

**June 2015**  
**Number 112**

# The Eider



Displaying Puffins. Photo taken during a recent trip to Lunga (see page 7) ©John Bowler

**Recent bird sightings—pages 23-27**

**Field trip to Extremadura, Spain—pages 15-19**

**Atlantic Hazelwoods—pages 20-22**

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### Club News

#### FIELD TRIPS 2015

If there is a chance of adverse weather that might lead to the cancellation of a fieldtrip, please check the club's website or contact the organiser the night before or prior to setting off.

**Sunday 28 June. Skipness.** Led by Katie Pendreigh (e-mail [katiependreigh@aol.com](mailto:katiependreigh@aol.com) phone 01583 441359. Meet in the car park beside the entrance gate to the castle at 10.00hrs. The Sea Food Cabin will be open for lunch.

**Saturday 25 July. Loch Gilp,** Add Estuary and Taynish. Led by Jim Dickson (phone 01546 603967; e-mail [meg@jdickson5.plus.com](mailto:meg@jdickson5.plus.com)). Meet at 10.00hrs in Lochgilphead at the Corran Car Park, opposite the caravan park, on the A83, close to the roundabout (A83/A816) at the western end of the town.

**Saturday 29 August. Seabirds from the Colonsay Ferry.** Led by David Jardine (e-mail [dcjardine@btinternet.com](mailto:dcjardine@btinternet.com) phone 01546 510200). Meet at the Kinnacraig Ferry at 09.15hrs. Hopefully there should be good numbers of seabirds to be seen from the ferry. It may be possible to hire a minibus on Colonsay if enough folk are interested (around 10-12 needed). Please contact David by 20 August if you want to join the trip.

**Saturday 26 September.** Loch Laich and Port Appin. Led by Mike Harrison (E-mail [jmharrison@iee.org](mailto:jmharrison@iee.org) phone 01631 710656). Meet at the Appin Hall car-park (grid ref. NM938459) on the A828 at 10.30hrs.

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#### INDOOR MEETING 2015/2016

**Autumn meeting. Saturday 14 November 2015 at the Cairnbaan Hotel (<http://www.cairnbaan.com/>),** near Lochgilphead (phone 01546 603668). The programme will be included in the September *Eider*.

**ABC's 30th Anniversary Dinner.** A dinner to celebrate the club's 30th anniversary has been arranged to follow the autumn meeting (above) at the Cairnbaan Hotel. Professor Des Thomson, Principal Advisor on Biodiversity for Scottish Natural Heritage and founder chairman of the Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme has kindly agreed to attend and to speak at the dinner. The menu and booking form are included as the last page of this issue together with information on other accommodation near to the Cairnbaan Hotel.

#### Acknowledgements

Very many thanks to the following for their contributions to this issue—John Bowler, Neil Brown, Malcolm Chattwood, Sandy Coppins, Jim Dickson, Sandra Elliot, Ian Fisher, Bob Furness (including photocopying & dispatch), Sue Furness, Mike Harrison, David Jardine, Eddie Maguire, David Palmar, Linda Petty (proof reading), Peter Roberts, Nigel Scriven and Gordon Gray Stephens

**Spring meeting 2016.** Date and venue to be arranged (details will be provided in the September *Eider*).

**Raffle prizes.** Donations of raffle prizes for indoor meetings are always welcome.

### ARGYLL BIRD REPORT 25 (2013)

This report was published in March. If anyone would like to purchase additional copies, these can be obtained from Bob Furness (address on back

page). The cost is £8.00 plus £1.50 for post and package. Please make your cheque payable to the 'Argyll Bird Club'. Previous years copies of the bird report can also be purchased from Bob.

### THE ARGYLL BIRD CLUB WEBSITE

([www.argyllbirdclub.org](http://www.argyllbirdclub.org))

Do visit our website to find out about up-to-date arrangements for meetings, recent sightings of birds and lots more.

## Last chance to help in the BTO's House Martin survey

The survey is based on randomly selected 1 -km squares and up to three visits are required, between mid-May and late-July. House Martins can occupy a very wide range of habitats including quite remote areas.

Some of the squares selected for the survey are in rural areas and have very few buildings—we would like at least one visit to these squares to check for signs of House Martins nesting. We expect visits to take an hour or less (visits to squares containing more buildings may take longer).

The maps opposite show the available squares in the BTO region of Argyll (mainland, Bute and Gigha). If there is a square near you, or on a route you will be travelling along in June or July, please consider covering it even if you have never seen House Martins in your area. 'Zero counts' from squares with no House Martins are extremely important to the survey, and by spending just a few minutes confirming and submitting a 'zero count' you will help to ensure our survey results are robust. You may even be surprised and find some House Martins that you didn't know about.

You can request squares online at: <http://blx1.bto.org/housemartins/home>. You will need to be logged in to request a square, or will need to register if you are new to BTO online surveys.

Alternatively, email Nigel ([njscraven@gmail.com](mailto:njscraven@gmail.com)) to tell him which square you would like to cover.



## Summaries of talks from the ABC's Spring Meeting

Inveraray 7 March 2015

### Introduction

The Spring Meeting was held on a very wet 7 March at the Argyll Hotel in Inveraray. After club chairman Mike Harrison had welcomed 51 members and guests for a programme of six talks, Argyll Bird Recorder Jim Dickson reported on some of the more unusual birds that have been seen and photographed in Argyll over the past few months.

### Clyde seabirds—Nina O'Hanlon (summary by Bob Furness)

Nina O'Hanlon, a postgraduate at the University of Glasgow, gave a talk on the changing fortunes of coastal seabirds. After reviewing trends for a variety of species, she concentrated on the Herring Gull in a study area encompassing the coasts of Argyll, SW Scotland and Northern Ireland. Although many colonies have declined in recent years, some have grown, and the difference in fortunes in different areas allows some inference as to why these patterns exist. Egg sizes and colour patterns vary, as do chick provisioning rates and nest attendance by adults, and diet composition. Herring Gulls feed much less on fish than might have been expected, and tracking data from adults caught at various colonies showed that most herring gulls spend much more time foraging inland than at sea. Grain, probably stolen from livestock feeding troughs, seems to be important in the diet in spring, whereas marine foods form more of the diet fed to chicks. Gull fortunes in coastal Argyll do seem to be linked to fishing, but perhaps more to farming and refuse disposal.

### Tracking Golden Eagles—Ewan Weston (summary by Malcolm Chattwood)

There are around 440 pairs of Golden Eagle in Scotland. Much past work has contributed to our current knowledge of Golden Eagles, and a further national survey will be undertaken in 2015. Ewan described the variety of habitats used by eagles but also noted how this can be reduced by changes in landscape management resulting in potential conflict between different interests. Ewan gave details of recent work which involved tagging chicks and then tracking the birds to see where they go and what this has told us about



This study investigated habitat use by sub-adult Golden Eagles ©Ian Fisher

eagle ecology. The handling of Golden Eagle chicks in the nest is difficult so the preferred option is to lower the chicks to ground where they can be hooded to ease handling. This operation still requires impressive climbing and ropework skills and the slides showed it is not a task for the faint-hearted amateur.

Once fledged, birds tend to move from their natal home range via a transient range and eventually arrive in what will be their breeding range. The use of trackers has provided valuable information on the timing of movements and how long birds stay in different areas and habitats. Young eagles leave their parents home range between eight weeks and eight months after fledging. Maps of individual tracks showed how varied and wide-ranging some of these movements can be, although it was found that some areas were favoured by a number of different birds. The use of temporary settlement areas (TSA) by a number of different birds was not uncommon, and often there were forays back into their natal home range. In summer, birds tended to stay within their TSA, whilst spring found the young birds exploring wider areas.

One of the less welcome findings of the exercise was the sudden loss of birds wearing transmitters, possibly due to persecution. Continued monitoring of tagged birds will not only increase our knowledge of Golden Eagle movement and behaviour, but provide data from those areas where



Heron chick being ringed on Colonsay ©David Jardine

raptor persecution is suspected.

### Grey Herons in Argyll—David Jardine (summary by Steve Petty)

At short notice, David very ably stepped in to replace the scheduled speaker, and gave an informative talk on Herons in Argyll. A brief review of the literature suggested Herons were heavily persecuted in parts Argyll during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Nowadays, the population appears to be fairly stable, but declines have been noted after extremely cold winters. Heronries have been counted in Argyll since 1928/29 as part of the BTO's long-running study. The latest survey in 1985 located 36 heronries containing 259 nests (mean 7.2 nest per heronry). Correcting for sites not counted indicated a population of around 600 pairs in Argyll. Most heronries are in tall trees and conifers seem to be preferred, but they will use a range of other nest sites when tall trees are not available, such as crags, derelict buildings, reed beds and bushes.

David has been studying Herons on Colonsay for many years. Since 2000 the number of nests has fluctuated between 13 and 20. Most of these were in one main colony, but there were a number of smaller, satellite colonies. The location of colonies has changed over time. Overall the density of breeding Herons on Colonsay is high (27pairs/100km<sup>2</sup>). Mean clutch size (3.40) and mean brood size (1.93) were not significantly different between years. Storms during the breeding season can result in some nests being destroyed and the local Golden Eagle pair has predated some nestlings. The mean date when the first egg was laid was 5 April. A total of 292 chicks have been ringed (1994–2014), but only nine have been recovered dead.

Seven were less than one-year old, and two were between 3–5 years of age. Of these, three were found dead on Colonsay/Oronsay, two were found elsewhere in western Scotland, three in Ireland and one in Norway (775km from the ringing location). A study of food brought to nests on Colonsay showed that most items were from the marine environment, indicating the importance of the inter-tidal zone. Some evidence from elsewhere in Argyll indicates that inland colonies, exploiting freshwater habitats, have better breeding performance than coastal pairs.

### Resolving conflicts between farming and geese on Islay—Rae McKenzie (summary by Mike Harrison)

A new management strategy for geese on Islay was announced by SNH in December 2014 and Rae McKenzie travelled from the island to explain it to us. Reviewing the last sixty years of monitoring the goose population, Rae explained that the numbers of geese overwintering, both Barnacle and Greenland White-fronted Geese, had increased enormously since protection was introduced in 1951. The White-fronts have declined somewhat in recent years but Barnacle numbers have remained at a high level. As the numbers increased, so did the amount of grass eaten with the consequent impact on farmers' incomes. Despite the establishment of an RSPB reserve, refuge areas, diversionary feeding, goose scaring and compensation schemes the conflict between farming and geese has continued with the increasing goose numbers, especially since 2008 as the level of compensation payments fell behind the level of damage. The objective of the new policy is to reduce crop damage by Barnacle Geese from the current level, regarded as 'very serious', to an acceptable level without adversely affecting the Greenland White-front population or increasing damage by other goose species. Compensation payments alone are not an acceptable solution because they do not reduce damage. The current damage is to be measured and a target set at an acceptable level. Scaring will be continued, although the effectiveness of most scaring methods has been found to decline over time. Crop protection netting has been trialled but may not be an economic solution. If all other methods have been exhausted without achieving the necessary reduction in crop damage then numbers may be reduced by 'lethal scaring' (a method already used

to a limited extent). Meanwhile, the aim is to increase the population of White-fronts by improving their traditional feeding areas and using diversionary feeding. A project is currently tracking the White-fronts to locate their favoured feeding and roosting sites. The 'adaptive' part of the management strategy requires plenty of measurement, monitoring and adjustment of the actions being taken in order that no more 'lethal scaring' is used than is necessary to reduce crop damage to an acceptable level.

