



Taynish National Nature Reserve (NNR) is located on a peninsula on the western side of Loch Sween in Knapdale, Mid Argyll. Native broadleaved woodland has survived here for over 6,000yrs. Sensitive management throughout its history has allowed Taynish to remain a very special place. The reserve is a mixture of woodland, scrub, bog, foreshore, grassland and heath, which together support a rich diversity of wildlife.

In 1990, two Common Bird Census (CBC) plots (woodland and coastal plot) were established to represent the full range of habitats present on this diverse NNR. I carried out the fieldwork and analysed the data throughout the period, thus maintaining continuity and survey accuracy, although 2013 and 2014 were missed due to other work commitments. The completion of 25 years of CBC field work was achieved in 2016. This account updates a previous article in the March 2016 *Eider* (pages 6-7).

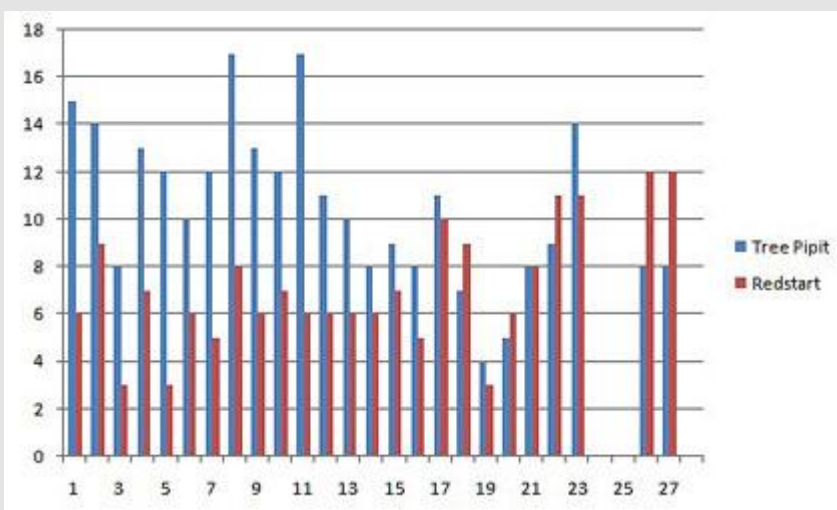
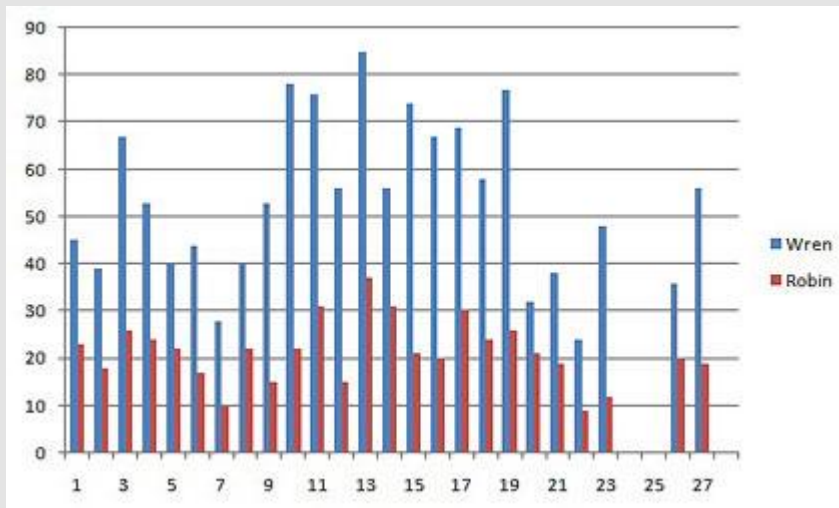
Throughout this period, the total number of bird territories and the total number of species recorded annually have remained high and shown little variation amongst years, probably reflecting the rich habitat diversity. However, some interesting trends among individual species have emerged during the survey.

Notable upward trends included the amber listed Redstart from as low as three territories in 1992 to a record level of 12 territories in 2015 and 2016 (see figure on next page). There has been a significant increase in Blackcaps from one or two territories in the 1990's to an outstanding 22 territories in 2015 (down to 14 in 2016). Similarly Garden Warblers have increased from one or two in the 1990's to eleven territories in 2015 (down to five in 2016). Willow Warbler, now an amber listed species, and the most abundant breeding species at Taynish, has shown a gradual increase from a low 41 territories in 1992 to an outstanding 137 territories in 2011 and 112 territories in 2016. Blue Tits have increased from as low as eleven territories in 1992 to 39 in 2015 and 35 in 2016.

Notable declining species include the Tree Pipit from a high of 17 territories in 1997 to only four in 2008 (eight in 2016—see figure on next page), Wood Warbler from eleven territories in 1998 to zero territories in 2012 (currently only a single territory), Starling from seven territories in 2002 to zero currently, Cuckoo from four territories in 2000 to zero territories in recent years and Skylark from five territories in 1993 to zero territories currently. All of these five species are



Robin ©Steve Petty



The graphs show the number of territories from 1990 (1 on the bottom (x) axis) to 2016 (27 on the x axis). No counts were made in 2013 and 2014 (24 and 25 on the x axis).

Wren and Robin (upper figure) have fluctuated during this period. In contrast, Tree Pipit has declined and Redstart has increased (lower figure).

red listed nationally. Other red listed species including Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush, Grasshopper Warbler, Spotted Flycatcher, Linnet and Lesser Redpoll have remained relatively stable at Taynish. However, Grasshopper Warbler has shown evidence of a decline in recent years with zero territories in 2015, compared to seven in 2011. The amber listed Oystercatcher has declined from five territories in 2002 to zero territories currently. Other amber listed species, Mallard, Snipe, Common Sandpiper, Meadow Pipit, Dunnock, Bullfinch and Reed Bunting have remained relatively stable.

Wrens and Robins have fluctuated greatly over the years, probably reflecting variations in survival due to winter conditions, as peaks and troughs coincide (figure above). Wren and Robin populations peaked in 2002 with 85 and 37 territories respectively and both reaching all-time lows in 2011 with 24 and 9 territories respectively.

In recent years there has been evidence of a decline in Sedge Warblers, down from a peak of 13 territories in 1998 and 1999 to an all-time low of only two territories in 2016, White-throat down from a peak of 10 in 2001 to an all-time low of a single territory in 2016, Chaffinch down from 43 in 2004 to an all-time low of 19 territories in 2016 and Buzzard down from a regular single territory to zero.

I suspect that this unique long-term data set not only reflects bird population trends in Taynish, but also provides a valuable indicator of population trends over a much wider area of Argyll. For example, the increase in Blackcaps and the decline in Wood Warblers seems to be a county-wide phenomenon. Comments from club members on this aspect would be welcome by the editor.

John Halliday

Editor note: The full data set of the breeding bird populations within the Taynish CBC plots can be viewed under the 'Publications' tab at <http://argyllbirdclub.org>