

**September 2010**  
**Number 94**

# The Eider



**Photographic Competition Update**

**Accounts and AGM Minutes 2009**

**Autumn Indoor Meeting**

**Field Trip Reports**

**Ortolan Bunting on Mull**

**Recent Sightings**

**Short-Eared Owl©Jimmy MacDonald**

To receive the electronic version of *The Eider* in colour, ABC members should send their e-mail address to the Editor.  
Past issues (since June 2002) can be downloaded from the club's website.

## Editor

Mark Williamson: Port Ban, Kilberry,  
Argyll PA29 6YD

Phone: 01880 770 162

E-mail: [me41.williamson@btinternet.com](mailto:me41.williamson@btinternet.com)



**What is this bird? See back page for the answer**

## Inside this issue

Photographic Competition	2
Butterfly Recording	2
Autumn Meeting	3- 5
Snippets	5
Field Trip Reports	6-8
Extremadura trip report	8-10
Unusual Species Accounts	10-11
Recent Reports	12-17
Argyll Bird Club Business	17-21
Membership	17
Accounts	18
AGM minutes 2009	19-21

## Acknowledgements

Judy Arter, Tom and Shirley Callan, Danielle Clark, Paul Daw, Jim Dickson, Bob and Sue Furness, David Jardine, Jimmy MacDonald, Ian McGhie, Eddie Maguire, Katie Pendreigh, Karl Pipes, Tom Prescott, Nigel Scriven, Debbie Thorne.

## Editorial

Welcome to the autumn edition of the Eider. Firstly, I hope you have had a good summer— on the birding front, summer seemed to take a while to get going but once birds arrived and settled down to breeding, most species seemed to do very well ( I noted good numbers of Wrens, Stonechats, juvenile warblers, Black-birds and Song Thrushes, Gold and Greenfinches ). On the downside, the usual mass gathering of seabirds did not materialise in July. This usually takes place when the sandeels and sprats arrive, followed by shoals of mackerel. All of these seem to have been fewer in number this summer— is there something wrong in our seas? Has anyone else noticed a difference this summer?

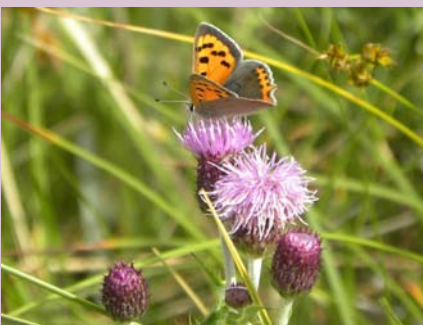
On a slightly more humorous note, I heard that BMW were not allowed to advertise their electric car as 100% carbon free because it plugs into the National Grid!

## Photographic Competition

The closing date for entries to the competition has now passed, but you can still contribute to the competition by voting on line for the photograph you like the most. The closing date for voting is 10th October. So, if you would like to view the photographs and vote then visit the ABC website at <http://argyllbirdclub.org/photocomp/photocomp.asp> . You can only bring out your vote once. However, in that voting section, you can vote for as many pictures as you want. For each picture you vote for, you can leave a comment. Please do not forget the button “**Submit votes**” at the bottom of the page or else your votes will not be submitted. Once they are submitted you get a confirmation screen that your votes have been entered.

## Requests for Butterfly Records

**If you have any photographs of butterflies or moths then you can send them to:**  
[tomprescott@btconnect.com](mailto:tomprescott@btconnect.com)



Small Copper©Mark Williamson

**Butterfly Conservation Society.**  
Balallan House, Allan Park, Stirling,  
FK8 2QG  
Tel: 01786 447753



Marsh Fritillary©Mark Williamson

Common Blue©Mark Williamson



## Field Trips

**September:** 25th. Trip to **Machrihanish Seabird Observatory** including a demonstration of bird ringing– Twite. The observatory has fresh water, kettle and microwave otherwise, the nearest eating places will be Machrihanish and Campeltown.

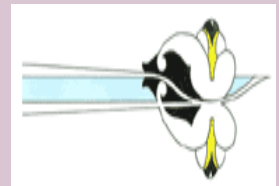
## ABC indoor meetings 2010



### ARGYLL BIRD CLUB

**Saturday 6th November 2010**

### AUTUMN MEETING PROGRAMME



0930	Doors open and coffee/tea
0950 - 1000	<b>Welcome &amp; introduction</b> <i>Nigel Scriven, Chairman of the Argyll Bird Club</i>
1000 - 1015	<b>Recent birds sightings</b> <i>Paul Daw, Argyll Bird Recorder</i>
1015 – 1045	<b>Biodiversity in Argyll: Past, Present and Future - Marina Curran-Colthart</b>
1045 – 1100	<b>Argyll Bird Club's Contribution to Argyll's BAP – Nigel Scriven</b>
1100 - 1120	Coffee/tea
1120 – 1150	Threats to Biodiversity 1: Mink
1150 – 1220	Threats to Biodiversity 1: Wind farms
1220 - 1340	Lunch (available in the hotel)
1340 - 1420	<b>Annual General Meeting</b>
1420 – 1450	Monitoring Bird Biodiversity 1:
1450 – 1450	<b>Monitoring Bird Biodiversity 2: Black Grouse in Argyll - Alison Philip</b>
1515 - 1540	Tea/coffee
1540 - 1600	<b>Practical Backyard Biodiversity: Gardening for birds– Mark Williamson</b>
1600 - 1615	Raffle and end of meeting

## Silver Jubilee Dinner Cairnbaan Hotel

A Silver Jubilee celebration dinner at Cairnbaan Hotel has been organised to follow after our meeting on 6th November, 2010 at a cost of £25 per person. The menu will comprise 3 courses with choices as follows -

### ***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***

Barbreck Gigot of lamb enriched with garlic and fresh rosemary glaze

**or**

Baked fillet of Chicken stuffed with Haggis with a whisky and Thyme sauce.

### ***Sweets***

Profiteroles with chocolate sauce

**or**

Raspberry Cranachan with hazelnut shortbread

### ***Coffee and Petit Fours***

( Soup will be available as an alternative starter, and there will be a vegetarian option for the main dish )

**To assist with catering please complete the form below and return it with £25 per person** (cheque made payable to Argyll Bird Club) to Katie Pendreigh, The Whins, Ferry Road, Tayinloan, Argyll PA29 6XQ

Name.....

Address.....

.....

.....

Number of people attending.....

Payment enclosed.....

### Accommodation within 5 miles of Cairnbaan Hotel

Name & address	Tel	Web Address	Ensuite	Double B&B	Miles ex Cairnbaan
Bellanoch House, Bellanoch, Lochgilphead PA31 8SN	01546 830149	<a href="http://www.bellanochhouse.co.uk/home.php">www.bellanochhouse.co.uk/home.php</a>	All rooms	£90	3
The Corran, Poltalloch St Lochgilphead PA31 8LR	01546 603866	<a href="http://myweb.tiscali.co.uk/lamonthoy/index.htm">myweb.tiscali.co.uk/lamonthoy/index.htm</a>	All rooms	£65	2.5
Dunchraigaig House, Kilmartin, Lochgilphead PA31 8RG	01546 605300	<a href="http://www.dunchraigaig.co.uk/43.html">www.dunchraigaig.co.uk/43.html</a>	All rooms	£70	4
Somerled, Bridgend, Lochgilphead PA31 8QA	01546 605226		All rooms	£70	2
Horseshoe Inn, Bridgend, Lochgilphead, PA31 8QA	01546 602305	<a href="http://www.horseshoeinn.biz/index.htm">www.horseshoeinn.biz/index.htm</a>	All rooms	£65	2
Royal Hotel, Ardrishaig, Lochgilphead PA30 8EU	01546 606017	<a href="http://www.royalhotelargyll.com/index.htm">www.royalhotelargyll.com/index.htm</a>	All rooms	£75	3.5
Empire Travel Lodge, Union Street, Lochgilphead PA31 8JS	01546 602381	<a href="http://www.empirelodge.co.uk/index.htm">www.empirelodge.co.uk/index.htm</a>	All rooms	£60	2.5
White Rock, Tayvallich, Lochgilphead PA31 8PF	01546 870310	<a href="http://www.whiterock-argyll.co.uk/">www.whiterock-argyll.co.uk/</a>	One	£58	5

The above list is not an exhaustive list of accommodation in the Cairnbaan area, neither does the list represent any form of recommendation for the accommodation shown.