### **Argyll's Atlantic Hazelwoods—Gordon Stephens** (summary by Steve Petty)

Hazel was one of the first tree species to colonise western Scotland after the last ice age, around 9,500 years ago. Pollen analyses indicated Hazel was the main component of the temperate rainforest that extended over vast areas of the west coast prior to other tree species becoming established. Remnants of these Atlantic Hazelwoods have survived, and represent a unique habitat in the oceanic (wet and mild) climate of western Scotland. Gordon described some of the work of the Atlantic Hazelwoods Action Group which aims to raise awareness of this distinctive, woodland habitat.

Today, most Hazelwoods are found on inland and coastal slopes along the west coast. Unlike Hazel elsewhere in the UK, these Atlantic woods have been little managed over time, so allowing many individual stems to develop into small trees, shaped by the westerly winds. Here Hazel appears to be the climax vegetation, which has persisted as a natural monoculture since the last ice age. This has allowed many species dependent on clean air and wet conditions to flourish; such as slow-growing lichens, fungi and bryophytes, all of which have limited dispersal capabilities and are thus dependent on old trees and static woodland conditions. Some species of lichen occur nowhere else in the world. The level of grazing is important in maintaining such exceptional communities—too little grazing allows rank vegetation (grasses and bramble for example) to shade out some of the more delicate plants, while too much grazing is not only detrimental to these plants but it also restricts the regeneration of hazel itself. In the past, Hazel provided protein-rich nuts for impoverished rural communities during winter, as well as rods and stakes for house building (wattle and daub) before stone became the main building material. I'm sure many

in the audience will look upon hazel woods in a totally different light after this fascinating presentation (Gordon has very kindly written an article about Atlantic Hazelwoods for this issue—pages 20-22)

### **Bearded Reedlings in the Tay Reedbeds—Iain Malzer** (summary by Neil Brown)

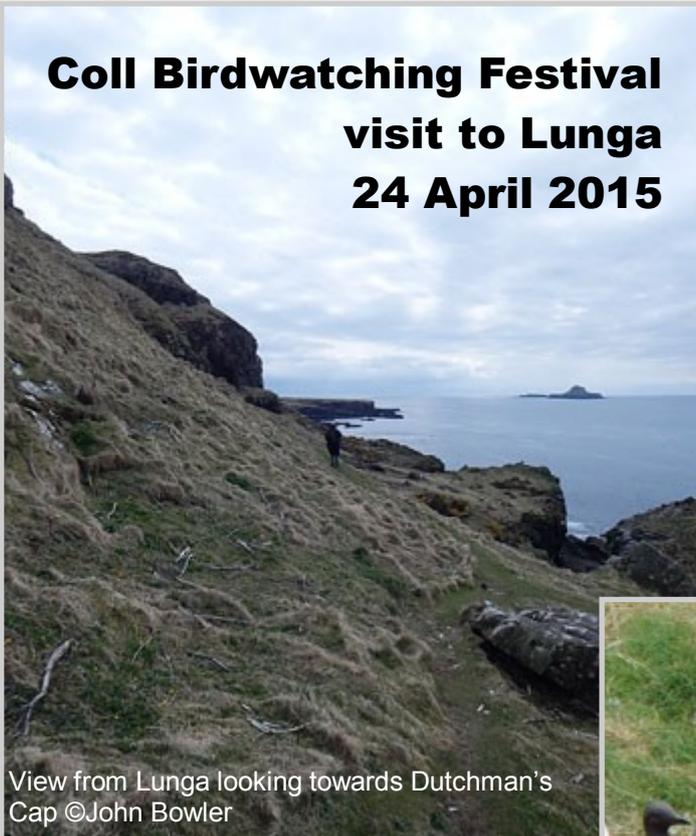
Dr Iain Malzer gave a fascinating presentation on the life of Bearded Tits living in the Tay reed beds. This habitat covers 410ha and is the largest expanse of reed bed found in Britain. The Bearded Tits or Bearded Reedlings were well adapted to life in the reed beds, with a feeding biology that allowed them to survive by gorging on insects during the summer months and feeding on seeds produced by the reeds during winter. The reeds themselves were managed with selected areas being harvested, mostly for thatch, which created areas of different aged reeds. Bearded Tits were shown to use these areas differently. The older reeds providing better nesting habitat and the newer reeds were ideal for foraging. Populations were monitored using ringing with standardised mist netting, which provided capture and recapture data. In 2013, 330 new birds were ringed and 764 in 2014 demonstrating that the Tay reed beds were the most important site for these birds in the UK. Other survey methods such as point counts, taken from ladder tops, were used to assess breeding. Radio tags were used to monitor the bird's daily movements through the different areas of reed, which showed a feeding preference for the wetter areas of the bed, perhaps because bigger insects were found there? Also, Bearded Tits were found to congregate in unmanaged areas of reed bed during the winter months due to higher seed availability. This informative talk was another great example of what can be learned from wildlife in general when an intensive study is aimed at a single species.

### **Conclusion**

After drawing the raffle and thanking the donors for the prizes, the speakers for their excellent talks and Bob Furness for arranging the programme, Mike Harrison closed the meeting with an invitation to the Autumn Meeting and AGM at Cairnbaan on 14 November.

**Mike Harrison**

## Coll Birdwatching Festival visit to Lunga 24 April 2015



View from Lunga looking towards Dutchman's Cap ©John Bowler

Friday 24 April 2015 was a lovely calm day as we headed out from Arinagour, Coll with Coastal Connections as part of the second annual Coll Birdwatching Festival organised by Development Coll with input from BTO, RSPB and SOC. The comfortable covered rib was full with 12 birdwatchers including Argyll stalwarts David Palmar, Janet Palmar and Richard Wesley. We saw small numbers of Puffins and Manx Shearwaters on the smooth crossing but as we approached the landing area on Lunga it was clear that the seabirds had returned en masse to the cliffs.

Hundreds of Puffins ignored us entirely as we watched them at close quarters going about their pair-bonding rituals (photo front cover). I was surprised to see how many Puffins there were compared to my last visit to Lunga in 2006, with more extensive dense colonies now spread well along the coast to Harp Rock. Low thousands of Guillemots (photo above) thronged Harp Rock itself, whilst Razor-bills and Fulmars were also back in good numbers on the boulder slopes. Shags were also busy nest-building (photo oppo-

site), many sporting green darvic rings. The only species that appeared to be in short supply was Kittiwake, with just a handful of pairs noted on the steepest cliffs. Hopefully more will arrive as the season progresses.

With the calm conditions and even a spot of sunshine, a great trip was had by all, with bonus birds on Lunga in the form of a Whimbrel, two Common Sandpipers and a singing Dunnock. Next year's Coll Birdwatching festival is already being planned for May 2016 and will include further trips to Lunga and to nearby Tiree. I can't wait!

**John Bowler, RSPB**



Top Photo: Common Guillemots on Lunga ©John Bowler

Lower photo: Pair of Shags at nest on Lunga ©John Bowler



## Report of the ABC field trip to Ledaig, Dunstaffnage and Tralee on 28 February

I suppose some rain must be expected in February in Argyll and, sure enough, it was advancing towards us from Mull as we waited by Connel Bridge to see how many members would brave the rather grim forecast. It was a close run thing, but the rain arrived just before the scheduled start time at 10.00hrs.

Five members and one guest surveyed Loch Etive and Connel Sound from the north end of the bridge. The reef to the east of the bridge was well exposed by the neap tide and several Shags were resting there, along with a Great Black-backed Gull and a pair of Eider. Close to the shore, almost below the bridge, two Little Grebes were diving for food while a pair of Mallard cruised past. A Grey Heron was fishing below the rocky shore on the south side of the sound and two Mute Swans could be seen at the mouth of the Lusragan Burn. A red-headed Red-breasted Merganser was fishing amongst the mooring buoys to the west of the bridge. Jackdaws and Feral Pigeons were sitting around on the bridge girders while a Herring Gull stood on the very peak of the structure.

Rooks were calling from the trees of the nearby rookery as we set off through North Connel towards Ledaig Point. Away from the traffic noise on the main road it was easier to hear calls of Great Tits and Chaffinches coming from the scrubby woodland along the road. A Song Thrush flew across in front of us. Blue Tits and Coal Tits flitted between a garden feeder and a birch tree by the roadside as we passed and a Goldfinch flew in to join them.

Two Oystercatchers were probing the local football pitch for food, quite unconcerned by our presence as we crossed the grass towards the airfield. As is often the case in winter, the airfield was bleak and apparently lifeless. We joined the path along the southern edge of the airfield, sheltered somewhat by the Gorse bushes, and made our way out to Ledaig Point, parting company with two members who had more pressing matters to attend to. A few Hooded Crows and a particularly black Hybrid/Carrion Crow were foraging on the beach and around the grass in the corner of the airfield. A couple of Shags were feeding in the sound and a Cormorant flew past heading for Loch Etive. The tide had covered the sandy parts



Ledaig Point on a day the sun shone – not on 28 February!  
©Mike Harrison

of the beach and the few Oystercatchers we could see immediately, were on the stony parts of the spit. Two dogs rampaged along the beach from the north and revealed the presence of some small waders which flew across to the spit and promptly disappeared amongst the stones. After much scanning of the shore we managed to find two Turnstones appearing and disappearing between stones as they moved around. Having given up hope of finding any other birds we turned to leave and found four Ringed Plovers on the airfield tarmac behind us and a Dunnock on top of a bush. Returning through North Connel to the cars we added House Sparrow and Starling to our list and heard a Greenfinch and a Robin in the woodland by the road.

A five-minute drive brought us to Dunbeg where Song Thrush and Blackbird were spotted immediately in a garden. House Sparrows could be heard having a rammy in a bush as we walked towards the woodland which fringes Dunstaffnage Bay. Very few birds were about as we squelched across the grass towards the shore, but a Chaffinch was spotted at the top of a larch tree and a Robin could be heard singing in the woods. Great Black-backed, Herring and Common Gulls were feeding in the bay but, again, the tide had covered most of the mud. A bird roosting on the farther shore puzzled us for a while and remained unidentified until disturbed some time later by a passing Herring Gull, when it revealed itself to be a Curlew. A dozen or so drake Mallard flew in to join the several pairs already in the bay while a small flock of Wigeon swam gently along the shore. With the sky

brightening a little we returned to the car, collecting Goldfinch, Great Tit, Blue Tit and Wren in the scrub on the way.

