

Birds of Conservation Concern: The Red List in Argyll 2010

On a global scale the species threatened with extinction have been “red listed” by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as those most likely to become extinct. Although preventing extinction is a high priority, the loss of biodiversity is also an important consideration. In the UK and Europe there are relatively few bird species seriously at risk of extinction. The two globally threatened species out of 246 regularly occurring species in the UK are Balearic Shearwater, and Aquatic Warbler, and they make up less than 1% of the British red list.

In addition, it is important to identify those species that are under threat, and which species we have a responsibility to conserve as part of contributing to the global battle. Also, in determining priorities for conservation action, it is necessary to consider a range of parameters. Major declines in population may not lead to a threat of extinction yet, but still represents a drop in biodiversity. This may be both recent and historic, and can lead to small and isolated populations which become and remain vulnerable.

In 1990 the “Red Data Birds in Britain” Batten *et al* listed 117 species “demanding care and attention in Britain. In 1996 this was followed by “Bird Species of Conservation Concern” by Gibbons *et al*. BoCC1, as it is now known, developed the approach further to give Red and Amber Lists according to a range of status criteria. It gave red listing to 36 species and amber to another 110. In doing so, it recognised that some common and widespread species were worthy of conservation priority following population declines related to agricultural changes e.g. Skylark, Linnet and Corn Bunting. It was realised that regular review was essential and in 2002 Gregory *et al* published BOCC2. In this the Red List grew to 40, with 9 new declining species, and with 5 recovering species moving from red to amber. Thus the amber list crept up to 121.

In 2005 the priority list of birds in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan was reviewed. An innovation in this review was that it looked at a race (sub-species) level. This would facilitate more targeted conservation action and promote genetic and ecological diversity within species.

BOCC3 (Eaton *et al*, 2009) accommodates changes in the status of UK birds and refinements in the criteria for selection, including assessment at the race level. BOCC3 uses a simple approach where species or races are measured against a series of quantitative criteria. These criteria include aspects of population status in the UK, Europe and globally. Satisfying one or more of these criteria will qualify a species for the red or amber list. Species meeting none of the criteria are placed on the green list.

The Importance of the Red List in Argyll

One of the motives in collating this table is to draw attention to the value of records of these species. It is well recognised that the ability to monitor the distribution and abundance of species is a vital conservation tool. The threats to birds are wide, varied, and not diminishing. The Argyll Bird Record Database is increasingly useful for researchers in evaluating the potential impact on birds of both development and conservation projects. In order to make the data more comprehensive, it is important that records of these species don’t have substantial gaps, and are up to date. While all records are welcomed, some records are more valuable than others, and few more than those on the red list.

It should be emphasized that the Red List is a countrywide UK context. The fact that Herring Gull is on the list might seem surprising to many residents of Argyll. However national data indicate breeding and wintering population declines. That might not seem apparent in Argyll, but how would we know for certain. Those who monitor seabird colonies regularly have noticed falls in productivity, which in long lived birds take time to translate to a drop in population. Unless there is monitoring, population changes can go unnoticed until they become serious.

Red List Criteria

IUCN Red List: globally threatened (critically endangered, endangered or vulnerable).

HD: Historical decline in breeding population (judged to have declined severely between 1800 & 1995 and not recovered since)

BDp: Breeding declining population (>50% over 25 years [BDp¹] or entire period since first BOCC review starting in 1969 [BDp²])

WDP: Non-breeding population (winter) decline (>50% over 25 years [WDP¹] or entire period since first BOCC review starting in 1969 [WDP²])

BDR: Breeding range decline (>50% of 10-km squares occupied by breeding birds [BDR¹] or the longer term period [BDR²])

The BOCC3 Red List

UK Red List 52 Species	Status in Argyll**	Previous Listing (BoCC2)	Red-list Criteria	Legal Protection & National BAPS
Greater Scaup	Winters regularly. LBAP (AB)	A	Winter population decline ²	S1, UK, Sc
Common Scoter	Former tiny breeding population in 2 localities (Islay and mainland). No breeding records since 2003. LBAP (AB)	R	Breeding population decline ¹⁺²	S1, UK, Sc

