

June 2007
Number 81

The Eider



What an Eider!—a King Eider photographed at Machrihanish SBO on 12 May 2007 (photo Eddie Maguire)

Arrival & departure dates of migrants

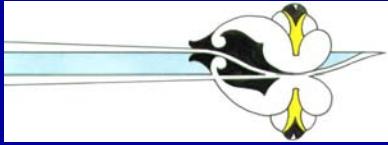
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[Recent reports](#)

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ABC indoor meetings in 2007-08

Autumn Meeting 2007

Saturday 10th November at the Cainbaan Hotel
(<http://www.cairnbaan.com/>), near Lochgiphead

The programme is on page 3

Spring Meeting 2008

Saturday 8th March at The Argyll Hotel, Inveraray
(<http://www.the-argyll-hotel.co.uk/>)

The programme will be in the December Eider

Editorial

You will find an order form for the *Birds of Argyll* included in this posting. Those of you who receive the electronic version of the *Eider* will have the order form posted to you separately, as the file size is too big to be sent as an e-mail attachment. We hope that you will all buy at least one copy. The price to club members is below the actual cost of producing and posting the book, so it represents excellent value. I know of one member who wants 14 copies! Bob Furness (contact details on the back page) will happily send you additional order forms on request—for family, friends etc!

The book will be available during the last quarter of 2007. At present it is not possible to give a publication date, but club members will be notified as soon as the date has been fixed. The club hopes to host a book launch that you will all be invited to.

The book is the culmination of a tremendous amount of work over the past six years, and something the club will be proud of for many years to come. Many people have contributed—ranging from club members and other birdwatchers, who have diligently submitted records to the Argyll Bird Recorder over many years, to the editorial group who have organised and steered the project, the authors of individual species accounts and artists and photographers whose illustrations embellish the book. Latterly, a heavy work load has fallen on David Wood's shoulders as he took on the Herculean task of page layout and design. But, take my word for it; the end product is going to be well worth the wait!

Many thanks

To the following for their contributions to this issue: John Armitage, Mary-Lou Aichison, John Bowler, Tom Callan, Danielle Clark, Paul Daw, Jim Dickson, Bob Furness, John Halliday, Ian Hopkins, James How, Eddie Maguire, Katie Pendreigh, Linda Petty (proof reading), Eva & David Shrewsbury, Margaret Staley, Lang Stewart, Michael & Huw Thomas and David & Louise Wood.

Field trips—2007 and beyond

There are no new trips advertised in this issue. This spring, three field trips ran successfully in some excellent weather conditions (see pages 4-6). In addition, Bob Furness has organised an excursion to Ailsa Craig on 24 June, which was quickly filled. He then arranged another trip on 1 July and that too is now full.

The possibility of going to Spain in spring 2008 for a week was discussed with interested members at the spring meeting. Two venues had been suggested (December 2006 *Eider*, pages 17-20). The overwhelming view, at the meeting, was that the trip should be for a week in early

June to the Picos de Europa in northern Spain rather than Extremadura. Also, most folks expressed a desire to go by ferry from Plymouth to Santander, across the Bay of Biscay rather than by plane. Subsequently, I have been looking at times of trains (from Glasgow to Plymouth) and ferries. The result is that the train/ferry return journey would add four days onto the week in Spain (travel to Plymouth by train one day, stay overnight in Plymouth and then another night on the ferry, and the same on the return journey). So, I have decided that we will do the same as the birds and fly! It is possible to go by air from Glasgow to

Santander, with a change in the south of England. At the meeting, the preferred option was to start the trip mid-week so that only one weekend was involved. Thus, the provisional dates are 11-17 June 2008, but this might change a little depending on the availability of flights and accommodation. Flight information is unlikely to be available until this autumn/winter, but once it is, I will be able to estimate

the cost of the trip and get back to those who left me their contact details at the spring meeting. The hotel I plan to stay at is Hotel del Oso at Cosgaya in the Picos (<http://www.hoteldeloso.com/>), but this again depends on whether enough accommodation is available once the flight information is published.

Steve Petty (contact details at the top of page 2)

Birds of Argyll—request for photos

The *Birds of Argyll* is nearing completion, but we are lacking a few colour photographs, which readers might be able to help with. If possible, we would like photos of the following birds:

Sooty Shearwater, European Storm-petrel, Leach's Storm-petrel, Snowy Egret, Hobby, Green Sandpiper, Grey Phalarope, Pomarine Skua, Long-tailed Skua, Rock Dove, Common Cuckoo, Green Woodpecker, Grasshopper Warbler, Garden Warbler, Common Redpoll

In addition, we are looking for some landscape photos, particularly of Coll & Tiree (including the machair in flower), photos of

birds being studied in Argyll (ringing, trapping, monitoring etc., including some of the folks involved in these studies), and photos of land management taking place, e.g. shots of people fishing or farming.

If you can provide any of these, please contact:

David Wood

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Machrihanish Seabird and Wildlife Observatory—website

The observatory's website has been transformed since the last time I looked at it, and it is well worth visiting at:

<http://www.machrihanishbirds.org.uk>

It has easily accessible sections (about us, news, reviews, photo gallery, location, contact us, links, digiscoping and merchandise). But probably the outstanding feature is the wealth of excellent photographs taken mainly by Eddie Maguire, and mostly from the

observatory!

If you haven't been there, the observatory itself is well worth a visit, as you never know what's going to turn up, for example the King Eider on the front cover of this issue! Eddie is also a fountain of knowledge, not only about the migrants and resident birds, but also about the fast developing art of digiscoping.

Steve Petty

Programme for the ABC's Autumn Meeting Saturday 10th November 2007 Cairnbaan Hotel, near Lochgilphead

| Time | Session |
|-----------|---|
| 0930 | Doors open, coffee and tea |
| 0950-1000 | Welcome and introduction— <i>Nigel Scriven</i> (Chairman) |
| 1000-1015 | Recent bird sightings— <i>Paul Daw</i> (Argyll Bird Recorder) |
| 1015-1115 | Bean Geese in Scotland— <i>John Simpson</i> |
| 1115-1145 | Coffee/tea |
| 1145-1230 | Antarctica— <i>John Anderson</i> |
| 1230-1245 | Putting Scotland's birds on the map— <i>Jacqui Kaye</i> |
| 1245-1345 | Lunch (available in the hotel) |
| 1345-1415 | AGM— <i>ABC members only</i> |
| 1415-1500 | Wildlife in Belarus— <i>David Kent</i> |
| 1500-1530 | Coffee/tea |
| 1530-1615 | Wildlife photography— <i>Philip Kirkham</i> |
| 1615-1645 | Raffle, after which the meeting ends |

During the past few months there has been a succession of changes to the Islay "birding scene". A while ago, Clive McKay left the island for pastures new, as had Tristan ap Reinallt before him, thus reducing the resident birding community to single figures!!

Then, at the beginning of 2007, I was appointed BTO Regional Representative, and WeBS organizer, for Islay, Jura and Colonsay (to replace Malcolm Ogilvie). I soon discovered a similar low number of BTO members in the catchment's area!! With the upcoming Atlas Project (wintering and breeding) commencing in November, 2007 and lasting for four years, clearly some thought was needed as to how interest could be generated in BTO field work, and how to sustain it at least for the Atlas period!! Thankfully, David Jardine personally ensures the completion of all BTO surveys on Colonsay - many thanks David. So, the problem only existed on the two larger islands.

After some thought and encouragement from close friends, it was decided to have a meeting of all those who had contributed to the Non-Estuarine Wader Survey over the winter and who were considered "active". The objective was to draw together everyone who might contribute to future survey work and also to work towards improving the general birding scene through better and swifter communication and so on. The meeting was held at the RSPB's Loch Gruinart Reserve. Just before we started a Little Egret was seen by most attendees. This helped to raise the atmosphere, and was held by some to be a sign of future success!

And so through a process of debate, begging and arm twisting the Islay Bird Group was formed! Pledged to the above tasks it will hopefully make life a lot easier when the planning and allocation of Atlas takes place. Already a handful of potential future contributors has emerged, modestly offering help in their local area with casual records.

Then, as if to endorse, but certainly encourage the fledgling group, a Lesser Yellowlegs turned up at Gruinart late on a Sunday afternoon. On this occasion a good proportion of the newly formed ornithological congregation gathered in the evening to enjoy absolutely splendid views. It felt as if we should have a resounding good sing, but we resisted the temptation lest we disturb such a jewel!!

Seriously, what appeared to be a daunting task is proving to have



As if to endorse the formation of the Islay Bird Group, a Lesser Yellowlegs turned up at Gruinart soon after the inaugural meeting (photo James How)

potential, a nice community focus and something that will lead to a better set of results for the Atlas than was at first thought possible. There will still be problems I'm sure. The western half of Jura for one! But, the whole situation is now more optimistic. Additionally we are hoping to improve the flow of information and records to the Argyll Bird Club, and to give some impetus to the whole birding scene within the two islands. To assist this we have created a blog site (www.islaybirds.blogspot.com), which is in its infancy but already attracted an ever increasing number of "hits". To resident and visitor alike, this will hopefully provide information to help everyone enjoy what we all like doing best - birdwatching!

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Bute field trip—24 March 2007

This trip was originally scheduled for 17 March, but the weather was so inclement that Ian Hopkins cancelled it. Then the weather improved and he fixed the new date for the following Saturday. What a good decision! The weather was superb, deep blue skies all day—sunshine from wall to wall!

Bute is such a lovely island, just driving round it was a great pleasure, never mind the birds we saw. For me the high spot was watching skeins of geese, mainly **Greylags** but also some **White-fronts**, wheeling over the island. They are viewed with jaundiced eyes by the local farmers. We saw two farmers driving around in quad bikes trying to stop the flocks landing on their fields. In spite of these efforts we did see many on the ground. I did not keep a bird list for the day, but we had good views of **Red-breasted Mergansers** in their breeding finery, lots of **Redshanks** and **Wigeon**. One of the highlights was watching a **Meadow Pipit** as it sat on a bare branch, just inches away from the window of our mini bus. Visiting various lochs we saw **Goldeneyes** and **Tufted Ducks**. Our trip to Loch Fad was disappointing, the fishermen were out in force and there were no birds at all on the water. While we were at Ettrick Bay two extraordinary vehicles passed overhead; a



The party bird watching on Bute (photo Danielle Clark)

hybrid between a paraglider and microlight! They made an awful lot of noise, putting up any birds around, but they were moderately entertaining as they descended to just above our heads, gave us a cheery wave and then rose into the sky again. Just before they appeared, a **Peregrine** was spotted flying high, but it made no attempt to stoop.