Another short drive took us to Tralee where we parked and had a quick bite to eat, conscious that the light rain we had suffered all morning was just the precursor to the heavy rain that was forecast to arrive in the early afternoon. The sound of the rising wind in the trees carrying the calls of the Rooks from the rookery across the road was very evocative of spring, as was the song of a nearby Robin—only the sunshine and blue sky were lacking! Blue and Great Tits were feeding amongst the bushes as we walked along the road and a pair of Collared Doves flew up on to a house roof. Arriving at An Sailean we could see Oystercatcher and Curlew on the mud to the north of the track. Careful scrutiny revealed two or three Greenshank feeding busily along the muddy shoreline. Some more Oystercatchers were roosting on the beach on the west shore. A few Mallard and Wigeon cruised slowly past the cordgrass beds and some Common and Black-headed Gulls flew up from a hidden patch of mud. Moving further down the track gave us a better view to the north east where eight Greenland White-fronted Geese were

watching us carefully over a small rise. About 20 were revealed when they flew off later. With the fresh breeze blowing straight up An Sailean from the sea we decided to forego the walk round the shore to Ardmucknish Bay and retraced our steps up the track and back to the car.

Nominated highlights of the trip included Dabchicks on Loch Etive, the Greenshank and White-fronted Geese at An Sailean, and the Ringed Plovers standing behind us on the airfield while we searched for them on Ledaig Point spit. An interesting, if rather wet, day.

**Species List:** Mute Swan, Greenland White-fronted Goose, Eurasian Wigeon, Mallard, Common Eider, Red-breasted Merganser, Great Cormorant, European Shag, Grey Heron, Little Grebe, Eurasian Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover, Eurasian Curlew, Greenshank, Turnstone, Black-headed Gull, Common Gull, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Feral Pigeon, Collared Dove, Western Jackdaw, Rook, Carrion/Hybrid Crow, Hooded Crow, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Wren, Common Starling, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Robin, Dunnock, House Sparrow, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch

Mike Harrison

### Report of the ABC field trip to the Sound of Gigha and south Kintyre on 28 March

This trip came close to being cancelled due to the grim weather forecasts in the days leading up to the event. However, the day-ahead forecast suggested that the worst of the rain should have passed by the time we were to muster at 10.00hrs, and so it proved correct. Only the wind remained—and plenty of it—enough to disrupt the early ferry sailings. The view from Ronachan Point was of heaving grey seas under a low grey sky.

But, there were birds about. Herring, Common, Great and Lesser Black-backed Gulls were cruising along the coast or sheltering in the bay just along from our position. A few Shags were on the rocks and a pair of Eider was spotted amongst the waves. Meanwhile Pied Wagtails and Rock Pipits were feeding along the seaweed line along the beach. Chaffinch, Hooded Crow, Jackdaw and Rock Dove went about their business on or over the land. Not too bad really! We already had more species (12) and more members (five) than I had



With rough weather in the Sound of Gigha, members decided not to venture across to the island ©Mike Harrison

feared. But it was cold in the wind, so we moved on to West Coast Salmon in the hope of finding a bit more shelter, for us if not for the birds, and added Mallard, Shelduck and Rook to the list on the way.

Right enough, there was some shelter in the gully just above the beach and from here we rapidly

found Red-breasted Merganser, Great Northern Diver, Slavonian Grebe, more Eiders and some Common Scoter. A Gannet was cruising around out in the sound and some Black-headed Gulls fought their way upwind along the shore. An Oystercatcher was the first wader of the day and we eventually found a Ringed Plover sitting by the seaweed just beyond reach of the waves, and a Red-throated Diver was picked out amongst the waves. A Grey Heron flew over the access road as we left for Tayinloan.

A flock of about 90 Greenland White-fronted Geese was counted in a field adjacent to the road along with a few Greylags and a pair of Teal which were feeding in a small flood at the bottom. Two Mistle Thrushes were seen on the roadside telephone wires and Jackdaw flocks seemed to be everywhere.

A flock of 28 Curlews and two Lapwings were in the field opposite the home of our sixth member, from where, while enjoying a coffee break in a nice warm conservatory, we also saw Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, House Sparrow, Wren, Sparrowhawk, Collared Dove, Common Buzzard, Raven and Pheasant. The ferry was operating by now, but the rough waters of the sound and the lack of a pub lunch made the prospect of a crossing to Gigha less appealing than usual. A consensus was soon reached that we should head for the more sheltered waters of Campbeltown Loch. We also hoped the forecast showers would be lighter the further south we went.

After a short visit to Tayinloan Jetty, where Sanderling and Redshank were added to a list, now totalling 44 species, we abandoned the Sound of Gigha in favour of elsewhere. Few seabirds were visible as we drove south along the coast with spectacular seas crashing on to the rocks beside the road.



**Upper photo.** Jim Dickson pointing out birds at West Coast Salmon to those who braved the weather ©Mike Harrison

**Lower photo.** A male Teal at Stinky Holes, Kintyre ©Jim Dickson

A few Shags were perched well out of harm's way and most gulls were standing around in the fields, although a few were cruising along the shore. Flocks of Rooks and Jackdaws were numerous; raptors less so with only single Buzzard and Raven records. Flocks of Greenland White-fronted Geese and Greylag Geese grazing the fields became more numerous as we approached Campbeltown. A Stonechat was seen on a roadside fence.

Campbeltown Pier proved not to be the most sheltered place to park. Jim's hat took off as soon as he opened the car door and was last seen floating down Campbeltown Loch looking like a seal's head. Notwithstanding at least one cold head and a couple of rain showers the harbour area contained Herring and Great

Black-backed Gulls, Black Guillemots, Eiders and Shags. A Common Guillemot and a Razorbill were further out in the loch while two Gannets cruised around and occasionally plunged in. Carrion Crow, Rook, Feral Pigeon and Starling could be seen over the town. Two Mute Swans were asleep on the shore by the Nato Jetty as we drove along the loch side towards Stinky Hole, where a flock of Teal were feeding in the pool. This proved an ideal place for a lunch stop, despite the name, as we could watch for waders in Kildalloig Bay between Stinky Hole and Davaar Island. Oystercatchers were the most numerous, but Curlew, Redshank, Turnstone and Ringed Plover were also present. Rock Pipits and a Pied Wagtail flitted around the edge of the pool and a pair of Mallard joined the Teal. A pair of Red-breasted Merganser flew in and landed in the bay, joining some Great Black-backed and Herring Gulls. A few Black-headed Gulls crouched by the water's edge and a Shelduck flew slowly upwind.

Returning along the loch side towards the town, and noting a drake Goldeneye near the Nato Jetty, we took the road for Machrihanish. Small groups of Greenland White-fronted Geese were widespread in the fields. A flock of Wigeon was swimming on a small flood in one field with two Shelduck asleep nearby. A small group of geese near a farm was found to contain two Barnacles, six Greylags and six White-fronts; whether this was the farmer's home flock was not clear. Starlings were numerous along the road through Drumlemble and many gulls could be seen on the fields.

Parking at Machrihanish, conditions were not dissimilar to those we had left further north with massive waves crashing onto the rocks. Shags and Eiders were on the water; Rock Pipit, Oystercatcher and Pied Wagtail were on the shore; Herring, Great Black-backed and Black-headed Gulls were cruising around on the strong wind, and a Gannet could be seen further offshore. Time was now getting on so we set off for home, though not before those who visited the Gent's were serenaded by a Song Thrush atop a telegraph pole. Progress towards home was temporarily halted by a flock of gulls in a roadside field in which Jim had picked out the distinctive white form of an Iceland Gull. The birds flew off after being photographed, allowing us to resume our journey. A few hundred yards down the road to the airfield, progress towards home was temporarily halted again by a flock of gulls in a field in which Jim had picked out the distinctive white form of an Iceland Gull (another one!). A flock of about 180 Greenland White-fronted

Geese was counted while more photos were taken before we continued on our way. A Reed Bunting and a Kestrel were added to the list and more flocks of Starlings, Rooks and Jackdaws were noted as we headed northwards.

It was late afternoon by the time we reached Tayinloan and the wind was a lot lighter than it had been earlier, although the sea conditions were still a bit too choppy for easy duck-spotting. Four Meadow Pipits by the road to the ferry were the 61st entry on the list at the end of a day which had promised little but delivered a lot.

**Species List (Sound of Gigha):** Greenland White-fronted Goose, Greylag Goose, Common Shelduck, Eurasian Teal, Mallard, Common Eider, Common Scoter, Red-breasted Merganser, Common Pheasant, Red-throated Diver, Great Northern Diver, Northern Gannet, European Shag, Grey Heron, Slavonian Grebe, Eurasian Sparrowhawk, Common Buzzard, Eurasian Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover, Northern Lapwing, Sanderling, Eurasian Curlew, Common Redshank, Black-headed Gull, Common Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Rock Dove, Collared Dove, Western Jackdaw, Rook, Hooded Crow, Common Raven, Wren, Common Starling, Mistle Thrush, Robin, House Sparrow, Pied Wagtail, Meadow Pipit, Rock Pipit, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch (45 species)

**Species List (elsewhere in Kintyre):** Mute Swan, Greenland White-fronted Goose, Greylag Goose, Barnacle Goose, Common Shelduck, Eurasian Wigeon, Eurasian Teal, Mallard, Common Eider, Common Goldeneye, Red-breasted Merganser, Northern Gannet, European Shag, Common Buzzard, Common Kestrel, Eurasian Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover, Eurasian Curlew, Common Redshank, Turnstone, Black-headed Gull, Common Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Herring Gull, Iceland Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Common Guillemot, Razorbill, Black Guillemot, Feral Pigeon, Western Jackdaw, Rook, Carrion Crow, Hooded Crow, Common Raven, Common Starling, Song Thrush, Common Stonechat, Pied Wagtail, Rock Pipit, Twite, Reed Bunting (42 species)

**Mike Harrison**

## Report of the ABC field trip to Lismore on 11 April



Club members at Fennachrochan, Lismore ©David Palmar

Following the first warm week of spring, nine members gathered in Appin for the bird club's first ever visit to Lismore. However, an overnight change in the weather saw them quickly discard their short-sleeved shirts and don hats and gloves again!

The first birds for the visit were logged on the short crossing from Port Appin—a single Cormorant was amongst the non-breeding Shags on the mid-channel skerry, and a single Black Guillemot was seen along with a few Eiders. There were plenty of Herring Gulls back on their breeding territories on Eilean nan Caorach and Inn Island. Hooded Crows were mobbing a single Raven at the north end of Lismore.

On arrival we were met by Liz Buckle, Teenie and Noelle, to whom we were indebted for their help with transport on the island. After a short look at the jetty where Wren and Robin were heard singing loudly, we went round to Port Ramsay and walked down the Fennachrochan track to overlook the bay. The tide was fully in and a large group of around 30 Oystercatchers were roosting on the rocks, but other waders little

in evidence. However, pairs of Shelduck and Red-breasted Merganser were found along with a few Mallard. A Wood Pigeon, a scarce bird on Lismore on account of the relatively low woodland cover on the island, flew over the bay. We found a few Chaffinches around the village. Three redpolls, first identified by their rattling call, flew over. Despite the cold wind, the light and colour in the landscape was spectacular, with late snow on the hill tops and a brilliant rainbow on the edge of a thick black cloud—it was time to move down the island.