**Cairnbaan Hotel** is offering Bed and Breakfast rates @ £70 for a double room and £50 for a single room. Please contact Mr Dobson, the manager on [info@cairnbaan.com](mailto:info@cairnbaan.com) . Telephone 01546 603 668

### Snippets

On the 2nd of May this year I picked up the dead, bedraggled body of a Siskin which lay on the ground under one of the peanut feeders. It was a male with a ring on its leg. Ring number X055306 was duly notified to the BTO. I wondered who it was that had been ringing locally as, after that dreadful nationwide freeze it surely must be recent.

Well, on June 25th I received the answer. The bird was ringed on 19th February 2008 at Stover Country Park, nr Newton Abbott, Devon. The 'Ringing details' state Age: 2nd year (5) I'm not sure if that means its age when the ring was affixed or when I found it? I assume it means that it was in its fifth year, ringed in its second? If it had lived for five years and survived through last Winter I find that remarkable! Distance covered 641km.

**Karl Pipes**

#### Birds of Lismore - a request.

During the last year I have made a number of excursions to Lismore to carry out the timed tetrad visits for the Atlas. This has led to some interesting sightings including Water Rail and Long-eared Owls. A species list for this relatively under-watched, yet quite large, island does not appear to have been published so I have started to pull one together. There are some interesting historic records including Glossy Ibis and several of Leach's Petrel. I would be interested to hear from anybody who has made visits to Lismore to hear what they have found, in particular any records of Black-throated Diver, Fulmar, Storm Petrel, Merlin, Pheasant, or Swift would be most welcome (or any other interesting species).

**David Jardine** ([dcjardine@btinternet.com](mailto:dcjardine@btinternet.com))



## Field Trip Reports



### Skipness Field Trip 26 Jun 2010

Arran from Skipness ©M Williamson

On a rather dull and breezy morning twelve club members gathered at the Castle car- park at Skipness. Unfortunately, Libby had to inform us that Katie Pendreigh, our erstwhile leader, had been taken ill and would be unable to lead us. Confusion then reigned for a short while before, with a deal of local knowledge, we decided to have a look in the wood at the back of the car-park.

This very quickly proved to be a good decision as, by staying very quiet and remaining still at intervals along the way, we soon picked up a family of juv. Spotted Flycatchers being fed by the adults. Not easy to pick out- but I think we all managed eventually. We then either heard or saw a good number of other species which, from memory, included Treecreeper, Blackcap, Bullfinch, Willow Warbler, various Tits and a number of others: mostly either feeding or with dependant young. May I draw your attention to the Breeding Codes in the accompanying list of species observed? It is very important that the evidence of breeding is recorded when sending in records and makes these records much more valuable.

Species	B.Code	Species	B. Code
Common Peafowl Cat. E (rbbp)	S	Blackbird	FF
Northern Gannet		Oystercatcher	DD
Red-breasted Merganser		Song Thrush	S
Shag		Blackcap	FL
Great Cormorant		Common Whitethroat	S
Grey Heron	H	Common Chiffchaff	S
Common Buzzard	H	Spotted Flycatcher	FL
Oystercatcher	DD	Blue Tit	FL
Ringed Plover	H	Great Tit	FL
Common Sandpiper	DD	Coal Tit	H
Common Gull		Eurasian Treecreeper	FL
Great Black-backed Gull		Rook	H
'Comic' Tern		Hooded Crow	H
Black Guillemot	P	Carrion Crow	H
Wood Pigeon	P	Common Raven	FL
Collared Dove	P	Common Starling	FL
Tawny Owl	S	House Sparrow	FL
Great Spotted Woodpecker	S	Common Chaffinch	FL
Sky Lark	S	Greenfinch	FL
Sand Martin	H	Goldfinch	FF
Barn Swallow	ON	Siskin	H
House Martin	ON	Bullfinch	FL
Tree Pipit	S	Chimney Sweeper Moth	
Rock Pipit	FF	Small Heath	
Pied Wagtail	FL	Small Pearl bordered Fritillary	
Wren	FL	Grayling	
Dunnock	FL	Meadow Brown	
Robin	S	Common Blue	

#### Species observed during Skipness field trip

Following this woodland walk, we wandered on up the road before turning to the right to head towards the shore. Again from memory; we saw/heard Swallow, House Martin, Sand Martin, Tree Pipit, Crows, Raven, Siskin, Linnet, Chiffchaff and House Sparrow. By this time we were quite glad to settle down for lunch among the rocks on the shore. A few sea birds passed by but the highlight for many of us was a Grayling Butterfly which visited our picnic spot. I was aware but not familiar with this (not very common) species but was delighted to see a further two individuals which appeared to meet up further along the shore. This involved much displaying of the eyespot on the front under wing. Other Butterflies and Moths were also noted. Along the shore we were con-

tinually monitored by Common Sandpipers who were presumably attempting to lead us away from their Chicks. Also much in evidence were many Rock Pipits and a few other shore birds such as Pied Wagtail and Ringed Plover. A species we expected, but did not see, was Wheatear in spite of a family being seen by the shore on the previous day.

The only sadness on this trip, apart from the absence of Katie, was that the Seafood Cabin was closed (their mussels are superb). Arriving back at the castle during mid to late afternoon we departed for home- all agreeing that it was a good day out and looking forward to the next field trip.

The **Breeding Codes** appearing alongside the species list are: S - singing male, H -present in suitable breeding habitat, P - pair present in breeding season in suitable habitat, FF - carrying food or faecal sac, FL - recently fledged dependant young, and ON - occupied nest. For full list of codes check the BTO website: [www.bto.org](http://www.bto.org)

Any errors or omissions in the above are entirely my fault.

**Tom Callan.**



Photo © Shirley Callan

### Taynish National Nature Reserve Field Trip Saturday 29 May, 2010

As a 'summer migrant' from western Canada to Otter Ferry it was good to finally set out to join some fellow members on my first field trip with the Argyll Bird Club.

On the way to the ferry at Portavadie, and throughout the day, the lack of birds on wires and fences along the roads compared to previous years was very noticeable. Tarbert was packed with yachts and sailors for the Scottish Series of yacht races, but despite this, a pair of Mute Swans with a notably large brood of eight young cygnets was spotted at the far end of the harbour.

At Taynish we entered "one of Britain's largest remaining native oakwoods". The assembled group, led by Tom Callan, set off on a still, overcast morning with woodland on one side and bog on the other. As expected Willow Warblers, Blackcap, and Common Whitethroat were soon heard and seen with good views of a Sedge Warbler in full song. Deeper in the woods on a mossy branch a Song Thrush was seen feeding a fledgling.

Light rain started to fall as we made our way under the dripping trees but a Spotted Flycatcher out in the open on a bare tree-top branch was seen well by everyone through the telescopes.

On reaching the shore of Linne Mhuirich a familiar sight came into view: two pairs of Greater Canada Geese with goslings. After a brief lunchbreak two members of the party tucked sprigs of bog myrtle behind their ears to ward off the midges as we set off on the path past the Mill ruins. When we reached the shores of Loch Sween we spotted Redshank, Common Sandpiper and a Gannet.

In the early afternoon eight of the group continued on to the open spaces of the Islandadd Bridge, Moine Mhor and the Crinan Ferry.

Highlights of the afternoon included: a male Hen Harrier aggressively flying to and fro possibly defending territory/nest/chicks; three Cuckoos vigorously interacting in some low trees; and two Short-eared Owls quartering the open ground, one carrying food.

As we scanned on either side of the road ahead we looked up to find one of the owls had come up behind us and it flew low over our heads, before turning to one side, giving us a tremendous close-up view.

On the return journey, we were in the last car passing the fields close to Crinan Ferry and were the only ones to see the single Stonechat of the day, carrying a Fritillary butterfly. So few Stonechats have been seen this year in Argyll it made for a very satisfying end to a most enjoyable day, especially with the implication of breeding activity.

