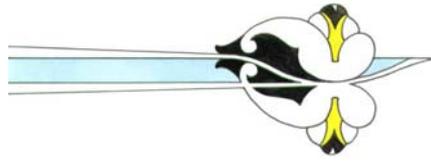


# The Eider



The Eider is the Quarterly Newsletter of the Argyll Bird Club (<http://www.argyllbirdclub.org>)  
Scottish Charity Number SC 008782

June 2005

## Editor

Steve Petty, Craigielea, Kames  
Tighnabruaich, Argyll PA21 2AE  
Phone: 01700 811235  
E-mail: [stevepetty@compuserve.com](mailto:stevepetty@compuserve.com)

## Inside this issue

Editorial	2
New secretary required	2
Beavers in Argyll	2
Raven study in Kintyre	2-3
Oakwood symposium	3
Doug Trigg	3
Autumn meeting programme	3
Partial-albino Greenfinch	4
E-mail distribution Group	4
Field trip reports	4-5
French Kittiwakes in Argyll	5
Raptor report for 2004	6-9
White-winged gull influx	10
White-winged gull ID	11
Recent reports	12-15
Goldcrest weight	15
Field trips and events	16
Help wanted to count Eiders	16
The Sandwich Tern's tale	17
Black Guillemots in the Clyde	17-18
Adverts	19
Help wanted with diver rafts	20



A Tawny Owl photographed in the Argyll Forest Park near Arrochar by Jim Duncan

## Autumn Meeting 2005

On Saturday 5th November 2005  
at the Cairnbaan Hotel, near  
Lochgilphead.

The programme is on page 3

## Spring Meeting 2006

On Saturday 11th March 2006 at  
the Royal Marine Hotel, Hunter's  
Quay, Dunoon.

We hope to include the  
programme in the September  
issue of the *Eider*

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

## Editorial

The Spring Meeting at the Argyll Hotel in Inveraray attracted one of our largest audiences, with around 70 people present. Our thanks go to Bob Furness for, yet again, arranging such an interesting variety of talks.

Helen Docherty opened the conference with a talk on **Capercaillie**, which not only looked at our nearest population on the Loch Lomond Islands, but also gave an overview of the problems they face throughout Scotland. This was followed by Michael Thomas, who kept everyone greatly entertained with a fascinating account of John James Audubon, a renowned American bird artist, and his links to Scotland. Brian Little finished off the morning session with a mouth-watering account of his birding exploits in Australia. It wasn't hard to understand why he keeps going back! After lunch I talked about my own research on **Northern Goshawks**. This was followed by Mike Raven who described the BTO's breeding bird surveys and highlighted some results. Bob Furness gave the final presentation of the day about one of the most frequent birds to visit our bird feeders; the **Coal Tit**. This was based on data from birds that he had ringed in his garden. He demonstrated that **Coal Tits** are one of our most sedentary birds, with their numbers apparently fluctuating in relation to Sitka Spruce cones crops. **Coal Tits** are able to extract seeds from cones during periods of dry weather, when the cone scales open and this provides them with a substantial food resource

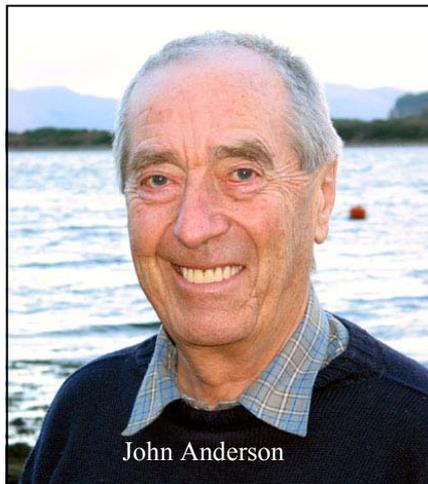
The popularity of the electronic version of the *Eider* is continuing to increase. It is now dispatched to 42 club members, 38 of whom have opted for the *e-Eider* only. This is an environmentally-friendly decision that also saves the club money in production and mailing costs. In return, members get a better quality publication (in colour) and receive it a few days before the black and white version is mailed. So, if you have an internet connection and don't get the *e-Eider*, please consider being added to the circulation list by sending your e-mail address to me (contact details on the front page). If you want to see what the *e-Eider* look likes, copies can be viewed and downloaded from the club's website. The latest issue of the *e-Eider* is added to the website about one month after being dispatched to members.

For help and contributions to this issue, I would like to thank John Anderson, Danielle Clark De Bisschop, Roger Broad (and the Argyll Raptor Study Group), Tom Callan, Clive Craik, Paul Daw, Jim Dickson, Jim Duncan, Bob Furness, Chris Jackson, Eddie Maguire, David Merrie, Katie Pendreigh, Linda Petty (proof reading), Keith Shackleton, Margaret Statley,

Michael Thomas, Blair Urquhart and Chris Waltho.

## New Secretary required

John Anderson has decided to step down as club secretary at the AGM in September. This is a sad loss for the club as John has been a very efficient secretary, helped by his wife Helen, who has meticulously taken notes at Committee Meetings. In addition to his secretarial role, John recently took on the task of producing the club's promotional leaflet. This has been a



John Anderson

great success, and is the main factor responsible for the recent growth in membership. John (and Helen) will be a hard act to follow, but if you are interested, please contact the club's chairman, David Wood (contact details on the back page) before the AGM.

*Editor*

## Beavering away again!

Following SNH's recent recommendation that a trial re-establishment of European **Beavers** should go ahead at Knapdale, mid Argyll, our secretary wrote to the Scottish Executive (SE) encouraging them to support the trial release of **Beavers**. Below are copies of the correspondence:

**The letter from the Club to Mr Ross Finnie, MSP, Minister for Environment and Rural Development, The Scottish Executive.**

*Dear Minister*

*Trial Reintroduction of the European Beaver to Knapdale, Argyll*

*I refer to my letter to you of 18 November 2002 and Angela McTeir's reply dated 20 December 2002.*

*The Argyll Bird Club, a community organisation constituted in 1985, strongly supported the trial reintroduction of beavers to Knapdale at its AGM in 2002.*

*I am writing to ask if you have been able to give further consideration to SNH's application and your anticipated timescale for a decision?*

*I look forward to hearing from you.*

*Yours sincerely*

*John Anderson, Secretary*

**The reply from the SE.**

*Dear Mr Anderson*

*Thank you for your letter of 29 March 2005 to Ross Finnie MSP about the proposed trial re-introduction of the European Beaver to Scotland. I have been asked to reply.*

*I do note your continued interest in this matter. As you are aware from previous correspondence, SNH were asked in December 2002 to provide further information to support their licence application. This information was received in February 2005. You will appreciate that the legal, ecological and economic aspects of their proposal which is based on several years of research, require to be carefully considered. A decision on the application will be made in due course.*

*Yours sincerely*

*Angela McTeir*

Looks as though it will be a while yet before (or if) we see Beavers in Argyll!!

*Editor*

## Proposed Raven study in Kintyre

Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) wishes to commission research into the status of **Ravens** in Kintyre. The raven is a protected bird under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. However, **Ravens** may cause agricultural damage to livestock, particularly in the spring lambing period, which creates conflict with farmers. Shooting under licences issued by SEERAD has taken place in the last few years and SNH are consulted for advice on licence applications. They are currently unable to assess what effects this shooting management is having, both on the local **Raven** population, and in terms of effective control of agricultural damage. Experience on Mull and Islay suggests that the presence and management of local authority refuse tips may have a large impact on local **Raven** population dynamics.

The purpose of this contract is to establish the current size, distribution and structure of the **Raven** population in Kintyre. Results gained from this baseline survey will be used to inform further research into the feeding behaviour of **Raven** flocks (particularly where agricultural damage is being caused by predation on livestock)

and immigration/emigration studies of **Raven** in Kintyre.

To assist with this project, Blair Urquhart (contact details below) would be grateful for any information about **Ravens** in Kintyre from club members, particularly on locations of nest sites and communal roosts sites (with grid references and numbers of birds at roosts). The only communal roost site that SNH are aware of is at Cnoc Moy (Mull of Kintyre).

SNH would welcome suggestions for possible contractors, especially those based locally. SNH is likely to insist that the contractor has public liability insurance. Details of the project can be obtained from:

Blair Urquhart, Area Officer, Scottish Natural Heritage, 1Kilmory Estate, Kilmory, Lochgilphead, ArgyllPA31 8RR

Tel: (01546) 603611 Fax: (01546) 60229

E-mail: [blair.urquhart@snh.gov.uk](mailto:blair.urquhart@snh.gov.uk)

### Atlantic oakwood symposium: a reminder

**A** symposium on *Atlantic Oakwoods* will be held in the Corran Halls, Oban on the 14 - 16 September 2005. It is being organised by the Botanical Society of Scotland and sponsored by the Forestry Commission, Forest Research and the British Ecological Society. For further details

about this conference see the December 2004 Eider (page 3)

Booking forms and further information can be obtained from:

Shiela Wilson, Institute of Geography, University of Edinburgh, Druinmond Street, Edinburgh EH8 9XP, or from the website.

E-mail: [shiela.wilson@ed.ac.uk](mailto:shiela.wilson@ed.ac.uk)

### Doug Trigg

**A**rgyll Bird Club members and the wider conservation movement in Argyll will be greatly saddened to learn that Doug Trigg died on 8th April. Doug was Secretary of the Lorne branch of the Scottish Wildlife Trust for ten years and had only recently retired from this post. His main ornithological interest was in the local Mute Swans, which he and his wife Elaine had been ringing since they moved here from Worcestershire fifteen years ago. All of the red/orange colour rings that we still see on the swans of Argyll, particularly around Doug's home near Oban, were the work of Doug and Elaine. Doug also contributed to the Argyll Bird Club's Nestbox Scheme, ringing broods of tits, Redstarts and Pied Flycatchers in local woods, as well as carrying out more general ringing in his garden and elsewhere, including Barn Owls. Meanwhile, we all send our deepest sympathy to Elaine with our best wishes for the future.

### Programme for the Autumn Meeting on Saturday 5th November 2005 Cairnbaan Hotel, near Lochgilphead

09.30	Doors open, coffee and tea
09.55-10.00	<b>Welcome and introduction</b> — <i>David Wood</i>
10.00-10.10	<b>Recent bird sightings</b> — <i>Paul Daw</i>
10.10-10.30	<b>Scottish outdoors access: recent changes in the law</b> — <i>Gavin Smith</i>
10.30-11.00	<b>To moult or not to moult: a Tawny Owl's dilemma</b> — <i>Steve Petty</i>
11.00--11.20	Coffee/tea
11.20-12.00	<b>Wildlife crime</b> — <i>Joe Connelly</i>
12.00-12.40	<b>Costa Rica: breakfast of biodiversity</b> — <i>Nigel Scriven</i>
12.40-13.40	Lunch (available in the hotel)
13.40-14.10	<b>Annual General Meeting</b>
14.10-14.50	<b>How birds build nests</b> — <i>Mike Hansell</i>
14.50-15.10	Coffee/tea
15.10-15.50	<b>Wildlife on Coll</b> — <i>Simon Wellock</i>
15.50-16.20	<b>Visiting St Kilda and other Western Isles</b> — <i>Chris Jackson</i>
16.20-16.30	Raffle and end of meeting

## Partial-albino Greenfinch

This photograph of a male **Greenfinch** with white patches over most of its body was taken by John Anderson in his garden in April. Has anyone else taken digital photos of partial or full albino birds?

Editor



Photo: John Anderson

## E-mail distribution group for bird sightings

Some time ago, I set up an e-mail distribution group for bird sightings in Argyll. Here's the link for anyone who is interested:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ArgyllBirding/>

James Towill

E-mail: [jamestowill@v21net.co.uk](mailto:jamestowill@v21net.co.uk)

## Field trip reports

### Sound of Gigha

Although there was a cool easterly breeze, Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> April dawned dry and the weather improved as the day went on and by the afternoon we were blessed with long sunny periods. Twelve people arrived at Ronachan car park (plus 2 more who may or may not have been club members and who disappeared early on). Along the shore we had **Shags**, **Common Eiders**, **Shelducks**, **Ringed Plovers**, **Rock Pipits**, the usual **Oystercatchers** and gulls, while further out there were more distant views of **Great Northern Diver** and **Common Scoter**. We soon decided to move on to the West Coast Salmon site further down the peninsula. We were greeted by our first migrant of the day – a lone **Sand Martin**. As usual here the birds on the sea were closer to the shore. So we had excellent views of two winter plumage **Great Northern Divers**, at least 6 **Slavonian Grebes** and a male **Long-tailed Duck** all

in almost complete breeding plumage, as well as the more usual **Red-breasted Mergansers**. Also a group of ten or more **Black Scoter** close enough to see the bright yellow on the bills and to clearly note the differences in male and female plumage. When we had all had time to admire these wonderful birds we headed south again to catch the 12:00 ferry to Gigha. On the way we saw that there were still several hundred **Greenland White-fronted Geese** in the fields near Rhunahaorine along with at least a few **Greylag Geese**.