A nasty sleet shower was just ending as we arrived at our next stop by Kilcheran Loch. It was sufficient to dampen us, and Noelle, who lives there, very kindly provided some warming coffee. From her garden we watched six Grey Herons rise from the marsh at the north end, where they had presumably been hunting for frogs and toads. As the sun came out a Kestrel (photo opposite) hovered over us and a hidden Goldfinch sang strongly from a dense hawthorn bush. Walking further down to the loch, a Wheatear, the first of around 6-7 seen during the day, was found on the short limestone grassland by the loch, and 2-3 Sand Martins were hawking over the water. Richard, bringing up the rear, heard a Willow Warbler singing as the rest of the group scanned the loch. On first impressions it looked 'quiet', with a small group of six Tufted Ducks feeding in the reeds on the far shore the only birds visible. Little Grebes announced their presence with loud trills, but they took some time to find in the edge of the reeds and a pair of Greylags flew down and landed. However, it took some assistance to flush the ten Teal which were hiding at the south end of the loch. The assistance



Adult male Kestrel, Kilcheran loch, Lismore ©David Palmar



White-tailed Eagle, Kilcheran Loch, Lismore ©David Palmar

came from a magnificent adult White-tailed Eagle, which flew past at close range affording near-perfect views for all (photo above).

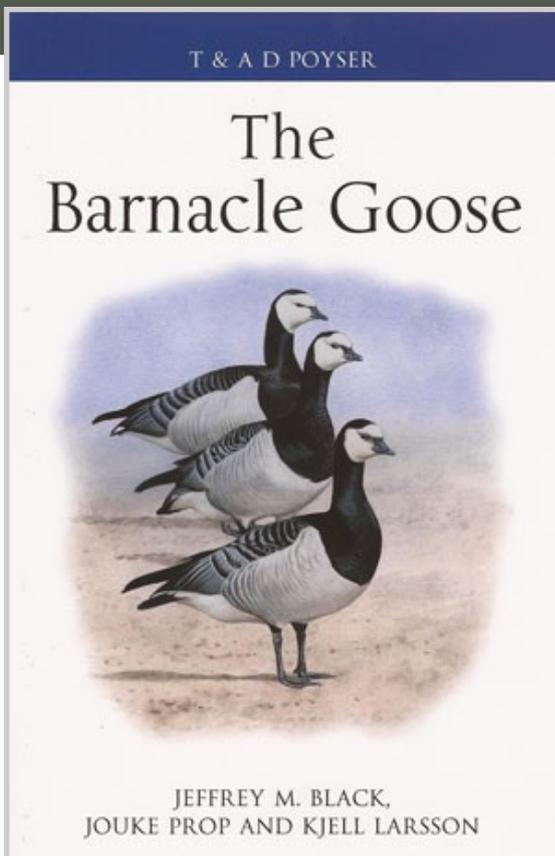
It was soon time for lunch, so we returned north to the café, where we enjoyed its warmth after the cold wind, and also some excellent food. After lunch, three of our party accepted a lift back for an earlier ferry. The remainder, set off, after waiting for a nasty shower to pass, to walk the four miles back to the ferry, via Balnagown Loch and the broch.

Other than a pair of Canada Geese and a few male Mallard (the females were presumably incubating) there was little on the loch, but Lesser Black-backed Gull and

Common Buzzard were added to the 'island-list' as we walked north. Thankfully we had our backs to the wind when the next squall came. A small flock of around 80 Kittiwakes were less fortunate as they battled south off Eilean Dubh, where Shags and Cormorants were sheltering on their breeding ledges on the island's cliff. As the squall ended some of the group heard the trisyllabic call of a migrating Greenshank as it flew north.

On our walk back to the pier, 40 occupied nests were counted in the rookery at Achuaran (we had earlier seen seven in the rookery at Clachan). Many Rooks feeding in the adjoining fields with Jackdaws. A small Brown Hare was seen close to the Port Ramsay road end and House Sparrow and Coal Tit on feeders in a garden at Point, were late additions to the list, but not as late as the Rock Pipit which flew and landed on the beach as we boarded the ferry home—making 49, a respectable island total, for such a blustery day which was enjoyed by all.

**David C Jardine**



### Book review—The Barnacle Goose

Most books from the Poyser stable are worth a second look, and when the subject matter was on the most common goose in the county and an Argyll speciality, *The Barnacle Goose*, I settled down for a good read. This monograph was not based on the Greenland race, which winters here, rather it is principally about the birds which breed on Svalbard and winter on the Solway Firth, supported with information from the Russian/Baltic/Dutch population. Following introductory chapters on the study populations and study sites, and on research methods, the authors demonstrate how colour-ringing of these populations has allowed them to study many choices which these lovely geese face—finding mates, long-term partnerships, family life, nest parasitism adoptions and kin. They also provide detailed descriptions of food and feeding, survival and reproduction and the influence of body size on the success of birds. A more traditional use of ringing data also allowed them to study site fidelity, movements and exchange amongst populations.

As the Greenland breeding population, much of which winters in Argyll, is found close to the study

population, it was not surprising to find that there is some interchange between populations. What is surprising, is just how few birds move between wintering sites. The study of these marked populations has also allowed detailed investigation of their population dynamics. As these populations are also increasing, this study provides a very powerful insight into the issues which face 'our' birds in Argyll. Therefore, the comments in the final chapter on 'Conservation and Agriculture' are

of particular interest. While not based on the local population, this is an important publication which I would recommend to anyone interested in the future of this iconic species in Argyll.

**David C Jardine**

**The Barnacle Goose** (2014) by Jeffrey M Black, Jouke Prop & Kjell Larsson, published by T & AD Poyer, London. ISBN 978-1-4729-1157-5 (hardback), 287 pages.

### Treasurer's Report for the financial year 2014-2015

Our cash balance at the end of the year stood at £10,440.50, an increase of £180.26 from the previous year. Income from subscriptions was very slightly lower than for the previous year, but much the same as in 2013. Fluctuations in subscription income arise due to changes in numbers of members, but also from late payments arriving from members who forgot to renew in January; these often arrive around the end of the financial year in early April so may happen to fall in one year or the next. Income from bank interest was zero as Treasurer's Accounts no longer get interest, so this source of income has now fallen out of the accounts. Raffles at the indoor meetings continue to provide useful income, as well as entertainment, and we are grateful to members who contribute items to be raffled. Sales were mainly of the book which is still selling steadily and has not yet run out, but included small numbers of bird reports too. We do not reclaim Gift Aid every year so this was a welcome addition to this year's accounts. The relatively large income from data provision is also welcome, though the level of this income is likely to fluctuate and may not be this high in future.

Expenditure included printing of the *Argyll Bird Report* and associated postage and envelope costs, but these costs were down on the previous year when we had two bird reports within a single financial year. Insurance costs included insurance of the club's telescope and binoculars now available for monthly field trips, as well as third party cover for club activities. The web site licence costs also happen not to fall in each financial year and the costs paid in 2014-15 cover two years of leasing our web site. The fee that we pay for the web site includes a component based on volume of hits the web site receives. It is satisfying to report that this fee has increased, indicating that

#### Accounts for the 30th year of the Argyll Bird Club 15 April 2014 to 14 April 2015

INCOME	2014/2015	2013/2014
Subscriptions	2412.23	2648.23
Sales	638.98	369.30
Raffles	273.00	462.50
Data fees	1300.00	0.00
HMRC Gift Aid	612.54	0.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5236.75</b>	<b>3480.03</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
Bird report	1930.00	3946.00
Newsletter photocopying	179.84	84.00
Postage	635.26	1024.72
Public meetings	958.45	1000.90
Insurance	233.63	233.63
Licenses/website	108.50	0.00
Envelopes	33.05	56.93
Grants	977.76	1031.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5056.49</b>	<b>7377.18</b>
Surplus/deficit for year	180.26	-3897.15
Brought forward	10260.24	14157.39
Assets at end of year	10440.50	10260.24

the web site is attracting increasing numbers, presumably mostly in response to the excellent and up to date bird observations being listed on the 'recent reports' page. Grants made during 2014-15 included materials to fence off and establish signs at a Little Tern colony to reduce human disturbance, support for Twite colour ringing, purchase of mist nets for a 'constant

effort ringing site', and the ground rent for Machrihanish Seabird Observatory. Despite spending nearly £1,000 on grants, the accounts show a small surplus for the year, thanks especially to income from data provision from the bird records database. The accounts have been audited by Dr Bernie Zonfrillo.

Bob Furness, 5 May 2015

### Membership Secretary's report for the financial year 2014-2015

Our number of memberships has remained similar to last year's total. In April 2015 at the end of the financial year we had a total of 195 memberships, including a good number of family memberships, though (as usual) a few members have not yet responded to a request for subscription

renewal, so the number may increase as these late payments arrive. We have approximately 300 members in the club if we count individuals rather than memberships.

Sue Furness, 5 May 2015

### Islay Birders & Argyll Bird Club members trip to Extremadura, Spain April/May 2015



Bee-eaters ©Jim Dickson

#### 30th April—Madrid and onto Gredos.

Our group comprised Ian and Margaret Brooke, Daphne Campbell, Bob Davison, Jim Dickson, David Formby, George Jackson and Peter Roberts. With a large and roomy minibus we set off around mid-afternoon from Madrid airport along a labyrinth of motorways. Before long we were out of the city and driving along autopistas and eventually onto country roads as we approached Navarredonda de Gredos and our hotel for the next two nights. A number of birds were seen as we motored along including the first Cinereous (Black) Vultures.

**1 May—Birding in the Gredos Mountains.** It was a Spanish holiday, so we decided to do the higher walk in the morning, in the

hope of getting there before too many hikers arrived. The weather looked dodgy at first with light drizzle as we drove into the mountains. However, by the time we set out for the hike, it had dried up and the light had improved. Our main target for the day was Bluethroat. We hiked up a stony track to an area with dense patches of whin. To my mind this was atypical Bluethroat habitat, but after a while David spotted the only bird of the day (photo on next page). We eventually got super views of it, albeit for seconds at a time. Our other goal was to see Spanish Ibex, an endemic wild goat. These were surprisingly abundant on the rocky slopes, including a few males with large horns (photo on next page). There were many birds to be seen amidst a mass of singing Dunnocks! Soon after our arrival we had brief views of Ortolan Buntings. Black Redstarts, Northern and Black-



A Bluethroat (upper photo), a magnificent male Spanish Ibex (middle photo) and a Western Bonelli's Warbler (lower photos), all photographed in the Gredos Mountains (images ©Jim Dickson)

eared Wheatears popped up occasionally. Both sexes of Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush were seen. Water Pipits and Eurasian Skylarks were singing loudly and displaying. Crag Martins were present, nesting in one of the information shelter roofs. The scenery was of gentle mountain slopes with smooth, lichen-covered rock, bushes and grasses with snow present on slopes above

us. We climbed up to about around 2,000m.