Black Grouse	Scarce breeding resident, in sharp decline , 200 lekking males. LBAP (AB & NP)	R	Historical decline, Breeding population decline ¹	T, UK, Sc
Capercaillie	Very rare, probably extinct in Argyll. No records since 1998. LBAP (NP)	R	Breeding Range decline ²	A1, S1, T, UK, Sc
Grey Partridge	Formerly widespread, now localised & recent releases for shooting. LBAP (NP)	R	Breeding population decline ¹⁺²	UK, Sc
Balearic Shearwater	Scarce autumn migrant	NA	IUCN Globally threatened	
Eurasian Bittern	Rare visitor, mostly in winter	R	Historical decline	S1, Sc
White-tailed Eagle	Rare breeding resident derived from introduction. LBAP (AB)	R	Historical decline	A1, S1, Sc, T
Hen Harrier	Sparce but widespread breeder, passage and winter migrant. LBAP (AB)	R	Historical decline	A1, S1, Sc, T
Corncrake	Summer breeder, with a recovering population. LBAP (AB)	R	Historical decline, Breeding population decline ² , Breeding Range decline ²	A1, M, S1, Sc, T
Northern Lapwing	Widespread but localised in winter. LBAP (AB & NP)	A	Breeding population decline ¹	UK, Sc
Temminck's Stint	Vagrant	A	Breeding population decline ¹⁺²	
Dunlin	Declining breeder, widespread on passage and in winter. LBAP (AB)	A	Winter population decline ²	A1, M, T
Ruff	Uncommon migrant and occasional lecking birds in spring.	A	Breeding population decline ¹⁺²	S1, Sc
Black-tailed Godwit	Regular migrant and scarce in winter. LBAP (AB)	R	Historical decline	S1, UK, Sc,
Whimbrel	Regular migrant in varying numbers.	A	Breeding population decline ¹	M, S1, T
Red-necked Phalarope	Formerly a rare breeder, now rare passage migrant	R	Historical decline	S1, UK, S1
Arctic Skua	Brink of Extinction. 3 territories Jura & 1 Coll Widespread on coastal passage. LBAP (AB)	G	Breeding population decline ¹	M, T, UK, Sc
Herring Gull	Most abundant gull, but decreasing. LBAP (AB)	A	Breeding population decline ² , WDP1	UK, Sc
Roseate Tern	Rare migrant. Last bred over 50 years ago..	R	Breeding population decline ¹⁺² , Breeding range decline ²	S1, UK, Sc
Turtle Dove	Scarce passage migrant	R	Breeding population decline ¹⁺²	UK, Sc
Common Cuckoo	Frequent and	A	Breeding population	UK

	widespread breeder. LBAP (AB)		decline ¹⁺²	
European Nightjar	Once widespread. Possibly extinct. Occasional churring birds in spring.. LBAP (NP)	R	Breeding Range decline ²	UK, Sc
Wryneck	Rare spring and autumn migrant.	R	Historical decline, Breeding population decline ¹⁺²	S1, UK, Sc
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	Not recorded	R	Breeding population decline ¹⁺²	UK
Sky Lark	Common & widespread breeder, coastal & lowlands in winter. LBAP (NP)	R	Breeding population decline ²	UK, Sc
Tree Pipit	Summer visitor, common on mainland.	A	Breeding population decline ¹⁺²	UK
Yellow Wagtail	Regular scarce passage migrant.	A	Breeding population decline ¹⁺²	UK, Sc
Ring Ouzel	Local declining upland breeder, scarce passage migrant. LBAP (AB)	R	Breeding population decline ¹	UK, Sc
Fieldfare	Abundant passage migrant. Less numerous in winter.	A	Breeding population decline ²	S1
Song Thrush	Widespread & common resident With some autumn passage & winter visitors. LBAP (AB & NP)	R	Breeding population decline ²	UK, Sc
Redwing	Abundant passage migrant. Less numerous in winter.	A	Breeding population decline ²	S1, Sc
Grasshopper Warbler	Widespread but local breeder. LBAP (AB)	R	Breeding population decline ¹⁺²	UK
Savi's Warbler	Not recorded	R	Breeding population decline ¹⁺²	UK
Aquatic Warbler	Not recorded	R	IUCN Globally threatened, Winter population decline ¹	UK
Marsh Warbler	Vagrant	R	Breeding population decline ¹⁺²	S1, UK
Wood Warbler	Widespread but scarce breeder. LBAP (AB)	A	Breeding population decline ¹	UK
Spotted Flycatcher	Widespread but local breeder. LBAP (AB)	R	Breeding population decline ¹⁺²	Sc
Willow Tit	Vagrant	R	Breeding population decline ¹⁺²	UK, Sc
Marsh Tit	Not recorded	R	Breeding population decline ²	UK
Golden Oriole	Rare migrant	A	Breeding population decline ¹	S1
Red-backed Shrike	Rare passage migrant	R	Historical decline, Breeding population decline ¹⁺²	S1, Sc
Common Starling	Locally common resident on islands, less so on mainland. Winter visitor.	R	Breeding population decline ¹⁺²	UK
House Sparrow	Common resident near habitation	R	Breeding population decline ¹⁺²	UK
Tree Sparrow	Recently re-established	R	Breeding population	UK, Sc

	breeder on Islay. LBAP (AB & NP)		decline ¹⁺²	
Linnet	Resident breeder & partial migrant	R	Breeding population decline ²	UK, Sc
Twite	Local resident & winter migrant. LBAP (AB)	R	Historical decline, Breeding population decline ¹	UK
Lesser Redpoll	Widespread but local breeder and migrant	A	Breeding population decline ¹⁺²	UK
Hawfinch	Vagrant	A	Breeding population decline ¹	UK
Yellowhammer	Local resident in decline. LBAP (NP)	R	Breeding population decline ¹⁺²	UK
Cirl Bunting	Vagrant	R	Breeding range decline ²	UK
Corn Bunting	Recently extinct breeder, occasional vagrant	R	Historical decline, Breeding population decline ¹⁺²	UK, Sc

#Taken from *The Birds of Argyll* with revisions from the Argyll Bird Record Database.

*LBAP = Local Biodiversity Action Plan

AB= Argyll & Bute

NP= Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park

R = Red list

A = Amber list

G = Green list

S1=Schedule WCA

A1= European Birds Directive, Annex 1.

M= European Birds Directive Migratory

T= Target species for wind turbine risk (SNH Guidance 2006)

UK = UK BAP species 2007

Sc = Scottish BAP species

References

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