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# The Eider

## Wings over Western Skies

Ornithological highlights from  
Scotland's Atlantic coast



16-17 March 2019

Details on pages 5 & 6

Booking form last page  
of this issue

## Scottish Birdwatchers' Conference 2019

Corran Halls, 54 Corran Esplanade,  
Oban, PA34 5AB

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### Editorial

It was good to see so many of you at the autumn meeting at the Cairnbaan Hotel, for a full and interesting programme of talks, ably arranged by our Chairman. For those of you who were unable to attend the meeting, abstracts of the presentations are given on pages 14-18 of this issue.

The AGM followed an excellent lunch at the hotel. A number of important items were discussed. Probably the most pressing was finding a new treasurer and membership secretary. Peter Hogbin and his wife Dorothy agreed to take over these posts, and were duly elected. Bob and Sue Furness had efficiently managed both of these positions for many years and were thanked by the club.

The future of the *Argyll Bird Report* was also discussed at the AGM. Following this Jim Dickson, the current editor, has summarised how the bird report could develop in the future. It is essential that all of you read Jim's account on pages 3-4, and please send him any comments. If we follow the route Jim has outlined, the club would save a substantial amount of money, making any increase in membership rates unlikely in the foreseeable future. In fact, it was agreed at the meeting that membership rates for those aged 25 or under would be abolished, thus providing free membership to this age group. Hopefully this will result in more young folk joining the club.

There has been much discussion in committee and at previous AGMs about the club becoming involved in some aspect of social media, which might also encourage more young people into the club. In response, our chairman has recently set up a Facebook page. Anyone on Facebook can send a request to Nigel (contact details on back page) to join. If you are not on Facebook, you will need to set up a Facebook account first.

In this issue can be found details about the spring meeting, which will be a joint conference with the Scottish Ornithologists' Club, the British Trust for Ornithology and the Argyll Bird Club. An application form is included as the last page of this issue. You can also download one from the BTO's website. Please note, completed application forms must be sent to the BTO before 23 February.

Finally, on behalf of the club, I wish you all a very happy Christmas, and I hope all your birding dreams come true in the New Year. Thank you so much for continuing to support the Argyll Bird Club.

## Club News

### FIELD TRIPS 2019

If there is a chance that adverse weather might lead to the cancellation of a field trip, please check the club's website or contact the organiser the night before or prior to setting off.

**Saturday 26 January. Kerrera.** Led by David Jardine (e-mail [dcjardine@btinternet.com](mailto:dcjardine@btinternet.com) phone 01546 510200). This will be a walk round the northern end of the island, including some walking off track. Please meet at the Gallanach Ferry Terminal (map. ref. NM834283) at 10.15hrs, departing on the 10.35hrs ferry. Please bring your own lunch. Please advise David if you wish to join this walk.

**Saturday 16 February. Bute.** Led by Ian Hopkins (e-mail [hopkins0079@btinternet.com](mailto:hopkins0079@btinternet.com) mobile phone 07702 123170). Meet Steve Petty at the Colintrave Ferry at 10.00hrs. We aim to share cars to take the minimum number over on the 10.30hrs ferry. Ian will meet us off the ferry on Bute. Please bring your own lunch. The trip will include several short walks (each 300m maximum) on level ground.

**Sunday 17 March.** Numerous field trips following the Spring Meeting (see programme on page)

### INDOOR MEETINGS 2019

**Saturday 16 March. Spring Meeting (Scottish Birdwatchers' Conference).** To be held in the Corran Halls, Oban. This will be a joint conference with the Scottish Ornithologists' Club, the British Trust for Ornithology and the Argyll Bird Club. The programme is given on page 5.

ABC members will need to book via the BTO's website ([www.bto.org](http://www.bto.org)) or use the booking form on the last page of this issue. The cost is £30 per person. ABC members will be eligible for a partial refund of this cost by applying to our treasurer ([treasurer@argyllbirdclub.org](mailto:treasurer@argyllbirdclub.org)).

A number of field trips will take place on the day after the meeting (Sunday 17 March). Details of venues are given on page 6.

**Autumn Meeting and AGM. Saturday 2 November.** To be held at the Cairnbaan Hotel ([www.cairnbaan.com](http://www.cairnbaan.com)), near Lochgilphead (phone 01546 603668). Lunches will be available in the hotel. The programme will appear in a later issue of the *Eider*.

**Raffle Prizes.** Donations of raffle prizes for indoor meetings are always welcome.

### FUNDING FOR BIRD CONSERVATION PROJECTS IN ARGYLL

The ABC is willing to fund or part fund worthwhile bird conservation projects in Argyll. For example, this could include helping with the

costs of field work for the last year of the Seabird Monitoring Programme (Seabird counts 2015-2019) (see page 19). Applications for funding should be submitted to the Secretary (contact details on the back page).

### WHY NOT TAKE THE E-EIDER?

The club still has to produce around 70 black and white photocopies of each issue of the *Eider*. This involves the club in a considerable cost for photocopying, postage & packing and time. So, if you are not on the circulation list for the electronic (PDF) version of the *Eider*, please consider switching, and let our Secretary know. The PDF is in full colour. It can be easily stored in a folder on your computer, from where it can be printed if necessary. Thank you.

### THE ARGYLL BIRD CLUB'S WEBSITE

Don't forget to visit our website ([www.argyllbirdclub.org](http://www.argyllbirdclub.org)) to find out about up-to-date arrangements for meetings, recent sightings of birds, including photographs, and lots more.

### ARGYLL BIRD REPORT 29 (2017) AND BEYOND

During the last year or so some of you may have been aware that it has been my intention to step down as editor of the *Argyll Bird Report* while trying to bring a new editor on board. Although enjoyable, editing the report has been very time consuming, especially coupled with other voluntary duties. Over the last five years our hard working and dedicated report team enabled a change from the previous position of a report produced every two years to annual once again, as well as hitting the target publication in time for the spring indoor meetings.

Unfortunately, so far, there has been no interest from anyone coming forward to take on this editor role. This has led me to have a complete re-think about what an annual bird report is about and try and come up with sustainable solutions and prevent a no-report scenario. Meanwhile, I have agreed to stay on as editor for the *ABR* 29 (2017) report and am pleased to say that with the dedicated help from our species compilers and others that this report is on target for publication in early March 2019.