Our hosts told us of an afternoon walk close to the hotel where we should find Citril Finch—one of the birds we would not see further south. We set off around open native pine forest with occasional fields, streams and damp patches. This turned out to be a very pleasant and productive afternoon and achieved the main goal of finding Citril Finches—the only lifer on the tour for Jim. We also saw plenty of other birds. Short-toed Treecreepers were quite numerous as were Great Spotted Woodpeckers and Eurasian Nuthatches. The latter seen at a nest hole. A Crested Tit was seen, but only high in the canopy. Raptors put on a reasonable show with views of Red and Black Kites, light-phase Booted Eagles, Eurasian Sparrowhawk and a couple of distant migrating European Honey-Buzzards. Towards the end of our afternoon we stopped by a marshy pasture and found lovely Western Yellow Wagtails of a blue-headed persuasion, Eurasian Linnets, Eurasian Hoopoe and our first look at European Serins. We returned to the hotel at 18.15hrs and had another fine supper with free wine before turning in for the night.

**2 May—Gredos to Extremadura.** We loaded the luggage into the minibus before breakfast, after which we checked out and paid our bills. We spent a productive hour or so wandering in the heath-like habitat at the back of the hotel. Jim and Bob had found Dartford Warblers here earlier, so we made special effort to see these, and we were rewarded with reasonable views of singing males. Here too we had eye-level views of Western Bonelli's Warbler (photo opposite) and Rock Bunting in superb clear morning light. Also seen were Common Stonechats and Greater Whitethroats with Woodlarks singing high overhead and the inevitable Dunnocks singing prominently on bush tops

Eventually we set off on the scenic drive out of the Gredos Mountains and towards Monfrague. It was a twisting and winding mountain road to Candeleda, then a much flatter area before Oropesa. We were now in very different habitat of flower-rich fields, olive groves, cereal crops and pastures. It was appreciably hotter too. Lunch time was spent at the picnic tables by the visitor centre to the Arroyo Del



Cinereous (Black) Vulture. These were seen frequently, but Griffon Vultures were more abundant ©Jim Dickson

Campo wetlands at Saucedilla. The birding was good with a flurry of wetland species added to our list. Notable were many Purple Herons (more abundant than Grey Heron), a gorgeous Little Bittern, plus a range of other egrets, Gull-billed Terns and Purple Swamphens—the latter a fairly recent colonist here. All the expected wetland warblers present—Eurasian Reed, Great Reed, Savi's and Cetti's, plus Zitting Cisticola (Fantailed Warbler). All sang at times, but only the Cetti's gave good views, while all others seemed happy to sing from inside the extensive *Phragmites* beds. Waterfowl were scarce, with just a few Little and Great Crested Grebes, Mallards and 1-2 Gadwall. However, European Bee-eaters seemed to be everywhere. By late afternoon we were travelling the small roads from Saucedilla to Serrejon, where I had previously found Black-shouldered Kites. In the afternoon we had a pair of Spanish (Imperial) Eagles and a couple of Cinereous Vultures overhead. Then we struck lucky with the kite. First a bird flew past quickly, then late in the afternoon we had another sighting of a bird, possibly at a nest tree. It was 17.00hrs, hot and folks were tiring, so we headed to Monfrague National Park and settled in to our new accommodation early.

**3 May—Monfrague National Park.** Birding before breakfast, amidst the Cork Oak dehesa around the hotel, produced good views of Iberian (Azure-winged) Magpies and Common Quail calling in adjacent meadows. After a Spanish breakfast of toasted rolls and coffee we collected our pic-

nics and set off for Monfrague National Park. The first site at Tietar was literally 5mins down the road and instantly produced the goods—a Spanish Eagle on crags on the other side of the Tajo River. The magnificent pale-headed adult sat at the very top of the pinnacles being mobbed by irate Eurasian Jays. For the first 20mins we enjoyed stunning views of this bird sitting and flying about over its nest in a nearby tree—absolutely magnificent! Here too were the usual large numbers of Eurasian Griffon Vultures, sitting on rocks, occasionally giving flight, sitting on nests, all looking huge and imposing in the scopes. We had several views of the much scarcer, seemingly tattier (moulting) Cinereous Vultures along with Black Kites. On the edge of the river Daphne spotted a Common Kingfisher that made forays up to its nest hole in the bank. The adjacent Cork Oaks and scrub held a pleasing variety of small birds such as Sardinian and Subalpine Warblers, Rock Buntings and Blue Rock Thrush. We slowly worked our way through Monfrague taking in the various viewpoints to ponder what might show up. Sadly there were no Bonelli's Eagles, but Daphne found a distant Short-toed Eagle—the first of the trip. A small number of Egyptian Vultures were seen including one on its nest. Cinereous Vultures continued to show, sometimes adjacent to Eurasian Griffons for comparison.

We arrived at the park's information centre around lunchtime, and used the loos and had a coffee and ate our lunch on the picnic tables. Some folks found a passing Hawfinch. In the afternoon, we visited the vulture cliff at Pena Falcon. The added bonus was a Black Stork on its crag nest. The vultures were every bit as spectacular as at Tietar. We finished by driving to Castillo Monfrague and climbing the steps to the top of the renovated tower, where there were remarkable views of vultures as they soared back and forth below.

After the evening meal we drove back to Tietar to see if we could see the Eurasian Eagle-Owl. On arrival, a couple of London birders had already found them. We were delighted to have twilight views of an adult, right at the very top of the crag, and two large, fluffy chicks, both quite mobile. We were discussing the whereabouts of Red-necked Nightjars, when we heard one calling. We used a playback tape and we were lucky to see a couple of birds in silhouette and hear more of their distinctive song. After returning to the hotel, some of us celebrated with generous meas-

ures of Spanish cognac in an almost empty bar.

**4 May—Belen Plains and Trujillo.** After breakfast we drove via Serrejon onto the main road to Trujillo, turning south to Torrecilla de la Tiesa to begin a slow drive along the minor roads and farm tracks of the Belen plains. Our goal was to find Great and Little Bustards. We eventually found a couple of Great Bustards on the vast grassy plains rolling towards the horizon in all directions. The one bird to show itself properly was a female, better than nothing, but we were hoping for some magnificent males. During our searching we found a number of new species. Several female Montagu's Harriers were quartering the fields. A pair of Little Owls perched in old farm buildings where they were presumably nesting. The whole area was awash with chunky and odd-looking Callandra Larks and Jim located a single perched and singing Greater Short-toed Lark. With so many Eurasian Magpies in the area it was only a matter of time before we encountered their brood parasite, the Great Spotted Cuckoo. We were lucky with a pair, one of which perched in the open offering good scoping views. White Storks were feeding on the fields and we saw numerous nests. One noteworthy nest had a sparrow colony nesting in it. Even better was the realisation that both House and Spanish Sparrows were present.

We ate our picnic lunch in this open landscape, keeping watch for anything of interest. Nearby a group of birders were watching something in their scopes. After lunch, we discovered they had found a displaying Little Bustard, amongst a glorious carpet of multi-coloured wildflowers. We watched this bird for a long time as it popped its head and neck above the grass to issue its funny burping call—in audible to us due to wind direction, but we could see its head being thrown backwards to make the sound carry.

From here we meandered north to Trujillo. We parked and wandered into the central plaza, where the annual cheese fair stalls were being noisily dismantled. We enjoyed a coffee and a wander through this picturesque and historical town for the best part of an hour. By now it was time to start heading homewards. We made a couple of short stops as we came across groups of raptors including many Eurasian Griffon Vultures, both Red and Black Kites, Common Buzzard, Cinereous Vultures, and 1-2 Short-toed, Booted and Golden Eagles. As we progressed the weather deteriorated into grey cloud and drizzle

**5 May—Monfrague, Talavan and Caceres Plains to Santa Marta de Magasca.** After breakfast and the collection of picnic lunches, we left at around 09.00hrs to drive through Monfrague National Park and explore the countryside towards Talavan and Santa Marta de Magasca.

We only got a few hundred metres before Jim spotted a couple of Eurasian Golden Orioles flash across the road. The birds spent a lot of time flying back and forth chasing each other between trees and allowing everyone, finally, some decent views of one of Europe's flashiest birds. We also saw more Red-legged Partridges and a long overdue Orphean Warbler, which perched in scope view for a surprisingly long time. Woodchat Shrikes were on good form before we had a short stop and took a brief look at Portilla de Tietar. Here were the usual masses of Eurasian Griffons and a Spanish Eagle. We saw a perched Short-toed Eagle before driving west until we reached Pena Falcon, at the opposite end of the park. A stop here added several Black Storks to the day's list, with a bird sat on its nest and at least four others in the air.

From here we continued past the little reservoir at Talavan and through lovely Cork Oak and olive grove country. The reservoir was fairly quiet, with Great Crested Grebes showing well and a single skulking Great Reed Warbler. We ate our lunch here and then set off across the open plains north of Caceres towards a European Roller nest-box scheme. Many nest boxes have been erected on utility poles across miles of open country, giving these gorgeous birds access to this habitat—perfect except for the lack of trees or buildings to nest in. We meandered along back roads, through extensive areas of flower-rich steppe, keeping an eye open for bustards and anything else of interest. Jim, our main spotter, called a halt when he found three Collared Pratincoles. These had landed at a small irrigation pool and we had some good views of a species, which I have rarely found in this area. Next we came across a concentration of vultures on a kill. This comprised many Eurasian Griffons and a couple of Cinereous Vultures offering good photo opportunities.

Later we rustled up 2-3 male Little Bustards displaying, and today we could hear their funny burping calls. Further along we began to see single Great Bustards. Sadly we failed to locate any dis-



Roller (upper photo). Many of those were breeding in nest boxes. Rock Bunting (lower) were often seen during the trip ©Jim Dickson

playing males, so Margaret was still somewhat unimpressed by this large, iconic bird. At least a couple of males were fairly close, but they still didn't "tick the box" for her as did Rollers, Bee-eaters and Hoopoes!

By now it was time to head home via the main road to Serrejon, arriving at the hotel by about 18.25hrs. Supper was at the usual time and the friendly staff worked through our "Spanglish" translations and plied us with bottles of free cava at the end of the meal, to show their appreciation for our custom.

**6 May—Arroyo Del Campo at Saucedilla, then to Madrid and homeward.** It was a perfect morning of clear skies for our departure from Spain. The hotel surprised us with fried eggs, bacon and fruit juice, rather than the toast and jam of previous mornings. We travelled a short distance to the wetlands at Arroyo del Campo near Saucedilla. It turned out to be well worthwhile, adding a few more species to our list. First, Bob

found a Ferruginous Duck—not a common bird in central Spain. In a marshy area, on the opposite side of the road, a Little Ringed Plover showed for a while amongst several Black-winged Stilts and our first sightings of the sadly scarce European Turtle Dove. Here too was a pair of Eurasian Marsh Harriers food-passing in the air. A little further on I played a Water Rail scream. Within seconds we had our reply from several birds and eventually 1-2 showed briefly before scuttling back into their wet marshy world. Just like our previous visit, we were hearing the usual marshland passerines—Savi's, European and Great Reed Warblers, but still finding it inexplicably tricky to see any. A single Zitting Cisticola did allow a long look in the scope, underwhelming everyone but myself (a confessed "cisticolaphile"). On the circuit around the hides we did manage distant views of Savi's and fleeting looks at the other two warblers. All the same heron species were as here as was Purple Swamphen and masses of Gull-billed Terns—75-80 in Bob's estimate. At our final stop, with most of the group in the minibus ready to leave, I heard distant calls of Eurasian Penduline Tit. Everybody jumped out and a tape playback resulted in a lovely finalé to our tour, before binoculars were finally packed away.