Bird watchers are such generous people; those without telescopes were offered looks through by those who had them, for which I was most grateful. Ian, with his intimate knowledge of the island,

and of its flora and fauna, was a wonderful guide. Driving along he sees things that those of us gazing out of the window fail to notice - how does he do it? 'That there was a buzzard sitting on a branch of a nearby tree' he said, 'did you see it?' He pointed out that some of the many new lambs we saw had plastic coats on to prevent them getting chilled! And finally he drove us to the ferry, and we just managed to catch the boat, which was on the Bute side of the Sound. A perfect day, many thanks to Ian!

Eva & David Shrewsbury

Sound of Gigha field trip—14 April 2007

Despite some early mist, the weather for the Argyll Bird Club field trip to the Sound of Gigha looked promising, and 18 people turned up at the car park at Ronachan (at least 20 were present for some part of the day). It was good to see that these included several new club members and a couple of guests.

Willow Warblers had arrived in force in the past couple of days and several were singing in the trees opposite the car park together with Robins and Wrens. A first Common Sandpiper of the year had been seen by some people before the rest of us arrived. Close to the shore, gulls included Common, Herring, Lesser Black-backed and Great Black-backed. On the rocks were four or more Shags with at least six Red-breasted Mergansers, three or four Common Eiders and an odd Common Shelduck nearby. A group of at least six Purple Sandpipers were spotted on rocks along the shore by a sharp eyed observer and one or two Ringed Plovers were also present. Further out on the sea, at least nine Great Northern Divers were mostly in non-breeding plumage and a single Gannet flew past. Several Grey Seals were lounging on the rocks. A single Swallow was seen as we left.

The site at 'West Coast Salmon' seldom disappoints, and this day was no exception. We soon picked up Slavonian Grebes quite close to the shore and eventually had at least 10 birds. Most were in breeding plumage, but two were apparently still in a rather confusing partial winter plumage. Groups of Common Scoters were also sitting on the sea just off-shore, probably 20 or more in all. Among them were at least eight drake Velvet Scoters - the white spot by the eye and even white patch on the wing could clearly be seen.

Conditions were flat calm with virtually no wind at all. This meant that sound carried well across the water and we could hear some unfamiliar piping calls. When checked later against recordings it transpired that these were from the Common Scoters - a sound that none of us had heard before. Two of the Slavonian Grebes were engaged in the so-called 'penguin-dance' display where they rise up out of the water facing each other. At the same time they gave a quite loud trilling sound that was also new to us. Again there were several Great Northern Divers further out in the Sound, some in almost full breeding plumage as well as a pair of Common Goldeneye. A beautiful Black-throated Diver in full breeding plumage sailed past close to and at least one Red-throated Diver was seen to the north. Three or four Sand Martins made an appearance while we were there and a Ringed Plover sat tight at a spot on the shingle as though on eggs. We didn't investigate further for fear of disturbing it. Altogether a magical spot and it seemed a pity to have to drag ourselves away to be in time for the 12.00hrs ferry to Gigha.

As we waited to board the ferry two Sandwich Terns flew north calling - the first terns of the year for most of us - and four Lapwings were displaying in the fields. On the journey across to the island we saw several Common Guillemot and a few Black Guillemots and Razorbills, all quite close to the ferry. Several more Common Scoters and five or six Great Northern Divers were also seen before we reached the island. A Common Shelduck was with Mallards just north of the ferry jetty and passerines seen and heard as we walked to the hotel included Willow Warblers, Dun-



'Greenland' Wheatear near the ferry terminal to Gigha
(photo Danielle Clark)

nocks, Wrens, Song Thrush, Robin, Goldfinch and Greenfinch.

Sitting in the garden of the Gigha Hotel, eating our lunch in the glorious sunshine, it felt more like high summer than spring. As there was time to spare before we had to catch the ferry back we walked up to the woods near Achamore House. A Lesser Redpoll was calling, the usual woodland birds were singing and the first few bluebells were just coming into flower. Meanwhile Linnets were found in the gorse bushes down towards the beach.

On the return journey we saw at least 12 more Common Scoters and several more Great Northern Divers, one of which was struggling to swallow a small flat fish.

As we walked from the ferry up to Katie Pendreigh's house, another single Swallow flew past as well as a small group of Meadow Pipits, a Common Raven and several Rooks. A single Northern Wheatear was picked out in one of the fields. Some very tame male Reed Buntings, in pristine breeding plumage, gave us close up views as we enjoyed the refreshments Katie had kindly provided and the good conversation.

Still in bright sunshine we took a short walk along the beach to the ferry car park. Although it was fairly quiet for birds we did see a noticeably large and strongly marked male Wheatear with a very upright stance that showed the characteristics of the Greenland race *leucorhoa*. And all the time Sky Larks were singing their heads off overhead. On the way home Mike Harrison picked up three White Wagtails along the shore at Ronachan

With the addition of a Mute Swan seen near Ronachan on the way home we finished the day with a total of 63 species and two additional races (Greenland Wheatear and White Wagtail). With many thanks to Katie for generously providing cakes, tea and coffee for such a large group - I just don't know where she found all the coffee mugs! And thanks to Danielle Clarke for the excellent photograph.

Paul Daw

Six members joined John Halliday (Reserve Manager) and Francois Chazel (Site Management Officer) at Taynish National Nature Reserve on a glorious spring morning on Saturday 12 May. John welcomed the members to Taynish, one of Scotland's most beautiful oak woodland reserves, especially at this optimal time of year when woodland birds and flowers are at their most spectacular.

We followed the woodland trail, a 5km circuit through some of the most scenic oak woodland on the Taynish peninsula. Reed Buntings and Sedge Warbler were singing in the valley mire, while Great Spotted Woodpeckers and Redstarts were proclaiming their territories in the spectacular wooded hillside of Barr Mor.

Opportunities were taken to discuss reserve management. Since stock (cattle and sheep) were removed 30 years ago when the reserve was established, there has been a significant expansion of woodland cover, particularly birch. This has resulted in a gradual loss of open heathland, bog and coastal grassland, all important habitats for a wide variety of moths, butterflies and dragonflies. Future management will aim to sustain these open areas of high conservation interest in association with scrub and extensive areas of woodland, which will help to maximise Taynish's biodiversity. A grazing trial with cattle is being proposed in part of the woodland, which hopefully will provide natural dynamism to the woodland and woodland edge habitats. Marsh Fritillary, one of Europe's rarest butterflies thrives at Taynish thanks to traditional cattle grazing on the coast which keeps rank vegetation in check and allows butterfly food plants to flourish.

Moving on, we were rewarded by excellent views of most of the summer visitors including Redstarts, Wood Warblers and Common Whitethroats. However, Blackcaps and Garden Warblers remained undercover, which tested our song ID skills!

This will be my 18th year of Common Birds Census at Taynish. Interesting trends include the doubling of Willow Warbler territories from 0.8 per hectare (100mx100m) to 1.6 per hectare, a huge density. Most species are doing well and Blackcaps, once rare at Taynish, are now relatively common. Observations during our walk suggested that 2007 is a good year for Redstarts but a poor



Enjoying the sunshine and oakwoods at Taynish NNR
(photo Louise Wood)

year for Wood Warblers. The brief appearance of a Golden Oriole in 1992, 1994, 1997 and 2003 of course was a reward for all my censusing effort! But best of all is being down at Taynish early on a clear spring morning with the mist rising in the mires as the sun filters through, listening to the dawn chorus and feeling very privileged to be present on one of Scotland's most beautiful National Nature Reserves.

John Halliday

Scotland's first Coastal and Marine National Park

In March 2007 the Scottish Executive produced a 51 page booklet reviewing consultation responses on proposals to establish Scotland's first Coastal and Marine National Park (CMNP). The document is available at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/04/17092536/0>

and from Blackwell's Bookshop, Edinburgh (0131 622 8283). The Argyll Bird Club committee sent a response to the initial proposal, and was one of 171 organisations to do so. Ten possible areas had been defined as suitable candidates for the first CMNP, including "Argyll Islands and Coast", and an overlapping area called "Lochaber and South Skye". These were the only overlapping areas, the others ranging from the Clyde (which includes the Clyde coast of Kintyre) to Shetland. OS copyright regulations prevent us from including their map in the Eider, but the "Argyll" area includes the mainland coast of the Firth of Lorn and Loch Linnhe, Sound of Mull out to Ardnamurchan Point, the Sound of Jura, but (perhaps surprisingly) not the west coast of Kintyre, or Gigha. You can see a map of this from the Argyll link at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Environment/Countryside/16131/Marine-National-Park>

which also includes a short video film of some highlights of the area!

The review of 940 responses showed 72% supported the establishment of a CMNP, and 10% oppose it. The combination of the Argyll Islands and Coast and the Ardnamurchan, Small Isles and south Skye coast was considered by the largest number of respondents to be the most appropriate location. Most 'interest groups' identified a range of benefits that they thought would result from a CMNP, including benefits for tourism and for new types of businesses. On the other hand, fishing interests mostly suggested that there would be no benefits, while local authorities and community councils mostly answered "no response" to this question!

Graphs and statistics can be misleading. And although 940 responses sounds quite good, when these are broken down between the 10 potential areas, sample sizes from individual areas can be very small. Although Argyll received the largest number of 'votes' as site for the first CMNP, only Orkney received nearly 100% support from the very small number of local respondents in favour of their local area. Several respondents in Argyll were opposed to the idea of a CMNP in Argyll. So, overall, the possibility of Scotland having its first CMNP may have come a small step closer, with Argyll apparently a front runner. But I'd not want to bet on whether we see a CMNP in Argyll before or after we see breeding beavers!

Bob Furness

The 'upside-down bird' of Argyll gardens

Have you noticed that Siskins seem to be the only bird that actually prefers to be upside-down while feeding on peanuts? Any self-respecting Blue Tit will hang on to the feeder head-up, while those cheeky and aggressive little finches happily peck away with their head below their feet. I wonder if they have a specially evolved anatomy to cope with this. Perhaps the blood would rush to their tail if they fed the "right" way up! Presumably Siskins have evolved to feed upside-down to allow them to hang from spruce and pine cones and prize out the seeds from the partly opened cone scales. For conifer seed is their main diet, at least in winter and spring.