As we walked up the pier to the ferry a single female **Wheatear** was noted, our second migrant, and **Sky Larks** were singing overhead. A group of 4 **Wigeon** were spotted near the shore as the ferry left and we soon had close up views of Katie's 'tame' **Great Northern Diver** – a bird she had seen frequently over the past few weeks. Two more **Great Northern Divers** were seen a little further out. These birds were all of similar appearance, with the white cheeks and neck of winter plumage but moulting into the chequered plumage of summer on the back. Soon afterwards a pair of **Common Scoters** gave us excellent views close to the ferry while further out were a group of 3 **Long-tailed Ducks**. Later we saw a second year **Gannet**, the only one of the day, flying up the sound.

As we arrived on Gigha the sun came out and the hardier souls among us started peeling off outer layers of clothing. A **Common Buzzard** circled overhead and a **Meadow Pipit** gave a classic performance of its parachute display flight. Pairs of **Mute Swans** and **Mallard** were swimming close to the shore.

Despite the tempting offer of group discount at the snacks trailer near the ferry terminal we stuck to our plan and headed for the Gigha Hotel. It was such a good day that most of us had our meals or sandwiches at the tables in the garden and enjoyed the lovely outlook across the Sound of Gigha as we ate. A twittering call from a bird flying over made us think briefly of **Swallow** but it turned out just to be a **Pied Wagtail**. After lunch we voted to stay on the island for an extra hour as it was such a glorious afternoon. So we walked down to Achamore House & gardens and then across to the west coast of Gigha. The usual tits and finches were found in the trees around Achamore but, less predictably, a pair of **Lesser Redpolls** were calling and feeding at the top of a large larch tree. **Robins** were singing at regular intervals during our walk, but although it looked ideal habitat for **Yellowhammers** or **Linnets** none were seen and there was little bird life in the open country to the west otherwise. On the walk back we noted several Peacock butterflies and a healthy population of **House Sparrows**.

The return ferry trip produced several **Common Guillemots**, one or two **Razor-bills** and a single **Black Guillemot** as well as the first **Red-throated Diver** we had seen. There were even more **Great Northern Divers**, scattered all over the Sound, than on the outward trip.

Katie Pendreigh kindly provided us with her very welcome cakes and biscuits and a hot drink. We were also treated to the unusual sight of at least four **Reed Buntings** feeding in her garden – the males resplendent in their smart breeding plumage.

As time was getting on we decided to forego the walk up the shore and opted for another stop at West Coast Salmon. We arrived just in time to see a beautiful **Black-throated Diver** in full breeding plumage close inshore and finished the day admiring the many breeding plumage **Slavonian Grebes** and **Common Scoters** still present.

In terms of numbers we listed a modest 50 or so species but this is not the main point of these trips and thanks to the beautiful weather and excellent company, not to mention the obliging birds, we had a most enjoyable and rewarding day.

As at least one person present remarked, 'it is a pity that we do not see more of our members at these events'!

Paul Daw

### Bird ringing with Bob Furness

On Sunday 20th March a small select band of members gathered at the lovely Loch Lomond-side house of Bob and Sue Furness. It turned out to be the first really spring-like day of the year - so warm that even the butterflies were about, and an ideal day for our purpose.

For the next couple of hours or so we watched fascinated as Bob took us through the process of ringing the common garden birds frequenting the area. The tits and finches etc which had flown into the mist net were put into individual bags to be taken into the conservatory to a work table. It was great to see the birds so close and apparently untroubled by the process so far. The next step, which also did not appear to bother the birds, caused the spectators quite some amusement. To make weighing the birds easier and even less traumatic Bob inserted them headfirst into a black plastic 35mm film holder giving them a light tap on their behind to make them secure. They were then weighed with only their tail and legs sticking up out of the canister. This was very effective and the birds did not seem to mind the indignity in the least. They were



Bob Furness extracting birds from a mist net (photo Tom Callan)

also checked for age, sex and the presence of fleas before ringing and releasing. All the details were then entered in the record book.

All the while Bob kept us well amused and informed as to the practicalities and the knowledge to be gained from all aspects of bird ringing. The trip was rounded off beautifully with a plate of Sue's home made soup and a bite to eat.

*Tom Callan*

## Isle of Bute

At 9 o'clock on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> March, nine members met at the Colintrave ferry slip for the trip across the Kyles of Bute to Rubodach, where we met local birdman Ian Hopkins who had arranged a mini bus, which provided us with shelter from the bitter north wind on this bright and sunny day. From there we headed along the shore of the East Kyles, and saw some **Eider Ducks** and the occasional **Goldeneye**, to Kames Bay just outside Port Balantyne. Here we spotted various waders and one **Shelduck** while waiting for two other members who missed the 9.00 o'clock ferry. We then headed towards Ettrick Bay, the largest bay on the island, located on the west side of the Bute looking out over the Firth of Clyde towards the Sleeping Warrior (with his winter coat on!) on Arran.

Year round, Ettrick Bay attracts lots of waders, and in the winter geese feed on the grass fields. However, this time a large flock of **Greylag Geese** were on the northern end of the beach! The small burn emptying its water in the bay provided some **Dunlin** and the field behind the road

a flock of 60 or more **Fieldfares**.

We went on to the end of the road before heading back past Ettrick Bay towards Scalpsie Bay, famous for the seals on the rocks, to our next stop at Greenan Loch. This loch is home to large numbers of water fowl including 600 plus **Wigeon**. Before going for lunch at the Kingarth hotel, we went to the hide at Loch fad for views of **Coots** and **Hérons**.

From Kingarth we drove down to Kilchaten Bay for more waders. From the hide at Loch Ascog we admired a large flock of **Wigeon** and four **Great Crested Grebes** while trying out different types and sizes of telescopes belonging to four of the 13 members.



ABC members on Bute (photo Danielle Clark De Bisschop)

Before calling it a day, we drove back through Rothesay and along the shore road at Ascog where we looked for **Turnstone** (none present) and other waders.

A great day out for everyone thanks to Ian Hopkins who expertly introduced us to the birds of the Isle of Bute!

Species list: Great Crested Grebe, European Shag, Cormorant, Grey Heron, Mute Swan, Greylag Goose, Eurasian Teal, Mallard, Tufted Duck, Shelduck, Wigeon, Common Eider, Common Goldeneye, Red-breasted Merganser, Common Buzzard, Common Pheasant, Common Moorhen, Common Coot, Eurasian Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover, Northern Lapwing, Dunlin, Eurasian Curlew, Common Redshank, Black-headed Gull, Mew Gull, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Common Wood Pigeon, Eurasian Collared Dove, Grey Wagtail, Pied Wagtail, European Robin, Common Blackbird, Fieldfare, Blue Tit, Eurasian Jackdaw, Rook, Carrion Crow, Hooded Crow, Common Raven, Common Starling, House Sparrow, Chaffinch, European Greenfinch

*Danielle Clark De Bisschop*

## French Kittiwakes at Machrihanish

On 28<sup>th</sup> June 2000, 160 **Kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla*, the majority first-summer birds,

were loafing on the foreshore in front of the Machrihanish Seabird Observatory for most of the morning/early afternoon. In amongst these birds, three first-summer birds were found to be colour-ringed. All colour sequences were double checked by Eddie Maguire, John McGlynn & Jimmy McCallum (visitor).

Subsequently, it was discovered that all three **Kittiwakes** had been ringed as chicks in summer 1999 at different colonies on the Brittany coast. Birds 1 & 3 have not been seen since they were at Machrihanish, but bird 2 has quite a history (below)!

*Bird 2, ring sequence*

Left leg: **Red** over **Yellow** over **White**.  
Right leg: **White** over **Blue** over **Metal**.

*History*

1999. Ringed at a colony at Karreg Korn, Goulien, Finistere, Brittany (48° 04' N: 4° 36' W) in June. It was last seen at its natal colony on 4<sup>th</sup> August.

2000. Colour ring sequence read at Machrihanish (56° 26' N 5° 45' W) on 26<sup>th</sup> June, approximately 822 km NNW.

2001. Seen on five occasions in three different colonies in Finistere, Brittany.

2002. Attempted to breed at Porzh an Halen colony Goulien, Finistere, but had definitely disappeared by 21<sup>st</sup> June.

It seems likely that these birds spent their first winter in the north Atlantic, probably somewhere south of Britain, and then moved north during spring/summer, as wandering immatures.

Is it an amazing coincidence that three colour-ringed **Kittiwakes**, all roughly from the same area of Brittany, should appear in western Scotland at the same location, and on the same date and at the same time! To date (February 2005) no other colour-ringed **Kittiwakes** have been seen; although I have looked for them.

Many thanks to David Jardine who, with a lot of patience, finally traced the French ringer, clinched the origin of these birds and ended a near five-year mystery!

**Eddie Maguire** (Warden), Machrihanish Seabird and Wildlife Observatory

[David Jardine was able to trace the ringer of these Kittiwakes through a website in Belgium:

<http://www.cr-birding.be>

The site gives details of many colour-ringing schemes across Europe. Also, the cub website has details about some colour marking schemes:

[http://www.argyllbirdclub.org/bird\\_rec/colour\\_marked.html/](http://www.argyllbirdclub.org/bird_rec/colour_marked.html/)

If you find out about a colour marked bird please pass the details on to the BTO. **Editor**]

## Argyll Raptor Study Group (ARSG) - Monitoring Summary for 2004

**T**he ARSG monitors the breeding performance of raptors throughout Argyll. This is the second annual summary to appear in the *Eider* (the first report appeared in the September 2004 *Eider*). These data will eventually be published in the *Argyll Bird Report* for 2004.

Good weather early in 2004 may have been a contributory factor which allowed **Golden Eagles** and some early **Buzzards** to do well. However, some later-nesting birds, including some late **Buzzards** and **Hen Harriers** that still had small young, suffered when the weather broke. On Kintyre, feeding opportunities, especially for harries and owls, became more difficult as the season progressed due to vole numbers declining from a high point at the start of the year.

The collection of these data have involved much time by a small, dedicated group of raptor enthusiasts; namely E. Ashworth, R. Broad, D. Brooks, J. Bowler, P. Doyle, C. Fotheringham, A. French, A.G. Gordon, M. Gregory, D. Hayward, A. MacDonald, J. Weir; J. Halliday, P. Haworth, I. Hopkins, J. How, D. Jardine, A. Keys, C. McKay, A. McCluskie, M. Ogilvie, M. Peacock, D. Sexton, D. Walker, S. Wellock, and the Forest Commission Scotland (FCS) and RSPB. Most of the information has been provided by members of the ARSG, but important contributions have come from several other sources included in the list above, particularly in connection with the National Hen Harrier Survey. The ARSG is grateful for permission to include information provided by FCS and Doug Trigg from the FCS Barn Owl study area in Knapdale and Kintyre. *Produced on behalf of ARSG by R A Broad*

### Red Kite

Two records, both of single birds. One (blue tag left wing, white tag right wing; hatched on the Black Isle, Highland in 2002) seen on Coll on 13 Mar. One (red tag right wing; hatched 2003) seen on Seil on 27 April.

### White-tailed Eagle

Breeding in Scotland. Thirty-two pairs were located and breeding was confirmed at 28 sites, with 15 successful pairs fledged 19 chicks (Sea Eagle Project Team).



