

## **ARGYLL BIRD CLUB – Field Trip Tayinloan, 30 November 2013**

Strong gale force wind and heavy horizontal rain swept the shore clear of birds the day before our outing and it seemed the shore and fields at Tayinloan had been deserted by birds. However, when (eventually) the morning of 30th dawned the wind and rain had both calmed and left me with a nice clean car and evidence of wild life returning! Nine of us met at the car park and set off north wards along the shore although David Palmer turned back to take some "must have" photographs of the long tailed ducks that seemed quite close to the pier. Grey lag geese and good numbers of Greenland white fronted geese were grazing on the surrounding fields, but in spite of careful searching, none were found to have neck collars. All eyes were also looking out for a sighting of the two snow geese that had been in the area off and on for several days previously and nearly missed sighting of a peregrine falcon that flew from over the sea inland before disappearing from view. Proceeding further North with sightings of a Great Northern diver and 2 red throated divers we watched five bar-tailed godwits feeding at the edge of the sea in the company of curlews, teal, wigeon, and shelducks. As thoughts were by now veering towards a hot drink and perhaps something to eat we retraced our steps and visited the Ferry Farm Cafe for a welcome lunch break. Once all appetites were satisfied, it was agreed that we should proceed south along the shore, crossing the Tayinloan Burn by means of the slightly shaky wooden bridge where, in days gone by, grey wagtails used to frequent. As the afternoon light began to grow dull and with a list of fifty one species all agreed that it was time to make our way home.

Species List - Greenland White-fronted Goose, Greylag Goose, Common Shelduck, Eurasian Wigeon, Eurasian Teal, Mallard, Common Eider, Long-tailed Duck, Red-breasted Merganser, Common Pheasant, Red-throated Diver, Great Northern Diver, Great Cormorant, Shag, Grey Heron, Slavonian Grebe, Hen Harrier, Common Buzzard, Peregrine Falcon, Oystercatcher, Common Snipe, Bar-tailed Godwit, Eurasian Curlew, Common Redshank, Black-headed Gull, Common Gull, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Rock Dove, Collared Dove, Western Jackdaw, Rook, Hooded Crow, Common Raven, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Skylark, Wren, Common Starling, Blackbird, Redwing, Robin, Common Stonechat, Dunnock, House Sparrow, Pied Wagtail, Rock Pipit, Common Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Twite.

## **ARGYLL BIRD CLUB – Field Trip Report Ledaig Point - 26 October 2013.**

The resident Jackdaws and Feral Pigeons seemed unperturbed by our presence as we scanned Loch Etive from our windy vantage point on Connel Bridge. A couple of Grey Herons were feeding in the shallows and there was the usual scattering of Shags and Eiders diving for food. A Herring Gull was in close attendance ready to pounce on anything brought up by the Eiders, while a Great Black-backed Gull preferred to survey the scene from a mooring buoy. A Buzzard flapped lazily along the north shore as we turned our attention to the woodland which cloaks the embankments of the bridge approach road. Dunnock and Robin were heard and two Great Tits were seen feeding in a Rowan tree. Collared Dove, Blackbird, Goldfinch and Starling were added to the list as the six members present walked through North Connel to reach the shore of the loch where a group of Rock Pipits were staking their claims to the seaweed piles. Meadow Pipits flitted about the airfield grassland as we

approached Ledaig Point. With the water level above half tide the birds were conveniently close, but the area available to accommodate them was somewhat restricted. Nonetheless, there were groups of Oystercatcher and Curlew, each about 25 strong, Turnstone and a single Ringed Plover. Two Cormorants were resting at the end of the spit. A scan round Ardmucknish Bay revealed only a few distant Eiders on the increasingly choppy water. Several Black-headed Gulls flew past as our group, now eight strong, returned along the airfield path and House Sparrows were spotted on the roofs in North Connel. As we reached our cars a group of nine Whooper Swans flew east over the bridge and continued up Loch Etive towards Bonawe.

After parking at Dunbeg we walked through the woodland, which separates the village from Dunstaffnage Bay. Several Wrens could be heard and Siskin, Chaffinch, Coal Tit and Treecreeper were seen feeding in an old Ash tree. A group of five or six Long-tailed Tits flitted across our path before we reached the shore. A flock of Wigeon was feeding close to and on the shore, and a Mute Swan cruised across the bay while another preened in the shallows. A Sparrowhawk circled high above the castle until it was lost from view. Several distant Curlew feeding on the exposed mudflats were accompanied by a Bar-tailed Godwit and a Redshank. A few Dabchicks were feeding in the bay and a group of ten Mallard were also present.