The habit of feeding at peanut and niger feeders in gardens, especially in the late winter and spring, is something that has spread through the Siskin population only in the last few decades. Siskins used to be extremely rare in Argyll until the conifer plantations that were mostly established during the 20th century started to reach maturity and produce cones. Now this is one of our more abundant birds. Sometimes the peanut feeder in my garden is covered with them. But their presence in the garden is quite erratic. They are there some springs and hardy at all in others, on some days in huge numbers and on others not to be seen at all. A few years ago Steve Petty told me that this was because the Siskins prefer to feed on spruce seeds, and they can only get at these when the cones are open. Cones open when it is dry, and close up tight when it is wet. So Siskins can extract seeds while the weather is dry, but cannot when it is wet. Also, spruce trees produce lots of cones in some years, and hardly any in others. This is called "masting" and is typical of a number of tree species (including oak and beech).

Steve and I supervised a Masters student at Glasgow University, Ailsa McKenzie, who looked at long term data on numbers of Siskins and other birds I caught in my garden each year. Her analysis showed that Siskin numbers in my garden were high in springs following low spruce cone crops, and low in springs when the spruce cone crop had been heavy. This pattern applied not only in my garden, but also in the BTO Garden Bird survey data set for all areas of the UK. The same was true of Coal Tits, which apparently also feed extensively on spruce seed. So these birds clearly do prefer spruce seeds when they can get them, and use garden feeders as something of a last resort. Which is perhaps a surprise given how easy it is for them to get food from garden feeders. Presumably the cats and human disturbance in gardens make these a less attractive prospect for the birds than the top of a spruce tree! Ailsa's analysis of these variations from year to year will be published in the next issue of *Bird Study*.

But that analysis did not look at how much Siskin activity in gardens is affected by day-to-day changes in the weather. For the last couple of years I have been measuring seed consumption from feeders in my garden every day. It turns out that Steve was right.



Siskin in a typical upside-down feeding position compared to the Blue Tit (photo Bob Furness)

On wet days there are more Siskins in the garden and they eat far more seed. After a run of dry days the Siskin activity drops close to zero, as does their consumption from my feeders. I can tell this because I have a niger seed feeder that is used heavily by Siskins, but hardly ever used by any other birds. I don't (yet) have Goldfinches in my garden to complicate this story, and (unlike the Siskins) the Coal Tits, other tits and finches, seem to prefer sunflower to niger seeds. This effect of weather has been really obvious this spring because there was a very large spruce cone crop over winter so very few Siskins have been coming to the feeders, except during wet weather. And this spring we have enjoyed long dry periods between the wet spells, with huge changes in Siskin activity as a result. So maybe the generally wet climate of the west of Scotland is not good for Siskins? Maybe, but it could be even more complicated. Spruce cones ripen in the autumn. In the east of Scotland, where the weather is more often dry in autumn and winter, most of the seed falls from partly open cones in autumn and winter, with little left by spring. (I know this because in the cause of science I've been climbing trees on each side of Scotland every month through the winter to find out!). In Argyll, it is usually too damp in autumn and winter for the cones to open, and much of the seed remains in the cones right through until the spring. This late retention of seed in the west of Scotland may help the birds when it comes to breeding. Siskins in Argyll may find that seed supply in spring is just the thing to fuel the start of their breeding season which is unusually early compared to other small birds and may be based more on conifer seed than on insect or other seed availability. Providing it does not rain too much of course, in which case it is back to the peanut and niger feeders!

Bob Furness

The Ruddy Duck's tale

I am a fan of the Ruddy Duck. I like its name. As Lang Stewart's photograph shows (next page), its splendid chestnut plumage is indeed ruddy.

I derive childish pleasure from shocking friends who never hear the R word cross my lips, when, as used to be the case, I could answer their question "What is that bird?" with the reply "That's a ruddy duck!!!!!!". Mind you, that reply cannot compete with the following repartee that occurred when I was in Poland in the late 70's. I was in the Beskidy Mountains with two Polish biologists who wanted to know about birds. They invited me to name and help them to identify every bird we saw. On a small lake I said

with great authority "those are Mallard, the commonest duck". My colleagues roared with laughter. One said to me "Professor Thomas, how do you know they are Communist ducks!!!!!!"

But, back to that Ruddy Duck! As is clearly visible in the photograph, it belongs to the genera *Oxyura*, the stifftails—all members of this genera have tails that are held erect. The most serious fact about the species is that it is under sentence of death. Why? It is a native of North America. The late and much admired Sir Peter Scott introduced three pairs into his wildfowl collection at Slimbridge in 1948. They bred successfully. The bird is very adept at hiding its nest, and the young are very efficient at escaping capture. By 1952, it was known that several males had es-

The Eider

caped from their enclosure. In 1957, 20 birds escaped from a net after capture for ringing. The rest is history!!

Reservoirs in Somerset were host to the first breeding success outside Slimbridge, after which birds spread into the Midlands. The birds' productivity was astonishing—twenty-five wild pairs in 1972 increasing to 570 breeding pairs in 1991. Throughout the 1990's the population increased by 10% per annum. It was now present in Central Scotland.

Now, to the dark side of this tale. If the Ruddy Duck had stayed in the U.K. there would have been no problem. British birdwatchers like the bird—it is the emblem of the West Midland Bird Club and there is a Ruddy Duck pub in Peakirk, Cambridgeshire. But, the Ruddy bird spread into Holland (1973), to France (1974) and to Belgium (1979). Then it reached Spain. Big problem!! Spain is home to an endangered species of *Oxyura*, the White-headed Duck. In 1977, there were only 22 birds left in Spain, although subsequent conservation efforts raised the population to 2000 birds. The species became the emblem of the Spanish conservation movement.

The Ruddy duck's problem is that males are ladies' men. When they reached Spain in the 1980's, if the male could not find a female Ruddy, then a female White-headed would suffice—and hybrid young were the result. The conservation problem was



Ruddy Duck (photo Lang Stewart)

stark and almost impossible to resolve humanely. A rare European duck was about to be swamped genetically by a New World introduction. The RSPB conspired with the government ministry DETRA, and £800,000 funded a culling programme in the U.K. The Ruddy duck was to be banished from our land. Ethnic cleansing sanctioned by the RSPB!!!!!!

The dilemma is unresolved as I write. The Ruddy Duck will probably survive, and Spain's destruction of its own environment, in hot pursuit of tourist income and intensive agricultural production, will probably seal the fate of the White-headed Duck!

Michael Thomas

Confessions of an incompetent bird watcher

In 1990, we went for our first adventure holiday to Ethiopia. At that time that country was the subject of endless news reports of famine and war; when we saw the trip advertised I phoned the owner of the company asking whether it was appropriate for tourists to go there. That is what the country wants, to earn cash not be on the receiving end of charity, I was told. On the strength of that we booked.

We had been interested in birds in a sort of way before, we did have a bird book, hardly ever opened, and we did have a pair of binoculars, but they were seldom used to study birds. Our holiday in Ethiopia changed all this; we had a superb birder as guide and Ethiopia is FANTASTIC for birds, everything from several types of eagles to Paradise Flycatchers and all sizes in between. Looking back through the mists of time and remembering other countries we have visited, I think Ethiopia is a birders' paradise! Our guide soon realised that he had a potential bird watcher in me, and he ensured that I saw everything he did, even introducing me to the delights of looking through a telescope!

Unless a bird is sitting in a prominent place, I have great difficulty finding them in my binoculars, never mind telescope, so we have not gone down that path though I am always grateful to those kind people who will find a bird and then invite us to look at it through scope! I love large birds (so much easier to see), very colourful ones, birds that do unusual things, like skimmers, but am not so interested in LBJs! I am definitely not a twitcher. My ideal bird watching is to see an interesting bird, quite differ-

ent from any other bird, and watch it for a long time as it goes about its business near to me. An occasion I remember fondly was in Kenya: I was unwell and stayed in our roundel as the others went on a game drive. A Woodland Kingfisher landed on a post nearby. It flew off many times, but always returned to this isolated post. I must have watched it for two hours—wonderful!

My most abiding bird memory happened in Iceland, on a miserable day. I was standing alone at the edge of a lake when a pair of small ducks landed literally at my feet. The male was just gorgeous, gold, chestnut and green with a wonderfully laced black and white body, I had never seen anything like it. I held my breath and drank in the sight until they flew away. I then noticed a bird expert standing about 100 yards away and asked him had he seen them and what were they. Teal in full breeding plumage, I was told; my all time favourite bird!

Living by, and sailing on the sea we can recognise the common sea birds such as the auks, Gannets and Cormorants. My favourite here are the Manx Shearwaters when they fly in a group, all turning at the same moment so that one second they look black, the next white—synchronised flying!

I suppose our most successful birding has been in the Antarctic, an area we have visited four times. I am an expert on penguins and albatross but sometimes can't recognise the raptor flying above our house or the unusual bird on the bird table. Most of the birds we see as we go about our daily business at home have no name as far as we are concerned, this is why I so enjoy going around with someone who KNOWS about birds, one of the experts from the bird club. How is it that they always find birds while I can go out and see not a single one? Why can we so seldom identify a new (to us) bird unless it stays for ages, allowing us time to get the book out and try to identify it? One of our successes was when a bird flew into our window and was stunned - plenty of time to find out it was a Meadow Pipit before it recovered. We have never seen one since, as far as we know!

It would be so helpful if I could recognise bird song, but I can't. I came to this game too late. I can't even hear some of the bird song now never mind recognise it! But in spite of all these disadvantages watching birds gives me enormous pleasure and we so enjoy seeing the birds who visit our bird table, just outside our window.

Eva Shrewsbury

An enjoyable experience on Fair Isle—a Crossbill feeding on thistles (photo David Shrewsbury)



Tayvallich Wildlife Club

Tap, tap, tap; bang, tap, bang. It was a bleak evening in November, and this was how our project started when Tayvallich Wildlife Club decided to make space for nature.

We are a group of 18 kids (between the ages of 6 and 13) and a handful of adult helpers who all share the same enthusiasm for wildlife and conservation. We are extremely lucky to live in one of the county's finest and most diverse habitats. Surrounding Tayvallich there are ancient oakwoods, lochs, mires, hill country and miles of coastline with quiet inland waters and wild rocky shores. The kids all know they're lucky to live here, but I thought it would be fun to show them, in a bit more detail, the wildlife they share their home with.