Pair of White-tailed Eagles on Mull, one with a wing tag, February 2005 (photo Jim Duncan)

Argyll Records. In addition to breeding birds on Mull there was a good scatter of wandering/dispersing birds seen or reported. As usual most were on islands and the adjacent mainland. A minimum of 17 individuals were identified on Mull. Two different birds were seen on Coll (Mar and Oct), one was on Garvellachs (Apr), three individuals were seen on Islay (Feb-Mar, July, Nov) and 4-5 individuals were reported from Jura-Scarba (all months, except Jan and Mar). Two different birds were reported on Seil (Feb and Aug) and two were reported together at Loch Melfort. In Knapdale, a bird seen at Caol Scotnish seems likely to have been the same bird seen later the same day at Point of

Knap (Nov). One was seen at Knockdow and Inverchaolin Glen, Cowal (Nov). A series of reports from North Argyll (Loch Linnhe, Lismore, Appin, Glen Creran and Loch Etive, involved 4-5 individuals (Jan-Jun) with singles at Bridge of Awe (Feb) and Achallader, Blackmount (Apr). Several of the sightings in widely different areas refer to the now much travelled, blue L, identified in 2004 on Islay (Feb-Mar), Blackmount (Apr), probably seen on Mull (May), Loch Etive (Jun), Islay (Jul & Nov) and Jura (Nov).

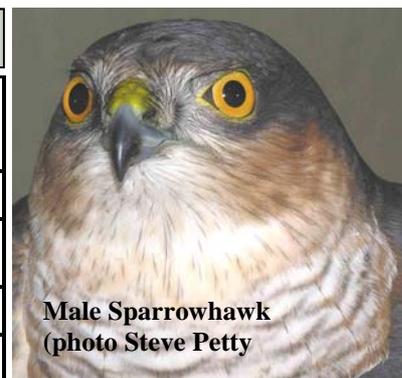
### Hen Harrier

2004 was a national survey year for **Hen Harriers**. The efforts of ARSG members were supplemented by Clive McKay (Islay), Danny Brooks (Mull) and Elsie Ashworth (Mainland) contracted by RSPB and who carried out considerable additional survey work in randomly selected 10 km squares. While the survey work on Mull and Islay was extensive, the substantial numbers of occupied sites presented in the table above do not represent full coverage of these islands. Additional casual sightings of **Hen Harriers** seen in other unsurveyed areas of Argyll indicate that the Argyll population is in excess of 100 occupied sites, despite some areas of the mainland remaining unoccupied for several years.

Area	Sites checked	Sites occupied	Sites successful	Outcome unknown	Min no. fledged	Young per successful site
Coll		3 <sup>1</sup>	1	0	2	2.00
Mull		27	7	12	16+	2.28 <sup>2</sup>
Islay		42	22	13	55+	2.50 <sup>3</sup>
Jura		1	0 <sup>4</sup>	0	0	-
Mainland (not Cowal)	8	8 <sup>5</sup>	2	1	5+	2.50
Cowal		11 <sup>6</sup>	5	0	16	3.20
Bute		4 <sup>7</sup>	3	1	9+	3.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>96</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>2.57</b>

Coll<sup>1</sup>. Two pairs present in spring-summer although only one pair was thought to have bred. A non-breeding pair was present in a third area, but only during the spring.  
 Mull. Occupancy; figures include pairs that either failed or did not attempt to breed. Breeding success<sup>2</sup>, at a sample of 6 sites the outcome was accurately known; 3 sites failed and 3 successful sites fledged 9 young (3.00 per successful site).  
 Islay. Occupancy, figures include pairs that either failed or did not attempt to breed. Breeding success<sup>3</sup>, at a sample of 20 sites the outcome was accurately known; 2 sites failed after heavy rain, 18 successful sites fledged 51 young (2.83 per successful site).  
 Jura. <sup>4</sup>2-3 chicks hatched but were predated by a **Golden Eagle**.  
 Mainland (excluding Cowal)<sup>5</sup>. Occupancy, figures include 3 pairs that either failed or did not attempt to breed and one area apparently occupied only by a male until May.  
 Cowal. Occupancy<sup>6</sup>, figures include one pair that either failed/not breeding. One pair that failed lost both its first and repeat clutches.  
 Bute. Occupancy<sup>7</sup>, figures include one pair that laid but the outcome was unknown.

Sparrowhawk					
<i>Coll, Colonsay, Kintyre and Cowal</i>	<i>Sites occupied</i>	<i>Sites where eggs laid</i>	<i>Sites successful</i>	<i>Min number fledged</i>	<i>Young per successful site</i>
Fully monitored	5	5	4	11	2.75
Brood size unknown	5	5	5	Brood size not known	
Outcome unknown	4	1	Outcome not known		
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>				



**Male Sparrowhawk**  
(photo Steve Petty)

**Buzzard (Ian Hopkins—co-ordinator)**



Photo: Steve Petty

<i>Area</i>	<i>Sites checked</i>	<i>Sites occupied</i>	<i>Sites successful</i>	<i>Outcome unknown</i>	<i>Min number fledged</i>	<i>Young per successful site</i>
Coll	15	14	4	10	8	2.00
Tiree	10	10	6	3	6	1.00
Colonsay	52	24	8	12	19	2.37
Islay	10	10	8	2	13	1.62
Cowal	24	24	9	13	13	1.44
Bute	27	27	24	0	51	2.12
Other areas	2	2	2	0	4	2.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>1.86</b>

Notes about the table. Nests with large young on last visit were assumed to have been successful. For the first time in 15 years of monitoring on Colonsay, a pair fledged a brood of 4.

**Golden Eagle**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Ts checked</i>	<i>Ts occupied</i>	<i>Ts where eggs laid</i>	<i>Ts known to have fledged young</i>	<i>% of occupied Ts that fledged young</i>	<i>Min. number of young fledged</i>	<i>Number of young per successful pair</i>
2004	61	56	38	28 (29)	50%	32 (33)	1.14 (1.13)
2003	100	80	52	29 (30)	36.25% (37.50%)	30 (31)	1.03 (1.03)
2002	62	57	36	15	26.31%	15	1.0
2001	54	54	27	18	33.3%	21	1.16
2000	62	59	28+	19	32.2%	22	1.15
1999	61	57	28	16	28.0%	17	1.06
1998	61	54	?	22	40.7%	27	1.22
1997	58	53	?	25	47.1%	31	1.24
1996	57	54	37+	25	46.2%	29	1.16
<b>1992</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>32.14%</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>1.03</b>

2004 was the best year for breeding **Golden Eagles** for many years, with 50% of the monitored sites successfully producing young (see table). 56 monitored sites were occupied, but at four sites only single birds were seen or otherwise proven to be present. A chick was removed under license from a site on Mull that had twins; it subsequently fledged as part of the re-establishment project in Ireland. If it had fledged in Argyll, the total number of young reared in 2004 would have been 33 (34) and the number of young/successful territory would have been 1.17. One half-grown chick survived when the nest in which it was sitting slipped ca 20m down a crag. The adults continued to feed the chick, which subsequently fledged.

( ) = figure includes chick half grown on last visit

## Osprey

Year	Sites occupied	Sites successful	No. fledged	Young per successful site
2004	9	7	13 <sup>1</sup>	1.85
2003	7	6	9	1.50
2002	5	3	6	2.0
2001	5	5	10	2.0
2000	4	4	9	2.25
1999	4	4	9(10)	2.25

Although one bird was present in the early spring at a previously successful site, a pair failed to become established in 2004. Two new pairs nested successfully, one at a natural site and the other at an artificial platform. Elsewhere, a pair built a new nest and occupied the site through the summer but did not lay. Overall the population continued to increase. One site failed when a three week old chick was predated by a Pine Marten.

<sup>1</sup> Brood size: b/1 x 3, b/2 x 2, b/3 x 2.

## Kestrel

Area	Sites checked	Sites occupied	Sites where eggs laid	Sites successful	Outcome unknown	Min. number fledged	Young per successful site
Coll	1	1	1	1	0	1	1.00
Islay	5	5	5	3	0	7	2.33
Cowal	7	7	4	2	3	9	4.50
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>2.83</b>

On Colonsay, a male was seen carrying food to a former nesting area, but the site was not located.

## Merlin

Area	Details
Coll	Three pairs held territory, but no further evidence of breeding at any of these sites.
Mull	1-2 birds seen in suitable habitat in 6 different locations, the majority were previously unknown sites. Breeding proved at one site (nest with eggs), but the outcome was unknown.
Islay	Breeding assumed at one site (pair present all season), but the nest was not located.
Mid Argyll	Pair present (displaying 24/4) near previously known nest site, but no further information available. Pair present 24/4 and bred successfully, 1+ fledged juvenile on 30/7. Breeding assumed at one new site (pair present all season), but no nest was located.
Kintyre	Breeding proved at one site in North Kintyre (adult with fledged brood).
Cowal	Two sites monitored, both apparently unoccupied.

More sightings were reported from suitable habitat during the breeding season. The majority were generated during fieldwork for the **Hen Harrier** survey. Unfortunately, most refer to single visits to areas early in the season, and in most cases it is not known whether birds stayed to breed.

## Peregrine

Area	Sites checked	Sites occupied	Sites where eggs laid	Sites successful	Outcome unknown	Min. number fledged	Young per successful site
Misc Islands <sup>1</sup>	9	9	6	4	2	7+	1.75
Islay	5	5	4	3	0	4+	1.33
Mainland (exc Cowal)	3	2	2	2	0	3+	1.50
Cowal	12	9 <sup>2</sup>	5	4	1	10	2.50
Bute	2	2	2	0	1	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>24+</b>	<b>1.84</b>

<sup>1</sup>Misc Islands. Includes information from Coll, Tiree, Mull, Colonsay, Oransay.

<sup>2</sup>Cowal; occupation, 7 pairs and 2 singles. Five pairs laid eggs and two either failed or did not attempt to breed.

Mainland (exc Cowal) One site regularly monitored in Mid Argyll was unoccupied for the first time since before 1990.

**Barn Owl**

Area	Sites checked	Sites occupied	Sites where eggs laid	Sites successful	Outcome unknown	Min. number fledged	Young per successful site
Islay		3	3	2	1	8	4.00
Kintyre/ Knapdale (FCS)		18	18	9	2	26	2.88
Cowal		5	5	1	1	2	2.00
Bute	5	3	3	2	0	5	2.50
<b>Total</b>		<b>29</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>2.92</b>



Photo: Jim Duncan

**Tawny Owl**

The only information provided in 2004 related to an unoccupied nest site on Bute.

**Long-eared Owl**

*Mull.* Breeding proved at two sites and an adult present in a third area on the Ross of Mull. The outcome of nesting attempts was unknown.

*Colonsay.* Pairs present in at least two areas. One site fledged three chicks. No young were heard at the other site, which was presumed to have been unsuccessful.

**Short-eared Owl**

Area	Sites checked	Sites occupied	Sites where eggs laid	Sites successful	Outcome unknown	Min number fledged
Islay		2	2		2	
Mull		11	11		11	
Cowal		4	4	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>17</b>	<b>17</b>		<b>13</b>	

More sightings than in 2003 from suitable habitat during the breeding season. The majority were seen during fieldwork for the **Hen Harrier** survey. Unfortunately, most refer to single visits to areas. The outcome was known for only the four sites that were fully monitored on the Cowal; all failed.

**Raven**

Area	Sites checked	Sites occupied	Sites where eggs laid	Sites successful	Outcome unknown	Min. number fledged	Young per successful site
Colonsay	13	12	10	8	2	26	3.25
Islay	2	2	2	2	0	10	5.00
Cowal	25	25	23	12	10	34	2.83
Bute	14	12	9	8	2	35	4.37
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>3.50</b>



**Golden Eagle** (left photo) and **White-tailed eagles** (right photo), photographed on Mull during 22-24 February 2005 by Jim Duncan



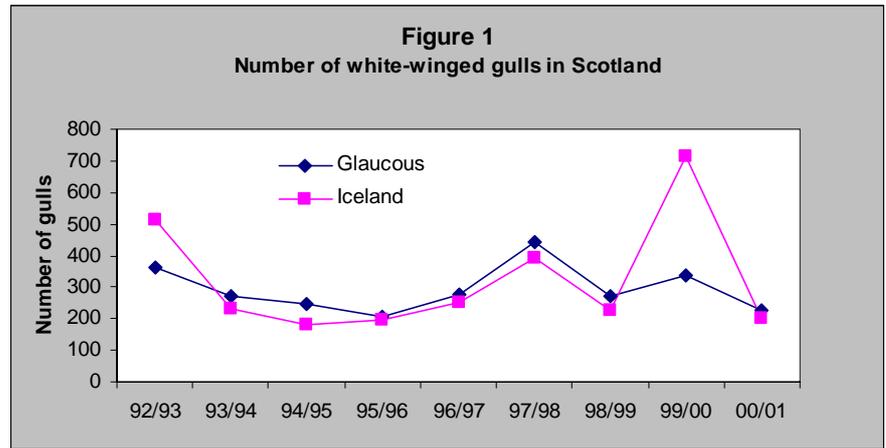
**Record influx of white-winged gulls**

**A**s you may already be aware, this winter has seen an exceptional influx of both **Glaucaous Gulls** (GG) and **Iceland Gulls** (IG) into Scotland, including Argyll, particularly from late January into February. Could this be our best ever winter for these appealing visitors from the far north?