**Judy Arter**



## ABC Field Trip – Circular route from Clachan Village Hall Car Park

**On 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2010** – Having briefly debated the good sense of setting out in such heavy rain, four brave souls wrapped up in waterproof gear, set off from the Village Hall Car Park, at Clachan. We squelched our way alongside the tree lined Clachan Burn passing at least 2 small colonies of Sand Martins, and as the rain abated somewhat, were rewarded with excellent sightings of three separate families of Spotted Flycatchers and large numbers of Swallows, House and Sand Martins all hawking low over the fields, before we reached the river estuary. Apart from Sandwich Terns and gulls (Common, Herring and 1 Greater Black- Backed) the ubiquitous Oystercatchers and a Curlew there were no, hoped for, divers or sea ducks to be seen. Taking the track running parallel to the coast we were treated to views of two Peregrine Falcons as well as Common Buzzards over Dun Skeig. Redpoll, another family of Spotted Flycatchers and many Willow Warblers were seen before we stopped and enjoyed our lunch in the sunshine while sitting on a low wall overlooking the sea. Looking out to sea we watched Eider, Red-breasted Mergansers, Heron, Shag, Cormorant, Arctic Terns, two divers species flying in the distance, Gannets fishing and Curlews and Oystercatchers on the shore beside us. Having passed the jetty at Portachoillan we proceeded on past Loup House where a fifth family of Spotted Flycatchers were observed. At the quarry about 70 Sand Martins nests holes were counted (many with birds looking out, others busily darting in and out). We proceeded onwards and joined the road leading back past Quinhill where three Kestrels were making the most of another dry patch of weather. We then returned to our cars. Thoughts of a cup of tea at Tarbert- to round off a very enjoyable trip- were soon abandoned owing to the sighting of Ospreys (2 adults and 2 juvs.) en route home.



**Birds seen** – Gannet, Cormorant, Shag, Heron, Shelduck, Mallard, Eider, Red-breasted Merganser, Osprey, Common Buzzard, Kestrel, Peregrine, Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover, Curlew, Black- headed Gull, Common Gull, Herring Gull, Greater black-backed Gull, Sandwich Tern, Arctic Tern, Wood Pigeon, Collared Dove, Swallow, House Martin, Sand Martin, Skylark, Meadow Pipit, Rock Pipit, Pied Wagtail, Wren, Robin, Wheatear, Song Thrush, Black Bird, Willow Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Spotted Flycatcher, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Rook, Hooded Crow/ Carrion Crow, Raven, Starling, House Sparrow, Chaffinch, Linnet, Twite, Greenfinch, Redpoll, Siskin, Reed Bunting

Katie Pendreigh

## Trip to Extremadura 21<sup>st</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> March 2010



Azure winged magpies©Jim Dickson

In past editions of the Eider Steve Petty has written about his travels to various regions in Spain which have inspired me to head back there for a trip and explore the central plains area of Extremadura. The draw of seeing a large number and good variety of raptors coupled with the chance of flocking bustards and sandgrouse was very appealing in an area of sparse human population, un-spoilt savannah-like grasslands and rolling countryside with extensive oak groves.

With my wife Fiona we had the chance to visit this region at the end of March. I was however mindful of the fact that this was rather late for wintering species-like the large numbers of Common Crane that come here- and perhaps too early for a lot of the summer





Great Bustards ©Jim Dickson

visitors. Target species of Great and Little Bustard, Black-bellied and Pin-tailed Sandgrouse and several raptor species, particularly vultures should however still be present.

Travelling from Scotland, the easiest route to this region was an Easyjet flight from Edinburgh to Madrid. There we picked up a pre-arranged hire car and drove to the Trujillo area of Extremadura just under four hours away on the recently improved motorway. A bit of caution is required when leaving the airport however to connect with the correct motorway as getting lost in central Madrid can be a bit of a nightmare! Some guide books recommend staying in more than one location to give this vast region ample coverage. However, after a bit of study it appeared that staying near Trujillo was reasonably central for exploring at least two areas of the plains and was within easy reach of the magnificent Monfrague National Park- an area with three species of vulture and lots more.

After a bit of internet searching we chose to base ourselves at the Hotel Rural Vinas las Torres ([www.vinaslastorres.com](http://www.vinaslastorres.com)) a beautiful old stately home in the middle of some lovely countryside which is well geared up for individuals and birdwatching groups.

Within a short walk from the hotel interesting species such as Azure-winged Magpie, Great Spotted Cuckoo,



Red Kite ©Jim Dickson

Iberian and Woodchat Shrikes, Woodlark, Hawfinch, Sardinian Warbler, White Stork, Red Kite could all be easily seen and Scops Owl was heard calling at night. The owners Juan and Belen Pedro both spoke good English and made our stay very comfortable and relaxed. Two other parties of birdwatchers were also staying at the hotel and it was good to compare sightings. Dinner was excellent Spanish home cooking and the wine was excellent. We made one evening trip into Trujillo for dinner- to the atmospheric old plaza mayor, a town where Lesser Kestrels are very numerous.

Each morning pre-breakfast trips were made to the nearby Belen plains and it was relatively easy to find small flocks of Great Bustard with displaying males, as well as some Little Bustard. The male Great Bustards were still together in their 'gentlemen's societies' and usually seen at a range down to 200 metres but occasionally the odd bird was seen flying overhead and the sheer size of them could then be appreciated. Black-bellied and Pin-tailed Sandgrouse, Stone Curlew and numerous Calandra Larks were the other gems of this habitat. Other areas of plains between Trujillo and Caceres about 40km further west held good numbers of Great Bustards with flocks of up to 80 birds seen along with the odd small group of Black-bellied Sandgrouse. Pin-tailed Sandgrouse proved very hard to find and it appeared that Little Bustards were no longer in the large flocks that can occur. In addition to the wonderful displaying Calandra Larks (like Skylarks on steroids), there were still a few large flocks of wintering birds- with several hundred birds seen in total. Not far from Trujillo, we were fortunate enough to see two Spanish Imperial Eagles on the ground together. Summer arrivals on the plains were rather scarce. However, a few newly- arrived Montagu's Harrier were seen and the odd Black-eared Wheatear.

Travelling up to Monfrague National Park- an area of low rocky hills surrounding the Tagus River- proved to be a very pleasant drive, with numerous raptor distractions on the way. This is probably the most fa-

mous area in Extremadura, if not Europe for breeding raptors and the inaccessibility of much of the terrain and extensive cover of Mediterranean evergreen forest has given rise to an incredible number of these birds of prey. On approaching the park Griffon Vultures appear to be the most numerous and can be seen at all times in the sky along with smaller numbers of Black and Egyptian Vulture, Black and Red Kites, Short-toed, Booted, and Bone Ili's Eagles. Getting very close to watch Griffon Vultures at their nest appears to be a major tourist attraction in this area. We were fortunate to have an Eagle Owl's nest pointed out to us on the far side of the Tagus River and were able to watch the adult get up every so often to readjust its position on the eggs. In turn, we were able to point out the nest to the next arrivals of birdwatchers!

Altogether a great place for a short or extended birdwatching trip where most of the main species are relatively easy to find and see.

Jim Dickson



## Unusual Species Accounts

### Ortolan (*Emberiza hortulana*) Mull 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> May 2009: A New Species for Argyll

On 9<sup>th</sup> May 2009 visitors to Mull, Sandra Price and Alison Ingle found a bird at Craignure campsite that was to frustrate the Argyll and Mull bird recorders for a further 10 months!

Sandra, a wildlife photographer, was visiting Mull to photograph Otters. While in their campervan Alison noticed a bunting near the van and realized it was something unusual. Fortunately they had a couple of field guides with them and came to the conclusion that the bird must be an Ortolan Bunting. Sandra then managed to take some super photographs as it fed on bare ground a few metres away.

It was seen again briefly the following morning and later that day Sandra and Alison happened to meet Dave Sexton at Loch Frisa, and later still, Alan Spellman, both of whom viewed the bird images of the camera's viewfinder and agreed with the tentative identification. Alan later contacted me with this news but I think he was surprised to learn just how rare this species is in the west of Scotland with no previous Mull or Argyll records and only a handful from St Kilda and the Western Isles.

Unfortunately this is where the trail went cold as Sandra and Alison then left the island without giving their contact details and Alan and Dave both assuming the finders would be back in touch! Almost a year passed and it was looking very likely that this potentially excellent record would never be submitted and reach the record books and would be lost altogether. Fortunately contact was made again,

with valid personal reasons given for the delay, and the eventual submitted description and photographs were accepted by the Scottish Bird Records Committee as the first Argyll record.