On this particular wildlife club meeting, we had 18 members making nest boxes for birds. Some made tit boxes and some made boxes that Pied Flycatchers might use. It was optimistic to hope for Pied Flycatchers as they are not regular birds here, but the different boxes taught the kids that most bird species require different types of nest sites.

Surprisingly all 18 boxes were assembled within 20 minutes of starting! They all had the hole at the front and the lid hinged, though some were a little lacking in right angles, but the birds didn't mind!

We failed to entice Pied Flycatchers, but the tit boxes were a huge success. We did some research into territory sizes and worked out how far apart the boxes should be, we put them on the east or north-east side of trees, as there they would be most protected from the weather. The kids chose their sites—wrote their initials on the boxes—climbed up a short ladder and hammered them to a tree. Some wished their boxes good luck as they waved good bye to them!

And luck we had! Eight out of 12 of the tit boxes were occupied in the first year—a mixture of Blue and Great Tits. Six out of the eight occupied boxes reared chicks, and three of these broods fledged with rings!

Our ringing day was terribly exciting, we did it in school time, which made it seem very important to the children! The whole school (21 kids) went out with Steve Petty from the Argyll Bird Club. Many of the children had never seen a nestling before. Steve is experienced, showing the kids how to handle the fragile little creatures. Everybody got a look. Those who wanted to had a brief chance to hold a baby bird and the thrill and wonder on the children's faces was fantastic.

That moment, sitting in a circle with Steve, in an oakwood on a sunny school afternoon, baby bird eyeing you from your cupped hands, was a small thing, but it was wonderful. That's when tomorrow's conservationists will be made, and that's what Tayvallich Wildlife Club is all about. Thank you Steve for helping us realise the wonder of nature.

Mary-Lou Aichison



Erecting a box
(photo Morag Rea)



Inspecting the chicks
(photo Mary-Lou Aichison)



Admiring a ringed Blue Tit
(photo Mary-Lou Aichison)

Making maps of Scotland's birds

Much has happened to Scotland's habitats and climate in the last 20 years. Soon the new Bird Atlas 2007-2011 will tell us how these changes have affected our birds. Thousands of volunteer birdwatchers across Scotland will help to put dots on the map by sending in their records. The results will form the basis for the conservation of birds in Scotland, and the UK as a whole, for the coming decades. We are delighted to announce that Bob Swann has been appointed as the Bird Atlas 2007-2011 Organiser for Scotland. Bob will start on 1 June and brings to the job enthusiasm and many years of experience of bird surveying.

Chris Wernham, Head of BTO Scotland said "I am delighted that Bob will be taking on this role. I can't think of anyone who would have greater skills, experience or enthusiasm for the next, most challenging of atlas projects. It would be hard to name a bird survey that Bob has not done and he is, to use his own words, 'a well kent face' in Scotland's birding circles. The huge range of bird projects that have benefited from his energy and experience are testimony both to his life-long enthusiasm for studying birds, and his natural ability to collaborate with others. He also enthusiastically helps a great many others to acquire the field skills required for survey work. He'll be a busy man fitting in organising the Bird Atlas in Scotland as well, but I have no doubt that he will do a superb job. All of us at BTO Scotland look forward to working with Bob, and no doubt we will learn much from him in the process!"

Chris Waltho, Vice President of SOC, added, "With his long history of fieldwork experience and his long involvement with the SOC, Bob is very well placed to help mobilize our members and our branches. Completion of the Atlas is a major priority for the SOC over the next few years, and we are confident that our members will support Bob and the regional organizers, to help achieve this vital project."

Bob commented "It is a great privilege to be appointed as the new atlas organiser for Scotland. I have always been a keen 'atlaser' having been involved as a fieldworker in all three previous atlases and a regional organiser in the last one. This means I am very familiar with rewards of atlas work, but am also aware of the commitment required both by survey workers and regional organisers."

"I hope that by promoting the atlas in Scotland, I can assist the regional organisers in obtaining full coverage for this exciting project. This will be a daunting task, especially getting cover over our many wild and remote areas, in both summer and winter."

"Atlasing, is however, fun. You never know what will turn up, what new exciting bird site will be discovered. Every birder in Scotland will be able to help. I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible over the next four years. By working together we can make this project a huge success, which will not only be an enjoyable experience for us, but will also be of great benefit to Scotland's birds."

Bob will work part-time from his home in Tain, Ross-shire but will get out and about in Scotland to meet Regional Organisers and to give talks to promote the Atlas. You can email Bob at bob.swann@bto.org or by contacting BTO Scotland office on 01786 466560.

The Bird Atlas project will map the distribution of birds in winter and the breeding season and will find the hot spots. Of great interest, to birdwatchers and conservationists alike, will be the changes in range and bird numbers in Scotland since the last breeding atlas (1988-91) and wintering atlas (1981-84).

BTO Scotland, News Release

Feeding garden birds—the Garden Bird Health Initiative (GBHi)

Almost all of us put out food for the birds in our gardens. As well as making a contribution to the welfare of the birds we do this, of course, to attract more birds for us to see. This activity brings with it certain responsibilities, especially for the health of the birds.

I am quite often contacted by members who have noticed dead or dying birds in the garden and want to know the cause. These events are usually caused by an outbreak of infections such as Salmonella or Trichomonas and, sadly, these are readily spread from bird to bird at garden feeding stations.

In 2003 the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (UFAW) set up a working group (GBHi) to examine such problems. The Garden Bird Health Initiative set out to:

1. Develop and publish guidelines about how to best feed garden birds in order to maximise the benefits for their welfare and conservation and
2. Undertake a major garden bird health surveillance and research project.

UFAW have produced an excellent (and simple) leaflet "Feeding Garden Birds: Best Practice Guidelines" which can be downloaded free from their website or obtained by post, for those without internet access.

There is also a more detailed booklet on the same subject which is available from them at £4.99.

You can download the leaflet from the UFAW website at: www.ufaw.org.uk/gbhi.php

or they can be contacted by phone at 01582 831818 and by post at: Universities Federation for Animal Welfare, The Old School, Brewhouse Hill, Wheathampstead, Herts. AL4 8AN.

UFAW are also keen to hear from anyone seeing dead birds or signs of disease in garden birds, please call 0207 449 6685



Some titbits



On my way to Dunoon, I came across the remains of a gull in the middle of the road, below a traditional Peregrine site. I had a brief look and thought Kittiwake, funny but I had not seen a live one thereabouts for quite some time. On the way to Dunoon I had a niggles at the back of my mind - there should not be anything but black on the wing tips!

About three hours later on the way back I picked up the remains for closer examination and lo and behold there were terminal white spots on primaries three, four and five. Having lots of field guides, which all hold to the "wings dipped in ink" position I rang Paul Daw who with his gull ID book was able to confirm, at least to my surprise and I am sure to some others, that this was how an adult winter bird should look. It shows the pitfalls in bird ID. Still, I suppose in the field, these spots would be virtually impossible to see. I always knew that gulls were a bit tricky!

Tom Callan

A few pairs of Common Gulls have nested on buildings in Tighnabraich (Irvine's Store, Kyles of Bute Hotel etc) for a number of years. This year an enterprising pair have built a nest on top of an old Land Rover, alongside the local garage.

Steve Petty



This photo was sent to me by Michael Thomas. It was taken by his son in the USA. A pair of Peregrines regularly nest on the Brooklyn Bridge in New York, and Huw Thomas was lucky enough to get this photo as one of the birds flew overhead.

Steve Petty

Arrival of spring migrants, departure of winter visitors and some passage migrants in 2007

This report has only been possible thanks to the efforts of those who took the trouble to send in records. We have had an excellent response to the request for arrival dates of spring migrants in Argyll. As a result we have quite a detailed picture of what has happened this year. Many thanks to all of you, and if any of you have observations that would add to this picture, it is not too late to send them in.

Departure of winter visitors

Many **Whooper Swans** were moving north on the night of 23-24 March (see below) but 11 stragglers were still on Tiree on 11th May. Large numbers of **Greenland White-fronted Geese** and **Barnacle Geese** were on Tiree on 2-3rd April, but by 18th April only a few remained.

There is often relatively little evidence of return passage of **Fieldfares** in Argyll. Apart from 20 on 3rd March, there were no spring records at all this year. Also, very few were reported during the latter part of the winter. Similarly, there were relatively few spring records of **Redwings** apart from a few during March and some moderate sized flocks on Tiree in early April. **Snow Buntings** were scarce during the winter, and the last was seen on 7th March.

Spring arrival pattern

Chiffchaffs and **Blackcaps** reported in the first half of March could possibly have been winter visitors, so the first real spring migrants were a **Sandwich Tern** at Machrihanish SBO and a **Northern Wheatear** at Bunessan, Mull on 15th March. A **Barn Swallow** seen powering it's way north through the rain on 17th March, just north of Kilmore, nr Oban by Bill Allan was the second earliest record ever for Argyll (two were reported on Islay on 15th March 2003). More **Wheatears** were reported from Islay and Mid-Argyll on 18th March.

Some early movement took place on 22nd March, when single **Whimbrel**, **Wheatear**, **Common Chiffchaff** and **Willow Warblers** were found, and a female **Black Redstart** appeared on Mull the following day. More **Chiffchaffs** were heard singing in the last few days of March and the first **Osprey** appeared on 31st.

Apart from the early **Swallow**, these were all fairly typical dates, but several people have remarked on the relatively late arrival and small numbers of **Sand Martins** this spring. The first were not reported until 3rd April. **Swallows** on the other hand arrived early in Argyll although, according to Bird Track, they were late in Britain as a whole. After the early lone bird in March there were sin-

Female Whinchat (photo Tom Callan)



gles on 9th and 11th April and by 12th April they had been seen in many places. However, they were still seen only in small numbers (possibly passing through) and the main arrival of local birds seems to have occurred, as usual, in the third week of April.

It would seem that a mass arrival of migrants occurred from 12th to 14th April. **Swallows**, **Sand Martins** and **Willow Warblers** were widespread, several **Common Sandpipers** were found, and early **Tree Pipit**, **House Martin** and **Grasshopper Warbler** had been reported. The first **Common Cuckoo** was on Coll on 20th April and by 26th April they were being heard everywhere.