**Conclusion.** This turned out to be a very pleasant week's birding, with plenty of time to explore and to make sure everyone had good views of the birds. Accommodation and transport was given the 'thumbs up' and the weather was fairly kind to us. We ended up with seeing virtually all our 'target' species, plus a number of less expected species. The ones we missed were Bonelli's Eagle and two sandgrouse species. We travelled about 730 miles and finished with a total of 142 species recorded (three were "heard only").

### Peter Roberts

**Editor's footnote:** This was a highly successful trip at less than half the cost of commercial firms. Peter would be willing to organise a similar trip next year if enough folks were interested. Other possible venues include the Pyrenees and other bird-rich areas in Spain. If you are interested, please contact Jim Dickson (contact details on back page)



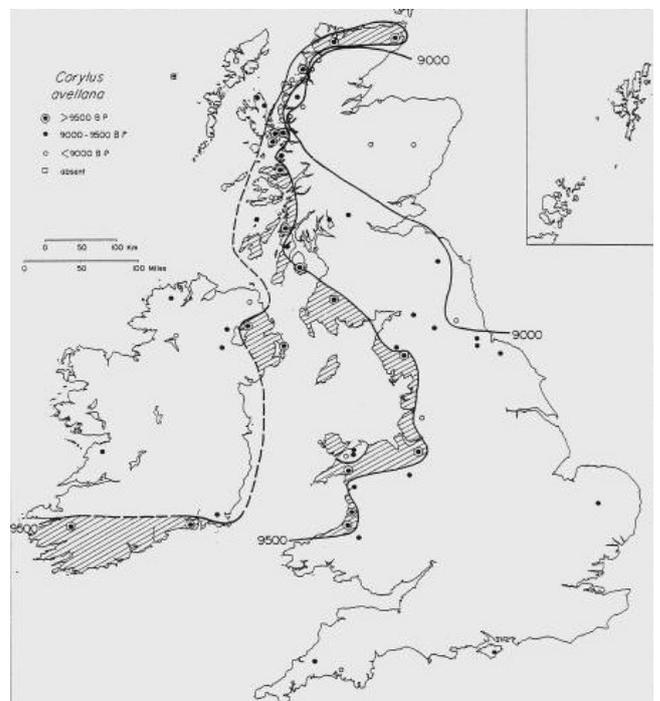
## Atlantic Hazelwoods

The Atlantic Hazel Action Group (AHAG) is an informal partnership of government agencies, local authorities, NGO's and lichenologists. AHAG promotes awareness of our Atlantic Hazelwoods, and encourages more sympathetic management of Hazelwoods.

Atlantic Hazel is concentrated on the oceanic west coast of Scotland, with Argyll and Lochaber as strongholds. Hazel occurs throughout the west coast, however these special Atlantic Hazelwoods form a distinctive habitat which has a high biodiversity value. Forming a part of our "Celtic rainforest", these woods are home to some of the richest assemblages of lichens, bryophytes and fungi in the whole of Europe.

Hazelwoods are one of Scotland's oldest woodland type, recolonising Britain well before oak. Pollen records show that Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) arrived in Argyll over 9,500 years ago, and pollen records also indicate that pure Hazel stands covered much of the west of Scotland (map opposite). These records indicate that Hazel arrived in west Scotland from a refugia to the south west, rather than over the land bridge from Europe. The early use of Hazel by humans is shown by Steve Mithen's excavations on Colon-say. He uncovered tens of thousands of burnt Hazel shells in the Mesolithic pits, evidence of

large scale food processing at a time when hazel nuts were an important food source through the winter months.



The approximate area (shaded) where Hazel was present earlier than 9,500 years before present (BP). The map is based on the distribution of Hazel pollen in sediments aged by radiocarbon dating (sites shown as dots) (Birks 1989).



**Left photo.** Hazel Glove Fungus (*Hypocreopsis rhododendri*) ©Gordon Gray Stephens

**Right photo.** Atlantic Hazel supports a wealth of internationally scarce lichens (and bryophytes) ©Sandy Coppins

The pollen records also show that Hazel was the dominant tree in the west of Scotland, forming large stands in a landscape that was probably about 65% wooded. Some of our remaining Hazelwoods are still pure stands, without any larger trees such as oak, Ash, Common Alder or Wych Elm. These woods are probably remnants of these first colonisers, and if this is the case, they are some of Britain's most ancient habitats.

Hazel remained important in the physical world of Argyll's people for millennia. It appears in the archaeological record, whether as food on Oronsay, or as building material and charcoal as found by Eric Creegan in the 1962 excavation at Bruach an Druimein, Poltalloch (Abernethy 2009).

In the age before concrete blocks and the "4 by 2", hazel rods were a valuable component of most vernacular buildings. Until the 18th century most of the population of Argyll would have lived in "creel" houses, formed from oak crucks with hazel or willow panels for walls. The stone cottages that we now associate with the west highland vernacular only appeared when the oak became valuable to the laird as charcoal and bark. In the age before plastic, Hazel was also a valuable material for making baskets for a whole range of purposes; for example lobster creels, fenders

and peat carrying baskets (also called creels).

Hazel was largely ignored in the written records of estate management, which tend to focus on the management of oak as the most valuable tree of the late 18th and early 19th century. However, there are some mentions in the Poltalloch Estate Records (Argyll & Bute Council Archive). Frequently this is because it was being weeded out of oak stands. In one area, Inverlussa, there must have been enough of it to be worth exploiting commercially. The records reveal that over 27,000 wands were produced in one year from Inverlussa for barrel hoops, and over 700 man days devoted to managing the hazel in the same woods in one month in 1838. Demand for wooden barrel hoops would have declined as iron became more plentiful and cheaper.

Hazel was also important in the world of myths and spirituality. Hazel was regarded as the best material for dowsing, with St John's Day considered the best day to cut your dowsing rod. Hazel was one of the nine sacred woods that should form the new fire on Beltane, while Holyrood Day, the 14th September was the traditional nut picking date, a school holiday in parts of Scotland until the early 20th century. Robert Burns "Halloween" describes the role of hazelnuts in

selecting your partner:

The auld guidwife's well-hoordit nits,  
Are round and round divided,  
And monie lads' and lasses' fates  
Are there that night decided:  
Some kindle coothie, side by side,  
And burn thegither trimly;  
Some start awa, wi' saucy pride,  
And jump out-owre the chimlie  
Fu' high that night.

Young people were given Hazel nuts, and girl and boy would put their nuts in the fire together. If the nuts stayed together, the partnership would be strong, but if the nuts explode in the flames, then the relationship would also break apart.

Today the continuity of woodland cover, coupled with the west coast's plentiful rain, mild climate and clean air, allows specialist plants to continue to thrive in Atlantic Hazelwoods. Notable inhabitants include the white script lichen *Graphis albo-scripta*, which is almost entirely dependent on Atlantic Hazelwoods, and which has only been found in Scotland. Atlantic Hazelwoods also provide the main home for 23 other very rare species of lichen (see photo on last page) for which Scotland has an international responsibility (Woods and Coppins 2003).

Atlantic Hazelwoods also provide the main Scottish home for the Hazel Gloves Fungus *Hypocreopsis rhododendri* (photo on last page), which is found on about 30 Hazelwood sites. This fungus was first discovered in Britain on Mull in the 1970s. Previously it had been recorded on *Rhododendron sp.* in North America. Hazel Glove has been selected as a Species Action Framework, a Scottish Government recognition of its importance.

Despite the importance of the Atlantic Hazelwoods, they have tended to be sidelined over the years, a forgotten temperate rainforest. They do not fit in with the British National Vegetation Classification (NVC) community types, nor are they recognised as distinctive in the European Habitats Directive.

When we think about Hazel at all, it is often as coppice, the system for managing Hazel thatch was developed to suit England's demands for tim-

ber and the growing conditions found in England. This focus on coppice has led to the following misunderstandings about hazel:

- ⇒ Hazel is an understory shrub
- ⇒ Multi-stemmed Hazel is all Hazel coppice
- ⇒ Hazel will die out if it is not regularly coppiced

AHAG is working to counter these misconceptions, which are not very accurate, and which can be particularly misleading when applied to Atlantic Hazelwoods. Instead Hazel should be regarded as a light demanding pioneering species, which will form self-perpetuating pure stands.

Conservation grazing regimes are normally the best way of managing Atlantic Hazelwoods, with a grazing level which aims to allow the hazel to regenerate, while preventing bramble and other growth from overwhelming the bryophytes and mosses that are such a special feature of these woods.

## Gordon Gray Stephens

For more information about the Atlantic Hazel Action Group and its work, or to buy a copy of "*Atlantic Hazel*" for £9.50 please contact Gordon Gray Stephens ([Gordon@nativewoods.co.uk](mailto:Gordon@nativewoods.co.uk) or phone 01852 500530).

## Web based information

<http://www.snh.gov.uk/about-scotlands-nature/habitats-and-ecosystems/woodland/>

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# Recent sightings

February—April 2015



Whimbrel, Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, 29 April ©Eddie Maguire

Presented here are a wide range of records of rare and unusual species as well as counts and movements of more common species seen in Argyll during this period. Many thanks to everyone who sent in records and apologies for any errors or omissions. Ideally records should be submitted using the Argyll Bird Recording System (email: [abcrecorder@outlook.com](mailto:abcrecorder@outlook.com) for details) or the BTO's BirdTrack system. The 'recent reports' section on the club's website is updated almost daily and interesting reports for that should be e-mailed to Jim Dickson ([meg@jdickson5.plus.com](mailto:meg@jdickson5.plus.com)). Also to be found on the website is a comprehensive 'spring migrants' table compiled by Paul Daw. Observers' names are given in brackets for 'rare bird description species'.

(MSBO = Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, Kintyre. ABRC = Argyll Bird Records Committee, BBRC = British Birds Rarities Committee, SBRC = Scottish Bird Records Committee and WeBS = Wetland Bird Survey.)

## Swans, ducks, geese & gamebirds

**GREYLAG GOOSE.** A pair at Loch Leathan, Mid-Argyll on 11 Apr were the first John Halliday had

seen on the loch in 25 years!

**PINK-FOOTED GOOSE.** Thirty were grounded at Inveraray, Mid-Argyll on 12 Mar. In NW Mull, 75-100 were heading N on 18 Apr. Smaller numbers were noted elsewhere.

**GREENLAND WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE.** High counts on Tiree of 660 birds on 16-17 Feb and 748 on 16-17 Mar. On Islay an island count produced 3,995 birds on 16-17 Mar.

**SNOW GOOSE.** Up to eight pairs nesting on Soa off Port-na-Luing, Coll on 23-24 Apr.

Pink-footed Goose, Barloisnoch, Mid Argyll, 15 March  
©Jim Dickson



**LESSER CANADA GOOSE.** At least one bird remained in the Loch Gruinart area, Islay until 13 Mar.

**BARNACLE GOOSE.** On Tiree, the total counted on 18-19 Feb was 4,291 birds and 4,693 on 16-17 Mar. An Islay island count totalled 36,982 birds on 16-17 Mar.