Beyond *ABR* 29 I have been looking at sustainable and practical solutions for continuing the club's bird report. This has involved looking at how bird recording regions manage elsewhere in Scotland, as well as Ireland and some parts of England and Wales. A few things were evident. Many reports continue to improve, in the sense that, they have more and more data, articles and photographs. However, presumably due to the greatly increased time to bring such reports together, publication dates often slip further into

the future. As some reports get 'thicker' and 'glossier' then production costs can also rise dramatically. Another trend that has been noted is an increase in the number of regions producing an online digital (PDF) report or in some cases a PDF report combined with the option of an extra cost paper option for purchase.

Going back to basics I conducted a mini-survey (and not very scientific!) from a few folk (both hardened birders and folk with only a casual interest in birds) that receive the *ABR*, for some frank and honest feedback. Findings have confirmed some of my own thoughts and include:

...for some folk the report is overly detailed and most of the species information is not read

...photographs can be nice and pleasing to look at

...some folk are keen to look for their own records within the report

...some are interested in what has turned up during the year

...the report is there to use as a reference to flick through on occasions

...some feel the report is no longer relevant as produced so long after the year reported

Again, going back to basics and asking what is a regional bird report for? Put simply I believe the main function is to bring together in one form, a list of notable bird sightings for a region over the year and at the same time trying to make some sense of numbers, distribution in time and space, status and population trends. The inclusion of photographs is not necessary. However, they often help to lighten up a 'dry read' and in many cases e.g. rarities, they can add to the historic record. Papers and articles can often be better served in the likes of *The Eider*, *Scottish Birds* or other nature publications. More detailed tables of bird counts (e.g. WeBS) and ringing recoveries can now be easily accessed on the BTO website. Data requests for environmental impact assessments and conservation studies do not usually take bird report information but usually request the raw data held on our bird database.

So, taking some of the above factors into account and looking towards making a report production more sustainable in future, the Argyll Bird Club committee is supportive of the suggestion that post *ABR* 29, the club will move to producing a PDF report. As such we have identified some of the pros and cons associated with such a change and are listed here:

#### Pros

- Current *ABR* costs are approx. £1,500 to print and a further £300

or so for postage, whereas a PDF report effectively costs nothing.

- The cost savings would enable the membership subscription rate to remain unchanged for many years to come, as well as encouraging younger members (25 years and under) to enjoy free membership.
- The cost savings would go towards funding worthwhile bird projects within Argyll.
- A slimmed down report containing just the 'systematic list' would take less 'people hours' to produce and perhaps be produced within the year after the reported year, which has not happened for many years in Argyll.
- For the first time, colour photographs could be incorporated within the species accounts. In a printed report this can double or even quadruple costs.
- As the report would be easily downloaded from the ABC and SOC websites it is potentially available across the internet and not limited in number (as per a finite print run).
- Any errors can be easily corrected, and an updated version created for download.
- A PDF can be better than a 'hard' copy for folk who are visually impaired—the font size can be altered on screen to be more readable. Also, most modern devices now have the ability to read out the text for you.
- A PDF is effectively a 'green' solution to overcome the use of paper and the carbon footprint of delivering 'hard' copies.

#### Cons

- Not all ABC members and others will be happy to no longer have the traditional 'hard' *ABR* copy.
- Not all ABC members and others have access to the internet or a computer, or mobile device (kindle, ipad, smart phone etc) to read a PDF.

#### Solutions to the Cons

The bird club committee are aware that some members and others do not have access to, or ability to use the internet. For instance around 70 members still request a paper copy of the *Eider*. Although a PDF file can be printed this would not be in a bound form. Therefore, our solution would be to print a small run of report copies in a basic, non-colour booklet—more like an *ABR* from many years ago, and not a high production cost modern type. The club would probably absorb some of the print and postage costs for members requiring this format. However, there may be a small charge for this service.

Finally, this would be the ideal time for you as a club member to give any feedback or suggestions regarding the above proposals and this would be greatly appreciated.

**Jim Dickson** (editor of the *Argyll Bird Report*)



Scottish Birdwatchers' Conference  
Indoor meeting on 26 March 2019 in the Corran Halls, Oban

## PROGRAMME

09:00 - 09:45 Registration and tea/coffee

### SESSION 1

- 09:45 - 09:50 Ian Bainbridge (SOC President)  
*Welcome and introduction*
- 09:50 - 10:25 Amanda Trask (University of Aberdeen)  
*It's tough for Choughs: ecology, genetics and conservation of Red-billed Choughs in Scotland*
- 10:25 - 11:00 Lila Buckingham (Centre for Ecology & Hydrology)  
*Putting auks on the map: a multi-colony tracking study of winter ranges*

11:00 - 11:30 Tea/coffee

### SESSION 2

- 11:30 - 12:00 Bridget England (RSPB Scotland)  
*The population status and conservation needs of Corncrake in Scotland*
- 12:00 - 12:30 Alan Fielding (Independent Conservation Data Analyst)  
*Paul Haworth - a lifetime of raptor research*

12:30 - 13:45 Lunch

### SESSION 3

- 13:45 - 14:15 John Calladine (BTO Scotland)  
*Tracking Short-eared Owls and other attempts to understand them*
- 14:15 - 14:45 Robin Ward (Treshnish Isles Auk Ringing Group)  
*What can be achieved in one week every year?*

14:45 - 15:15 Tea/coffee

### SESSION 4

- 15:15 - 15:45 Ross Lilley (Scottish Natural Heritage)  
*Sea Eagles and livestock: Resolving the conflict*
- 15:45 - 16:30 John Aitchison (Wildlife Cameraman)  
*Wildlife filming on the west coast and the Hebrides*
- 16:30 - 16:40 Raffle
- 16:40 - 16:50 Chris Wernham (Head of BTO Scotland)  
*Summing up*

17:00 Close of Conference



**Scottish Birdwatchers' Conference  
Field trips on Sunday 27 March 2019**

**LOCAL BIRDWATCHING**

Whether you are interested in exploring the area independently or joining an organised group outing, there are several sites within easy reach of the conference centre.

**'Pelagic' to Mull**

The Island of Mull is renowned for its varied landscapes (mountains, moorlands, sea lochs and sandy beaches) plus of course for its wildlife. This trip will cross over to Craignure and back watching for seabirds, divers and raptors. If volunteers are found to take cars over, we will also visit Lochdon and Grasspoint where a variety of waders can be found. Ferry fare £7.20 rtn (passenger), £27.50 rtn (car, shared).

**North Connel, Ledaig Point & Ardmucknish Bay**

The promontory at the mouth of Loch Etive and the broad sandy bay north from here support a variety of species including Eider, Red-breasted Merganser, divers, several wader species, Linnet and Twite. This outing will involve a short walk along the shore (2–3 km).