The garden centre car park at the east end of the bay provided a good, though windy, location for the lunch stop. Six Red-breasted Mergansers were feeding close inshore while a few Curlews stalked the mudflats. A Peregrine flew across the bay and was lost from view behind woodland.

After lunch, with rain visible over Mull and Morvern, we headed north to Benderloch to visit An Sailean, a muddy creek to the west of Tralee Bay. Parking amongst trees the seven remaining members walked past some houses and through woodland to reach the creek. House Sparrows were making good use of a bird feeder in one garden, with a hen Pheasant waiting below to clean up any spillage. Six Collared Doves were feeding on the track as we approached. We stopped at the edge of the woodland and surveyed An Sailean. A Greenshank, then another, were quickly found feeding with a few Curlews and Oystercatchers. One of the Greenshanks flew into a small mud patch about 25m away from us, giving very good views, and then demonstrated its call as it flew off. A few Grey Herons could be seen in amongst the reeds and on the further shore. As we walked along the sheltered shore towards Ardmucknish Bay the sound of geese heralded a flight of 12 Greylags which crossed An Sailean but did not land. A small flock of Redwing, our first for the day, flew into the woods. We stopped at the point where we could see the remaining shoreline as far as the bay. Two Ravens were investigating the other shore and, while watching them with binoculars, a distant Kestrel flew across the field of view. With one source forecasting that rain would arrive at 2.30hrs and another forecasting 2.50hrs we turned for home as the first spots were felt at 2.40hrs. By now three Greenshanks and a Redshank were visible together on the mudflats. Another flight of Greylags, 16 this time, passed over us as we made our way back along the shore and through the woods. A Rook, heard calling as we approached the cars, was the last entry on the list at the end of an interesting and enjoyable day.

Species list: Little Grebe, Great Cormorant, European Shag, Grey Heron, Mute Swan, Whooper Swan, Greylag Goose, Eurasian Wigeon, Mallard, Common Eider, Red-breasted Merganser, Eurasian Sparrowhawk, Common Buzzard, Common Kestrel, Peregrine, Common Pheasant, Eurasian Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit, Eurasian

Curlew, Common Redshank, Greenshank, Turnstone, Black-headed Gull, Common Gull, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Feral Pigeon, Collared Dove, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Redwing, Meadow Pipit, Rock Pipit, Pied Wagtail, Wren, Dunnock, Robin, Long-tailed Tit, Coal Tit, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Eurasian Treecreeper, Western Jackdaw, Rook, Hooded Crow, Common Raven, Common Starling, House Sparrow, Common Chaffinch, Goldfinch.

Mike Harrison

**ARGYLL BIRD CLUB – Field Trip Report  
Tiree - 22 -29th September 2013.**

There were eleven Club members involved in this trip. Seven assembled in Oban on Tuesday to board the 14.30hrs sailing of the Clansman - David Merrie, Tom Callan, Rab Morton, Yvonne McCrone, Fiona Barge, Robin Harvey and myself.

During the crossing our species tally hit double figures, just, with Herring Gull, Grey Heron, Greater Black Back, Eider, Guillemot, Cormorant, Shag, Gannet, Black Headed Gull and Kittiwake. On arriving at the pier in Gott Bay at 18.30hrs we teamed up with David and Janet Palmar, who had already been on the island since the weekend. Later in the week we also met up with Jim Dickson, who was staying separately, and for another week. While on Tiree we made contact with resident John Bowler, who provided invaluable help and advice.

Before going to Hynish we stopped at the Co-op in Scarinish to shop for the first few days and then headed to the southwest of the island to our accommodation, arriving in the dusk. The caretaker, Monica Smith, was there to greet us and show us round. The heating was on, so it was very cosy. We were staying in Morton Boyd (MB) House, part of the former lighthouse shore station. The buildings were refurbished 20 years ago to provide accommodation and exhibition space by the Hebridean Trust ([www.hebrideantrust.org](http://www.hebrideantrust.org)). MB House is in the former smithy building, and the living-dining room still has the blacksmith's forge in the corner as a room feature. There were four bedrooms - two twin rooms and two with double bunks. With nine of us and only eight beds, the Palmars stayed in their campervan, but used the facilities in MB House. While the kitchen is quite small it was adequate, with enough big pans to cater for our party. There was a shower room, a bathroom with shower, and a separate WC (making 3 loos in all), so we were well provided for.