Photo© Sandra Price

Ortolans are like a slightly smaller and slimmer version of a Yellowhammer. They have a longish pink toned bill, noticeable pale eye ring, heavily dark streaked grey-brown mantle, orange-brown underparts with an olive head, yellow throat and grey breast band. Females have an overall duller plumage with some streaking on the head and fine dark spots on the breast. The photo of this bird shows fairly strong olive tones to the head and some yellow on the throat, ruling out a first winter plumaged bird but has some fine streaking to the head and breast and a washed out peachy colour to the underparts indicating that this bird was most likely a summer plumaged female.

Occurrences of Ortolans in Scotland peak in early May and mid-September with a handful of records each year mainly from the northern isles. It is thought that most spring sightings are of birds heading for Scandinavia where the population in Finland has been increasing recently in contrast to the rest of Europe where there have been steep declines.

This Mull record occurred at a time of prolonged easterly winds from the continent which later in May was probably also the factor in two Bluethroat records in Argyll.

**Jim Dickson**

The Eagle Hide at Loch Frisa on Mull will be staying open over the winter. Trips can be booked through the Tourist Office at Craignure on 01680 812556. Further details can be found at <http://www.rspb.org.uk/datewithnature/sites/mull/index.asp> ( The website says opening times are April to September but in fact we are open right through autumn and winter).

Debby Thorne  
RSPB White Tailed Eagle Information Officer  
Isle of Mull





## Recent Reports

May to July  
2010

Paul Daw

(Tel. 01546 886260)

e-mail:

[monedula@globalnet.co.uk](mailto:monedula@globalnet.co.uk)

The latest news on bird sightings in Argyll is available on the Argyll Bird Club website at [www.argyllbirdclub.org](http://www.argyllbirdclub.org) See 'Click here for latest bird reports' on the home page.

### STOP PRESS.

An amazing influx of **Lapland Buntings** has been reported in the past week or so (i.e. from the beginning of September). For example a flock of 150-200 on was found on North Uist on Thursday 2 Sep. On 5 September a check of the Hough Bay to Rubha Chraiginis area by John Bowler produced some **48 Lapland Buntings** in confiding groups of up to 12 along the strandline - easily the highest count to date of this species on Tiree. In Argyll, the islands or the west coast of the mainland (e.g. Tayinloan, Machrihanish etc.) would be an ideal place to find them. Personally I've never seen one but apparently they are fairly easy to distinguish from **Reed Bunting** being larger, bulkier and much longer winged – quite lark like in fact. I look forward to your records...

### A first for Scotland.

Two races of **Black-tailed Godwit** occur in Britain. The nominate race *Limosa limosa limosa* breeds in small numbers in England (and possibly Dumfries and Galloway) and occurs as a migrant. The race normally seen in Scotland and which breeds in very small numbers in Northern Scotland, Orkney and Shetland as well as in Iceland and Norway is *Limosa limosa islandica*. A detailed description by John Bowler of a bird seen on Tiree that matched the description of *Limosa limosa limosa* was recently accepted by SBRC (with the help of info. supplied by Dutch birders) and becomes, perhaps rather surprisingly, the first accepted record of this race in Scotland.

### Variations in Chaffinch plumage.

Out of the blue I had a phone call recently from Nigel Hudson (BBRC) regarding some 'blue' Chaffinch photos that George Newall took in Dunoon ages ago. He was catching up on stuff left behind by the previous BBRC Secretary apparently. We had quite a long chat about strange Chaffinch colour morphs (I also mentioned the 'pink' Chaffinches photographed near Otter Ferry some time ago). It seems to be a Scottish phenomenon – he says e.g. all the Chaffinches in the Scilly Isles are perfectly standard plumage. Perhaps its just that there aren't so many of them so that variations are less likely to occur? He later sent me photos of a Chaffinch taken in Speyside recently which looks very like the bird photographed in Dunoon. He seemed to think *British Birds* would be interested in a short paper or 'note' on the subject. A good proportion of the Chaffinches in my garden have partially white tails – either white outer tail feathers or in some cases the entire terminal half of the tail is white. Does anyone else have unusual Chaffinches – I'd be interested to see any photos you may have taken.

**Wildfowl (and Gamebirds):** A pair of **Whooper Swans** were seen on a small loch in Ederline Forest, Mid-Argyll on 17 June but there was no sign of them breeding (John Taylor). A colour-ringed radio-tagged **Pale-bellied Brent Goose** was at Caolas, Tiree on 27 May (John Bowler).

A total of 550 **Greylag Geese** at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 29 July included fledglings and fledged broods of **Pintails**, **Shovelers** and **Tufted Ducks**. (John Bowler).

An adult drake **Blue-winged Teal** was seen and photographed by a visitor

to the island at Loch na Keal, Mull on 2 May (per Alan Spellman). What was presumably the same bird was reported on Gigha the following day (per Jim Dickson).

**Common Shelducks** appear to have had an excellent breeding season at Machrihanish - 167 ducklings had been recorded in the area by the end of June, **Common Eiders** also did well with 92 recorded in the same period (Eddie Maguire).

A male **Pintail** at Connel with Mallards on 22 and 23 May (Bob Grove) may well be the same bird that has also been reported around Oban and Dunstaffnage.

Four adult **Common Eiders** with 11  $\frac{3}{4}$  grown young at Otter Ferry on 2 July were an indication of an unusually successful breeding season in the area (see earlier comments from Machrihanish). A single female **Red-breasted Merganser** was with a crèche of 14 very small and small young at Otter Ferry on 6 July (Tom Callan). A pair of **Goosanders** with 5 ducklings were seen on the River Ruel near Clachan, Cowal on 17 June (Tom Callan).

A pair of **Ptarmigan** with 5 young were seen at Beinn Lurachan, North Argyll on 5 June (Colin McFarlane). There was great excitement when two quail were photographed at Kenovay, Tiree on 6 June – sadly they turned out to be escaped **Japanese Quail**! A 'genuine' **Common Quail** was calling at Totronald, Coll on 16 June (Ben Jones).

#### Seabirds – divers, grebes, shearwaters, herons etc (and other seawatch species):

Two **Red-throated Divers** were in Calgary Bay, Mull on 30 June (Anand Prasad). An outstanding count of 65 **Great Northern Divers** at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 9 May included a pack of 53 together – mostly in breeding plumage and was followed, on 23 May by an even larger group of 82 (again mostly in full breeding plumage) many of which were giving their eerie calls (Eddie Maguire).

A **Little Grebe** with a brood of 4 young were on the Powder Dam loch, Cowal on 12 June (Tom Callan).

A total of 80 **Manx Shearwaters** flying S past Machrihanish Seabird Observatory in 3 hours on 27 May was the highest count of the month (Eddie Maguire).

A **Cory's Shearwater** was reported from Lunga, Treshnish Isles on 2 July by a member of the Treshnish Isles Auk Ringing Group (Tim Dixon).

Rafts of **Manx Shearwaters** totalling more than 700 birds (including one raft of 250+) were off-shore at Dunollie, Oban on 18 July and at least 200 were still there on 23 July. There must have been some food source here since about 200 Guillemot/Razorbills,

100 **Arctic Terns**, 10 **Northern Gannets**, a handful of **Kittiwakes** and about 150 mixed gulls were also present (Bill Allan). The 600 **Manx Shearwaters** feeding in a dense concentration with terns just off the southern tip of Lismore seen by John Bowler on 26 July were presumably part of the same phenomenon.

At Machrihanish Seabird Observatory a conservative estimate of 5,000 **Manx Shearwaters** were rafting/foraging inshore on 28 July and all eventually flew S (Eddie Maguire). Approx. 200 **Manx Shearwaters** were at the mouth of Loch Gilp, Mid-Argyll on 29 July (Andrew Stephenson).

A single **Sooty Shearwater** flew S at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 17 July and a total of 12 were seen there on 26 July (Eddie Maguire).

A total of 14 **Storm Petrels** flew S at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory in 5 hours on 4 July (Eddie Maguire), and 2 **Storm Petrel** were in Gunna Sound, Coll on 26 July (John Bowler).

An adult **Little Egret** was photographed at 'Stinky Hole' Campbeltown Loch on 22 May (Mavis Gulliver per Eddie Maguire).

Two **Spoonbills** were seen at Loch Don, Mull on 24 June. In view of the colony that has bred in East Anglia this summer we may, hopefully, receive more records of this exotic bird in future (Stephen Smith per Allan Spellman). There were later reports of a single **Spoonbill** on Seil Island (per Richard Wesley).