At present, not all records have been sent to Paul Daw, though it is clear we may have witnessed a significant invasion during the winter. Could it surpass all previous records in Argyll, and how does this winter compare with previous years? In this article we will examine past winter records from the notable influx of 92/93 through to 00/01 using data from the Scottish Bird Reports (SBR) and Argyll Bird Reports (ABR). Using this information we look at relationships between numbers of GG and IG, and whether influxes of both species occur in the same winters and how Argyll records compare with those for Scotland as a whole?

Information taken from SBR gives bird/month totals for each region rather than an estimate of individuals involved, as is the case for Argyll, where with smaller numbers it is easier to give actual numbers of birds reported. So, in the case of Scottish winter totals, these are cumulative figures giving a number higher than the actual number of records reported, as many birds stay for several months and would be counted in each month. This difference aside, it is felt that both these figures indicate trends and make comparisons among years possible. It should be noted that at regional level (Argyll for example), variations in winter numbers will depend on the number and location of observers, probably more so than for Scotland as a whole. That said, it becomes clear that some winters are relatively poor for white-winged gulls while in other winters large influxes occur (Table 1).

In Argyll, the numbers of GG and IG in any winter are similar although in general there appears to be slightly more IG recorded, outnumbering GG in 7 out of 9



winters (Figure 1). For Scotland as a whole, GG outnumber IG in 7 winters out of 9.

In Argyll, GG numbers ranged from 5-16 individuals per winter, averaging about 10, with the best winter being 97/98, followed by 92/93 and 99/00 (Table 1). IG ranged from 4-22 individuals, averaging about 13 birds per winter, with peaks being in 92/93 followed by 99/00 then 97/98. For Scotland as a whole 97/98 was also the best year for GG followed by 92/93 and 99/00, which appears to be mirrored in Argyll? IG numbers in Scotland peaked in 99/00 followed by 92/93 then 97/98. These are also the three best winters for Argyll. What is surprising is the widely held belief that the winter of 92/93 was the biggest influx year, but this seems to overlook 97/98 for GG with 445 cumulative month totals (364 in 92/93). The overall peak month was March 2000 with 87 GG (72 in Feb 1993). For IG, 99/00 gives a cumulative month total of 714 (515 in 92/93) and the peak month total was 239 in March 2000 (172 in Feb 199). So for Scotland as a whole, it appears that March 2000 yielded the most significant influx during this period.

Influxes of both GG and IG occur in the same winters (Figure 1), although there are some differences in the nature of the influxes. Looking at the spread of records over each winter, GG start arriving in good numbers much earlier than IG, generally in Oct/Nov, whereas IG arrive in numbers usually from late December into January. Most GG arrive between Jan-Mar, with a peak around late Jan into Feb,

with numbers ranging from 41 in a poor year to 87 in a good year. The peak month for Scotland this winter (2004/05) was Feb with 170 birds reported already. IG generally arrive a bit later, often during Feb to Apr with numbers peaking in March for 5 out of the 9 years, and individual numbers ranging from 38 in a poor year to 239 in a good influx year (99/00). The peak month for Scotland this winter was Jan with 250 birds reported already.

During influx years, numbers of IG appear to increase more dramatically than those of GG, which show less fluctuation from year-to-year. In Scotland as a whole GG tend to outnumber IG, however in influx years IG can greatly outnumber GG.

So in Argyll how does this past winter compare with previous years? From the records received so far, there have been 30 GG and 33 IG, which easily outnumbers the previous best years for both GG (97/98 with 16 records) and IG (92/93 with 22 records).

This year's influx occurred after periods of prolonged north and west winds, helping to bring birds to Scotland, as was the case in previous years. Just how much these influxes are due to weather conditions alone is beyond the information available for this article, as indeed are factors such as food supply and breeding success; although an analysis of age groups occurring in different years may give some useful pointers.

Please feel free to comment on this article, particularly if you can contribute to the reasons for these periodic influxes.

**Jim Dickson and Paul Daw**

Table 1. Numbers of Glaucaous and Iceland Gulls in Scotland and Argyll during nine winters.

	92/93	93/94	94/95	95/96	96/97	97/98	98/99	99/00	00/01
<b>Glaucaous Gull</b>									
Scotland <sup>1</sup>	364	270	247	204	275	445	272	336	224
Argyll <sup>2</sup>	13	8	6	5	13	16	5	13	9
<b>Iceland Gull</b>									
Scotland <sup>1</sup>	515	231	179	195	252	390	225	714	202
Argyll <sup>2</sup>	22	6	11	8	14	18	14	20	4

<sup>1</sup>Cumulative totals: <sup>2</sup>Individual totals – see text

## Identifying Glaucous and Iceland Gulls

**G**laucous (GG) and Iceland Gulls (IG) are 'white-winged gulls' which visit us each winter in varying numbers from their arctic and sub-arctic breeding grounds. Finding one of these gulls often feels like a nice treat due to their scarcity and appealing white wings, which makes them stand out from other 'large' gulls.

Given a good view in favourable conditions, sorting out a GG from an IG should present no real problems. However, in practice a great deal of care and attention may be required if a mistake is to be avoided. Even after looking at many GG and IG this winter some birds can be a bit of a problem to identify easily.

To identify a bird with confidence it is best not to jump to a quick conclusion, but to look for a number of features, ideally through a telescope, as identity is largely based on differences in size, structure, bill pattern and bill colour.

These are large gulls which take four years to mature and hence come in four age groups. Both species can mirror each other in having almost identical plumage patterns at each stage of life, with first-winter birds resemble each other, adults

are similar and so on. So, as plumages are similar, build and structure become very important. Size alone can sometimes be a bit misleading due variation among sexes and individuals. Generally, GG is larger than IG and **Herring Gull**, approaching the size of a **Great Black-backed Gull**, while IG tends to be a shade smaller than **Herring Gull**. Size alone is not that useful if the bird in question is not next to another large gull. More important is a bird's structure, particularly head shape, bill proportion, rear end shape and relative leg size.

A large percentage of these gulls are immature, often in their first year, where the overall body colour can be more creamy or pale milky brown than in whiter, older birds. Identification of first year birds can be helped by bill pattern, with GG having a large two-toned bill – pale horn with the outer 1/3 sharply tipped black. The smaller-billed IG has no obvious black tip at this age, but is more diffusely black over the outer 2/3. It is well into their second calendar year that IG develop a black tip similar to a first winter GG, but the bill is always much smaller. As birds become older, the bills of both species become similar in pattern, which can lead to mistakes in identification if other features are not studied. To make a correct identification you should try and note several features, which together should

clinch it.

**Glaucous Gull:** Obviously or slightly larger and longer legged than **Herring Gull** and more heavily built with a large 'oversized' bill, small eye and sloping forehead, which gives a meaner, aggressive appearance. At rest, the primaries project only a short distance beyond the tail and there is often a tertial 'step' or bump in the lower back profile. In flight they are broader winged, longer necked, larger headed and more lumbering than IG.

**Iceland Gull:** Smaller or obviously smaller than GG, usually a bit smaller than **Herring Gull** with shorter legs, a more 'normal sized' bill, proportionately larger eye and a more rounded head giving a gentle appearance. At rest, the primaries project further beyond the tail than in GG, making the rear end more pointed and less truncated than GG. In flight they are more elegant than GG, appearing longer-winged and have a shorter-necked and small-headed appearance.

I have included below some digiscoped images of GG and IG taken this winter, for you to practice your identification skills. Hopefully, with some of these points in mind, you will be able to go out, find and identify your own GG and IG next winter.



Three photos of white-winged gulls taken this winter by Jim Dickson. Can you identify them?

## Recent bird reports from Paul Daw: February—April 2005

**R**ecent **Developments:** Since March we have been trying to give those with internet access the opportunity to hear about the latest bird sightings in Argyll (almost) as they happen. You can find these by accessing the club website at [www.argyllbirdclub.org](http://www.argyllbirdclub.org) and following the link to *Latest Reports* from the Home Page. I am trying to update this weekly, when time allows and when there is sufficient new material. The records displayed include a selection of sightings from Coll, and Tiree kindly provided by John Bowler and Simon Wellock and some from Mull provided by Alan Spellman. At present I have no source of up-to-date information regarding Islay, so if anyone out there would be willing to let me know about significant sightings as they happen, I would be happy to include them. Records for the mainland come from individual club member and visitors. To encourage people to send information in and to acknowledge their contribution I am, wherever possible, including the name of the observer after each record (full names in brackets except: SW = Simon Wellock, JB = John Bowler, TC = Tom Callan, PD = Paul Daw, JD = Jim Dickson, JH = John Halliday).

As always, what we include depends on you. This is not just a list of rare birds. Anything you consider of interest may be included. I am also keen to have feedback on this new addition to the website, so please let me know what you think. For those of you without internet access, and I know this will include many of you, we shall of course continue to include all the information in the 'Recent Reports' in the *Eider*.

Many thanks for those of you who sent in reports of **Green Woodpeckers** after my request in the last *Eider*. We can now confirm that they are still present in Benmore Botanic Gardens near Dunoon and in the Loch Frisa/Killiechronan area of Mull. There were also two or three interesting records for the Colintrave area of Cowal. There must be other **Green Woodpeckers** in Argyll – so please keep the records coming in.

I have given details of the arrival of summer migrants to Argyll in the table on this and the next page, in which I have included a few, early May records to complete the picture.

#### Divers to Wildfowl

At least 20 **Slavonian Grebes** were present in the Sound of Gigha on 2<sup>nd</sup> April, with a similar number of **Great Northern Divers** and at least 5 **Long-tailed Ducks** (Argyll Bird Club outing, see page 4). A good view was had of a **Great Crested Grebe** off Blairmore, Loch Long, Cowal on 9<sup>th</sup> April (Peter Staley) – a rare sighting for Argyll despite the fact that they are quite numerous further up the Clyde estuary. A sea-watch from the CalMac pier on Coll on the evening of 31<sup>st</sup> March brought 1,200 **Manx Shearwaters**, 400 auks, 150 **Gannets** and 400 **Kittiwakes** (SW).

Among several reports of **Whooper Swans** migrating northwards were: 9 over Breachacha, Coll on 11<sup>th</sup> March, 35 in the Add Estuary on 17<sup>th</sup> March (Ian Hopkins), 60 on Loch Eck on 21<sup>st</sup> March (Mary Bacon), 50+ over Arinagour and 91 over Totronald, both Coll on 23<sup>rd</sup> March (SW) and 6 were on the upper Powder Dam loch (nr Millhouse, Cowal) also on 23<sup>rd</sup> March (TC). Steady movements of geese through Tiree in mid-April included groups of up to 70 **Light-bellied Brent Geese** 14<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> April, and 87 were feeding in Balephetrish Bay on 19<sup>th</sup> April (JB). A pair of **Mandarin Ducks** were in

Table. First dates for spring migrants, late dates for winter migrants and some passage migrants—Argyll 2005