The later migrants such as **Common Swift**, **Whinchat**, **Common Redstart**, **Sedge Warbler**, **Common Whitethroat** and **Garden Warbler** all appeared for the first time during the last week of April and first week of May, much as usual, but a **Spotted Flycatcher** on 1st May was relatively early.

In general, although some **Swallows** and **Willow Warblers** were a day or two earlier than usual, it would seem that, despite the best efforts of climate change, it was a fairly typical spring for migrant birds in Argyll.

Paul Daw

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E-mail: monedula@globalnet.co.uk

| Arrival and departure dates of migrants – Argyll spring 2007 | | | | |
|--|------------------------------|--------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Species | Location | No. | Date | Observer |
| Whooper Swan | Balevullin, Tiree | 11 | 7 th May | John Bowler |
| Garganey | Canal Loch, Coll | 1 | 17 th April | Simon Wellock |
| | Loch Gruinart, Islay | 2 (m) | 26 th April | James How |
| | Port-an-t' Saoir, Coll | 2 (pr) | 27 th April | Simon Wellock |
| Long-tailed Duck | Dunstaffnage Bay, Mid-Argyll | 1 | 3 rd May | Stuart Gibson/Bill Allan |
| Osprey | Ford, Mid-Argyll | 2 | 31 st March | John Halliday |
| | Loch Sween, Mid-Argyll | 2 | 9 th April | Bill Allan |
| | Loch Awe, Mid-Argyll | 2 | 16 th April | Lawrence Langan |
| | Hogh Bay, Coll | 1 | 24 th April | Simon Wellock |
| Corn Crake | RSPB Reserve, Coll | 1 | 9 th April | Alan Brodie |
| | Ruaig, Tiree | 1 | 12 th April | John Bowler |
| | Kiloran, Colonsay | 1 | 20 th April | David Jardine |
| Dotterel | Oronsay, Colonsay | 3 | 21 st April | Mike Peacock |
| Jack Snipe | Ulva Lagoons, Mid-Argyll | 3 | 25 th March | Paul Daw/T. Callan |

| Species | Location | No. | Date | Observer |
|----------------------------|--|------|------------------------|---|
| Black-tailed Godwit | Loch a' Phuill, Tiree | 9 | 5 th April | John Bowler |
| | The Reef, Tiree | 2 | 12 th April | John Bowler |
| | Taynuilt, Mid-Argyll | 2 | 21 st April | Lawrence Langan |
| | Oronsay, Colonsay | 16 | 21 st April | Mike Peacock |
| | Loch Gilp, Mid-Argyll | 114 | 21 st April | Simon Lawrence |
| | Loch a' Phuill, Tiree | 163 | 22 nd April | John Bowler |
| Whimbrel | Tayinloan, Kintyre | 3 | 22 nd March | Katie Pendreigh |
| | The Reef, Tiree | 2 | 20 th April | John Bowler |
| | Port More, Colonsay | 3 | 21 st April | David Jardine |
| | The Reef, Tiree | 24 | 30 th April | John Bowler |
| Common Sandpiper | Ronachan, Kintyre | 1 | 14 th April | Morag Rea |
| | Add Estuary, Mid-Argyll | 2 | 14 th April | Jim Dickson |
| | River Cur, Cowal | 1 | 15 th April | Peter Woods |
| | Salen, Mull | 1 | 18 th April | David Jardine |
| | Scarinish, Tiree | 1 | 19 th April | John Bowler |
| | Otter Ferry, Cowal | 1 | 22 nd April | Tom Callan |
| | Lismore, North Argyll | 1 | 28 th April | James Towill |
| Sandwich Tern | Machrihanish SBO, Kintyre | 1 | 15 th March | Eddie Maguire |
| | Tayinloan, Kintyre | 2 | 14 th April | Mike Harrison |
| | Tayinloan, Kintyre | 5 | 22 nd April | Katie Pendreigh |
| | Skipness, Kintyre | 1+ | 28 th April | per James Towill |
| Common Tern | Loch Feochan, Mid-Argyll | 2 | 2 nd May | Bill Allan |
| Arctic Tern | Traigh Bhagh, Tiree | 2 | 3 rd May | John Bowler |
| Little Tern | Traigh Bhagh, Tiree | 3 | 18 th April | John Bowler |
| Cuckoo | Uig, Coll | 1 | 19 th April | Simon Wellock |
| | Moine Mhor, Mid-Argyll | 1 | 22 nd April | Bill Allan |
| | Kames, Cowal | 1 | 24 th April | Steve Petty |
| | Tullochgorm, Mid-Argyll | 1 | 24 th April | Paul Daw |
| | Loch Melldalloch, Cowal | 1 | 24 th April | Tom Callan |
| | Widespread | | 26 th April | Malcolm Chattwood, Jim Dickson <i>et al.</i> |
| Common Swift | Oban, Mid-Argyll | 1 | 6 th May | Stuart Gibson |
| | Glen Euchar, Mid-Argyll | 2 | 11 th May | Bill Allan |
| | Mossfield, Oban | 4 | 12 th May | Stuart Gibson |
| | Bridgend (nr Lochgilphead), Mid-Argyll | 1 | 13 th May | Sue and Malcolm Chattwood |
| Sand Martin | Killiechronan, Mull | 3 | 3 rd April | Alan Spellman |
| | Loch Ederline, Mid-Argyll | 5 | 6 th April | Bill Allan |
| | Loch Leathan, Mid-Argyll | 2 | 8 th April | Jim Dickson |
| | Loch Ederline, Mid-Argyll | 22 | 8 th April | Jim Dickson |
| | Loch a' Phuill, Tiree | 2 | 8 th April | John Bowler |
| | North Ledaig, North Argyll | 3+ | 11 th April | Robin Harvey |
| | Kilchurn Castle, Loch Awe nr. Ballure, Kintyre | 8 | 13 th April | James Towill |
| | Loch Melldalloch, Cowal | 3+ | 14 th April | Paul Daw <i>et al.</i> |
| Swallow | Loch Melldalloch, Cowal | 18 | 18 th April | Jim Dickson |
| | Kilmore, Oban, Mid-Argyll | 1 | 17 th March | Bill Allan |
| | Hynish, Tiree | 1 | 9 th April | John Bowler |
| | Appin, North Argyll | 1 | 11 th April | Mary Gregory |
| | Eredine, Mid-Argyll | 1 | 11 th April | Karl Pipes |
| | Taynish NNR, Mid-Argyll | 1 | 12 th April | Malcolm Chattwood |
| | Bunessan, Mull | 1 | 12 th April | David Hatfield |
| | Kilmelford, Mid-Argyll | 1 | 12 th April | Jim Dickson/Bill Allan |
| | Tullochgorm, Mid-Argyll | 1 | 13 th April | Paul Daw |
| | Breachacha, Coll | 1 | 13 th April | Simon Wellock |
| | Taynuilt, Mid-Argyll | 2 | 13 th April | James Towill |
| | Kilchurn Castle, Loch Awe | 2 | 13 th April | James Towill |
| | Balephuil, Tiree | 1 | 13 th April | John Bowler |
| | Ronachan, Kintyre | 1 | 14 th April | Paul Daw <i>et al.</i> |
| | Kilmartin, Mid-Argyll | 9 | 14 th April | Jim Dickson |
| | Balemartine, Tiree | 4 | 14 th April | John Bowler |
| | Arinagour, Coll | 2 | 18 th April | Simon Wellock |
| | Loch Melldalloch, Cowal | 2+ | 18 th April | Tom Callan |
| | Otter Ferry, Cowal | many | 23 rd April | Tom Callan |