**Seil & Luing**

Picturesque Seil island is connected to the mainland by 'the bridge over the Atlantic'. After visiting a few sites on Seil we'll take the ferry to Luing and travel by car to Blackmill Bay, Toberonochy, Cullipool and the Atlantic Islands Centre. A range of species may be seen including ducks, geese, waders and raptors. This will be a car-based outing with short walks. Ferry fare £14.50 rtn for car with four passengers.

**Loch Laich (Appin)**

This beautiful inlet off Loch Linnhe is 1.5 miles north-east of Port Appin and is home to Castle Stalker (a four-storey tower house which featured in a Monty Python film). A variety of waders, ducks, seabirds and gulls may be seen, with raptors also a possibility. The outing will walk over the Victoria bridge and round to Portnacroish on a level cycleway, returning by the same route (~4km).

**Lismore**

This walking outing will take the foot ferry from Port Appin, looking out for Black Guillemots and Otters on the crossing. Once ashore we'll walk on even ground to the 'estuarine' area at picturesque Port Ramsay and Fennachrochan where a variety of waders, ducks and possibly raptors may be found (~8km). Ferry fare £3.70 rtn.

**Kerrera**

We'll walk around the southern end of Kerrera enjoying spectacular views of Mull and Gylen Castle. The Sound of Kerrera may yield Black Guillemot and Red-throated Divers and we'll hope for Great Northern Divers in the Firth of Lorne. Waders can be found at Barnabuck Bay, where there's also a chance of Otters. The island can be good for raptors, too. Distance ~9km on tracks, with several hills. Ferry fare £4.65 rtn.

## THE ABC'S RESPONSE TO A PROPOSED FISH FARM DEVELOPMENT

Reference 18/01561/MFF Relocation and enlargement of existing marine fish farm (currently comprising; 12 No. 80 metre circumference cages and feed barge) by re-equipment with 12 No. 120 metre circumference cages and feed barge. | East Tarbert Bay | Isle Of Gigha Argyll And Bute

A majority of committee members of Argyll Bird Club are concerned about this proposed development of the fish farm to increase its production, because of its likely environmental impact. The response below could not be fully endorsed by two members of the committee, for reasons of conflict of interest because they are involved with other organisations (SNH & A&BC), who may make a different response. Similarly this cannot be claimed to represent the views of the membership, as it has not been possible to conduct a wider consultation in the time available.

That the Sound of Gigha is of significant ecological importance has been identified by its designation as a proposed Special Protection Area under the Habitats Directive 1994 i.e. one of Europe's best wildlife sites <https://www.nature.scot/sound-gigha-proposed-marine-spa-supporting-documents>

Of particular interest to the Bird Club are the three qualifying species identified by the Site Selection Document (SNH 2016): Great Northern Diver, Common Eider and Red-breasted Merganser. Great Northern Divers in the Sound of Gigha are the county stronghold (ap Rheinallt et al, 2008, Birds of Argyll), and Bird Club records show that spring numbers can exceed 600. Given the likely turnover of birds passing through the area on passage, the numbers of birds passing through this area is probably much greater than this. There is also some evidence of site fidelity by these birds. The area in question is also important for wintering Slavonian Grebes, with numbers exceeding 70 at peak counts.

We are pleased to see that the EIA Report recognises the importance of these species and has identified the need to:

"a) Avoid significant mortality, injury and disturbance of the qualifying features, so that the distribution of the species and the ability to use the site are maintained in the long-term;

b) To maintain the habitats and food resources of the qualifying features in favourable condition."

We note that the identified impacts in the report are mortality through by-catch entanglement in equipment, disturbance by vessel movements, and loss or damage to supporting habitats.

We are not convinced by the statement that there is no potential for a likely significant effect on the habitat, given the information presented. The diet of Great Northern Divers is "primarily fish up to 28cm, but varies with locality and season, and can include crustaceans, molluscs, annelids, insects, and amphibia." (Cramp et

al., *Birds of the Western Palearctic*). That these prey species could be affected by chemicals such as emamectin benzoate (EMB) that are used to treat sea-lice would seem to be likely, given their known effect as a nerve agent in arthropods, and their inferred impact on marine benthos benthos (SARF098: Towards Understanding of the Environmental Impact of a Sea Lice Medicine – the PAMP Suite) <http://www.sarf.org.uk/cms-assets/documents/251503-644637.sarf098---whole-document-aug2016.pdf>

It is noted that mitigation measures are detailed to reduce disturbance by vessel movements. However there does not appear to be any proposed mechanism to monitor the effectiveness of any of these mitigation measures on the qualifying species of birds, and what could be done should they prove inadequate. Also, since it is not known in detail what the Divers diet is in this area, it appears that this information would be required to adequately assess the impact of the proposed facility, and that until more information is available, it would seem appropriate that the planning permission should be withheld. Nigel Scriven, Chairman, Argyll Bird Club.

**Editor's note:** Generally the club does not respond to planning/development applications as we feel official/professional bodies such as SNH and RSPB are better able to do so. In this case we felt a response was necessary, but there was not enough time to circulate details and collate responses from ABC members. If you want to be contacted by the club (via email) over future planning applications that are likely to directly impact birds or their habitats in Argyll, then please let the treasurer know.

### ABC FACEBOOK PAGE

Our Chairman has set up an ABC Facebook page. Anyone on Facebook can send a request to Nigel (contact details on back page) to join. If you are not on Facebook, you will need to set up a Facebook account first





## ABC field trip to Jura—25 August 2018



Paps of Jura from the Islay Ferry ©David Palmar [www.photoscot.co.uk](http://www.photoscot.co.uk)

Six club members met on a lovely late August day at Kennacraig for this exploratory field trip—the club's first outing to Jura. A few species were seen here, which were not seen later in the day. Four House Martins flew over the terminal and on the shore were a Wigeon, 12 Curlew, two Greenshank and 12 Redshank.

Once out past Gigha the numbers of sea-birds increased with plenty of Guillemots, Gannets and around 80 Manx Shearwaters. A dark-phase Arctic Skua was found on the north side of the Hebridean Isles, while a Great Skua was found on the other side of the ferry by Neil Hammatt.

Another raft of around 50 Manx Shearwaters was resting on the sea as we approached MacArthur's Head. Shortly afterwards a Golden Eagle was spotted soaring over the hills above, and a Red-throated Diver flew up the Sound of Islay. As the ferry approached Port Askaig, Janet Palmar spotted a roosting White-tailed Eagle in the trees by Dunlossit House. Unfortunately, it was soon obscured by trees and was not seen again.