Species	Location	Date
Osprey	Loch Awe, Mid-Argyll	26 <sup>th</sup> Mar
Spotted Crake	Coll	20 <sup>th</sup> April
Corn Crake	Totronald, Coll	18 <sup>th</sup> April
Corn Crake	Balemartine, Tiree	22 <sup>nd</sup> April
Corn Crake	Iona, Mull	26 <sup>th</sup> April
Common Sandpiper	Linne Mhuirich (Loch Sween)	11 <sup>th</sup> April
Common Sandpiper	Dervaig, Mull	14 <sup>th</sup> April
Common Sandpiper	Taynish NNR, Mid-Argyll	19 <sup>th</sup> Apr
Sandwich Tern	Ganavan (Oban), Mid-Argyll	23 <sup>rd</sup> Mar
Sandwich Tern	West Loch Tarbert, Kintyre	10 <sup>th</sup> April
Sandwich Tern	Dunoon, Cowal	10 <sup>th</sup> Apr
Arctic Tern	Gott Bay, Tiree	25 <sup>th</sup> Apr
Little Tern	Gott Bay, Tiree	12 <sup>th</sup> Apr
Turtle Dove	Tayinloan, Kintyre	14 <sup>th</sup> May
Cuckoo	Ardfern, Mid-Argyll	19 <sup>th</sup> April
Cuckoo	Glenbranter, Cowal	22 <sup>nd</sup> April
Cuckoo	Appin, North Argyll	23 <sup>rd</sup> April
Sand Martin	Powder Dam, Cowal	23 <sup>rd</sup> March
Sand Martin	Glen Bellart, Mull	27 <sup>th</sup> Mar
Sand Martin	Loch Ederline, Mid-Argyll	29 <sup>th</sup> Mar
Swallow	Achnamara, Mid-Argyll	26 <sup>th</sup> March
Swallow	Aros Park, Mull	27 <sup>th</sup> March
Swallow	Totronald, Coll	28 <sup>th</sup> March
Swallow	Loch a' Phuill, Tiree	5 <sup>th</sup> April
Swallow	Millhouse, Cowal	7 <sup>th</sup> April
House Martin	Kilchurn Castle, Loch Awe	26 <sup>th</sup> March
House Martin	Loch a' Phuill, Tiree	27 <sup>th</sup> March
Tree Pipit	Minard, Mid-Argyll	3 <sup>rd</sup> April
Tree Pipit	Taynish NNR, Mid-Argyll	11 <sup>th</sup> April
'White Wagtail'	Coll	23 <sup>rd</sup> Mar
Bohemian Waxwing	Tayvallich, Mid-Argyll	22 <sup>nd</sup> February
Common Redstart	Taynish NNR, Mid-Argyll	19 <sup>th</sup> April
Common Redstart	Minard Woods, Mid-Argyll	24 <sup>th</sup> April
Common Redstart	Loch Nell, Mid-Argyll	24 <sup>th</sup> April
Whinchat	Kilmelford, Mid-Argyll	19 <sup>th</sup> April
Whinchat	Kilninver, Mid-Argyll	22 <sup>nd</sup> April

Species	Location	Date
Whinchat	Glen Aros, Mull	25 <sup>th</sup> April
Northern Wheatear	Loch na Keal, Mull	19 <sup>th</sup> March
Northern Wheatear	Scarinish, Tiree	20 <sup>th</sup> March
Northern Wheatear	Crossapol, Coll	22 <sup>nd</sup> Mar
Northern Wheatear	Scammadale, Mid-Argyll	22 <sup>nd</sup> Mar
Ring Ouzel	Coll	23 <sup>rd</sup> March
Redwing	An Airidh, Tiree	27 <sup>th</sup> Apr
Grasshopper Warbler	Loch Leathan, Mid-Argyll	15 <sup>th</sup> April
Grasshopper Warbler	Appin, North Argyll	19 <sup>th</sup> April
Grasshopper Warbler	Balvicar, Mid-Argyll	22 <sup>nd</sup> April
Grasshopper Warbler	Kilmichael Glen, Mid-Argyll (5)	26 <sup>th</sup> April
Sedge Warbler	Dervaig, Mull	25 <sup>th</sup> April
Sedge Warbler	Balephuill, Tiree	26 <sup>th</sup> April
Common Whitethroat	Pier, Coll (very early date)	27 <sup>th</sup> March
Common Whitethroat	An Airidh, Tiree	3 <sup>rd</sup> May
Common Whitethroat	Minard, Mid-Argyll	4 <sup>th</sup> May
Common Whitethroat	Loch Scridain, Mull	5 <sup>th</sup> May
Garden Warbler	<u>No records yet</u>	
Blackcap	Taynish NNR, Mid-Argyll	11 <sup>th</sup> April
Blackcap	Balephuill, Tiree	23 <sup>rd</sup> April
Blackcap	Minard Woods, Mid-Argyll	24 <sup>th</sup> April
Blackcap	Kames, Cowal	25 <sup>th</sup> April
Wood Warbler	Coll	20 <sup>th</sup> Apr
Wood Warbler	Dunstaffnage, Mid-Argyll	3 <sup>rd</sup> May
Common Chiffchaff	Roundhouse, Coll	26 <sup>th</sup> March
Common Chiffchaff	Salen, Mull	26 <sup>th</sup> March
Common Chiffchaff	Tayinloan, Kintyre	29 <sup>th</sup> March
Common Chiffchaff	Minard, Mid-Argyll	3 <sup>rd</sup> April
Willow Warbler	Castle Stalker, North Argyll	3 <sup>rd</sup> Apr
Willow Warbler	Kilmichael Glen, Mid-Argyll	4 <sup>th</sup> April
Willow Warbler	Loch Ederline, Mid-Argyll	5 <sup>th</sup> April
Willow Warbler	Aros Park, Mull	10 <sup>th</sup> April
Willow Warbler	Danna Island, Mid-Argyll	11 <sup>th</sup> April
Spotted Flycatcher	Lussa, Kintyre	6 <sup>th</sup> May

### Stop Press

Migrant **Yellow Wagtails** are always very scarce in Argyll, so the arrival of 3 or possibly 4 males of the grey-headed race *thunbergi* on the north coast of Tiree on 20<sup>th</sup> May was quite unprecedented. This race is usually only reported from the Northern Isles in very small numbers.

the River Cur delta, Loch Eck on 8<sup>th</sup> April (Alex Nicol) and up to 9 birds were reported there in March (Peter Woods). Fourteen **Pintails** were at Loch Riaghain, Tiree on 16<sup>th</sup> February and 15 **Shovelers** were at The Reef, Tiree on 1<sup>st</sup> February (JB). Although large moult flocks of **Red-breasted Mergansers** often occur in late summer, a flock of 48 at Linne Mhuirich (Loch Sween) was unusual for 11<sup>th</sup> April (TC/PD).

### Raptors to Gamebirds

A bird seen near Ormsary (Knapdale) on 19<sup>th</sup> February was an unusual winter record of **Red Kite** (Peter Quelch) and good views were had of another in Kilmichael Glen on 20<sup>th</sup> April – no tags seen (Bettina per John Halliday). A **White-tailed Eagle** with blue wing tags bearing a black letter “L” was seen at the head of Loch Indaal, Islay on 13<sup>th</sup> February (Angus Hogg), an immature with green wing-tags over Ballard then Breachacha, Coll at 11:30 on 19<sup>th</sup> March (SW), a bird with pink tags was seen heading towards Macarthur’s Head, Islay on 21<sup>st</sup> March (JD), a very young (1<sup>st</sup> year) bird with no wing tags was around Port Ellen, Islay on 23<sup>rd</sup> March (JD) and a mature **White-tailed Eagle** was seen being mobbed by four noisy **Buzzards** over Arduaine, Mid-Argyll on the evening of 13<sup>th</sup> April (Cristina McAvoy). No less than three **Sparrowhawks** together flew over a garden at Soroba (Oban) on 19<sup>th</sup> April (Derek Pretswell). A female **Goshawk** has been reported in the forest near Glenbranter during March (Peter Woods). There were several reports of **Ospreys** in the Loch Awe area from 26<sup>th</sup> March—5<sup>th</sup> April (Alan Gray, JH, JD etc). Later reports include birds at Loch Frisa, Mull on 8<sup>th</sup> April (Alan Spellman), in the Add estuary on 12<sup>th</sup> April (JD) at Loch na Druimnean nr Kilmelford, Mid-Argyll on 22<sup>nd</sup> April (Richard Wesley) and on Coll on 27<sup>th</sup> April (SW). A **Merlin** was seen being mobbed by a pair of **Pied Wagtails** at Otter Ferry on 26<sup>th</sup> March (TC) and Katie Pendreigh had a close encounter with a male **Peregrine Falcon** which zoomed past her window at Tayinloan on 29<sup>th</sup> April.

**Spotted Crakes** called from two locations on Coll from 20<sup>th</sup> April. A male **Corn Crane** was at Totronald, Coll on 18<sup>th</sup> April, the first three **Corn Crakes** of the year on Tiree were calling at Balemartine on 22<sup>nd</sup> April (JB) and one was calling on Iona on 26<sup>th</sup> April. At least 30 calling **Corn Crakes** were on Tiree by 30<sup>th</sup> April (JB).

### Waders

One **Whimbrel** was at Loch an Eilein, Tiree on 21<sup>st</sup> April and influx of 16 appeared in west Tiree on 23<sup>rd</sup> April (JB). At Tayinloan, Kintyre 32 **Whimbrels** were present from 25<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> April (Katie Pendreigh) and April numbers on Tiree peaked at 27 at Heylipol on 30<sup>th</sup> (JB). An influx of **Black-tailed Godwits** to Tiree on 18<sup>th</sup> April included, among a group of 21 at Loch Bhasapol, a colour-ringed bird that was marked in Iceland in 2002 that has been spending its winters in western France. By the following day there were at least 224 birds around the island (JB). Sightings of **Common Greenshanks** included two at Castle Stalker (N Argyll) on 3<sup>rd</sup> April (Bill Allan) and two in the Add Estuary (with a single **Black-tailed Godwit**) on 9<sup>th</sup> April (JD). 79 **Turnstones** were at Killail (Otter Ferry) on 21<sup>st</sup> April—mostly in winter plumage but about 20% were in partial breeding plumage (TC). Two **Common Sandpipers** together at Linne Mhuirich (Loch Sween) on 11<sup>th</sup> April (TC/PD) were the first birds reported so far. They were followed by individuals near Dervaig, Mull on 14<sup>th</sup> April (Shaun McCullough), at Taynish NNR on 19<sup>th</sup> April (JH), on the Add

Estuary on 19<sup>th</sup> April (JD), at Lephinmore (Loch Fyne) 22<sup>nd</sup> April (TC), 3 separate locations in the Loch Tralaig/Scammadale area of Mid-Argyll on 22<sup>nd</sup> April (Richard Wesley), two at Minard, Mid-Argyll on 24<sup>th</sup> April (PD) and one at Kames, Cowal 25<sup>th</sup> April (Steve Petty).

#### Skuas to Woodpeckers

The first **Arctic Skua** on Tiree was a pale phase bird at Gott Bay on 26<sup>th</sup> April (JB). A single **Great Skua** was in Crossapol Bay, Coll on 13<sup>th</sup> April (SW) and one was at Rubha Chraiginis, Tiree on 24<sup>th</sup> April (JB). A **Little Gull** was seen at Loch na Keal, Mull on the shore below Kellan Wood on 13<sup>th</sup> Feb (Arthur and Pam Brown) and an adult **Little Gull**, in full breeding plumage, was at Gott Bay, Tiree on 25<sup>th</sup> April (JB). A first winter **Ring-**



Ring-billed Gull (Photo: Jim Dickson)

**billed Gull** was found in Oban Bay by Brian Rabbits on 4<sup>th</sup> April and was seen again (and photographed, above) by Jim Dickson on the following day. At Breachacha, Coll on 11<sup>th</sup> March, 8 **Lesser Black-backed Gulls**, included one which was presumed to be of the race *intermedius*. **White-winged Gulls:** A fascinating account by Jim Dickson of this winter's amazing influx of Iceland and Glaucous Gulls appears on page 10. The overall totals are provisional so far, and will probably increase. **The Iceland Gull** total includes a single bird at Dunoon, up to 5 in Oban, 2 at Furnace, at least 3 on Coll (in Jan), at least 4 on Tiree (in March), an estimated 15 on Islay during the winter and at least 4 on Mull. **Glaucous Gulls** include two in Oban (in Feb), one at Furnace, 8 in Knapdale and Kintyre (in Feb), 2 in North Argyll, at least 4 on Coll (in Feb), up to 5 on Tiree (in Jan), up to 5 on Islay during the winter and at least 3 on Mull. If you have any sightings of either species, which you have not sent in yet please let me know. Two adult **Sandwich Terns** were seen fishing off Ganavan (Oban) on the afternoon of 23<sup>rd</sup> March. One did a superb plunge dive and caught and ate a fish. This is the earliest recent record of **Sandwich Tern** in Argyll. Fun-nily enough the observer, Clive Craik, ringed a **Sandwich Tern** chick at a nearby

tern colony in 1980 or 1981. It was an excellent spring generally for **Sandwich Terns** in Argyll with more records than usual including two in West Loch Tarbert, Kintyre on 10<sup>th</sup> April (JB), two near the pier in Dunoon on 10<sup>th</sup> April (George Newall), eight in Crossapol Bay, Coll on the afternoon of 13<sup>th</sup> April (SW), one over the sea at Kirn (Dunoon) on 16<sup>th</sup> April (Andrew Webster), two fishing in Grogport Bay, Kintyre, 11 resting on shingle at 'Stinky Hole' Campbeltown Loch on 21<sup>st</sup> April (PD) and 4 in Gott Bay, Tiree on 26<sup>th</sup> April (JB). The first **Arctic Tern** was seen at Gott Bay, Tiree on 25<sup>th</sup> April (JB). An early **Little Tern** was at Gott Bay, Tiree on 12<sup>th</sup> April, with 23 there by 19<sup>th</sup> April (JB).