| Species | Location | No. | Date | Observer |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| House Martin | Lochdon, Mull | 1 | 3 rd April | Alan Spellman |
| | Ardalanish, Mull | 1 | 14 th April | David Hatfield |
| | Minard, Mid-Argyll | 1 | 21 st April | Paul Daw |
| | Heanish, Tiree | 1 | 22 nd April | John Bowler |
| | Glenbranter, Cowal | 1 | 22 nd April | Peter Woods |
| | Cairnbaan, Mid-Argyll | 16 | 22 nd April | Jim Dickson |
| | Otter Ferry, Cowal | 1 | 26 th April | Tom Callan |
| Tree Pipit | Tullochgorm, Mid-Argyll | 1 | 13 th April | Paul Daw |
| | Taynish NNR, Mid-Argyll | 2 | 18 th April | Bill Allan |
| | Kilmichael Glen, Mid-Argyll | 6 | 26 th April | Jim Dickson |
| | Bonawe, North Argyll | 4 | 3 rd May | Stuart Gibson/Bill Allan |
| White Wagtail | Ganavan Sands, Oban | 1 | 30 th March | John Bowler |
| | Traigh Bhi, Tiree | 2 | 1 st April | John Bowler |
| | Oban, Mid-Argyll | 1 | 12 th April | Bill Allan |
| | Ronachan, Kintyre | 3 | 14 th April | Mike Harrison |
| | Tarbert, Kintyre | 1 | 18 th April | Jim Dickson |
| | Ardtur, Appin, North Argyll | 13 | 20 th April | David Jardine |
| | Traigh nan Gilean, Tiree | 12 | 29 th April | John Bowler |
| Black Redstart | Fionnphort, Mull | 1 (f) | 24 th March | M. Wagemakers/C. Marshall |
| Common Redstart | Taynish NNR, Mid-Argyll | 'several' | 29 th April | Jim Dickson/John Halliday |
| | Inion & Ardchattan, North Argyll | 4 | 3 rd May | Stuart Gibson/Bill Allan |
| Whinchat | Luing, Mid-Argyll | 1 | 24 th April | David Jardine |
| | Moine Mhor, Mid-Argyll | 1 | 26 th April | Jim Dickson |
| | Otter Ferry, Cowal | 4 | 1 st May | Tom Callan |
| Northern Wheatear | Bunessan, Mull | 1 | 15 th March | per Alan Spellman |
| | Craignish Castle, Mid-Argyll | 1 | 18 th March | Bill Allan |
| | Sanaigmore, Islay | 1 | 18 th March | Malcolm Ogilvie |
| | Balephuill, Tiree | 1 | 22 nd March | John Bowler |
| | Ardnave Loch, Islay | 1 | 27 th March | Roger Hissett |
| | Treshnish Point, Mull | 4 | 28 th March | per Alan Spellman |
| | Ganavan Hill, Oban | 1 | 30 th March | Malcolm Chattwood |
| | Traigh Bhi, Tiree | 2 | 1 st April | John Bowler |
| | Kilmelford, Mid-Argyll | 1 | 4 th April | per John McAvoy |
| | Tayinloan, Kintyre | 1 | 4 th April | Katie Pendreigh |
| | Loch Scammadale, Mid-Argyll | 3 | 5 th April | Bill Allan |
| | Tiree | widespread | 14 th April | John Bowler |
| | 'Greenland' Wheatear | Tayinloan, Kintyre | 1 | 14 th April |
| Tayinloan, Kintyre | | 2 | 15 th April | Katie Pendreigh |
| Colonsay | | 3+ | 23 rd April | David Jardine |
| Loch Nant, Mid-Argyll | | 1 | 28 th April | Paul Daw |
| Heylipol/Balinoe, Tiree | | 15 | 4 th May | John Bowler |
| Breachacha, Coll | | 40+ | 4 th May | Simon Wellock |
| Ring Ouzel | Totronald, Coll | 1 | 20 th April | Simon Wellock |
| | Gigha, Kintyre | 1 | 28 th April | John Bowler |
| Fieldfare | Kilfinan, Cowal | 10 | 23 rd Jan | Tom Callan |
| | Balemartine, Tiree | 1 | 12 th Feb. | John Bowler |
| | Glen Lonan, Mid-Argyll | 20 | 2 nd March | Paul Daw |
| Redwing | Moine Mhor, Mid-Argyll | 14 | 2 nd March | Bill Allan |
| | Kinlochruel, Cowal | 3 | 27 th March | Tom Callan |
| | Balemartine, Tiree | 120 | 5 th April | John Bowler |
| | Balephuill, Tiree | 60 | 7 th April | John Bowler |
| | Balemartine, Tiree | 100 | 7 th April | John Bowler |
| | Balephetrish Hill, Tiree | 1 | 19 th April | John Bowler |
| Grasshopper Warbler | Appin, North Argyll | 1 | 14 th April | Mary Gregory |
| | Tullochgorm, Mid-Argyll | 1 | 20 th April | Paul Daw |
| | Castleton, Mid-Argyll | 1 | 21 st April | Dave Payne |
| | Balephuill, Tiree | 1 | 21 st April | John Bowler |
| | East Loch Fada, Colonsay | 1 | 21 st April | David Jardine |
| | Cairnbaan, Mid-Argyll | 1 | 23 rd April | Jim Dickson |
| | Kames, Cowal | 2 | 24 th April | Steve Petty |
| | Otter Ferry, Cowal | 3 | 26 th April | Tom Callan |
| | Oban, Mid-Argyll | 1 | 27 th April | Stuart Gibson |

| Species | Location | No. | Date | Observer |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Sedge Warbler | Loch Ederline, Mid-Argyll | 1 | 26 th April | Jim Dickson |
| | Loch Gruinart, Islay | 1 | 27 th April | James How |
| | Balephuill, Tiree | 1 | 27 th April | John Bowler |
| | Gigha, Kintyre | 1 | 28 th April | John Bowler |
| | Lismore, North Argyll | 1 | 28 th April | James Towill |
| Common Whitethroat | Uig, Coll | 1 | 24 th April | Simon Wellock |
| | Oban, Mid-Argyll | 2 | 27 th April | Stuart Gibson |
| | Gigha, Kintyre | 1 | 28 th April | John Bowler |
| | Taynish NNR, Mid-Argyll | 1 | 29 th April | Jim Dickson/John Halliday |
| | Otter Ferry, Cowal | 1 | 30 th April | Tom Callan |
| | Carnan Mor, Tiree | 1 | 5 th May | John Bowler |
| Garden Warbler | Taynish NNR, Mid-Argyll | 2 | 29 th April | Jim Dickson/John Halliday |
| | Tullochgorm, Mid-Argyll | 1 | 2 nd May | Paul Daw |
| Blackcap | Taynuilt, Mid-Argyll | 1 | 10 th March | Lawrence Langan |
| | Ganavan, Mid-Argyll | 1 | 13 th April | James Towill |
| | Dunstaffnage, Mid-Argyll | 1 | 16 th April | Stuart Gibson |
| | Danna, Loch Sween, Mid-Argyll | 1 | 16 th April | Anne-Lise Dickie |
| | Lagganmore (nr Oban), Mid-Argyll | 1 (f) | 17 th April | Anne-Lise Dickie |
| | Achamore, Gigha, Kintyre | 1 | 17 th April | Jim Cassels |
| | Taynish NNR, Mid-Argyll | 1 | 18 th April | B. Allan/Anne-Lise Dickie |
| | Arduaine, Mid-Argyll | 1 | 19 th April | Jim Cassels |
| | Craignure, Mull | 1 | 19 th April | David Jardine |
| | Kames, Cowal | 1 | 21 st April | Steve Petty |
| | Cairnbaan, Mid-Argyll | 2 | 25 th April | Jim Dickson |
| | Balephuill, Tiree | 2 | 25 th April | John Bowler |
| Wood Warbler | Taynish NNR, Mid-Argyll | 'several' | 29 th April | Jim Dickson/John Halliday |
| | Inveraray Castle, Mid-Argyll | 2 | 1 st May | Paul Daw |
| | Bonawe, North Argyll | 3 | 3 rd May | Stuart Gibson/Bill Allan |
| Common Chiffchaff | Tobermory, Mull | 1 | 8 th March | per Alan Spellman |
| | Kinnabus, Islay | 1 | 22 nd March | per Andy Schofield |
| | Balephuill, Tiree | 1 | 25 th March | John Bowler |
| | Kames, Cowal | 1 | 27 th March | Steve Petty |
| | Mid Argyll Hospital, Lochgilphead | 1 | 28 th March | Katie Pendreigh |
| | Crinan Woods, Mid-Argyll | 1 | 2 nd April | Bill Allan |
| | Oban, Mid-Argyll | 1 | 14 th April | Stuart Gibson |
| | Cairnbaan, Mid-Argyll | 1 | 15 th April | Jim Dickson |
| | Tullochgorm, Mid-Argyll | 1 | 20 th April | Paul Daw |
| Willow Warbler | Kinnabus, Islay | 1 | 22 nd March | per Andy Schofield |
| | Balephuill, Tiree | 2 | 7 th April | John Bowler |
| | Totronald, Coll | 1 | 11 th April | Simon Wellock |
| | Taynish NNR, Mid-Argyll | 3 | 12 th April | Malcolm Chattwood |
| | Dunstaffnage, Mid-Argyll | 1 | 12 th April | Robin Harvey |
| | Tullochgorm, Mid-Argyll | 1 | 13 th April | Paul Daw |
| | Oban, Mid-Argyll | 1 | 13 th April | James Towill |
| | Taynuilt, Mid-Argyll | 1 | 13 th April | James Towill |
| | Ronachan, Kintyre | 4+ | 14 th April | Paul Daw <i>et al.</i> |
| | Oban, Mid-Argyll | 2 | 14 th April | Stuart Gibson |
| | Balephuill, Tiree | 4 | 14 th April | John Bowler |
| | near Glenbranter, Cowal | 1 | 15 th April | Peter Woods |
| | Eredine, Mid-Argyll | 1 | 15 th April | Karl Pipes |
| | Kames Golf Course, Cowal | 8 | 15 th April | Steve Petty |
| | Cairnbaan, Mid-Argyll | 1 | 15 th April | Jim Dickson |
| Danna, Loch Sween, Mid-Argyll | 5 | 16 th April | Bill Allan/Anne-Lise Dickie | |
| | Taynish NNR, Mid-Argyll | 10+ | 18 th April | Bill Allan/Anne-Lise Dickie |
| Spotted Flycatcher | Inveraray Castle, Mid-Argyll | 1 | 1 st May | Paul Daw |
| Pied Flycatcher | Bonawe, North Argyll | 2 | 3 rd May | Stuart Gibson/Bill Allan |
| Lapland Bunting | Gott, Tiree | 2 | 20 th March | John Bowler |
| | Kilkenneth, Tiree | 1 | 23 rd March | John Bowler |
| | Loch Ba, Mull | 2 | 30 th March | Alan Little/Dave Wood |
| | Balephetrish, Tiree | 1 | 20 th April | John Bowler |
| Snow Bunting | Deucheran Hill, Kintyre | 1 | 7 th March | Eddie Maguire |

This report excludes most of the reports of spring migrants, which are included in the previous article (pages 12-15). So far there have been no spring records of Honey-buzzard, Spotted Crake, Turtle Dove, Lesser Whitethroat and Brambling.

Observers' full names are in brackets except for: SW = Simon Wellock, JB = John Bowler, TC = Tom Callan, PD = Paul Daw, JD = Jim Dickson, JH = John Halliday, BA = Bill Allan

Wildfowl (and Gamebirds)

6th February. An immature drake **American Wigeon** was found in Kildalloig Bay, Kintyre, just outside the mouth of Campbeltown Loch (south bank) (see photo below). Amazingly, it was very close to where Eddie found the second American Wigeon for Argyll in the early 1990s (Eddie Maguire).

8th February. Good viewing conditions in the Sound of Gigha revealed ten **Velvet Scoters** (nine males and one female) and c.30 **Common Scoters** (BA/JD).

14th February. During the goose count on Coll, Simon had a **European White-fronted Goose** at The Lodge with the Greenland White-front flock. There are only four previous records of this race in Argyll, all on Islay. So, this is a potential first record for Coll (SW).

16th February. The immature drake **American Wigeon** was present daily from 6th Feb and was showing well all day in the 'Stinky Hole' part of Campbeltown Loch. On Lussa Loch, Kintyre there were five **Goosanders** (only one drake), ten **Pochard**, 170 **Teal**, 100+ **Wigeon** and at least 60 **Snipe** (Eddie Maguire). An unexpected source for a great record of a pair of **Ptarmigan** on Beinn Chuirm was found at <http://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/339986> (Tony Kinghorn). They were definitely in Argyll and not in Stirling as shown by the map that was provided. Many thanks to James Towill for putting me on to this (PD).

19th February. The two drake **Ring-necked Ducks** were back at Loch Riaghain, Tiree together with a female **Scaup**, female **Pochard**, nine **Pintails** and 15 **Shovelers** (JB).