Raptors, rails etc.: An **Osprey** was fishing regularly at the head of Loch Feochan (nr Oban) during the week from 11 July and at least one juv. was on the nest at West Loch Tarbert on 11 July (Bill Allan). Two juveniles were reported at the West Loch Tarbert nest on 11 July and were still present, and well grown, on 31 July (Tom Callan). An **Osprey** was seen at Rhugarbh Croft, Appin on 22 July (Mary Gregory).

An immature **White-tailed Eagle** was seen at Loch Bhasapol, Tiree on 17 July and a juvenile **Marsh Harrier** was near Loch a' Phuill from 27 – 31 July (John Bowler).

A **White-tailed Eagle** was seen between Keills and Carsaig, Mid-Argyll on 30 July and on the previous day (29 July) an **Osprey** was hunting over Loch na Cille and a **Hen Harrier** was seen flying over the sea (about  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile out) from Keills Point towards Jura (John Aitchison).

An adult **White-tailed Eagle** has been seen on several occasions during May/June in the vicinity of Loch na Cille (Loch Sween) (John Aitchison et al). Three lucky visitors to Argyll (Andy Booth, Mark Killeen and Nigel Stewart) saw and photographed a **Black Kite** flying over the A85 E of Dalmally, Mid-Argyll on 31 May. Only



**Osprey and White tailed Eagle photographed by Jim Dickson at the Add estuary**

the second record for Argyll if confirmed. A **Red Kite** seen in flight near West Loch Tarbert on 30 May appeared to be carrying nesting material but sadly there were no further reports from this area (Clive Craik).

What was very probably a **Honey-buzzard** was seen NW of Loch Crinan on 5 June by Fiona Dickson (per Jim Dickson). It had a yellow wing tag and David Jardine confirms that a Scottish **Honey-buzzard** has been fitted with just such a tag. If confirmed this will be only the second record for Argyll. A female **Marsh Harrier** was watched hunting for 3 hours at Balephuil, Tiree on 22 May. It, or another adult female, was at Loch Bhasapol on 3 June (John Bowler). A **Marsh Harrier** was also reported at Coul, Islay on 4 May. An adult **Golden Eagle** was seen in north Cowal carrying a fox to feed its young on 5 June. So, sometimes at least, they can be the farmer's friend... (Paul Daw)

An **Osprey** was seen circling over Treshnish Point, Mull on 17 May (Anand Prasad).

A **Red-footed Falcon** was reported from near Port Charlotte, Islay on the evening of 2 May (Bob Davison per Ian Brooke).

Whilst on a dragonfly trip on 19 June, Dave Graham, Bryan Hickman and Calum Scott observed a **Hobby** catching dragonflies over the Black Lochs near Oban for at least half an hour. They also obtained some useful record photos of the bird, which confirmed its identity.

A **Common Crane** was seen at Coul Point, Islay on 4 May (per Ian Brooke). Possibly the same bird appeared at Ballachulish (Highland) on 12 June (John

Hobson).

Several people reported one or more **Corn Crakes** calling on Gigha during May (Valerie Wells et al). Calling **Corn Crakes** were also reported in May from Southend and Glenbarr, Kintyre and Connel and Easdale Island, Mid-Argyll- although some of these might have been passage migrants (Katie Pendreigh, Andy Robinson, Eddie Maguire *et al*). At least two **Corn Crakes** were heard regularly, and even seen on occasion, in the NW of Mull during May and June (Anand Prasad).

A pair of **Moorhens** have successfully bred on 'The Caspian' lake at Ardkinglas, Loch Fyne. At least two quite well developed youngsters were present on 7 July (Glyn Toplis).

A preliminary count of breeding **Corn Crakes** on Tiree in June found 383 calling males, very slightly down on 2009's final total of 389 (John Bowler).

**Waders:** An adult **Oystercatcher** digiscoped at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 10 May had been ringed at Penmon, Beaumaris, Anglesey on 26 October 2003 (Eddie Maguire). Three pairs of **Ringed Plovers** with at least 7 recently fledged young were along the Loch Fyne shore near Otter Ferry on 12 June. A first summer **Grey Plover** was at Fadamull, Tiree on 21 June, a Little Stint was at Loch a' Phuill on 4 June and an adult Pectoral Sandpiper was at The Reef on 10 Jun. Numbers of **Sanderlings** on Tiree peaked at 700 at Gott Bay on 21 May and five late **Purple Sandpipers** were at Hough Bay on 21 May. Two **Greenshanks** were on the spit at Otter Ferry on 30 June (Tom Callan). June 18 was an unusual date for five adult **Black-tailed Godwits** that appeared briefly at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory.

Approx. 20 **Sanderlings** were with a few **Dunlin** on the beach at Ardalanish, Mull on 14 July (George Newall). An early returning adult female **Ruff** was at Loch a'



**Red Knot at MSBO**



Phuill, Tiree on 7 July and 8 adult **Black-tailed Godwits** were at Loch a' Phuill on 30 July (John Bowler). Two **Greenshanks** appeared briefly at Otter Ferry on the evening of 3 July (Tom Callan) and two adult **Greenshanks** were on the Add Estuary early on the afternoon of 5 July (Jim Dickson). Two high-flying **Greenshanks** circled the point at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory (calling continuously) on 18 July before heading S: the first record this autumn (Eddie Maguire). Two **Greenshanks** and a minimum of 16 **Common Sandpipers** were in the Add Estuary, Mid-Argyll on 17 July (Bill Allan). A recently arrived flock of 22 **Common Redshanks** were at Otter Ferry on 21 July with 2 **Greenshanks**. A group of 18 **Turnstones** at Otter Ferry on 21 July were still in breeding plumage (Tom Callan).

Waders at the Add Estuary on 20 July included 8 **Dunlin**, 26 **Common Redshanks**, 2 **Greenshanks** and a **Whimbrel**. A single **Whimbrel** was also in Loch Gilp on 19 July, and, on 26 July, 15 **Dunlin**, 2 juv. **Sanderlings**, one **Red Knot** in breeding plumage, a **Bar-tailed Godwit**, 36 **Common Redshanks** and 3 juv. **Greenshanks** were found there (Jim Dickson). An adult **Black-tailed Godwit** was off-passage at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 12-15 July.

A **Black-tailed Godwit** was at the high tide roost at the Add Estuary on 25 July (Bill Allan). At least 30 **Common Sandpipers** were on the shore between Machrihanish Seabird Observatory and the village on 14 July (easterly near gale). (Eddie Maguire).

Two **Wood Sandpipers** were together on a pool at Kilmoluaig on 28 May and two splendid female **Red-necked Phalaropes** were feeding with **Sanderlings** at Gott Bay, Tiree on 20 May. Up to 4 **Red-necked Phalaropes** were at another site on Tiree during June giving rise to hopes of breeding there (John Bowler).

**Skuas, gulls, terns and auks (see also Seabirds above):** Two **Great Skuas** were on territory at a



Mediterranean Gull at Inverneill ©Jim Dickson



Little Terns at MSBO

site on Tiree throughout May and June. And a group of 6 **Great Skuas** were behaving territorially at a site on Coll on 5 June (Chris & Mandy Dee). An adult **Long-tailed Skua** was reported by a visitor (B. Dawson) at Sorobaidh Bay on 25 Jun (John Bowler). A dark morph **Arctic Skua** was seen at Calgary, Mull on 29 May (Andy & Helen Mortley per Anand Prasad). Three pale morph adult **Pomarine Skuas** flew N high over Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 20 May – an unusual spring record (Eddie Maguire). Also at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, a total of 62 **Arctic Terns** around the Big Scone colony on 25 May probably included some migrants, an adult **Roseate Tern** foraging off-shore on 22 May was a very unusual spring migrant and **Sandwich Tern** numbers peaked at 43. On 15 May a dark morph **Arctic Skua** was present daily from 15 – 18 June (Eddie Maguire). The Black harbour, Loch Fyne was an unusual location for an **Arctic Tern** on 3 June (Tom Callan).

A **Great Skua** was seen to drag a **Northern Gannet** onto the sea by the wing at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 1 July. What was presumably the same bird was present briefly on 2 July (Eddie Maguire). A **Great Skua** off Otter Ferry on the morning of 28 July was an unusual sighting for this location (Tom Callan). A dark morph adult **Arctic Skua** flew S at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 29 July (Eddie Maguire) and dark morph **Arctic Skuas** were off Hynish, Tiree on 16 July and Arinagour, Coll on 26 July (John Bowler).