Early **Common Cuckoos** were calling at nr Ardfern, Mid-Argyll on 19<sup>th</sup> April, at Kilninver (nr Oban) on 20<sup>th</sup> April (Bill Allan), along the River Euchar nr Scammadale on 21<sup>st</sup> April, at Moine Mhor on 22<sup>nd</sup> April (Richard Wesley), at Glenbranter, Cowal on 22<sup>nd</sup> April (Peter Woods), at Appin, North Argyll on 23<sup>rd</sup> April (Mike Gear) and at Lephinmore (Loch Fyne) on 25<sup>th</sup> April (TC). One calling at Cornaigbeg on 25<sup>th</sup> April was the first for Tiree (JB). A **Hoopoe** was reported at Cornaigbeg, Coll on 7<sup>th</sup> April (seen by John-Allan Macrae and described to Simon Wellock). There are previous April records of **Hoopoes** on Tiree, in 1998 and 2000, but no previous confirmed records for Coll. No reports of **Green Woodpeckers** in Cowal for three years, but following my appeal there have been several. Birds were heard 'yaffling' in Benmore Gardens (nr Dunoon) during March by Gordon Rothero and Steve Petty. They were heard there again on 15<sup>th</sup> April (Andrew Webster). Also a record we didn't know about, from as far back as March 1978, of a bird seen and heard at Colintrave, Cowal (Ian Hopkins) and a later report from the same locality in August 2004 (Graham Clark).

#### Passerines

First reports of **Sand Martins** were of five at Upper Powder Dam, Cowal on 23<sup>rd</sup> March (TC), one at Glen Bellart, Mull on 27<sup>th</sup> March (Alan Spellman), one at Loch Ederline, Mid-Argyll on 29<sup>th</sup> Mar (JH) and one nr Rhunahaorine Point on 2<sup>nd</sup> April (Argyll Bird Club outing, see page 4). The **first Swallow** of 2005 was seen at Achnamara (Loch Sween), Mid-Argyll on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> March (John Sweeney). Other reports of early birds included one at Aros Park, Mull on Easter Sunday, 27<sup>th</sup> March (Barry Bishop) and two at Totronald, Coll in the late afternoon of 28<sup>th</sup> March (SW). These were followed by reports of one in Kilmichael Glen, Mid-Argyll on 4<sup>th</sup> April (JH), two at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 5<sup>th</sup> April, two near Millhouse, Cowal 7<sup>th</sup> April (TC), at least two individuals around Loch Sween (PD/TC), two at head of Loch Feochan (Bill Allan), both on 11<sup>th</sup> April and eight in fields near Loch Crinan, Mid-

Argyll on 12<sup>th</sup> April with 30 **Sand Martins**. Two exceptionally early **House Martins** involved two birds around Kilchurn Castle (Loch Awe) on 26<sup>th</sup> March (Alan Gray) and one hawking for insects at the south end of Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 27<sup>th</sup> March (JB). These are the earliest records ever in Argyll. More usual dates were single birds at Glenbranter, Cowal on 20<sup>th</sup> April (Peter Woods) and at Cairnbaan 21<sup>st</sup> April (JD).

One **Tree Pipit** seen well at Tullochgorm (Minard) on 3<sup>rd</sup> April was very early for this species (PD). Another early bird was at Taynish NNR on 11<sup>th</sup> April (JH). Later records included birds seen singing at Cairnbaan on 18<sup>th</sup> April (JD) and at Dorlin Point, Loch Avich, Mid-Argyll on 22<sup>nd</sup> April (Richard Wesley). 18 migrant **Pied Wagtails** were at Totronald Coll on 11<sup>th</sup> March and of 141 wagtails noted on Coll on 23<sup>rd</sup> March at least 16 were **White Wagtails** (SW). On 24<sup>th</sup> April, 19 **White Wagtails** were at Hough Bay, Tiree (JB) and two were in the Add Estuary (JD). After the large November 2004 influx, **Waxwings** disappeared as quickly as they had arrived. However, a lone bird appeared briefly in a garden in Tayvallich on 22<sup>nd</sup> February and was caught in this hand-held digiscope photo (Morag Rea).



Waxwing (Photo: Morag Rea)

A pair of **Dippers** in the River Leacann (in Furnace, Mid-Argyll) on 16<sup>th</sup> March must surely have been near a potential nest site at this time of the year (PD).

The first singing **Common Redstarts** were at Taynish NNR on 19<sup>th</sup> April (JH), followed by birds in Minard Woods on 24<sup>th</sup> April (PD) and at Loch Nell head, Mid-Argyll, also on 24<sup>th</sup> April (Richard Wesley). One **Whinchat** seen at Loch a' Mhinn nr Kilmelford, Mid-Argyll on 19<sup>th</sup> April (Richard Wesley) was the first followed by a male at Kilninver (nr Oban) 22<sup>nd</sup> Apr (Bill Allan), one in Glen Aros, Mull on 25<sup>th</sup> April, one Moine Mhor 27<sup>th</sup> April (JD) and a male singing at Airigh Sheileach, Ormsary, Knapdale on 2<sup>nd</sup> May (PD). Mull had **Wheatears** at both Loch na Keal and Loch Spelve on 19<sup>th</sup> March (Alan Spellman) while singles were at Scarinish, Tiree on 20<sup>th</sup> March and three other sites on Tiree on 21<sup>st</sup> (JB). Coll had a male at Crossapol on 22<sup>nd</sup> March, at least 10 were on the island on the following day and 40+ were around Coll on 27<sup>th</sup>

March (SW). On the mainland a female **Wheatear** was seen in Scammadale Glen, Mid-Argyll on 22<sup>nd</sup> March (Bill Allan), three seen in Scammadale Glen, Mid-Argyll on 25<sup>th</sup> March (Mike Gregory), with singles at Auchalick Bay, Cowal on 28<sup>th</sup> March, at Otter Ferry on 29<sup>th</sup> March (TC) and at Tayinloan, Kintyre on 2<sup>nd</sup> Apr (Argyll Bird Club outing). Several 'Greenland' type **Wheatears** were found on Tiree during 20<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> April (JB). A stunning male **Ring Ouzel** on Coll on 23<sup>rd</sup> March was only the 6<sup>th</sup> record for the island. **Redwings**, **Fieldfares** and **Blackbirds** were also passing through on the same day (SW). A good movement of birds on Coll on 11<sup>th</sup> March included 26 **Song Thrushes** at Acha. Ninety-five **Fieldfares** and 12 **Redwings** were in a field south of Millhouse, Cowal on 24<sup>th</sup> March and three latish **Redwings** were at Inveraray Castle with other thrushes on 10<sup>th</sup> April (TC). At least 600 **Redwings** were at the west end of Coll on 11<sup>th</sup> April (SW) and three late birds were at An Airidh, Tiree on 27<sup>th</sup> April (JB).

The first reeling **Grasshopper Warblers** were heard at Loch Leathan, Mid-Argyll on 15<sup>th</sup> April (JH) and at Appin, North Argyll 19<sup>th</sup> April (Mike Gear). **Grasshopper Warblers**, which are known to vary in numbers from year-to-year, seemed to be all over the place by late April/early May 2005. Reeling birds were present at Kilbrandon Church on 22<sup>nd</sup> April, at Balvicar on 25<sup>th</sup> April (both Seil Island – Richard Wesley), Blair Urquhart heard at least 5 reeling as he walked up Kilmichael Glen, Mid-Argyll on 26<sup>th</sup> April, 2 were reeling at Balephuill, Tiree also on 26<sup>th</sup> April, one seen singing Cairnbaan 27<sup>th</sup> April (JD) and at least two were heard at Tullochgorm nr Minard (Mid-Argyll) on 1<sup>st</sup> May (PD). The first **Sedge Warblers** were singing at Dervaig, Mull on 25<sup>th</sup> April (Arthur Brown) and at Balephuill, Tiree on 26<sup>th</sup> April (JB), but in general there have been very few reports so far – have you seen/heard one? A very early **Common Whitethroat** was reported near the CalMac Pier, Coll on 27<sup>th</sup> March (SW). A female **Common Whitethroat** was at An Airidh, Tiree on 3<sup>rd</sup> May (JB) and another female was in a garden at Tullochgorm, Minard on 4<sup>th</sup> May (PD). A male **Blackcap** was seen daily in a garden at Kilninver (nr Oban) during 5<sup>th</sup> Jan–11<sup>th</sup> Apr (Bill Allan) and an early migrant was at Taynish NNR on 11<sup>th</sup> April (JH). A female at Balephuill on 23<sup>rd</sup> April was first of year for Tiree (JB), two or more singing in Minard Woods 24<sup>th</sup> April (PD), one at Kames, Cowal 25<sup>th</sup> April (Steve Petty) and a female at Balephuill, Tiree on 26<sup>th</sup> April (JB). At the time of writing I have still had no reports of **Garden Warblers**. A **Wood Warbler** on 20<sup>th</sup> April was only Coll's third record and on the mainland one was singing in Dunstaffnage Woods (Mid-

Argyll) on 3<sup>rd</sup> May (Robin Harvey) and 2 were singing in Minard Woods on 8<sup>th</sup> May (PD). Singing **Chiffchaffs** were reported at Roundhouse, Coll on 26<sup>th</sup> March (SW), at Salen, Mull also on 26<sup>th</sup> March (Maureen & Sue Hilder), at Largie Farm (Tayinloan) Kintyre on 29<sup>th</sup> March (Katie Pendreigh), at Totronald, Coll (2) on 2<sup>nd</sup> Apr (SW) and at Tullochgorm (Minard) on 3<sup>rd</sup> April (PD). One was singing at Sandbank (Dunoon) on 2<sup>nd</sup> April (Andrew Webster). Singing birds were at three or more different locations around Loch Sween, Mid-Argyll on 11<sup>th</sup> April. (PD/TC) and one was at Balephuill, Tiree on 12<sup>th</sup> April (JB). One **Willow Warbler** calling at Castle Stalker (N Argyll) on 3<sup>rd</sup> April (Bill Allan) was the first report. The earliest singing bird was in Kilmichael Glen, Mid-Argyll on 4<sup>th</sup> April, followed by birds at Auchnasaul, Mid-Argyll (Bill Jackson) and Loch Ederline (JD) on 5<sup>th</sup> April. Later records included one singing at Bousd, Coll on 10<sup>th</sup> April (SW), one singing at Aros Park, Mull on 10<sup>th</sup> April (Duncan & Sue Hall), two singing birds at Danna Island (Loch Sween), Mid-Argyll on 11<sup>th</sup> April (PD/TC), singing birds at Vaul, Tiree on 12<sup>th</sup> April and one at Kilbowie (Oban) 22<sup>nd</sup> April (Derek Pretswell). A major fall of **Goldcrests** occurred on Tiree on 19<sup>th</sup> March when a minimum of 30 were present on the island, including two taken by cats and one by a Sparrowhawk! (JB).

There was an unusual influx of at least 4 **Dunnocks** (usually only rare visitors to the island) on Tiree from 20<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> April and a lone **Great Tit** at Mannal on 4<sup>th</sup> April was the first record for Tiree since 1999! (JB). It looks as though March may be a time when **Magpies** (maybe last years' young?) tend to disperse. No less than five were reported well outwith their usual range in Argyll. One was in a garden at Carradale, Kintyre on 21<sup>st</sup> March (Mary Macmillan), another, also in a garden, was in Minard, Mid-Argyll on 29<sup>th</sup> (Alastair Galbraith), singles (presumably different birds) were seen on Mull at Fionnphort on 30<sup>th</sup> and at Grasspoint on 31<sup>st</sup> (per Alan Spellman) and one was present at Otter Ferry on 30<sup>th</sup> March and was seen again on 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> April (Valerie Malcolm). It



Lesser Redpoll  
(Photo: Tom Callan)

is not often that you see a **Lesser Redpoll** on peanuts, but a beautiful male bird was photographed feeding at Otter Ferry on 26<sup>th</sup> March (TC). A juv. **Siskin** in Jim Dickson's garden at Cairnbaan, Mid-Argyll on 17<sup>th</sup> April was proof of early breeding. Plenty of **Siskins** were still around in our gardens in March with at least 17 at feeders in Otter Ferry on 25<sup>th</sup> March (TC) and 9 **Goldfinches** were in a garden at Minard on 20<sup>th</sup> March (PD). Two male **Lapland Buntings** near Totronald included one in sub-song on 18<sup>th</sup> April, and a male Lapland Bunting in sub-song was at Crossapol farm, Tiree on 19<sup>th</sup> April (JB). **Snow Buntings** at Upper Killeyan on the Oa, Islay peaked at 32 in March and a flock of 10 were at Traigh nan Gilean, Tiree on 20<sup>th</sup> February (JB).