**BRENT GOOSE.** Highest counts: Forty-two at Uiskentuie, Islay on 9 Feb and 52 at Eilean Glas, Jura (from the ferry) on 3 April. A Dark-bellied bird turned up at Loch Gilp along with a Pale-bellied bird on 21 April. There has been only eight Argyll records of the former race in the last 20 years.

**MANDARIN.** The highest count was of six at the Ford Lochs, Mid-Argyll on 20 Apr.

**GREEN-WINGED TEAL.** A drake was seen at Gruinart RSPB Reserve, Islay on 26 Mar (Ron McNab *et al.*) and was still there on 1 April (James How). This or possibly a different drake was seen on the distillery pond at Port Charlotte, Islay on 28 Mar (David Clugston). A drake with broad flank stripes was at Loch an Eilein, Tiree on 13-14 Apr (John Bowler).

**TEAL.** Highest count: 465 at Gruinart RSPB Reserve, Islay on 11 Feb.

**PINTAIL.** A pair were on Oronsay, Colonsay on 27 Mar. This was an unusual record for Colonsay with only one other record since 1999. Highest count: 20 at Gruinart RSPB Reserve, Islay on 2 Mar.

**SHOVELER.** There were counts on Tiree of 15 birds at Loch Riaghain on 9 Feb and 14 at Loch a' Phuill on 16-17 Mar. There was a mainland record of a pair at Westport Marsh, Kintyre on 14 Apr.

**GARGANEY.** A pair were at Balinoe, Tiree on 17 Apr (John Bowler), a pair were at Gruinart RSPB Reserve, Islay on 27 Apr (Don Smith *et al.*) and a pair were on Oronsay, Colonsay on 29 Apr (Morgan Vaughan).

**RING-NECKED DUCK.** A first-winter male (arrived Nov 2014) was at Loch an Eilein, Tiree on 7 Feb (John Bowler).

**GREATER SCAUP.** Highest count was of 77 at Loch Indaal, Islay on 10 Feb.

**POCHARD.** One was at Ardhavie Loch, Islay on 16 Feb.

**LONG-TAILED DUCK.** Highest count was of 25 in the Sound of Gigha, Kintyre on 2 Apr.

**VELVET SCOTER.** Five were at the Sound of Gigha, Kintyre on 2 Apr and one was at Loch na

Keal, Mull on 2 and 26 Apr.

## Seabirds (divers, grebes, shearwaters, petrels also egrets & herons)

**GREAT NORTHERN DIVER.** Highest counts: on 2 Apr, 175 were counted at the Sound of Gigha, Kintyre and 53 were at Loch Indaal, Islay on 19 Apr.

**BLACK-THROATED DIVER.** Highest counts: On 13 Mar, 50 were between Kennacraig and Gigha, Kintyre (from the ferry) and 43 were counted in the Sound of Gigha, Kintyre on 2 Apr.

**MANX SHEARWATER.** First report: Thirty-six heading W off Aird, Tiree on 26 Mar.

**GREAT WHITE EGRET.** One was seen at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve, Islay on 17 April (James How *et al.*).

**SLAVONIAN GREBE.** Highest counts: Twenty-one were at Loch na Keal, Mull on 2 Apr and 23 at the Sound of Gigha, Kintyre on 2 Apr.

## Raptors to rails

**RED KITE.** One drifted SW from Cornaigmore over Heylipol and Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 6 Apr (John Bowler).

**OSPREY.** First report: One at West Loch Tarbert, Kintyre on 2 Apr.

**MARSH HARRIER.** A female was photographed hunting at Loch Garadh nan Capull, Tiree on 19 Apr (John Bowler).

**HOBBY.** One was at Gobagrennan (nr. Campbeltown), Kintyre on 11 Apr (Neil Brown).

**CORNCRAKE.** First report: One was at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve, Islay on 17 Apr.

## Waders

**DOTTEREL.** One was on Oronsay, Colonsay on 29 Apr (Morgan Vaughan).

**GOLDEN PLOVER.** High counts: On Tiree, island totals of 3,780 on 16 Feb and 2,750 on 16 Mar, also a count of 4,750 at The Reef on 9 Apr. On Islay, a count of 1,520 at Loch Gruinart on 25 Feb.

**RUFF.** A male on Oronsay, Colonsay on 27 Apr was coming into breeding plumage.

**JACK SNIFE.** On Tiree, one was at Milton on 9 Feb and one at The Reef on 2 Apr. One was at Benderloch, North Argyll on 8 Mar and one at



Left photo: Adult Bonaparte's Gull, Loch Coalisport, 27 March ©Jim Dickson

Right photo: First-winter Mediterranean Gull, Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, 1 April ©Eddie Maguire

Carradale, Kintyre on 18 Mar.

**BLACK-TAILED GODWIT.** Highest counts: On 21 April, 153 at Loch Gilp, Mid-Argyll and a max. of 425 around west Tiree on 28 Apr. Eight colour-ringed birds were noted and included three from Iceland, two from France, one from Portugal and two from The Wash, one of which was at least 22 years old.

**WHIMBREL.** First reports: One was at Machrihanish SBO, Kintyre on 19 Mar and a max. count there of 40 on 25 Apr. Fifteen were at Black-rocks, Islay on 26 Apr.

**COMMON SANDPIPER.** First report: One was at Loch na Keal, Mull on 7 Apr.

**GREENSHANK:** Highest counts: Five were at Loch Scridain, Mull on 9 Apr and six at Loch Tulla, North Argyll on 29 Apr.

## Skuas, gulls, terns & auks

**ARCTIC SKUA.** First report: One at Gunna Sound, Tiree on 24 Apr.

**GREAT SKUA.** First report: One at Ceann a' Mhara, Tiree on 5 Apr. A high count of six off Staffa, Mull on 24 Apr.

**KITTIWAKE.** At Machrihanish SBO, Kintyre on 31 Mar a total of 440 flew past during a W gale. All were aged and revealing that 280/440 (64%) were first-winter birds (Eddie Maguire).

**BONAPARTE'S GULL.** A first-winter bird was photographed at Sorobaidh Bay, Tiree on 24 Mar

(John Bowler). An adult at Loch Gilp on 4 Feb was presumably the same bird there at end of Dec 2014. This or a new adult bird was at Ormsary, Mid-Argyll on 26 Mar and 6 Apr (John Nadin, Mark Wood) and nearby at the head of Loch Caolisport on 27 Mar (Jim Dickson).

**LITTLE GULL.** A good run of records from Loch Gilp, Mid-Argyll with at least one adult and two first-winter birds there in Feb, two adults and a first-winter in Mar and a first-winter and second-summer bird in Apr. At least five birds involved.

**RING-BILLED GULL.** A first-winter bird was at Glen More, Mull on 2 Mar and then at Loch Beg to 21 Mar (Bryan Rains).

**MEDITERRANEAN GULL.** Following on from up to ten different birds at Loch Gilp, Mid-Argyll during mid-winter, there remained an adult, a first-winter and a second-winter in Feb, a first-winter in Mar and presumably the same bird last seen there on 15 Apr. So, at least three birds in this period. A first-winter bird was at Machrihanish SBO, Kintyre on 1 Apr.

**GLAUCOUS GULL.** Following a good influx of birds in mid-winter there were widespread reports of mainly singles from the islands and west mainland coasts. Highest numbers were on Tiree and well into double figures in Feb and at least five on the island into Mar.

**ICELAND GULL.** Widespread reports from the islands and the west coast mainland of mainly singles. However, up to five birds were at Ormsary, Mid-Argyll, remaining into Mar and up to three at Campbeltown, Kintyre in Feb, and up to three in

Oban, Mid-Argyll during Feb-Mar.

**KUMLIEN'S (ICELAND) GULL.** The juvenile from Dec 2014 was still present at Ormsary, Mid-Argyll until at least 6 Apr.

**LITTLE TERN.** First report: Two were at Traigh Bhagh, Tiree on 16 Apr.

**SANDWICH TERN.** First reports: Two were at Machrihanish SBO, Kintyre on 9 Apr, one was seen off Port Charlotte, Islay on 9 Apr and two or more off Tayinloan, Kintyre, also on 9 Apr.

**COMMON TERN.** First report: One was at Sorobaidh Bay, Tiree on 28 Apr.

**ARCTIC TERN.** First report: One was at Gunna Sound, Tiree on 23 Apr.

**LITTLE AUK.** One bird narrowly escaped being run over by the Tiree Ferry off Duart Castle, Mull on 13 Mar and six passed W off Aird, Tiree in 1hr on 26 Mar (John Bowler).

**PUFFIN.** On Tiree, dead birds noted on the 'Beached Bird Survey' at Traigh nan Gilean on 14 Feb and Traigh Bhagh on 16 Feb. At Machrihanish SBO one came ashore on 15 Apr and was returned to the sea. It was found again next day on the shore, but unfortunately it was dead.

## Doves, cuckoos, owls, swifts, kingfishers & woodpeckers

**STOCK DOVE.** One was near East Lodge (Moine Mhor), Mid-Argyll on 17 Mar and one was seen briefly at Balephuill, Tiree on 28 Apr. The latter was John Bowler's first on the island in 14 years!

**CUCKOO.** First report: One calling at Glen Fyne, Mid-Argyll on 11 Apr, and probably the first Scottish report this year (Lucy Sumsion).

**SHORT-EARED OWL.** One was near Loch an Eilein, Tiree on 3 Feb and presumably the same as a recently dead bird with a broken wing near Loch an Eilein on 6 Feb. Two birds, each seen at Loch Frisa, Aros Mains and Grasspoint Mull during Apr and one was near Port Charlotte, Islay on 10 Apr.

**KINGFISHER.** One was near Dunfuinary, Connel on 6 Feb, one was at Inveraray, Mid-Argyll on 7 Mar, one was at the River Massan at the top of the Holy Loch, Cowal on 22 Mar and one was at the mouth of Saddell Water, Kintyre on 27 Mar.

**HOOPOE.** One was found in Oban, Mid-Argyll on 11 Apr (Sandra Elliot per Janet Hunter). One was at Lochgair, Mid-Argyll on 14 Apr (Davie Rutherford). One was seen at Ardchattan Priory Gardens, North Argyll on 21 April and was probably



Hoopoe, Oban, 12 April © Sandra Elliot

present a few days earlier (Sarah Anderson/Christopher Lavis-Jones). Three spring records are unusual and reflect the record numbers in the southern British Isles this year.

## Passerines (larks to buntings)

**JAY.** Two were at Bunlarie, near Saddell, Kintyre on 2 Apr (Davie Robertson). Forty years ago this species was rare in Kintyre but has extended its range considerably over the last 10-15 years (per Eddie Maguire).

**MAGPIE.** Outwith the usual Argyll strongholds for this species in Cowal two long staying singles were present in Carradale, Kintyre and Tobermory, Mull. As often happens in early spring a few new birds wander into other parts of Argyll, with one at Butterbridge, Cowal on 20 Feb, and reports of singles at Kilmichael, Lochgilphead and Cairnbaan, Mid-Argyll from 21 Feb.