A 2nd year **Mediterranean Gull** was seen at Ormsary fish farm on 15 May (Tom Callan).

A moulting 2nd summer **Mediterranean Gull** seen at Inverneill just south of Ardrishaig on 28 July (Jim Dickson/Bill Allan) was still there on the evening of 29 July (Andrew Stephenson).

At least 30 **Sandwich Terns** were present at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 11 July A very early pas-

sage of **Arctic Terns** was detected there on 4 July when 118 adults were logged flying S / 5hrs in a SW - W gale and a compact group of 18 **Little Terns** were seen there the same day (Eddie Maguire).

**Arctic Terns** on Tiree had a reasonable breeding year with dozens of birds fledging from colonies around the island from mid-July and **Little Terns** fledged at least 22 young (John Bowler).

An excellent series of photographs of the **Gull-billed Tern** seen in the Heylipol Church / Moss area of Tiree on 25 April have now been received (Ian Sims, Robin Ward).

**Doves, owls, woodpeckers etc.:** Two **Stock Doves** were seen at Knockdow, Cowal on 26 May



A stunning shot of a Short-eared Owl © Jim Dickson

(George Newall). A **Turtle Dove** was photographed on Colonsay on 26 May ( John Higgins). The only Turtle Dove I've heard of this year so far. A **Stock Dove** was seen again at Rhugarbh Croft, Appin on 9 July and rufous-phase juvenile **Common Cuckoo** was frequently present on the fence there, feasting on black caterpillars from 5 to 19 July (Mary Gregory). During survey work on moorland near Claonaig, Kintyre three adult **Common Cuckoos** were seen between 13 and 17 July (Paul Daw).

A single **Short-eared Owl** was perched on a fence post at Balinoe, Tiree on 1 June and up to 3 **Short-eared Owls** have been regularly reported at Moine Mhor during May/June (John Halliday, Jim Dickson, Dave & Rebecca Payne, Bill Allen et al). Two early **Common Swifts** were over Burnside square, Campbeltown on 3 May. The peak count over Campbeltown during June was a respectable 40+ on 29 June (D. Robertson per Eddie Maguire). Approx. 12 **Common Swifts** flew SW

over Haunn Cottages at Treshnish, Mull during July (Anand Prasad). A group of at least 7 **Common Swifts** were seen visiting a nest site under the guttering of 3 -storey block of stone flats overlooking Tesco's in Oban on 19 June (Bill Allan). A total of 14 **Common Swifts** were seen over Oban on 15 July; six **Common Swifts** were seen flying over Moine Mhor on 17 July (Bill Allan) and a maximum count of 33 **Common Swifts** were seen over Campbeltown on 14 July (per Eddie Maguire).

A **Hoopoe** was reported at Garmony, Mull on 13 May (Rod Taylor).

A **Common Kingfisher** was seen and photographed by visitors (Ryan Walsh & Vickie Lawton) at Killymore, Loch Scridain, Mull on 23 July (per Alan Spellman).

**Passerines:** After breeding recommenced in 2002 there were pairs of **Sand Martins** nesting at at least five sites on Tiree this year (John Bowler). On 20 June a colony of at least 70 nests of **Sand Martins** were still feeding young near Ascog Bay, Cowal (Tom Callan). The first **House Martin** nest at Treshnish, Mull was only just being completed on 15 June (Anand Prasad). At Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, an adult Goldfinch digiscoped on 9 May had been ringed at Creting St. Mary, Suffolk on 19 October 2009 as a 1st year (**NB** A Goldfinch found at MSBO on 14 April 2009 had also been ringed in Suffolk the previous autumn), a male **Yellow Wagtail** was seen on 21 May (Eddie Maguire). A very late **Redwing** was at Balephuil, Tiree on 30 May. A pair of **Chiffchaffs** were at Balephuil during June, with the male singing intermittently all month. This pair were feeding young in the nest by 27 Jun – the first known breeding attempt on Tiree (John Bowler). Another **Yellow Wagtail** was seen and photographed at Kintira, Mull on 3 May (Hilary Adams). A **Ring Ouzel**, judged to be a first-winter male, came in-off-the-sea at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 22 July and rested briefly on the point (Eddie Maguire).

At least 7 **Sedge Warblers** were singing in the Ballochroy/Ronachan area of Kintyre and 4 **Common Whitethroats** were singing near Ascog Bay, Cowal on 21 May. Three **Wood Warblers** were singing at Creag na Croiche (near Lephinmore), Cowal on 1 June and 3 **Spotted Flycatchers** were feeding young in a tetrad near Ascog Bay, Cowal on 18 June (Tom Callan/ Daphne Campbell). An elusive female **Pied Flycatcher** was at Carnan Mor, Tiree on 22 May (John Bowler). Easier to see were the pair of **Pied Flycatchers** nesting near a garden at St. Catherine's, Cowal in May/ June (Graham Thomas). An excellent find for a spe-

cies that is now very scarce as a breeding bird in Argyll.

A **Nuthatch** was seen on several dates in early May at a peanut feeder in a garden in Tighnabruaich (Michaela Hunter). Looks as though they might be extending their range in Argyll?

A **Magpie** was seen coming off the shore at Keil Point, Southend, Kintyre on 26 May (D. Robertson per Eddie Maguire). A visitor possibly from Northern Ireland?

A strange partially albino **House Sparrow** at Carradale on 1 June caused quite a puzzle for a while (Ian McGhie).

An adult **Rose-coloured Starling** was reported at Tortonald, Coll on 14 June (Ieuan Bryn).

A series of six **Twite** digiscoped at Machrihanish Sea-bird Observatory during this spring had all been ringed at Heysham Harbour, Lancashire or Askham in Furnace, Cumbria between 2007 and 2010, mostly in winter and early spring (Eddie Maguire). A colour ringed **Twite** found at Haunn, Mull in April had been ringed at Melrose, Borders in winter 2008/2009 and one found last spring had been ringed near Wick, Caithness in winter 2000/2001 (Anand Prasad). The **Twite** that appear in Argyll in spring seem to be well travelled birds!

A pair of **Common Redpolls** remained at Carnan Mor during June. They nested and were seen food gathering nearby at Balephuill on 27 June – first breeding record for Tiree. A second pair were there briefly on 5 June (John Bowler). Eight **Common Crossbills** flew E over the Scottish Owl Centre, Campbeltown on 4 May (Rod Angus per Eddie Maguire), a female **Common Crossbill** was feeding two young on insects at Otter Ferry on 22 May and a total of 27 **Common Crossbills** were found at Victoria bridge, Loch Tulla, North Argyll on 5 May (Roger Broad). A **Hawfinch** was reported in a garden at Blairmore, N of Dunoon on 11 May 2010 (Janice Hampson).

A male **Yellowhammer** was seen around the bird table at Treshnish House, Mull on 7 May having first appeared on 2 May. Normally a scarce species on

Mull (Anand Prasad).

A flock of 30 or more **Linnets** was at Loch na Cille, Loch Sween on 17 July (Bill Allan)

Scattered family groups of **Twite** were about on Tiree during July amalgamating to groups of 15-20 birds from mid- month – a good breeding season (John Bowler).

**Spotted Flycatchers** seem to have had a good breeding season in Argyll this year. In addition to earlier reports, a pair with recently fledged young were seen at Keills, Loch Sween on 21 July (John Aitchison).

A **Common Crossbill** was reported on Coll (BirdGuides) and a male **Common Crossbill** was at Barsloisnoch Farm, Moine Mhor, both on 25 July (Bill Allan). During survey work on moorland near Claonaig, Kintyre two family parties of **Common Stonechats** were located on 13 July (Paul Daw).

### Other sightings

Two **Otters** were fishing together at the shore-side near the rafts of seabirds off Dunollie, Oban on 18 July (Bill Allan).

Large numbers of **Basking Sharks** have been reported off Tiree this spring/summer including 38 east of Salum on 21 Jun (John Bowler) and a **Basking Shark** was seen in Machrihanish Bay, Kintyre on 26 July (Eddie Maguire).



Snipe photographed by Tom Callan

## Argyll Bird Club Business

### Membership Secretary's Report

Our number of paid up memberships is currently the highest on record. At the end of the financial year 2009-10 (April 2010) we had a total of 247 memberships, including a good number of family memberships. Only a few members have not yet responded to a request for subscription renewal, so some may lapse. Therefore, we have approximately 370 members in the club if we count individuals rather than memberships.