**Paul Daw**

Tel: 01546 886260

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

How I raided my wife's  
purse and found some-  
thing interesting

Like many other club members, I've recently written accounts of several bird species for the forthcoming book on the *Birds of Argyll*. By February, authors had been found for all 325-plus species except for two - **Goldcrest** and **Sparrowhawk**. To help things along, I volunteered to take on the **Goldcrest**.

Of course, I didn't let on that I knew very little about **Goldcrests**. What could I say about them? Well, most people know that the **Goldcrest** is the smallest British bird; it is also the smallest bird of the west Palearctic region. As a boy obsessed with birds and caterpillars, I used to bore anyone who would listen with the amazing fact that the smallest British bird is smaller than the largest British moth, the Death's-head Hawk-moth.

From my ringing records I found that a **Goldcrest** weighs about five grams. So I put all these facts in the draft account. But then I realised that "five grams" means very little to most people. Most of us don't deal with grams every day. Instead of giving it in grams, why not compare the weight of a **Goldcrest** with something more familiar, perhaps an everyday coin or combination of coins?

So I raided my wife's purse for a one-pound coin and a two-pound coin, reckoning that one or the other or some combination might be a good starting point. I weighed them on an accurate analytical balance. I had to go back to the purse for more coins before I had a good match for the weight of a **Goldcrest**.

Can you guess what that match was?  
[Answer at the bottom of page 18]

**Clive Craik**

## Field trips and events

### Dalriada Festival

The Dalriada Festival *Celebrating the people and landscapes of Scotland's birthplace* with events in Knapdale, Crinan, Tayvallich, Lochgilphead, Kilmartin and Ardrishaig will be held from 19th to 26th June 2005. The festival includes a wide range of events associated with human history in the area and the landscape. Although not posted yet (Friday 27 May) details of the festival should soon be available from the Dalriada Project web page at:

<http://www.dalriadaproject.org>

The Argyll Bird Club will be putting up posters with a bird quiz at the main "Festival Hub" at Cairnbaan on 25 and 26 June and one or two committee members will meet to birdwatch at and around the Add Estuary hide during the period 11am to 1pm on Saturday 25 June. All bird club members are most welcome to visit the festival to help with the birdwatch or to take part in festival activities; you are most welcome to drop in to the hide for a few minutes or more within the advertised period while the bird club will have someone present. There will be car parking at Achabreck timber yard, and a shuttle bus to and from Cairnbaan, and to the Add Estuary hide, as there is only very limited parking by the hide (a bay with room for only 2 or 3 cars).

**Bob Furness**

### Beinn an Tuirc Wind Farm

I have arranged for club members to visit Scottish Power's Beinn an Tuirc Wind Farm, Kintray on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> September. The trip will include a visit to the wind farm itself, where the manager will take us inside a turbine to see the computer system that operates the wind farm.

We will also hear about some of the monitoring and mitigation work that has been designed to benefit the local pair of **Golden Eagles**. This will include details about the pair's ranging behaviour in relation to the wind farm, and how the adjacent heather moorland is being improved for red grouse and other moorland wildlife. Overall, the visit should last about 2-2½ hours, finishing around 13.30hrs.

Participants should meet at 11.00hrs at the entrance to the wind farm, just off the A83 (Tarbet to Campbeltown road) at grid reference NR665334, which is about 3km south of Glenbarr. The start time will enable those coming from Cowal to catch

the 09.45hrs Portavadie Ferry that arrives in Tarbet at 10.10hrs. It takes about 40 minutes to drive from Tarbet to the meeting point.

If you want to join this trip, please let me have your name and telephone number before 5<sup>th</sup> September, so that I can let Scottish Power know how many to expect. The phone number is in case the trip has to be cancelled at short notice, due for instance to a severe weather forecast.

**Editor**

### Western Isles cruises for Argyll Bird Club members

Chris Jackson, who owns and skips 'Chalice', a 70 foot motor yacht that sails out of Oban (see advert on page 19), has offered ABC members discounts on three trips later this year and, if there was enough interest, to organise a charter for members next year.

*This year's trips:*

Trip 1: 'Where Eagles Dare' - St Kilda and The Hebrides. June 22nd – July 1st. Special guest Chris Gomersall, professional wildlife photographer and ex-staff photographer for the RSPB. This is not a 'photography cruise' although Chris will be working en route and would be happy to offer guidance to anyone who is interested. Chris is no stranger to Chalice and has a vast knowledge of birds. He's also just completed a trip to India, where he was photographing Tigers. If conditions are favourable, we may attempt to get some underwater shots of gannets diving, and we're planning to meet up with the RSPB officer on Mull who looks after the eagle project.

Trip 2: 'Outer Space', St Kilda and the Hebrides. July 20th - July 29th. Special guest is Bruce Pearson who is a professional wildlife artist and the Chairman of the British Wildlife Artists Association. Again, Bruce will be working while on board, which is fascinating to watch. If anyone fancies 'having a go' he's available to provide coaching and heaps of encouragement. Otherwise, he's a great travelling companion and a mine of information. Bruce spent four months on Mull in 2003 studying otters.

Trip 3: 'The Wild West' St Kilda and the Hebrides. August 22nd – August 31st. This trip marks the 75th anniversary of the evacuation of St Kilda. Special Guest Hugh Barton. Hugh has been a workgroup leader for the National Trust at St Kilda on several occasions and is a keen amateur photographer. He's no stranger to the Hebrides and will bring the history of St Kilda to light.

Anyone wishing to book on one of these trips should contact Chris directly (tel:

01631 720609 – E-mail: [chris@mvchalice.com](mailto:chris@mvchalice.com). If you book through Chris's agent, they will not be able to offer the same discount.

*Next year's charter*

Just to whet your appetite - Chris can accommodate up to 12 ABC members on a full-board basis (full breakfast, lunch - or packed lunch if ashore) morning and afternoon snacks and three-course dinner). Destinations would depend on the length of the cruise, which can be as far as St Kilda. However, Chris suggests that for a variety of birdlife, cetaceans and scenery that we might like to consider a cruise of possibly six nights that would range from north Jura to Skye. This could give you destinations such as the Garvellachs, the Treshnish Isles, Canna, Sandaig or Isle Ornesay, Loch Nevis and Loch Coruisk. Alternatively, if the weather was favourable, we could head out into the Minch and up to the Shiant Isles, which is a marvellous location teeming with bird life, especially in May/June. If you work on a budget cost of £100 per person per night (based on 12 people), this will give you an approximate costing. All cabins have two single bunks, with the exception of Cabin 1, which has two low-level berths.

If you are interested, please contact me (contact details on the front page). Places will go to the first 12 applicants. Singles will need to share a cabin, so try to persuade a friend to join you! Once we have a group of 12 confirmed, we can discuss the itinerary within the group and get back to Chris for a costing.

**Editor**

### Help required for Eider surveys in 2005

I would be grateful for help from Argyll Bird Club members with the following:

1. Counts and locations of any moulting **Eider** flocks (mid July/late Aug), especially on the western mainland and islands.
2. Help in counting **Eiders** in September in southern Cowal especially around Ardyne, Loch Striven, Kyles of Bute, Portavadie and Kilfinnan.

If anybody is willing to help with either of the above projects, please contact me:

Chris Waltho, 73 Stewart Street, Carlisle, Lanarkshire, ML8 5BY.

Tel: 01555 750719

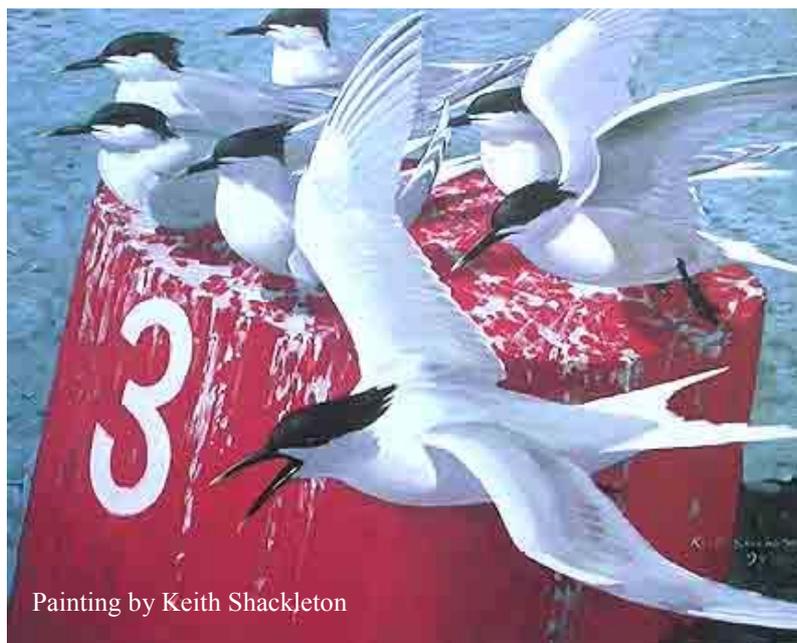
E-mail: [clydeeider@aol.com](mailto:clydeeider@aol.com)

## The Sandwich Tern's tale

Reading McWilliam (1927) raises false expectations. He reported **Common Terns** breeding between St. Ninian's Bay and Ettrick Bay, and at Ardscaipsie. By 1980, Gibson, Hopkins and Stephen said 'within recent years, however, nearly all nesting terns have disappeared from Bute and the offshore islands' (Transactions of the Buteshire Natural History Society, Vol. XXI. p. 83). A 1990 summary by Gibson and Hopkins reports attempts by **Common Terns** to breed on Inchmarnock in 1982 and 1984, but they were gone by 1986 (Transactions, Vol. XXIII. p. 121). It is now quite hard to see a **Common Tern** around the island. Occasionally an **Arctic Tern** flies by. Both species are known to breed at Bowling on the Inner Clyde, so it is worth keeping an eye out for these two terns. **Little Terns** have been seen in Kilchattan Bay in July.

It is the **Sandwich Tern** which you are most likely to see on Bute. It is a regular passage migrant, and can be seen in any month from April until October. It breeds at Hunterston, so our summer visitors are probably from there. The *Clyde Bird Report* shows large movements throughout the Clyde Estuary in 1999; 243 birds on 28-29 August and 303 on 12 September. July and August are the best months to see **Sandwich Terns** in Rothesay Bay. From my house above Craigmare Pier, I often hear them calling - the disyllabic 'kay-riik' or 'kirrik' is unmistakable.

Sandwich Terns are large birds, as big as **Black-headed Gulls**, tail-streamers 6-9 cms. long, a black bill, and white plumage. It has a prominent black and spiky crest. In summer the forehead turns white, reducing the aggressive aspect of the adult. **Sandwich Terns** fly with measured, forceful wing beats, often turning sharply when it has spotted a fish.



Painting by Keith Shackleton

They hover only briefly, unlike **Common Terns**, and then plunge **Gannet**-like at their prey.

Sandwich Terns winter off the coast of West Africa, arriving there in October. The coasts of Senegal and Angola are favoured, though a few Scottish birds have been recovered in Natal Province. Global warming may be affecting the species with one or two birds recorded off the English coast in winter. I note two reported in Hampshire on 23 January 2004.

The scientific name of the **Sandwich Tern** is *Sterna sandvicensis*. *Sterna* is contrived Latin from the Old Norse tern; *sandvicensis* from Sandwich in Kent. The bird was named by Dr. John Latham in 1785, 'owing to its being found there "in vast flocks making a screaming noise"' (General Synopsis of Birds).