There was a short wait in Port Askaig while the party waited for the small ferry to make the short crossing to Jura. In the bright sunshine and clear water a Ballan Wrasse was seen feeding on the remains of edible crabs discarded in the harbour. The group were soon across to Feolin and lunch was taken by the shore. A very speedy caterpillar was watched during lunch, which was later identified as a White Ermine moth, and a Northern Eggar caterpillar was found as the group walked up the track towards Inver. The warm weather brought out the butterflies, with several Peacocks being sighted, along with plenty of Small Coppers (photo

below), a new species for some of the party. Some individuals had pale blue spots on the hindwing.

At Inver there was a brood of Mute Swans with four cygnets on the shore, which was not particularly remarkable. However, one of the cygnets was pure white rather than the normal fawny grey. It had a touch of pink on its bill, and fitted the description of a 'Polish morph' Mute Swan which is a rarely reported genetic form of this swan (photo, next page). Moss Taylor has recently written about them in *British Birds* and it seems that this brood was only the third reported in Scotland. There had been one previously noted in Argyll. Bill Allan found a brood with a single 'Polish morph' cygnet at Ronachan Point, Kintyre on 22 September 2013 (per Jim Dickson).

There was a late Whitethroat in the bracken on the walk out to Inver lighthouse, where the sole Wheat-ear of the day was found by Bob Relf, a regular visitor to Argyll and ABC member, but on his first club outing. The group then retraced its steps before find-



Small Coppers on Jura  
©David Palmar  
[www.photoscot.co.uk](http://www.photoscot.co.uk)





A family of Mute Swans, including one white cygnet (Polish morph) ©David Palmar [www.photoscot.co.uk](http://www.photoscot.co.uk)

ing a group of around 20 Siskins and 80 Redpolls feeding on birch catkins in the Inver woodland on their walk up towards Loch a' Chnuic Bhrik. Another Golden Eagle was seen soaring over towards the Paps, which was being mobbed by a Raven and a Kestrel. Six Grey Wagtails were found in one of the disused lay-down areas for Inver Estate hydro project. A scan of the loch from a distance found no birds, but four Mistle Thrushes were spied by Neil Rankine perched on a deer fence, and a Sparrowhawk was seen soaring high in the sky.

Little was seen on the return trip to Feolin for the ferry back to Port Askaig, but another Arctic Skua was seen soaring over the moors on Jura on the return crossing. The party retired to the Port Askaig Hotel for refreshments and a meal before getting the evening ferry home. Few birds were seen while heading to Kenacraig, but a wonderful full 'moonrise' over Kintyre was a fitting ending to a long but enjoy-

able day.

**Species list (\*those not seen on/around Jura).** Mute Swan, Greylag, Wigeon, Teal, Mallard\*, Eider\*, Red-breasted Merganser\*, Red-throated Diver, Manx Shearwater, Gannet, Cormorant, Shag, Heron, White-tailed Eagle\*, Sparrowhawk, Buzzard, Golden Eagle, Oystercatcher, Curlew\*, Greenshank\*, Redshank\*, Arctic Skua, Great Skua\*, Black Guillemot\*, Razorbill, Guillemot, Common Tern\*, Kittiwake, Black-headed Gull\*, Common Gull, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Woodpigeon\*, Kestrel, Jackdaw, Hooded Crow, Raven, Goldcrest, Blue Tit, Coal Tit, Swallow, House Martin\*, White-throat, Wren, Mistle Thrush, Robin, Stonechat, Wheatear, Grey Wagtail, Pied Wagtail, Meadow Pipit, Rock Pipit, Chaffinch, Redpoll, Siskin (total of 55 species).

**David Jardine**



Shag and Cormorant colony, Jura ©David Palmar [www.photoscot.co.uk](http://www.photoscot.co.uk)



## ABC field trip to Campbeltown and Machrihanish Seabird Observatory—29 September 2018



ABC members enjoying the day out on Kintyre ©Rab Morton

Eight members had headed south down the Kintyre Peninsula and assembled at the Old Pier in Campbeltown to be met by Rab Morton, who was to be our host and guide for the first part of the day. After a short stroll along the Esplanade we set up telescopes to look out over Campbeltown Loch where more species were added to the list. Good views were had of a mix of seabirds including Gannets, Herring Gulls, Shags, Guillemots and a Great Black-backed Gull. Eider and Red-breasted Merganser were noted along with a skulking Grey Heron, which was difficult to see against the background of the North Shore Pier. A scattering of Oystercatchers probed the tideline whilst a flock of a dozen Turnstones were busy giving a pleasing demonstration of how they acquired their name, and leaving few stones unturned. Whilst gazing out over the water it's always easy to forget what might be going on behind you, where Carrion Crows, Jackdaws and Starlings were busy doing what they do in any town area. As we retraced our steps towards the Old Pier, Pied Wagtails were flitting about and a Black Guillemot, almost in its white full winter plumage, was bobbing about. The species' winter plumage is so different from the breeding version and it was a great opportunity for those who perhaps weren't so familiar with the Tystie to imprint the image in their mind for future reference.

We walked on down towards the Ferry Terminal at the New Pier where Rock Pipits were almost succeeding in blending in amongst the rocks and seaweed and a pair of Mute Swans was seen. Rob Lightfoot picked out a female Long-tailed Duck out in the bay which allowed views for some through the 'scopes before it decided to take flight and head out towards

the sea.

Then back to the pier to collect cars, after which some folk headed to local cafes for lunch, while others headed for the supermarket. After a bit to eat we headed round the south side of the loch to Killdalloig Bay and onto what is locally called the Fanks where we parked and had panoramic views over to Ailsa Craig, the Ayrshire coast and Arran. A flock of feeding Gannets was visible offshore with just a couple of Manx Shearwaters amongst them alternatively flashing black as they turned just above the waves. Raven, Buzzard, Chaffinch, Great Tit, Meadow Pipit and Mistle Thrush were not unexpected over the field and hill behind us, but the sight of eight Swallows and a couple of House Martins reminded us that summer had just about gone. Foraging Curlews and a Redshank provided some wader interest whilst a couple of Mallard bobbing about between the rocks were probably unconcerned that they only warranted a passing glance.

Heading back towards Campbeltown, a stop opposite Davaar Island revealed a trio of Red-throated Divers still retaining most of their breeding plumage. Across on the island 50-60 Shags were loafing on the rocks—waiting for the tide to change perhaps? An otter pair not far off-shore provided good views and some non-avian excitement. A further stop at "Stinky Hole" added Teal to the list, but the number of birds at this spot are dictated by the state of the tide, which was still low, so allowing waders, gulls and ducks to feed elsewhere.