26th February. A pair of **Pochard** on the machair loch near Port-an-t-Saoir this afternoon were the first on Coll since April 2004 and only the third and fourth records for the island. February Goose Count totals for Coll were 710 **Greylag Geese**, 547 **Greenland White-fronted Geese** and 1,820 **Barnacle Geese** (SW).

7th March. Twelve **Red Grouse** were found at Deucheran Hill, Kintyre and 23 **Red-legged Partridges** were seen near Killellan, Kintyre (Eddie Maguire).

13th March. A small Canada Goose found by Bill Allan on Loch nan Druimnean, near Kilmelford looked a very likely candidate for



American Wigeon at Campbeltown Loch (photo Eddie Maguire)

Recent Report Updates

The latest bird sightings in Argyll are available on the Argyll Bird Club website:

<http://www.argyllbirdclub.org>

On the home page 'click here for latest bird reports' takes you to straight to the most recent update. This page is updated every 7-10 days



Possible Lesser Canada Goose near Kilmelford (photo Jim Dickson)

Lesser Canada Goose (see photo above). It was photographed by Jim Dickson on 15th March and looked about two-thirds the size of a Greater Canada Goose, also present there. It appears smaller than the smallest presumed female in the area (BA/JD).

15th March. The **Snow Goose**, which had been favouring the Craobh Haven area of Mid-Argyll, was present again in the same area (JD/BA)

21st March. Alex Nicol was lucky enough to see four male and two (or possibly three) female **Mandarin Ducks** from the main road between Lock Eck and Glenbranter. For such striking birds they are often surprisingly unobtrusive. This is the most that have been reported there for some time (Alex Nicol).

23-25th March. Overall totals for the Goose Count on Tiree were 18 **Pink-footed Geese** and a record count of 4,390 **Barnacle Geese** (JB). On the night of 23rd/24th March there was a big push north by **Whooper Swans**. They could be heard over Lochgilphead, for most of the night (also heard over Tullochgorm, Minard—P.D.). There were 23 on Loch Gilp briefly at dawn on 24th (eight or so with coloured rings) before taking off north, with another flock of seven flying through at about 07.50hrs. A flock of

Stop Press

A drake King Eider was photographed by Eddie Maguire at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 12 May (front cover), and a summer-plumaged **White-billed Diver** was reported near Staffa on 3rd May (Brian Rains).

eight were flying north over Loch Gilp on the Sunday 25th at about 08.30hrs (Simon Lawrence).

28th March. A flock of 350 **Barnacle Geese** was on Inch Kenneth, Loch na Keal, Mull (per Alan Spellman).

1st April. A drake **King Eider** was seen and photographed with Common Eiders at Ormsary, Knapdale (Andy Smout).

10th April. A pair of **Long-tailed Ducks** were off Ganavan Sands, Oban (BA), and a drake **Gadwall** was at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree (JB).

13th April. A male **Mandarin Duck** and at least six females were seen along the River Cur at the head of Loch Eck, Cowal (Peter Woods).

14th April. At least 35 **Common Scoters** and eight **Velvet Scoters** as well as a dozen or more **Red-breasted Mergansers** and three or four **Common Shelducks** were seen in the Sound of Gigha during the Argyll Bird Club field trip. Piping display calls of Common Scoters could be clearly heard coming across the water in flat calm conditions (PD *et al.*).

17th April. While checking the wildfowl at Loch Melldalloch, near Tighnabruaich, Cowal, Tom Callan noticed a single female diving duck with bright white sub terminal bill patch and a dark skull cap. It was soon identified as a well-marked female **Ring-necked Duck**. This is the first Argyll record of a female Ring-necked Duck and it has been suggested in the past that they could easily be overlooked. Not this time! (TC). It was seen later by Jim Dickson.

18th April. Two **Goldeneyes**, c.12 **Mallards**, six **Teal** and a pair of nesting **Canada Geese** were at Loch Melldalloch, Cowal. A pair of **Mandarin Ducks** and a male **Tufted Duck** were at Dubh Loch, near Inveraray (JD). During the BBS on Tiree this morning John Bowler found four **Whooper Swans** flying north over Crossapol at 07.20hrs, 75 **Barnacle Geese** heading north across Hynish Bay at 08.25hrs, 17 **Greenland White-fronted Geese** at The Reef, 18 **Barnacle Geese** at Balephetrish, 12 **Pink-footed Geese** at Middleton and a pair of **Gadwall** at Loch a' Phuill (JB).

19th April. A flock of 420 **Pale-bellied Brent Geese** were among grounded birds found first thing in the morning, in low cloud and drizzle, at Sorobaidh Bay, Tiree (see photo below). These were the most John had ever seen on Tiree and they included at least 12 colour-ringed birds (JB).

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

8th February. Good viewing conditions in the Sound of Gigha revealed 41 **Great Northern Divers**, but only a single **Slavonian Grebe** (JD/BA).

24th February. A minimum of 37 **Red-throated Divers** and 139 **Great Northern Divers** were counted between Gigha and Kennacraig from the Islay ferry (Angus Hogg).

18th March. Seven **Leach's Storm-petrels** flew south past Machrihanish SBO from 12.30hrs to 14.00hrs (Eddie Maguire).

4th April. A pair of **Black-throated Divers** were seen near Loch Avich, Mid-Argyll (John McAvoy). A breeding plumage **Black-**

throated Diver was on Loch Scammadale (BA).

14th April. At least 20 **Great Northern Divers** (majority in non-breeding plumage), one **Black-throated Diver** in full breeding plumage with at least two more in non-breeding plumage and at least one **Red-throated Diver** were seen in the Sound of Gigha during the Argyll Bird Club field trip. There were also at least 10 **Slavonian Grebes**, all but two in breeding plumage. Two of the grebes were seen performing the face to face "penguin dance" display (PD *et al.*).

16th April. Just off the pier at Keillmore (Loch Sween) a lovely little group of six **Great Northern Divers** (two in breeding plumage) were swimming leisurely. Also, eight or so adult **Gannets** were seen in one hour (as well as quite a few Razorbill parties flying south). Two **Red-throated Divers** were together at Ulva, one breeding plumage, one winter plumage, (Anne-Lise Dickie/BA).

24th April. Three **Red-throated Divers**, one **Black-throated Diver** and seven **Great Northern Divers** in West Loch Tarbert were seen from the Islay ferry. Also, seven more **Great Northern Divers** were off Port Ellen, Islay, nine **Great Northern Divers** were in the north Sound of Gigha and two **Manx Shearwaters** were flying west of Gigha (Malcolm Chattwood).

26th April. A **Little Egret** was seen on the floods at Loch Gruinart, Islay (James How).

Raptors, rails etc.

24th March. While Simon Lawrence was trying to read Darvic rings on the Whooper Swans in Loch Gilp at dawn, a **Peregrine Falcon** whacked a Teal (he could hear the thud!) and carried it off right in front of him on the edge of the loch (too close to get the scope on it!).

25th March. A third-year **White-tailed Eagle** flew over Uig, Coll, then towards Lonban heading north (SW).

31st March. A **Water Rail** was seen, at the Benderloch Gravel Pits, North Argyll, for about 15 seconds as the last day of March drew to a close (Robin Harvey).

2nd April. Two **Water Rails** were calling from reed-bed at Balephuill, Tiree (JB).

5th April. Jim Dickson managed to catch on camera a sequence of shots taken at lunchtime at Loch Gilp of a female **Sparrowhawk** that plucked a Teal out of the water and carried it into the bushes. The whole thing took less than two seconds (JD)! Two **Water Rails** were at Balephuill, Tiree and one was seen crossing the road at Balinoe the following day (JB).

7th April. Putting up a garden shed can have its compensations. Jim Dickson had an immature **Golden Eagle** soaring directly overhead whilst building his this afternoon (JD)! A nice new species for the garden list!!

21st April. Two male **Corn Crakes** were fighting in John Bowler's back garden on Tiree—we should all be so lucky!

24th April. A **White-tailed Eagle** was seen from the water, fishing in Kames Bay, Loch Fyne. It flew off down the loch pursued by assorted gulls (TC).

Waders

18th February. A single **Grey Plover**, 53 **Curlews**, eight **Common Redshanks** and a single **Greenshank** were seen during the Loch Sween WeBS count (PD/TC).

21st February. A total of 140 **Eurasian Curlews** were counted at Kilchiaran, Islay (Angus Hogg). Two **Greenshank** were found at Rubha-nan-Ron, Balvicar Chalet Park, Seil. Later, there were seven **Purple Sandpipers** and 40 **Turnstones** at Ormsary, Knapdale (BA).

5th March. A minimum of 188 **Turnstones** were in the Otter Ferry area, including 86 at the fish farm (TC).

22nd March. Approximately 1000 **Golden Plovers** were on Islay, with 200+ at Kinnabus, 200+ at Smaull, 350+ at Laggan and a



Pale-bellied Brent Geese at Sorobaidh, Tiree (John Bowler)

Black-tailed Godwits at Ruaig, Tiree (photo John Bowler)



scattering elsewhere (Andy Schofield). At the same time approximately 3,200 **Golden Plovers** were at The Reef, Tiree with another 100 at Ard Ear (JB).

12th April. A total of 2,650 **Golden Plovers** were at The Reef (some 6,000 in all on Tiree at the time) with two **Black-tailed Godwits** (JB).

14th April. Two **Common Sandpipers** at Islandadd Bridge were calling this evening and at least 10 pairs of **Common Redshanks** along the River Add were at various stages of courtship (JD). A group of at least six **Purple Sandpipers** and a single **Common Sandpiper** were seen at Ronachan, Kintyre during the Argyll Bird Club field trip (PD/Morag Rea *et al.*).

18th April. A **Greenshank** in breeding plumage was in the Add Estuary, Mid-Argyll (JD). On Tiree, 34 **Black-tailed Godwits** were at Loch an Eilein (including a metal-ringed bird) with 24 more at Loch a' Phuill together with approximately 1,900 **Golden Plovers** (JB). A single flock of 200-300 **Golden Plovers** was seen briefly on the fields below the hotel at Ardalanish, Mull. They soon took off and headed north. A single **Sanderling** on the beach at Ardalanish was still in winter plumage (Alex Nicol).