*Michael Thomas*

## Black Guillemots breeding in the Clyde sealochs

Seabird 2000 data presented in Mitchell *et al* (2004) show no breeding of Black Guillemot in the Clyde sealochs, which include Loch Fyne, Loch Striven, Loch Long, Loch Goil and Gare Loch. This note confirms breeding in these sealochs, estimates the population size during 1999-2001 and provides a supplement to the Seabird 2000 data.

The first breeding bird atlas (Sharrock 1976) for the period 1968-72 shows possible breeding in Loch Fyne (National Grid 10km square NR97, Portavadie/ Kilfinan or Tighnabruaich and NR99, Minard Islands), but not in the other sealochs. In addition, there were no Black Guillemots recorded in the Inner Clyde north of the Cumbraes (NS15).

Breeding had been established on MOD piers at Ardgarten, Arrochar, Loch Long and Garelochhead (Gare Loch) by the mid 1980s, and on other military structures in these lochs by the end of the 1980s (John

Spooner *pers comm.*). Webb *et al* (1990) confirm the Garelochhead site and the presence of the Port Glasgow breeding sites on the Clyde Estuary that were occupied from the mid 1970s (Carnduff 1981), but no other sites in the sealochs.

By the second breeding atlas (Tasker & Walsh 1994) during the period 1988-91 there had been a considerable range expansion within the Firth of Clyde since Sharrock (1976), with breeding in an additional 25+ 10km squares, particularly into the sealochs (in five 10km squares) and adjacent parts of the Inner Firth to the Clyde Estuary (Port Glasgow), but also around much of the Outer Firth coast.

Much of this range expansion, especially in the inner Clyde sealochs, appears to be due to birds using man-made structures for nesting, a practise that has become widespread in the Clyde and adjoining areas (Carnduff 1981, John Spooner *pers. comm.*, Waltho 1998 that was wrongly cited as Dickson (1998) in Mitchell *et al.* (1994))

The Table and Map (next page) detail sites that were occupied by breeding birds during the Seabird 2000 survey period (1999-2001). A number of suitable islands near the mouth of Loch Fyne were not counted during the survey period, and breeding may occur on these (Map).

At least 47 pairs were recorded at 15 sites in the Clyde sea lochs. Eleven (73%) of the 15 sites were on man-made structures, including 10 on piers. Man-made struc-



Table. Breeding sites occupied by Black Guillemots in the Clyde sealochs during 1999-2001

Loch	Site No. & name	Grid reference	Site type	Pairs	Year	Observer
Fyne	1. Sgeir Port a'Ghuail	NR 874 699	Island	1	2000	Clive Craik
Fyne	2. Liath Eilean	NR 888 837	Island	1	1999	Peter Kirk
Fyne	3. Glas Eilean	NR 912 857	Island	2?	2001	Clive Craik
Fyne	4. Largiemore	NR 935 855	Pier	2	1999	CM Waltho
Fyne	5. Eilean Aoghainn	NR 985 945	Island	25+	1999	CMW/Paul Daw
Fyne	6. Ardnagowan	NN 105 055	Raft	1	1999	CM Waltho
Striven	7. MOD Fuel jetty	NS 095 715	Pier	1	1999	CM Waltho
Long	8. Coulport	NS 205 875	Pier	2	1999	John Simpson
Long	9. Finnart S	NS 235 945	Pier	1	1999	CM Waltho
Long	10. Finnart N	NS 235 955	Pier	1	1999	CM Waltho
Long	11. Glenmallan	NS 245 965	Pier	1	1999	CM Waltho
Long	12. Ardgarten	NN 285 035	Pier	3	1999	CM Waltho
Gare	13. Rosneath	NS 265 825	Pier	2	1999	CM Waltho
Gare	14. Faslane	NS 245 895	Pier	2	1999	CM Waltho
Gare	15. Garelochhead	NS 245 905	Pier	1	1999	CM Waltho
Goil	No sites recorded				1999	CM Waltho

tures accounted for 36% of breeding pairs. The other man-made structure used was a floating raft moored offshore at Ardnagowan. Nesting on floating structures has also been recorded recently on an operational car ferry in the nearby Sound of Gigha (Waltho 1998).

The four natural sites, all on rocky islands in Loch Fyne, accounted for 62% of the breeding pairs. At the largest of these, Eilean Aoghainn, Clive Craik estimated 10-20 pairs in 1995. However, mink predation was noted there in 2000, and by 2002 appears to have had a major impact on of breeding numbers Black Guillemot, Shag and Common Eider (Clive Craik). At this site Black Guillemot may now have been eliminated, or at least stopped breeding, and the other Loch Fyne sites may have suffered a similar fate.

Given the increasing presence of mink and their impact on the rocky islet nest sites, man-made structures may provide a safer nesting options in the longer term, in addition to facilitating the recent range expansion.

#### References

- Carnduff, D. 1981. Black Guillemots breeding in the inner Clyde estuary. *Scottish Birds* 11: 195-196.
- Mitchell, P.I., Newton, S.F., Ratcliffe, N & Dunn. T. E. 2004. *Seabird Populations of Britain and Ireland*. T. & A. D. Poyser, London.
- Sharrock, J.T.R. 1976. *The Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland*. T. & A. D. Poyser, Berkhamsted.
- Tasker, M. L. & Walsh P.M. 1994. Black Guillemot. In *The New Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland: 1988-1991*. (eds. Gibbons, D.W., Reid, J.B., & Chapman, R.A.) p228-229.
- Waltho, C.M. 1998. Black Guillemot nesting on an operational car ferry. *Scottish Birds* 19: 301-302
- Webb, A., Harrison, N.M., Leaper, G.M., Steele, R.D., Tasker, M.L. & Pienkowski, M.W. 1990. *Seabird distribution west of Britain*. Nature Conservancy Council, Peterborough.

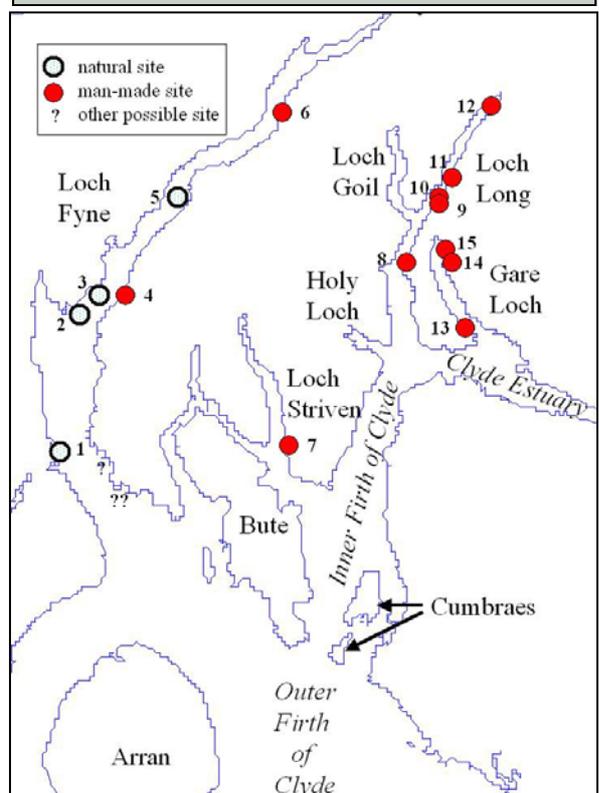
#### Chris M. Waltho

73 Stewart Street, Carluke, Lanarkshire, ML8 5BY

Email: [clydeeider@aol.com](mailto:clydeeider@aol.com)

(This article is reproduced from the *Seabird Group Newsletter* 99, February 2005, with permission from the Editor)

Map. Black Guillemot nest sites in the Clyde



Answer (see page 15): A Goldcrest weighs less than a 10p coin and about the same as a 20p coin.  
[A £2 coin weighs 12g, £1 weighs 9.5g, 50p weighs 8g, 10p weighs 6.5g, 20p weighs 5g and 5p weighs 3.25g.]

**Why not advertise in the Eider?** Rates are: £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.

## Hebridean Wildlife Cruises

Sailing from Oban  
 4/6/9 night cruises available  
 Inner & Outer Hebrides - St Kilda  
*Full details and prices at*  
**www.mvchalice.com**

Eagles and sea-birds  
 Whales and Dolphins  
 Basking Sharks  
 Otters  
 Relaxed walks  
 Fantastic scenery





**Stable Cottages and  
 The Farmhouse Bed and Breakfast**  
 Carnduncan, Gruinart  
 Isle of Islay, Argyll, PA44 7PS  
 Telephone: 01496 850500  
 Email: [info@accommodation-islay.co.uk](mailto:info@accommodation-islay.co.uk)  
 Website: [accommodation-islay.co.uk](http://accommodation-islay.co.uk)

**Self catering or bed and breakfast  
 accommodation within the RSPB reserve  
 at Loch Gruinart on the Isle of Islay.**

Ever thought of a birdwatching holiday on the beautiful hebridean Isle of Islay? Well here at Carnduncan we have accommodation situated within the boundaries of the RSPB reserve at Loch Gruinart. Self catering is in either a cottage sleeping up to 8 or a studio flat sleeping 2. Bed and breakfast is available in 'The Farmhouse Suite' comprising a bath/shower room, a lounge and a double bedroom. All have magnificent views over Loch Gorm and out across the sea to Ireland. Birds include chough, corncrake, buzzard, hen harrier, golden eagle and of course the spectacle of up to 50,000 barnacle and white front geese which over-winter here. The other reserve on Islay on the Oa is only half an hour away. Check out our website for more information and contact us anytime concerning availability.

**[www.accommodation-islay.co.uk](http://www.accommodation-islay.co.uk)**



**Telescope for sale**

Having just spent a small fortune on a new Swarovski telescope, my Bausch & Lomb scope in good condition is now for sale. Specification: 60mm diameter object lens and 15X – 60X zoom eyepiece, plus robust leatherette case.

Price: £70.

Please contact:

**John Anderson, Ard Beag, Connel, Oban, Argyll, PA37 1PT**  
**Tel: 01631 710630**

Articles for the next issue of *The Eider* should with the Editor before the 25th August 2005 (see the box opposite for more details)

Machrihanish Bird Observatory Report  
2002-2004

This report, written by Eddie Maguire, is now available as a pdf file on the club's website at:

[http://www.argyllbirdclub.org/publications/machrihanish\\_obs.html](http://www.argyllbirdclub.org/publications/machrihanish_obs.html)

**Editor**

Help needed with diver rafts

I would very much like to hear from anyone who might be interested in getting involved in diver raft monitoring in Argyll. I would be happy to take them out on one of my rounds later this year. These are likely to be during early-late June and late July-early August. Anyone interested must be able to walk for 5-6 six hours on rough ground. In due course, those interested in continuing, and working on their own, will have to get SNH licences.

David Merrie

Tel: 01250 884273

Email: [david@merrie1035.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:david@merrie1035.fsnet.co.uk)

Officials and Committee of the Argyll  
Bird Club (2004/2005)

**Chairman:** David Wood, Drover's House, Bellanoch, Lochgilphead, Argyll PA31 8SN (phone 01546 830272)

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

**Secretary:** John Anderson, Ard Beag, Connel, Oban, Argyll PA37 1PT (phone 01631 710630)

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

**Membership Secretary:** Sue Furness, The Cnoc, Tarbet, Loch Lomond G83 7DG (phone 01301 702603)

**Committee:** Richard Allan (Oban), Roger Broad (Killearn), Tom Callan (Otter Ferry), Paul Daw (Minard), Mike Gear (Appin), David Merrie (Blairgowrie), Katie Pendreigh (Tayinloan) and Steve Petty (Tighnabraich)

**Editor of the Argyll Bird Report:** Simon Wellock, Warden RSPB Coll Reserve, Totronald, Isle of Coll, Argyll PA78 6TB (phone 01879 230301)

**Editor of the Eider:** Steve Petty (contact details on front page)

**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))

**Argyll Bird Club Website:** <http://www.argyllbirdclub.org>

# The Eider



**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 and press releases. 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 in the first week of March, June, September and December. Articles for each issue must be with the editor before the 25th day of the month prior to publication. However, it greatly helps if material can be submitted well before these deadline dates. Items are accepted in the order they are received, and late submissions may have to be held over until the next issue.

Opinions expressed in articles are those of the author/s and not 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.

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 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 annual 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 1<sup>st</sup> January and can be paid by cheque or standing order. New members joining after 1<sup>st</sup> October are covered until the end of the following year. Further information can be obtained from the Membership Secretary or website (see box on this page).