As we headed out towards Machrihanish Seabird Observatory (MSBO), recent work by a

farmer had prompted a large flock of Herring Gulls to probe the ground in their search for lunch. Prompted by a cry of "white-winged gull" Rob turned the car just outside Drumlemble Village with the intention of heading back to where the suspected Iceland Gull had been close to the road. In the event it wasn't necessary as the gull obligingly lifted off from the field, flew over the road, and settled amongst other gulls and cows in a field opposite.

We arrived at MSBO and Rab handed over the duties of host and guide to Eddie Maguire. For those who had never visited MSBO before, it always comes as a surprise to see what a brilliant spot it is, with excellent facilities and a display of photographs covering the walls, which is second to none. We were also able to hear from Eddie about his observations and reports, and about the continuing Twite ringing project, which is undertaken by Rab and Eddie and supported by the Argyll Bird Club. The wind direction and strength on the day wasn't conducive to blowing any migrating rarities towards us, but the hide allows excellent views of seabirds like Gannets and gulls flying past close in-shore. Black-headed, Common and Lesser Black-backed Gulls along with Wigeon were added to the list here.

Readers may recall the fascinating article in *Argyll Bird Report* 27 where Eddie described a coordinated surveillance exercise of Gannets which flew overland from Campbeltown to Machrihanish. Eddie has continued this work with Rab Morton and Charlie Robertson

During our visit Eddie's phone was constantly ringing with alerts that Gannets had left the Campbeltown Loch and were making their way overland to Machrihanish. Each flight takes around nine minutes, which allowed us time to turn our attention from watching the sea to the west to looking eastwards for birds arriving over Machrihanish Golf Course. After scanning the bay for Gannets, which may already be in the area, binoculars were then trained inland to see if arriving birds could be spotted. Despite efforts of both experienced and inexperienced observers we didn't have a conclusive sighting of an arriving bird, but Eddie was able to demonstrate the differences between birds which were heading west to feed out at sea and those whose body shape showed they had fed and would be

heading back to Ailsa Craig "the long way round" via the Mull of Kintyre. A few less-experienced members were highly delighted to see their first juvenile Gannets (photo below). The flight of juveniles is unlike that of self-confident adults on a mission to catch food for hungry 'gugas' at the Ailsa colony. Juveniles impart an impression of being indecisive and appear to 'tread softly' as they pass MSBO, languidly, with a slow-motion progress—while they are constantly sharpening their flying skills and coping with extremes of Atlantic weather systems simultaneously! A total of nine youngsters were logged passing south on the day That rounded off a varied an excellent day and thanks are due to Rab, Eddie and Charlie for their time spent showing what variety Campbeltown and MSBO has to offer. Check out the MSBO website for latest news, reports and a selection of Eddie's stunning photographs at:

[http://  
www.machrihanishbirdobservatory.org.uk/  
location.htm](http://www.machrihanishbirdobservatory.org.uk/location.htm)

After leaving MSBO, some of the group spotted seven Whooper Swans on a pond near Stewarton, which prompted the usual debate "When and where does the field trip finish and you stop recording species seen?" The Whooper Swan is included in the list below.

**Species list:** Barn Swallow, Black Guillemot, Black-headed Gull, Carrion Crow, Collared Dove, Common Buzzard, Common Chaffinch, Common Eider, Common Guillemot, Common Gull, Common Redshank, Common Starling, Eurasian Curlew, Eurasian Teal, Eurasian Wigeon, European Goldfinch, Great Black-backed Gull, Great Cormorant, Great Tit, Grey Heron, Herring Gull, Hooded Crow, House Martin, House Sparrow, Hybrid Crow, Iceland Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Long-tailed Duck, Mallard, Manx Shearwater, Meadow Pipit, Mistle Thrush, Mute Swan, Northern Gannet, Oystercatcher, Pied Wagtail, Raven, Red-breasted Merganser, Red-throated Diver, Robin, Rock Pipit, Rook, Shag, Turnstone, Western Jackdaw, Whooper Swan

Malcolm Chattwood, Eddie Maguire & Rab Morton

**Editor's note.** I was pleasantly surprised to receive three accounts of this trip! So, I have attempted to combine all three accounts into the one above.



Juvenile Gannets flying past MSBO ©Eddie Maguire



## ABC field trip to the Sound of Gigha, Kintyre—27 October 2018



The Sound of Gigha  
on a bright but cold  
day ©Jim Dickson

After a week of dreich weather the forecasters had been confidently promising that a cold but clear northerly blast would arrive just in time for our October field trip. Fortunately they were spot-on and the three well-wrapped members who had travelled down from Mid-Argyll were soon joined by an equally well-wrapped Patricia Russell at the car park close to Ronachan Point. Three Oystercatchers were foraging on the beach close by, but attention was initially directed seaward where three Black Guillemots were seen with their Common cousins just discernible in the distance. Rob Lightfoot spotted six Ringed Plover on a rock over towards the Point and a Curlew on the far shore. A Sparrowhawk making a brief appearance in nearby bushes was another highlight of our first stop.

A flock of a dozen or so passerines flew past 30m out over the sea. They were soon recognised as Meadow Pipits, and as we scanned the sea for birds more likely in the habitat, the passing of pipits continued with some regularity. Out to sea Jim Dickson spotted what at first glance might have been small waders flying low over the waves, but were quickly identified as Skylarks. This passage of small groups of Meadow Pipits and Skylarks continued here, and at our next two observation points, with a minimum of 100 Skylark and 120 Meadow Pipits. Whilst late October is a period where migration of these species could be anticipated, the expectation was that flocks should be flying south, but all these birds were heading north! With no significant stormy weather to the south the direction of movement was something of a puzzle and remained a topic of conversation for the rest of the day.

Our next stop was a couple of miles south on the shore side near Ballochroy. Here we saw our first views of Slavonian Grebe and Common Scoter along with small groups of Common Eider and Red-Breasted Merganser. The sea

state was a bit lumpier than ideal in the fresh northerly wind, but had the benefit of blowing a couple of Great Northern Divers closer inshore. Both were still in their summer plumage and looking magnificent. Three Mistle Thrushes and 30 or so Redwing flew overhead, and Patricia spotted a pair of Greenfinches in a small tree a couple of metres to our left. This prompted a discussion on the scarcity of Greenfinches in the group's recent experience with Rob saying he hadn't seen the species in Scammadale in recent years. When birdwatching from the shore and spending most of the time looking seaward it's sometimes easy to miss the action that may be going on behind. Fortunately, Jim didn't fall into this trap and he spotted a pair of Golden Eagles soaring over the hills to the south-east—an unexpected bonus.