Sue Furness, 1 May 2010.



## 25<sup>th</sup> Year Accounts: 16 April 2009 – 15 April 2010

### Treasurer's Report for financial year 2009-2010

Our assets at the end of the year stood at £22,356.96. However, the income from the book has begun to diminish, and our stock of copies is also much reduced, so this source of income will be at a much lower level in future. Income from subscriptions was at the highest level on record. Income from bank interest fell dramatically with the reduction in interest rates to minimal levels. The new savings account we opened (a charities investment account) with Abbey, offered 30 times the interest rate given by the Bank of Scotland treasurer's account. Most of our savings were transferred to Abbey but the BoS account remained open to receive subscription income and for routine expenditures. However, the Abbey reduced their interest rate also to a negligible level so we closed the Abbey account and returned the money to the Bank of Scotland treasurer's account. Income labelled as "Field Trips" represents payments made by club members for meals at the spring 2009 meeting on Islay and the spring 2010 meeting at Seil.

Expenditure was deliberately increased this year to make best use of the income we obtained from the book, so our expenditure includes both normal activities plus extra ones. We published the 2006-07 Argyll Bird Report towards the end of this financial year. Newsletter photocopying costs cover issues from 2008 to 2010. Postage rates have increased, and we now routinely have issues of the Eider that have to be sent as large letters rather than the lowest postal category as our newsletters tend to contain more pages now than has been typical in previous years.

Public meeting costs look particularly high in 2009-10 but part of this is due to the fact that there were three meetings that fell into this financial year as the spring 2009 meeting on Islay was in April. In addition, extra meals costs were added to the budget because it was easier to pay centrally with a Bird Club cheque for the meeting dinner on Islay and the lunches at Seil. This is balanced by the income of £960 paid by members to the club for these meals. Insurance costs were increased to add insurance of the club's telescope and binoculars now available for monthly field trips. A donation of £500 was given towards the construction costs of the new hide at Sandbank. We bought presents to give to David Wood and Steve Petty when they retired from the Bird Club committee. Major extra costs included £1995 spent on nestboxes to be put up in Argyll's oak woods to encourage pied flycatchers, £2073.05 spent on purchase of a data projector for use at indoor meetings, and a new PC and printer for the Argyll Bird Recorder, and £846.67 spent on new software, and licences for the Argyll Bird Club website.

Nevertheless, our bank balance remains extremely healthy at £22,356.96. About £2000 of this has been earmarked for renovation costs for the tern nesting raft on Loch Etive, and £500 for mink eradication efforts on Seil. A further £10,000 is being set aside in case it can be used for land acquisition should an opportunity arise to develop a suitable site in Argyll for a habitat such as a wetland scrape.

**Bob Furness, 1 May 2010.**

<i><b>Income</b></i>	<b>2009/2010</b>	<b>2008/2009</b>
Subscription	2666.23	2394.23
Sales	2412.00	7489.50
Bank Interest	29.77	211.58
Other (raffles, donations, etc)	210.00	105.00
IR Tax refund	0.00	1326.02
Field Trips	960.00	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,278.00</b>	<b>11,526.33</b>
<i><b>Expenditure</b></i>		
Bird Report	2145.00	1986.00
Newsletter photocopying	871.20	0.00
Postage	879.67	818.43
Bird Recorder expenses	120.26	125.73
Public meetings	2028.50	829.90
Insurance	243.35	110.00
Sandbank hide	500.00	0.00
Gifts	94.26	0.00
Licences/web site	846.67	88.05
Nestboxes	1995.00	0.00
Equipment	2073.05	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,796.96</b>	<b>3,958.11</b>
Surplus/Deficit for year	-5518.96	7568.22
Brought forward	27,875.92	20,307.70
Assets at end of year	<b>22,356.96</b>	<b>27,875.92</b>

**Minutes of the 24<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Argyll Bird Club  
Held at the Cairnbaan Hotel on Saturday, 7<sup>th</sup> November, 2009**

**1. Apologies:** John Armitage, Malcolm and Sue Chattwood, Mike and Penny Gear, Alan Hawkins, David Jardine, Peter and Margaret Staley, Mike Thomas, David Warden, Mark Williamson.

**2. Minutes of the 2008 AGM:** Approved by John Anderson and seconded by Ian Hopkins

**3. Matters arising, not covered in the following items:** None

**4. Chairman's report:** I remarked in last year's report that the Club had passed a milestone with the publication of the "Birds of Argyll" book. The sales from this book have been good enough to give us an extremely healthy financial position, which is way beyond the vision we had when the Club was founded nearly 25 years ago. This gives a platform for new projects, which will mark a new phase in the activities of the Club. What these projects might be has been the subject of much recent discussion at committee meetings and by email. There is much more work to be done before these important decisions are made. One or more of these projects will be linked to celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> year of the Club, but with a view to a longer-term legacy. Ideas under consideration include a new nest- box scheme linked to priority species, bird hides, wader scrapes, bird reserves, an educational project with schools, and future publications. The Club has also recently contributed £500 to a £25,000 hide project, which is about to commence in Sandbank on the Holy Loch.

On the **Club's activities** over the past year, the autumn meeting heard talks on the new BTO Atlas, Buzzards on Colonsay, the RSPB in Argyll and North Ronaldsay. The spring meeting was held later than usual, and on Islay, with a slightly different format, with field trips and then the indoor session starting after lunch on the Saturday. The talks covered the subjects of Islay Wildlife, Geese, Choughs, and RSPB reserves. It was a well-attended and successful deviation from our habitual mainland venues. Thanks especially to Steve Petty for co-ordinating the weekend.

**Field trips** during the year included Bute, the Sound of Gigha; and with the trips to Skipness and the Kilbrannan Sound, and Tayinloan the programme is beginning to settle into a regular monthly pattern. Replacing Steve Petty as newsletter editor was never likely to be easy, as he had risen to a new standard. A big thank you to Steve for his work as editor, webmaster and committee member. We have been very fortunate that Mark Williamson was able to pick up the Eider reins so easily, and so the future looks good. Thanks also to all the contributors of articles and photographs, without which there would be nothing to read. Keep it up please.

Catching up with the **bird report** is a seemingly endless struggle. The next biennial report, for 2006 & 2007, is nearing completion, and should be out early in 2010, gaining more ground in the race to keep up. Thanks to Tom Callan, Paul Daw and the team of compilers. The increasing use of computers has aided this work, and the move towards an on-line reporting system is well underway. It is currently in the testing phase before being launched in the new year. Particular thanks to this goes to Danielle Clarke for her development work on this, working closely with Paul and Tom.

This leads me on to the **Club's website**, which Danielle has taken over from Steve Petty. Her web expertise has been a great asset in refining the site and adding new features. (If you haven't checked it recently, then please do, and join the forums at the same time).

I will conclude by thanking the **committee** for attending come rain or shine, and contributing their wise words, and enthusiasm. That we lost David Wood from the committee this year, with his move north, was to Shetland's gain, although he promises to stay in touch. Thanks to Bob and Sue Furness for managing our financial and membership business. Thanks to Ian Hopkins, standing down from the committee at this meeting. He regularly made the trek from Bute to attend meetings, requiring an overnight stay in Argyll. Lastly, special thanks to Katie Pendreigh, not only for her prompt production of minutes,

but also the numerous other things that make such a difference to the smooth running of the Club. I welcome the new faces to the team for what is likely to prove an exciting year ahead.

**Nigel Scriven.**

**5. Secretary's report: Apologies:** John Armitage, Malcolm and Sue Chattwood, Alan Hawkins, David Jardine, Patricia Russell, Mark Williamson.

Since the last A.G.M. committee meetings were held, in December, February, May, August and October at the Argyll Hotel, Inveraray where we were accommodated comfortably in the 'Stable'. The venue was booked from 07.00 p.m. and meetings began promptly at 07.30 as most of us have a fair distance to travel home afterwards. Regular items on the agenda this year, included discussion following trials of the proposed new on-line bird recording system devised by Danielle, who also revised the website and continues to manage it. This is expected to help with the immense task of handling bird records and the efforts to catch up in the compiling of the Argyll Bird Report.