The first morning dawned grey and breezy, but bright. After breakfast we got to know the local environment by taking a walk around the heritage buildings and grounds, and then headed along the road to "Happy Valley." We started a new list for Tiree and were soon racking up the species on the way to reach 20 with Rock Dove. Next to come were Merlin and Hen Harrier, and before long passed 30, next adding Peregrine and Buzzard. A single Black-tailed Godwit in flight was slightly surprising, but the number of snipe was impressive, with at least 40 in various sized groups, which numbered up to 25. By the end of the morning our tally was 37, and we headed back for lunch.

In the afternoon we went round to the hide area of Loch a Phuill, and added some common waterbirds to the list, as well as the numerous brown hares. During the rest of the week we visited many sites that were familiar from John Bowler's Tiree bird sightings, including most of the bays, The Reef and the various lochs.

One particular highlight has to be our visit to John's garden in Balephuill, at the foot of Carnan Mor. Being in the lee of the prevailing wind, and having a garden full of bushes, it is

a magnet for tired migrant passerines, as there are very few trees or bushes on the island. It was here that we were treated to one of several Yellow-browed Warblers that graced his garden this autumn. When at Caolas to view across Gunna Sound we met a local resident who had the Cedar Waxwing in his garden. Unfortunately it hadn't been seen that day and seemed to have gone. Never mind, I've seen them in North America. Later in the week we were able to return John's hospitality when he and Jim Dickson came round for a meal on Friday evening.

Another purpose of the trip was to explore opportunities for bird ringing. Around Hynish had initially looked promising during my recce in May, but with sheep and cattle roaming everywhere it was not conducive to using mist nets. However, behind John Morton House is a small fenced off garden with a small drying green, and no livestock. There was some physical shelter behind the building, but no bushes. At the end of the week we put up three mist nets and put out some bird seed to give it a try, but without success. With a few bushes it might be a more attractive place for birds, so that is a project for the future, given permission. We also tried some spring traps, and a walk-in trap, down on the shore. It helps to learn what the best places are to put these things in order to achieve success.

We thought we might have a better chance down on the shore where there was a substantial accumulation of rotting seaweed, which was hoaching in sandhoppers and kelp-fly maggots. Here we sighted a drop-door trap which it triggered by a long monofilament pull line from a distance. There were hundreds of Starlings foraging along the beach, and it was just a matter of time before some would wander in to the trap. Or so we thought. They walked all round it. They perched on top of it, but not one went inside. We decided to cut our losses, and pulled the trap on a Rock Pipit, so we didn't finish empty handed.

On the last morning we went to the middle of the island to investigate a likely looking garden which we learned was lived in by an elderly lady. Her daughter was up visiting, so when I knocked on the door and explained that we were interested in bird watching in the garden I was invited into the house. Apparently it had been a ringing site before, and was well suited to mist netting. It does look promising for the future.

I think all concerned enjoyed their stay, and got a lot out of it. I certainly enjoyed it, and I thank the group for being such good company. The end of September looks to be a good time for birds, and for availability of accommodation (before the October rush of windsurfers). If anybody is interested for next year I will start a provisional list. Just get in touch.

This is one version of the birds seen. I may have missed some that other trip members have on theirs: Mute Swan, Whooper Swan, Pink-footed Goose, Greylag Goose, Brent Goose, Shelduck, Wigeon, Teal, Mallard, Eider, Red-breasted Merganser, Red-throated Diver, Black-throated Diver, Great Northern Diver, Gannet, Cormorant, Shag, Grey Heron, Hen Harrier, Buzzard, Kestrel, Merlin, Peregrine, Corncrake, Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover, Golden Plover, Grey Plover, Lapwing, Knot, Sanderling, Dunlin, Ruff, Snipe, Black-tailed Godwit, Bar-tailed Godwit, Curlew, Redshank, Greenshank, Curlew Sandpiper, Turnstone, Black-headed Gull, Common Gull, Herring Gull, Great Black Backed Gull, Kittiwake, Guillemot, Rock Dove, Skylark, Swallow, Meadow Pipit, Rock Pipit, Pied Wagtail, Wren, Dunnock, Robin, Redstart, Stonechat, Wheatear, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Blackcap, Yellow-browed Warbler, Goldcrest, Spotted Flycatcher, Hooded Crow, Raven, Starling, House Sparrow, Greenfinch, Linnet, Twite, Lesser Redpoll, Reed Bunting.