After the relative shelter offered by bushes at Ballachroy, the exposure to the cold wind at the West Coast Salmon stop further down the coast dissuaded us from loitering, but the site provided further sightings of Slavonian Grebe, Common Scoter, two Rock Doves, another Sparrowhawk and our first Buzzard of the day.

Whilst passing through the area a week previously there had been no sign of Greenland White-fronted Geese in the fields below the road between Balure and Rhunahaorine School. What a difference a week and a northerly wind make. Between two fields around 800+ Greenland White-fronts were seen. Rob's persistence with the 'scope revealed several Greylags and two Barnacle Geese amongst them. A skein of White-fronts was spotted flying in from the south causing us to think that compasses may have gone awry after seeing the pipits and Skylarks heading north earlier. Amongst the large flock of Starlings foraging in the field near the farm a Song Thrush was spotted and Jackdaws were busy looking for food around the animal feeders.

We continued on to our destination at the



Tayinloan Ferry, calling in to see Katie Pendreigh, and taking advantage of her cosy conservatory/hide and excellent close views of her garden birds. Our schedule included lunch at the nearby Big Jessie's Tearoom. So, we reluctantly declined Katie's offer of further hospitality and moved on, with Patricia heading homeward.

We left the warmth of the tearoom and after a quick scan of the area from the elevated position of the ferry pier we headed off up the shore towards Rhunahaorine, where a pair of Stonechats was working its way along a fence. Heading north up the beach a Common Seal pup carcass was providing a feast for a juvenile Great Black-backed Gull (with another in close attendance, and a Hooded Crow loitering with intent to move in once the gull had taken its fill. We were able to pass quite close, which served to emphasise what a huge gull they are and with a vicious-looking beak designed for just such a purpose (photo opposite). An abandoned dining chair provided an unexpectedly comfortable spot for Rob (photo opposite) to scan the sea where Black Guillemots, Great Northern Divers, Red-Breasted Mergansers and Common Eiders were all seen, but Long-tailed Ducks were not in evidence on this occasion.

Other than a small number of Mallard, Loch-an Luing proved to be fairly quiet until a pair of Common Snipe sprang up from the reeds just in front of us. We were hoping that the belt of trees to the north of the caravan park would provide some shelter for both us and the birds, and so it proved to be, with Greenfinch, three Bullfinches, Treecreeper, and Great, Blue and Coal Tit added to our list. Goldcrests could be heard, but were not initially seen, until three appeared in nearby bushes. In typical Goldcrest fashion they were never still, but Jim persevered and managed to take a cracking photo, which can be seen on the club's website in the 'Recent Reports' section. Walking beyond the trees we were able to see across the fields where more Greenland White-fronts were resting, two with neck collars visible but too distant to read. Close by was a flock of 40 Lapwing, with another eight soon flying in to join them.

We re-traced our steps down the beach noting a party of ten Pied Wagtails feeding amongst the seaweed and the seal pup carcass was now unattended, but would no doubt provide more meals for scavenging gulls and crows the following day. We returned to the car and our thrush species count increased by one as five Fieldfares were spotted near Tayinloan village to round off the day with 58 species seen. Having seen Golden Eagle, Great Northern Diver, Slavonian Grebe, and Common Scoter it's perhaps a bit odd to say, but I think the northerly flight of good numbers of pipits and larks perhaps provided the highlight of the day.

**Species list.** Greylag Goose, Greenland White-fronted Goose, Barnacle Goose, Mallard, Common Eider, Common Scoter, Red-breasted Merganser, Pheasant, Great Northern Diver, Slavonian Grebe, Great Cormorant, Shag, Grey Heron, Golden Eagle, Common Buzzard, Sparrowhawk, Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover, Eurasian Curlew, Lapwing, Common Snipe, Black-headed Gull, Common Gull, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Rock Dove, Black Guillemot, Common Guillemot, Western Jackdaw, Rook, Hooded Crow, Raven, Goldcrest, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Skylark, Treecreeper, Wren, Common Starling, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Redwing, Mistle Thrush, Fieldfare, Wren, Robin, Common Stonechat, Dunnock, House Sparrow, Pied Wagtail, Meadow Pipit, Rock Pipit, Common Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Siskin, Bullfinch. (A total of 58 species)

Malcolm Chattwood (with help from Jim Dickson's notes)



Immature Great Black-backed Gull feeding on a seal carcass (above) ©Jim Dickson.

Rob Lightfoot enjoying the comfort of a 'beach chair' (below) ©Jim Dickson





## Abstracts of talks given at the Autumn Meeting of the ABC on 3 November 2018



The Cairnbaan Hotel. The usual venue for the autumn meeting ©Steve Petty

### Introduction

Club chairman, Nigel Scriven, welcomed members and guests to the autumn meeting at the Cairnbaan Hotel on Saturday 3 November. The Argyll Bird Recorder, Jim Dickson, presented an excellent set of photographs of birds, both common and uncommon, seen in Argyll since the spring meeting. In particular, it had been a good year for sightings of Glossy Ibis and Rosy Starlings. Jim went on to show some slides from a trip to Estonia in early April (see full account of the trip in the June 2018 *Eider* (pages 20-24). This was organised by Jim and included bird club members and birders from Islay. Their next venue, we were told, would be Rumania in early 2019.

### Birds, ticks and Lyme disease—Rachel Steenson, University of Glasgow (summary by Bob Furness)

Rachel Steenson, a postgraduate student at Glasgow University, outlined the complex relationships between deer, birds, the castor bean tick *Ixodes ricinus*, and

the bacteria that cause Lyme disease in humans. The ticks need to take a blood meal from a host in order to develop to the next stage (larva to nymph to adult). It is very rare for the bacteria that cause Lyme disease to be transmitted from adult female ticks to the eggs they lay, so infections in larval ticks must normally be taken up from the host birds from which they feed. Larvae and nymphs are most frequent on ground-feeding birds such as Blackbirds and Chaffinches and are rare on birds that feed in the woodland canopy, because ticks quest for hosts from the ground vegetation or shrubs. Adult ticks tend to attach to deer rather than birds, and tick numbers increase where deer are abundant. But the bacteria that cause Lyme disease don't survive in deer, so it is unclear whether risk of Lyme disease increases or decreases where there are more deer. However, modelling suggests that Argyll is one of the parts of Scotland where risk of Lyme disease is highest. Sampling birds at four sites by mist netting (Battleby, Blair Drummond, Rowardennan and Tarbet), Rachel found that Blackbirds had the most ticks and this species also most often carried the Lyme disease bacteria. Overall, the incidence of Lyme disease bacteria was high among birds at Battleby and Blair Drummond, intermediate at Tarbet and low at Rowardennan, suggesting that woodland sites might support less Lyme disease than sites with

The chairman introducing Rachel Steenson  
©David Palmar [www.photoscot.co.uk](http://www.photoscot.co.uk)





Hannah Riley ©David Palmar [www.photoscot.co.uk](http://www.photoscot.co.uk)



more agricultural land mixed with park land.