Steve **had** said he would be unable to manage the website and edit the *Eider* after 1<sup>st</sup> September, 2008, but generously continued to produce the following December and March editions. However, as time for the publication of the June 2009 *Eider* loomed ever nearer, and with no one coming forward to help, panic and an increasing amount of meeting time was used to try and devise reasonable ways and means of publishing the magazine in **any** form, far less to a standard we had all come to expect. Just in the nick of time, however, a keen bird watcher who is conversant with desktop publishing was discovered lurking at Port Ban. Mark was quickly shown the ropes by Steve who kindly passed on existing files and information etc. to allow a seamless transition and the June magazine was delivered to all, in time!

In February, David Wood resigned from the committee, owing to his work base moving to Shetland. At committee meetings we regularly miss his contribution, and in preparation for club meetings we realise gaps in the carrying out of tasks previously undertaken by him and essential to ensure the smooth running of those meetings. David Warden was co-opted on to the now depleted committee in December and Mark Williamson and Mike Harrison in May allowing us a full compliment of members, their ideas and interest are already proving to be extremely helpful. Things are never static, however, and regretfully Ian Hopkins now finds it necessary to resign, although he maintains his interest in the club and will hopefully continue to attend our club meetings.

Richard Allan has continued to give us regular updates on the progress and organisation of the BTO atlas surveys. Results of the questionnaire seeking the opinions of members on various issues were collated and discussed. The Club's Public Liability Insurance policy was renewed for another year with Golden Valley Insurance Services and the accounts were accepted by the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator allowing us to maintain our charitable status for another year.

Volunteers from amongst the committee took their turn to arrange programmes for Club meetings and dates were set for future committee meetings.

While Paul Daw's ever-popular Sound of Gigha outing went ahead others had to be cancelled mostly owing to bad weather. However, we are now trying to organise an outing to take place on the last Saturday of every month and hope that more members will offer to take a group on a favourite walk, which would help us to explore different parts of Argyll – there is no need to be an expert ornithologist.

**6. Treasurer's report:** Members were referred to the Statement of Accounts for the year from 16<sup>th</sup> April, 2008 – 15<sup>th</sup> April, 2009 that, together with the Treasurer's report, had been distributed earlier. Bob highlighted the need for the club to spend some of its assets in the near future or risk losing its charitable status. He listed ideas that had been put forward following initial discussion last year and developed by the committee. **1.** Entering into a land management for birds partnership, e.g. forming a 'scrape'. **2.** Erecting bird hides, **3.** Investing in a sizeable number of nest boxes to be fitted in suitable



habitats throughout Argyll, **4.** Employing a part time education officer to visit primary schools in Argyll in order to promote an interest in birds amongst children.

During discussion it was suggested that the money could be used to lever in more money, by applying for grants and subsidies to enhance an initial scheme, such as the forming of a reserve, or erecting a bird hide possibly in partnership with e.g. SNH. Woodcrete nest boxes were promoted for their durability if option **3** were to be adopted and it was pointed out that the spread of benefit in Argyll would be wider with this scheme than if one or possibly two hides were constructed. The idea of linking the fitting, monitoring and management of some of the nest boxes with schools, for education purposes, was put forward as being practicable and, the provision of web cameras for use with some boxes was promoted. Also, it was thought that school children could be involved in the making of further nest boxes. The idea of re-instating Common Tern nest islands and divers rafts was a popular suggestion as was the contribution of some funding towards mink control which was reacted to with enthusiasm. The question was raised of depositing some money with the Co-operative bank, which had the highest rate of interest at present, but it was pointed out this would have to be for a one or two year fixed-term interest which would not suit the purposes of the club at this time.

Adoption of the accounts was proposed by John Anderson and seconded by Ian Hopkins.

**7. Membership Secretary's report:** At the end of financial year 2008-09 there being a total of 204 paid members shows there has been little change since last year. It was suspected that in the previous year many had joined the club in order to take advantage of obtaining the 'Birds of Argyll' book at the reduced price. The difficulties brought about when members changed their email address without notifying the membership secretary were highlighted and it was a possibility that some members may be lost through lack of contact and not receiving the *Eider*.

It was suggested that a new promotion leaflet should be designed and distributed to raise awareness of the club amongst the public as the last one had encouraged several new members to join the club.

**8. Future Field trips:** The committee hope that a bird watching outing held on the last Saturday in every month will become a regular feature of the club's activities and those who attended had enjoyed the outings to Skipness and Tayinloan in October and November. The outing to the Island of Gigha on Saturday, 28<sup>th</sup> November was promoted as an occasion to look forward to and arrangements were underway to visit Loch Caolisport and Ormsary on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2010 and to the River Add estuary and Moine Mhor on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2010. Members were again encouraged to volunteer to show others bird watching walks in their part of Argyll.

**9. Election of office bearers and committee members:** Chairman Nigel Scriven stood down from the chairmanship in order to allow proposals for the position of chairman for the coming year to be put forward and, having previously agreed to give his services for another year, was proposed by Ron Forrester and seconded by Paul Daw.

Other office bearers and committee members were elected as follows –

Treasurer: Bob Furness – proposed by Nigel Scriven, seconded by Helen Anderson

Secretary: Katie Pendreigh – proposed by Paul Daw, seconded by Tom Callan

Membership secretary – Sue Furness – proposed by Nigel Scriven, seconded by John Anderson

Committee members who were re-elected: Richard Allan (BTO representative) Tom Callan (editor of the Argyll Bird Report), Malcolm Chattwood, Danielle Clark (manager of the website), Paul Daw (Argyll Bird Recorder), Andy Robinson (RSPB representative), David Warden- proposed by Nigel Scriven, seconded by Roger Broad

New committee members: Mike Harrison – proposed by Paul Daw, seconded by Helen Anderson, Mark Williamson (editor of the *Eider*)– proposed by Paul Daw, seconded by Mike Wall

**Articles for the December issue of the  
*Eider* should be with the Editor before  
the 24th November 2010**

**Officials and Committee of the Argyll Bird Club  
(2009/2010)**

**Chairman:** Nigel Scriven, 2 Allt na Blathaich, Loch Eck, Dunoon, Argyll PA23 8SG (*phone* 01369 840606 & 01505 843679)

**Vice Chairman:** Position vacant

**Secretary:** Katie Pendreigh, The Whins, Ferry Road, Tayinloan, Argyll PA29 6XQ (*phone* 01583 441359)

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

**Membership Secretary:** Sue Furness, The Cnoc, Tarbet, Arrochar, Dumbartonshire. (*phone* 01301 702603)

**Committee:** Richard Allan (Oban), Tom Callan (Otter Ferry), Malcolm Chattwood (Lochgilphead), Danielle Clark-De Bisschop (Colintraive), Paul Daw (Minard), Mike Harrison (Connel), Andy Robinson (Partick), David War-den (Kilfinan) and Mark Williamson (Kilberry).

**Editor of the Argyll Bird Report:** Tom Callan, Corra, Otter Ferry, Tighnabruaich, Argyll PA21 2DH (*phone* 01700 821212)

**Editor of the *Eider*:** Mark Williamson, Port Ban, Kilberry, Argyll PA29 6YD (*phone* 01880 770 162 )

**ABC Website:** <http://www.argyllbirdclub.org>

**Webmaster:** Danielle Clark

*phone* 01700 841284

*e-mail* [dany@condorjourneys-adventures.com](mailto:dany@condorjourneys-adventures.com)

**Argyll Bird Recorder**

Paul Daw, Tigh-na-Tulloch, Tullochgorm, Minard, Argyll PA32 8YQ

*phone* 01546 886260

*e-mail* [monedula@globalnet.co.uk](mailto:monedula@globalnet.co.uk)

**BTO Regional Representatives in Argyll**

**Argyll South, Bute & Gigha:** Richard Allan

*phone* 01852 300 359

*e-mail* [r.allan13@btinternet.com](mailto:r.allan13@btinternet.com)

**Argyll North—Mull, Coll, Tiree & Morvern:** Arthur Brown

*phone* 01688400415

*e-mail* [pamartbrown@btinternet.com](mailto:pamartbrown@btinternet.com)

Rod Little

*phone* 01688400315

*e-mail* [rlett6@aol.com](mailto:rlett6@aol.com)

**Islay, Jura & Colonsay:** John Armitage

*phone* 01496 860396

*e-mail* [jsa@ornquest.plus.com](mailto:jsa@ornquest.plus.com)



**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 digital photographs (jpeg files preferred) of birds and their habitats to the editor. 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. 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 annual *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).

**Mystery bird front page; House Sparrow (courtesy of Ian McGhie)**