19th April. Sixty **Black-tailed Godwits** were at Loch an Eilein/Heylipol, Tiree with a further 65 at Loch Bhasapol. A **Common Sandpiper** at Scarinish was the first of the spring (JB).

20th April. Two **Whimbrel** at The Reef, Tiree were the first of the year. Approximately 4,000 **Golden Plover** were also there, and 52 **Black-tailed Godwits** were at Loch an Eilein (JB). Five **Ringed**



First-winter American Herring Gull at Gott, Tiree (photo John Bowler)

Plovers were with 63 **Turnstones** (about half in breeding plumage) at Kilail, Otter Ferry (TC).

21st April. Migrant waders making a brief appearance in Loch Gilp included a flock of 114 **Black-tailed Godwits** (including three colour-ringed birds) and 186 **Common Redshanks**—both very high counts for this site (Simon Lawrence).

22nd April. A total of 163 **Black-tailed Godwits** were at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree (including a colour-ringed bird) together with 70 **Ringed Plovers**. The colour-ringed **Black-tailed Godwit** had staged in Zuid-Holland, the Netherlands on 9-13 April, having wintered in western France/Portugal (JB).

25th April. A final total of 550 **Black-tailed Godwits** on Tiree today (including many colour-ringed birds) was a record count for the island (JB).

29th April. Two **Spotted Redshanks** were on the Gruinart floods (James How).

Skuas, gulls, terns and auks

There were widespread records of **Iceland Gulls** and **Glaucous Gulls** during the period, far too many to list here (see club website for details). As Jim Dickson says it looks like another record year for white-winged gulls *cf.* last year.

11th February. A first-winter **Ross's Gull** was first reported off Portavadie (Loch Fyne) today. We presume that this is the same bird that was present earlier in the year at Ormsary (Andy Schofield/Bird Guides).

14th February. The first-winter **Ross's Gull** was seen well from the ferry slip at Portavadie this morning by Tom Callan and Steve Petty.

15th February. A first-winter **Mediterranean Gull** was in Loch Gilp (Eddie Maguire). Jim Dickson comments "a first-winter Mediterranean Gull would be a new one for there". Since August 2006 there have been two juveniles and probably two adults and two second-winters in Kintyre/Mid-Argyll—a total of up to seven birds!

7th March. A **Yellow-legged Gull** was seen well at Otter Ferry and a detailed description taken. If accepted this will be only the third record for Argyll (TC).

16th March. The third-winter/adult **Ring-billed Gull** was together with the adult **Iceland Gull** on the George Street foreshore, at Oban at 12 noon. Both were present there for some weeks (Stuart Gibson).

18th March. As well as the Leach's Petrels (above), two first-winter **Iceland Gulls**, a first-winter **Little Gull** and 46 **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** flew south past Machrihanish SBO in six hours from 08.00hrs (Eddie Maguire).

20th March. A first-winter **American Herring Gull** was seen at Gott, Tiree (see photo opposite). It or another was on the machair at Balephuill on 19 March. Adults of this race are almost indistinguishable from local birds although more heavily built, but first-winter birds are quite distinctive (JB).

21st March. A first-winter **Ring Billed Gull** was found at Smaull, Tiree (Andy Schofield).

8th April. At Inverneil this morning (NR 852793) there was a second-summer **Mediterranean Gull** with a nice black head. This must be a new bird as the last second-winter was a couple of months ago and had very reduced black marks on the primaries unlike this one. Mediterranean Gulls have recently established themselves as a breeding species in Northern Ireland—could Argyll be next (JD)?

16th April. Six **Black Guillemots** were counted at Ardmucknish Bay (off Dunstaffnage Castle) today and 11 pairs were in Oban Bay during the morning (Stuart Gibson).

25th April. A single **Arctic Skua** was seen from the ferry between Coll and Tiree (JB) and a total of 115 **Kittiwakes** (with a first-



Short-eared Owl at Islandadd Bridge (photo Jim Dickson)

winter **Iceland Gull**) were in Loch Gilp at lunchtime (JD)

29th April. Two **Great Skuas** were seen from the ferry between Mull and Coll (JB).

30th April. Five early pairs of **Little Terns** were on eggs on Tiree (JB).

Doves, owls, woodpeckers etc.

24th February. A **Short-eared Owl** seen hunting just north of Islandadd Bridge near Cairnbaan, Lochgilphead (BA) was later filmed by Jim Dickson (see photo above). The **Kingfisher** was present in Loch Gilp for several hours during the day (BA).

11th April. The owners of a garden at Benderloch, North Argyll were startled by the sound of breaking twigs last week as an **Eagle Owl** flew off! Apparently it belongs to a local keeper in the area. If anyone comes across it please phone Mary Craik (01631 720327) and leave a message (Andy Robinson, RSPB/Clive Craik).

19th April. A nice **Short-eared Owl** at Moine Mhor at dusk on the way home from the Sound of Gigha field trip finished off a splendid day (Mike & Ann Harrison).

30th April. A lucky observer at Lunga near Craobh Haven, Mid-Argyll had a **Hoopoe** in the field behind their house at 08.30hrs this morning. It was seen for a minute or two before flying off north (Jamie Spencer).

Passerines

3rd February. A single **Waxwing** was seen in Taynuilt at 14.00hrs. A neighbour told Laurie it had been visiting his garden daily since Jan 24th (Laurence Langan). This was the first mainland Waxwing reported this winter although birds had been seen on Arran in the previous few days. A single **Magpie** was seen near the Sports Centre in Lochgilphead being mobbed by a hoodie (Blair Urquhart).



Yellowhammer photographed in a garden at Poltalloch (photo Brian John)

20th February. Seven **Common Crossbills** were seen at Auchencree, near Deucheran Hill, Kintyre (Eddie Maguire).

18th March. Three female type **Common Crossbills** were on the road about one mile north of Ford, Mid-Argyll (BA).

25th March. A pair of **Dippers** were seen along the River Cur at the head of Loch Eck (Peter Woods).

28th March. Two male **Reed Buntings** and four **Yellowhammers** (two male/two female) were seen at Tayinloan, Kintyre (Katie Pendreigh).

1st April. A **Magpie** at **Eredine** was the first seen there in seven years (Karl Pipes).

3rd April. A male **House Sparrow** at a fat ball at Balliemore, near Otter Ferry, Cowal was the first seen there for three and a half years! A **Magpie** around the Post office at Otter Ferry was also an unusual visitor (Verity Harwood per Tom Callan). Two **Twite** were at Loch Scammadale, near Oban (BA).

14th April. A party of eight **Twite** were feeding in the car park at the Glencruitten, Oban today. One gave a burst of rambling twittering (song) as it perched on the bonnet of a car (Stuart Gibson)! A good *littoralis* type (Scandinavian) **Rock Pipit** was seen at Ardmucknish Bay lay-bye (near Connel). It had unstreaked ("self-coloured") grey head, nape, mantle and back (so not Water Pipit) which contrasted well with wings. Underparts were much paler than typical Rock Pipit. If accepted this could be a 'first' for Argyll (BA).

15th April. An adult male **Common Crossbill** was singing from a group of pine trees on Kames Golf Course, Cowal (Steve Petty).

18th April. A single **Tree Sparrow** was seen with House Sparrows feeding on the bird feeders in the garden of the Bishop's Palace on Iona. It was watched at close quarters for 15 minutes (Alex Nicol per Alan Spellman). Another **Tree Sparrow** had been convincingly reported, about a week previously, at Muasdale, Kintyre (Maggie Young). It appears there may be a light passage of these birds through Argyll in spring (*cf.* last year's records from Coll and Tiree), although it is curious that there was a ten year gap (1996-2005) with no records at all.

23rd April. During recent poor weather **Siskin** numbers have increased again in some gardens (see article on page 7). At least 30 were on garden feeders in a garden at Otter Ferry, Cowal at 06.00hrs and at least 12 at Tullochgorm, Minard (TC/PD).

28th April. To her great delight, Morag Rea saw a **Nuthatch** hammering away on the peanut feeder in her garden at Tayvallich, Mid-Argyll. Unfortunately the bird saw her move to get the camera and flew off before she was able to photograph it. This is still a very rare bird in Argyll with only a handful of records in the past 25 years (including one, also in April, in 2006). However, as the species has been spreading north in Scotland since the mid 1990s, perhaps we shall see more of them.

30th April. At 07.30hrs there was a single **Magpie** in Taynuilt, Mid-Argyll (Laurence Langan).

Other sightings

26th March. An early **Tortoiseshell** butterfly was in the garden at Tullochgorm, Minard during bright sunshine (Margaret Daw).

15th April. The first **Basking Sharks** of the season included a huge 8m specimen off Ruaig, Tiree and two more large sharks at Skerryvore (JB).

24th April. At least 20 **Harbour Porpoises** in small groups were seen in Loch Fyne from Otter Ferry (TC).

30th April. An **Orange-tip Butterfly** was seen at Largiemore near Otter Ferry, Cowal (TC).

Paul Daw

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Articles for the next issue of *The Eider* should with the Editor before the 25th August 2007 (see the box opposite for more information)

Officials and Committee of the Argyll Bird Club (2006/2007)

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Vice Chairman: Tom Callan, Corra, Otter Ferry, Tighnabruaich, Argyll, PA21 2DH (*phone* 01700 821212)

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

Treasurer: Bob Furness, The Cnoc, Tarbet, Arrochar, Dunbartonshire 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), Danielle Clark-De Bisschop (Colintraive), Paul Daw (Minard), Ian Hopkins (Bute), Steve Petty (Tighnabruaich) and David Wood (Bellanoch)

Editor of the *Argyll Bird Report*: Tom Callan (see vice-chairman above)

Editor of the *Eider*: Steve Petty (contact details on page 2)

ABC website: <http://www.argyllbirdclub.org>

Argyll Bird Recorder

Paul Daw, Tigh-na-Tulloch, Tullochgorm, Minard, Argyll PA32 8YQ (*phone* 01546 886260 *e-mail* monedula@globalnet.co.uk)

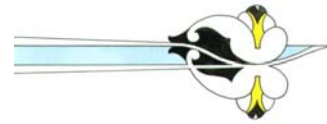
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The Eider



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

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

The *Eider* is published during the first weeks in 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. Contributions are accepted in the order they are received, which may result in some late submissions being held over until the next issue.

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

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

More about the Argyll Bird Club

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

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

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

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