Nigel Scriven

**ARGYLL BIRD CLUB – Field Trip Report  
Clachan - 25 May 2013.**

Recent weather during days/weeks immediately prior to 25/05/2013 had produced extremes of low temperature, strong wind, rain and hail but we were lucky – a calm, wind free and sunny day had at last arrived. Four of us anticipated good sightings of summer migrants, as in the past, with perhaps some new species to add to our list for the area. This outing took place two months earlier than in previous years and perhaps that was the reason why there was only one wheatear seen, one spotted flycatcher, and no redstarts- all having featured in previous years. With the exception of oyster catcher and common sandpiper no waders showed and on a day when we might have expected to enjoy an abundance of skylarks they were also marked by their absence. Butterflies, however, were out enjoying the sunshine with an abundance of green veined white as well as good numbers of small tortoiseshell, and orange tipped.

As we followed the track beside the Clachan Burn towards the sea, swallows were very much in evidence, house martins were busily flitting to and fro feeding and collecting mud for nests and we were glad to see the usual river bank sand martin colony clearly in good health. Our single spotted flycatcher of the day was discovered perched quite high up in a sycamore tree and two grey wagtails flew downstream towards where a dipper was found last year – but not today! At the coast the sea was calm with a Red Throated Diver, and two Great Northern Divers, handsome in their summer plumage, being easily visible through binoculars. As well as Gannets and Sandwich Terns diving for fish, several of the Sandwich Terns were carrying out courtship rituals, also two arctic terns were seen briefly flying past. Lunch was enjoyed in glorious warm sunshine with discussions on to how the recording of birds in Argyll should/could proceed without anyone offering to contribute their services as Argyll Bird Recorder now that Paul Daw has retired – all to the accompaniment of willow warblers, whitethroats, tree, rock and meadow pipits and lesser redpolls. Continuing on our walk past Corran Farm energetic Malcolm decided to explore another track which would take a route further into the hills and this is where he found the only wheatear of the day. As we neared the car park we decided it had been a fruitful day, throughout which we had seen 55 different bird species, several presenting clear signs of courtship display, nest building activities and feeding of young.

List of birds in the order that they were first seen as the walk progressed: rook, collared dove, swallow, blackcap, greenfinch, chiffchaff, wren, house sparrow, chaffinch, herring gull, gold finch, starling, dunnoek, house martin, blackbird, willow warbler, grey wagtail, sand martin, pied wagtail, heron, blue tit, great tit, song thrush, hooded crow, common buzzard, robin, spotted flycatcher, whitethroat, redpoll, sandwich tern, arctic tern, mallard, lesser black backed gull, common gull, eider duck, red-throated diver, rock dove, greylag goose, meadow pipit, shag, oyster catcher, great northern diver, gannet, kestrel, jackdaw, rock pipit, shelduck, tree pipit, razor bill, raven common sandpiper, sedge warbler, wheatear, linnet, siskin.

Butterflies seen: green veined white, small tortoiseshell, orange tip.

Katie Pendreigh.

**ARGYLL BIRD CLUB – Field Trip Loch Laich - Saturday 20 April 2013.**

This trip coincided with a community event to raise money for the restoration of the Jubilee Bridge across the salt marshes at Loch Laich, Appin. The day kicked off in Appin Village Hall with an introduction by Biodiversity Officer, and local resident, Marine Curran-Coulthard. Part of the purpose of the day was also to celebrate the 175th anniversary of the birth of the Scottish conservation pioneer John Muir, whose birthday was 21st April. With coffee and home baking to sustain the audience, a presentation on the life and achievements of John Muir was given by Nigel Scriven. After an early lunch the participants transferred to the bird hide on the south shore of the Laich Estuary. A photocall with a local reporter from Oban Times recorded the occasion. This was followed by the birding. The usual estuary waders were seen, along with wildfowl and gulls. The notable exciting species were Iceland Gull and Peregrine.

Nigel Scriven.