**SAND MARTIN.** First report: Two were at Loch Leathan (nr. Lochgilphead), Mid-Argyll on 22 Mar.

**HOUSE MARTIN.** First report: One was at Scarinish, Tiree on 7 Apr.

**SWALLOW.** First report: One was seen at The Oa Reserve, Islay on 17 Mar.

**WOOD WARBLER.** First report: One was singing at Aros Park, Mull on 18 Apr.

**CHIFFCHAFF.** First report: One was singing at Dunoon, Cowal on 17 Mar.

**WILLOW WARBLER.** First report: One was singing at Gobagrennan (near Campbeltown), Kintyre on 8 Apr.

**BLACKCAP.** First report: One was at Balephuill,

Tiree on 9 Apr.

**GARDEN WARBLER.** First report: One was at Kilmartin, Mid-Argyll on 21 Apr.

**COMMON WHITETHROAT.** First report: Two were at Tobermory, Mull on 23 Apr.

**GRASSHOPPER WARBLER.** First report: One was heard at Portnahaven, Islay on 16 Apr.

**SEDGE WARBLER.** First report: One was at Belanoch, Mid-Argyll on 22 Apr.

**WAXWING.** One was found freshly dead in Bowmore, Islay on 22 Mar.

**NUTHATCH.** One was seen at Glencruitten, Oban, Mid-Argyll on 1 and 6 Feb (Kyle Dods). One was present at Pennygowan, Mull on 19 Apr (Pete Dyson). One was seen briefly in a garden at Maltlands, Inveraray, Mid-Argyll on 28 Apr (Glyn Toplis).

**RING OUZEL.** A male was seen at Gobagrennan (nr Campbeltown), Kintyre on 13 Apr (Andy Mckee).

**SPOTTED FLYCATCHER.** First report: One was present near Port Ellen, Islay on 22 Apr. This was the earliest ever Argyll record.

**COMMON REDSTART.** First report: One was seen at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve, Islay on 17 Apr.

**WHINCHAT.** First reports: Single males were seen at Dalvore (Moine Mhor), Mid-Argyll and at Kilmichael Glen, Mid-Argyll on 18 Apr.

**WHEATEAR.** First report. Two were present at Claddach, Islay on 15 Mar.

**TREE SPARROW.** Two were seen at The Oa RSPB Reserve, Islay on 16 Apr.

**WHITE WAGTAIL.** First report: Two were seen at Machrihanish SBO, Kintyre on 2 Apr and a high count of 59 noted at Tayinloan, Kintyre on 28 Apr.

**'SCANDINAVIAN' ROCK PIPIT.** A summer-plumaged bird was at the Add Estuary, Mid-Argyll on 1 Apr (Jim Dickson).

**TREE PIPIT.** First report: One was at Ormsary, Mid-Argyll on 8 Apr.

**COMMON REDPOLL.** Three were seen at Balephuil, Tiree on 17-20 Apr.

**BULLFINCH.** High count: Twelve were seen at Bridgend Woods, Islay on 14 Feb.

**YELLOWHAMMER.** High count: Twenty were pre-



Upper photo: Lesser Repoll, Machrihanish SBO, 4 April ©Eddie Maguire

Lower photo: 'Scandinavian' Rock Pipit, Add Estuary, 1 April ©Jim Dickson



sent at Scarrabus, Islay on 4 Apr.

**REED BUNTING.** High count: Fifty were counted at Gruinart RSPB Reserve, Islay on 17 Feb.

**SNOW BUNTING.** Highest counts: Four were seen on Oronsay, Colonsay on 12 Feb and five were at the Big Strand, Islay on 28 Feb.

## Jim Dickson

Argyll Bird Recorder (contact details on back page)

### STOP PRESS (Up to 13/5/15)

**LITTLE EGRET.** One at Balvicar, Seil, Mid-Argyll on 4-5 May.

**DOTTEREL.** Four on Oronsay, Colonsay, four on Tiree and one at The Oa, Islay in early May.

**HAWFINCH.** One reported from Strachur, Cowal on 1 May.

**GREEN SANDPIPER.** One on Tiree on 3 May.

**LONG-TAILED SKUA.** Four passed Keillmore, Mid-Argyll on 12 May.

**SURF SCOTER.** A drake reported from Loch na Keal, Mull on 13 May.

Articles for the September issue of the *Eider* should with the editor before the 24th August 2015

### Officials and Committee of the Argyll Bird Club (2014/2015)

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**Vice Chairman:** Nigel Scriven, 14 Taylor Avenue, Kilbarchan, Johnstone PA10 2LS (phone 01505 706652)

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**Treasurer:** Bob Furness, The Cnoc, Tarbet, Arrochar, Dunbartonshire G83 7DG (phone 01301 702603)

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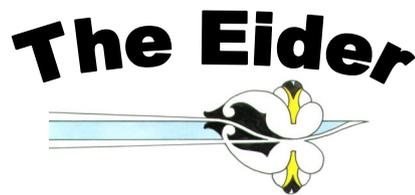
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**T**he *Eider* is the quarterly newsletter of the **Argyll Bird Club**. The editor welcomes articles about birds, wildlife conservation and ecology in Argyll, including articles of a wider natural history interest, notices of forthcoming events, book reviews, press releases and letters. Whenever possible, contributions should be submitted to the editor as e-mail attachments in Microsoft Word or rtf format. But, this should not deter potential contributors, as hand-written scripts are also acceptable. If in doubt about whether an article is suitable, please contact the editor for advice.

Suitable illustrations greatly enhance the attractiveness of the *Eider*, and artists and photographers are encouraged to submit artwork and unedited digital photographs (jpeg files preferred) of birds and their habitats to the editor. Please do not embed digital images in word files. Digital photographs of Schedule 1 species taken at or near the nest will not be accepted for publication unless the photographer was covered by an appropriate SNH licence.

The *Eider* is published during the first week of March, June, September and December. Articles for each issue must be with the editor **before** the 24th day of the month prior to publication. However, it greatly helps if material can be submitted well before these deadline dates. Contributions are accepted in the order they are received, which may result in some late submissions being held over until the next issue.

Opinions expressed in articles are those of the author/s and not necessarily those of the **Argyll Bird Club**.

**Advertising rates:** £80 for a full page, £20 for a quarter page, 7p per word for smaller adverts. Payment must accompany adverts, with cheques made payable to the **Argyll Bird Club**. Contact the Editor for further information.

### More about the Argyll Bird Club

The club was established in 1985 and has around 400 members. Its main role is to encourage an interest in wild birds and their habitats in Argyll; an area of outstanding natural beauty and biological diversity.

The club endeavours to provide a friendly and sociable forum for members of all ages, to meet and enjoy their common interest. This in itself provides a challenge as the human population of Argyll is relatively small and widely dispersed. The club hosts two one-day meetings each year, in spring and autumn. The venue of the spring meeting is rotated between different towns, including Dunoon, Oban and Lochgilphead. The autumn meeting/AGM is held in a convenient central location, usually near Lochgilphead. The club organises field trips for members. It publishes the *Argyll Bird Report*. Additional or past copies can be purchased from the Treasurer. Your annual subscription entitles you to one copy of the *Argyll Bird Report*, four issues of the *Eider* and free admission to the two indoor meetings. New members are always welcome, whether you live in Argyll or not. Membership categories and rates are:

Ordinary	£10
Junior (under 17)	£3
Family	£15
Corporate	£25

Subscriptions are due on 1st January and can be paid by cheque or standing order. New members joining after 1st October are covered until the end of the following year. Further information can be obtained from the Membership Secretary (see the box opposite).

## ABC's 30th Anniversary Dinner Cairnbaan Hotel, Saturday 14 November 2015

The cost of the dinner will be £25.50 per person (menu in box opposite). If you wish to attend the dinner please complete the form below and return it with £25.50 per person (cheques made payable to Argyll Bird Club) to Mike Harrison, 8 Ferryfield Drive, Connel, Oban PA37 1SP.

For those who wish to stay at the hotel after the dinner, rooms are still available (at the time of writing). The price for bed and breakfast is £85 single or £115 double. Please contact the hotel directly for accommodation (Tel: 01546 603668. Web: <http://www.cairnbaan.com/>)

Alternative accommodation within six miles of the Cairnbaan Hotel are given below.

### Menu

Three courses with the following choices

#### Starter

Prawn Marie Rose in a basket of crisp lettuce

or

Hot smoked salmon on a bed of mixed leaves with sour cream

#### Main Course

Roast Scottish sirloin of beef chasseur

or

Baked fillet of chicken stuffed with haggis with a whisky and thyme sauce

(a vegetarian option will also be available)

#### Sweet

Profiteroles with chocolate sauce

or

Raspberry Cranachan with hazelnut shortbread

#### Coffee and Petit Fours

Name & address	Tel	Web address	Double B&B from (in £)	Miles to Cairnbaan
Horeshoe Inn, Bridgend, Lochgilphead	01546 602305	<a href="http://www.horseshoeinn.biz">www.horseshoeinn.biz</a>	66	2.0
Empire Travel Lodge, Union Street, Lochgilphead	01546 602381	<a href="http://www.empirelodge.co.uk">www.empirelodge.co.uk</a>	70	2.5
Stag Hotel, Lochgilphead	01546 602496	<a href="http://www.staghotel.com/">http://www.staghotel.com/</a>	65	2.5
The Corran, Poltalloch St, Lochgilphead	01546 603866	<a href="http://myweb.tiscali.co.uk/lamonthoy/bed.htm">http://myweb.tiscali.co.uk/lamonthoy/bed.htm</a>	75	2.5
Grey Gull Hotel, Ardrishaig	01546 606017	<a href="http://www.thegreygull.co.uk/index.htm">http://www.thegreygull.co.uk/index.htm</a>	75	3.5
Dunchraigaig House, Kilmartin	01546 605300	<a href="http://www.dunchraigaig.co.uk">www.dunchraigaig.co.uk</a>	75	4.0
Kirnan House, Kilmichael Glen	01546 602320	<a href="http://www.kirnancottages.com/bed-and-breakfast/">http://www.kirnancottages.com/bed-and-breakfast/</a>	80	4.0
Ardifuir, Duntrune Castle, Kilmartin	01546 510271	<a href="http://www.ardifuir.co.uk/?page_id=2">http://www.ardifuir.co.uk/?page_id=2</a>	90	6.0
Kilmartin Hotel, Kilmartin	01546 510250	<a href="http://www.kilmartin-hotel.com/">http://www.kilmartin-hotel.com/</a>	70	6.0
Old Manse, Kilmartin	01546 510202	<a href="http://www.oldmansekilmartin.co.uk/">http://www.oldmansekilmartin.co.uk/</a>	75	6.0
Rosebank Guest House, Kilmartin	01546 510370	<a href="http://www.rosebankargyll.co.uk/index.html">http://www.rosebankargyll.co.uk/index.html</a>	60	6.0

Booking Form: Argyll Bird Club 30th Anniversary Dinner, Cairnbaan Hotel, 14 November 2015

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Names of people attending: \_\_\_\_\_

Payment enclosed\*: \_\_\_\_\_

\*£25.50 per person. Cheques made payable to the *Argyll Bird Club*

Please send your completed form to: Mike Harrison, 8 Ferryfield Drive, Connel, Oban PA37 1SP