### Tag-n-track—Hannah Riley, Clyde Muirshiel Country Park (summary by David Jardine)

“Gulls get bad press!” was an assertion made by Hannah Riley, of Clyde Muirshiel Country Park, but originally from Lochgilphead. An assertion which many club members could agree with, but Hannah and her colleague, Hayley Douglas, were trying to do something to rectify the situation. Their project to track Lesser Black-backed Gulls (LBBGs) in Inverclyde using GPS trackers, through social media and contact with thousands of school children, is beginning to bring about a more widespread understanding of these birds. The GPS tags are capable of transmitting their locations when the birds were close to a mobile phone mast—thus the birds ‘phoned home’ regularly!

Colour-ringing had shown that LBBGs from the Clyde area winter in Portugal and into western Africa, but little is known about the route they take, or their range during the breeding season. Hannah described the difficulty of catching the adults. Most of the birds caught and tagged were males as only the heavier birds were suitable for the 19g solar-powered tag. Each bird was given a name. The first was caught on the flat roof of Greenock Police Station and was immediately named ‘PC Bobby’, with others named ‘Garry’,

‘Steve’ and ‘Gully MacGullface’. It became clear during the talk that while the ‘gull girls’, who had become local celebrities, knew each bird individually, the gulls also knew and recognised Hannah and Hayley, giving a particularly hard time when they were close to their nests. Even disguises didn’t work!

The tracks of these birds during the breeding season provided some interesting results. Some birds had very small ranges, frequenting a small number of local sites around the town. When investigated further it was found that one was going back to a house regularly where he was being fed outside the back door. Later in the breeding season their habits changed, with birds foraging further afield, into the Clyde Estuary and in the fields of the surrounding countryside. Probably to feed their young on more natural food.

One bird started its autumn migration on exactly the same day in two successive years, despite differences in weather. The southward migration was slow, while the spring migration back to the breeding sites was fast. Some birds moved south where they stopped over, often in Eire, but sometimes in the English Midlands, before crossing over to France and the Bay of Biscay. Some birds moved through central Spain to Portugal, but most moved around the coast. Sometimes birds go ‘off line’ in their wintering grounds when they are not close to mobile phone masts. However, the signal from a tag on one bird, which died on a fish farm in southern Spain was so accurate it allowed a local birder to find the carcass (which may have been killed by a Marsh Harrier). He recovered the tag which he posted back to Scotland. Its journey was tracked through Madrid airport to London (the flight was even identified!) and then north up the motorway to Scotland, where it was redeployed on another bird.

Throughout this humorous talk it was clear that modern technology, combined with modern communication methods, were beginning to change attitudes toward this maligned group of birds.

### Ardeer; the unprotected jewel—Tom Byars (summary by Anne Archer)

The third talk of the day was one to make every birdwatcher ‘twitch’ with envy. Tom Byars is a man who has found his favourite bird living right under his nose. After years of studying of Lesser Whitethroats he then found them at Ardeer near Stevenston on the Ayrshire coast. This is a peninsula which was once a huge dynamite factory owned by Alfred Nobel, and which is now a much smaller works com-

Dynamite in the Dunes: A Natural History of Ardeer Peninsula  
by Tom Byars





Tom's favourite bird—a Lesser Whitethroat ©Tom Byars

prising four sandpits and a lot of artificial sandhills made years ago as protection from accidental explosions. The old works provide home for an abundance of species that have colonised an area unwanted by humans; until now. But more of that later.

What Tom found in 2006, when the fencing deteriorated and he and others started to explore the hundreds of square metres of Hawthorn, Gorse and Broom regeneration around lagoons, was exceptional. The habitat was perfect for Sedge Warblers (in 2017 there were 131 breeding territories, though only 36 in 2018) and for so many other species. The list included 191 bird species with a second record of a European Bee-eater for Ayrshire, 550 species of insects including 112 species of bees, wasps and ants, 75 species of beetles and 97 species of flies. The

rarities included Dune Chafer, Minotaur, Darkling, Red Longhorn and Hister Beetles, solitary bees including two first records for Scotland, Spider Wasp, Dark Green Fritillary butterfly and Metallic-winged Leafhopper, another first record for Scotland. Tom talked of clouds of Common Blue butterflies. Marsh Harriers pass through in spring and autumn and he had a fascinating photo of a dark-phase Marsh Harrier, which provided a puzzler for the audience. But, most of all for Tom, Lesser Whitethroats were found here. They breed on the site after returning from wintering grounds along the Nile Valley. The males return to their territory of the previous year and sing their hearts out until they attract a mate. By 2014 there were 13 singing territories, though only three bred. They feed on caterpillars and a direct link has been found between caterpillar abundance and White-throat numbers. Mature south-facing Hawthorn comprise their preferred territory, but they are showing increasing habitat plasticity with 2-3 pairs settling last year in open gorse scrub. Their range is slowly creeping northwards, so hopefully they will find plenty of suitable spots in western Scotland, if open gorse scrub is what they are looking for.

All this is an ecological wonderland, but there is a cloud on the horizon. Areas are being burnt, sometimes by local youths, Tom has a suspicion that some of it may be a deliberate attempt to reduce the conservation value of the site. On the horizon are ideas to develop it into a different sort of wonderland. The factory, which once employed 13,000 people, closed in 1990 and now there are plans to provide local employment again. One proposal is to create a marina, golf course, holiday village and tropical island resort with £200 million of Chinese money. The whole site has no conservation designation to protect it because it is a brownfield site (contaminated with heavy metals and asbestos), but Tom hopes there will soon be an environmental assessment. More information can be found at:

<https://swseic.org.uk/2017/07/secret-wildlife-derelect-ardeer/>

Our thanks to Tom for a fascinating talk.

**Seabird tracking—Peadar O'Connell, Marine Policy Officer, RSPB**  
(summary by Malcolm Chattwood)

In the introduction to his presentation Peadar acknowledged that the work he was about to describe was the result of a major study undertaken by his colleagues at RSPB. The study identified the vital at-sea foraging areas of Kittiwake, Guillemot, Razorbill and Shag from colonies all around the UK. By clearly showing which areas of sea are important to breeding seabirds, using so-



Peadar O'Connell ©David Palmar [www.photoscot.co.uk](http://www.photoscot.co.uk)





Maximum movements of breeding Razorbills from two colonies in Scotland ©RSPB

phisticated modelling techniques, advice can be given to developers, planning authorities and other agencies to ensure sufficient protection is given. The UK has some of Europe's largest seabird colonies and host huge proportions of the world's populations of breeding Manx Shearwaters (80%), Great Skuas (60%) and Gannets (56%). Unfortunately, many seabird species are in decline and pressures at sea include climate change causing changes in the ecosystem that affect seabird food supply, poor marine planning leading to developments in sensitive seabird areas and activities associated with some fishing practices such as over-fishing of seabird prey and seabirds being accidentally

caught in fishing gear, a fate known as seabird bycatch.

Where seabirds go when they leave their colonies to find food has largely been a mystery, making it challenging to put effective conservation measures in place where they are most needed. The improved sophistication of tracking technology was well-illustrated by a slide of a Gentoo penguin wearing what could only be described as a rucksack and compared to a modern, small, lightweight device used in the study. These modern advancements in technology have allowed a far greater number of seabirds to be tracked. The tags are generally attached to the birds' back using special tape, and the birds are re-caught a few days later to retrieve the tag and its valuable data before it falls off naturally. The tags allow scientists to observe the birds' movements to a very high resolution; once every 100 seconds to an accuracy of about 20 metres. Over 1,900 birds from over ten species have been tracked from in excess of 30 colonies. This has provided details of over 20,000 foraging tracks, as many birds made multiple foraging trips while they were being tracked.

Scotland has long been identified as a very important area for seabirds but the project allowed hotspot areas for foraging to be identified and also provide information to assess the distance which birds were travelling to find food and their success in returning with sufficient quantities to feed chicks. Colonies of Razorbills in Fair Isle were shown to travel over 300km whilst those from Colonsay less than 40km (see map opposite). Dive loggers were also attached to some birds to provide detail on how birds were feeding, with the Great Race to the west of Corryvreckan providing a good local example. The study also supported other projects like Project Puffin which sought not just to provide information on bird behaviour but to engage the public and allow them to contribute through the provision of photographs of birds carrying food at nest sites.

As well as being useful for marine planning, the tracking results can inform the process to support the management of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and help to identify new sites which are important for our seabirds. However, while MPAs certainly play an important role, a broader marine planning system is essential to support mobile species such as seabirds across the marine environment, outside designated protected areas. The tracking study supports this aim by increasing our understanding of where seabirds go during the breeding season, thus helping to improve the management of the wider marine envi-



Paul Barr ©David Palmar [www.photoscot.co.uk](http://www.photoscot.co.uk)



ronment to birds' advantage.

### Wildlife crime—Paul Barr, Police Scotland/Loch Lomond & Trossachs NP (summary by Alistair McGregor)

PC Barr has been a police officer for many years, and a wildlife crime officer for eleven years. At present he is seconded to Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park where he deals with a wide variety of wildlife crime along with his normal policing duties. In his presentation Paul highlighted Police Scotland's six wildlife crime priorities as Badger persecution, bat persecution, CITES (Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species) issues, Freshwater Mussels, poaching and raptor persecution.

Badger persecution comes in a variety of ways. He told us a bit about the horrific injuries that dogs sustain when pitted against a badger. This has massive welfare implications for both dogs and badgers. He then went on to outline the law concerning bat persecution, and the acts that protect bats. He indicated that roost disturbance was still a problem. He explained that with CITES issues, Police Scotland work with international police agencies to combat the illegal importation of endangered species and animal parts, i.e. powdered rhino horn and tiger parts, which fetch thousands of pounds per kilo on the black market. These are believed by some communities to have medicinal benefits. In locations where the Freshwater Mussels are present the police have a multi-agency approach, liaising with local land owners and water bail-

iffs. He showed slides of the damage this can have, and explained that Freshwater Mussels take many years to grow and can become extinct in the areas subject to illegal collection. Poaching included hunting with dogs, and Paul described a case that involved matching the DNA from the saliva of the dog with that found on the fur of a dead hare. This type of poaching wasn't done for meat, but for "sport" and betting on dogs and their ability to catch the prey. With raptor persecution Paul explained that poisoning is still happening. He said that if you find a suspected poisoned bait you should cover it up, and if possible to take a grid reference and pass it onto the police who will use their powers under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (section 19) to go onto land and remove the bait as evidence, and hopefully build a case to bring a prosecution. Paul showed slides of dead raptors and baits and he briefly explained how to identify a poisoned bait, describing it may be covered in a blue grainy substance with numerous dead flies about it. Sometimes raptors are shot off their nests, and in one case part of the tree around the nest was removed and x-rayed for shotgun pellets.

### Conclusion

After drawing the raffle and thanking donors for the prizes and the speakers for their excellent talks, the chairman closed the meeting with an invitation to the spring meeting in Oban on 16 March 2019. Overall, an excellent programme—many thanks Nigel for arranging it.

The audience at the autumn meeting ©David Palmar [www.photoscot.co.uk](http://www.photoscot.co.uk)



## BTO news update—November 2018

### Tawny Owl Calling Survey Continues

Choose your own site. 30 Sept to 31 March. 20mins (10 + 10 consecutively, and up to once a week). It's not too late to join in. Just do it as and when you can.

<https://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/project-owl/tawny-owl-calling-survey>

### Wetland Bird Survey

Help is still requested for monthly winter counts in areas on freshwater bodies and coastal areas where seabirds and shorebirds can be counted. Vacant sites can be viewed online, along with counting methods. The next counting date is 9th December 2018. 2019 dates are 20 Jan, 17 Feb, 24 Mar and 21 April. The report for 2016/17 is also available at:

<https://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/webs>

### Winter Bird Survey

In England all Breeding Bird Survey squares are included in monthly winter visits for an English Winter Bird Survey, which focuses on birds on farmland and their food. It also includes Brown Hares. It is open to squares in other habitats, and even squares in Scotland.

<https://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/english-winter-bird-survey>

### National Nestbox Week 14–21 February 2019

Annual promotion of putting up nestboxes, and the Nestbox Challenge. Downloadable information pack.

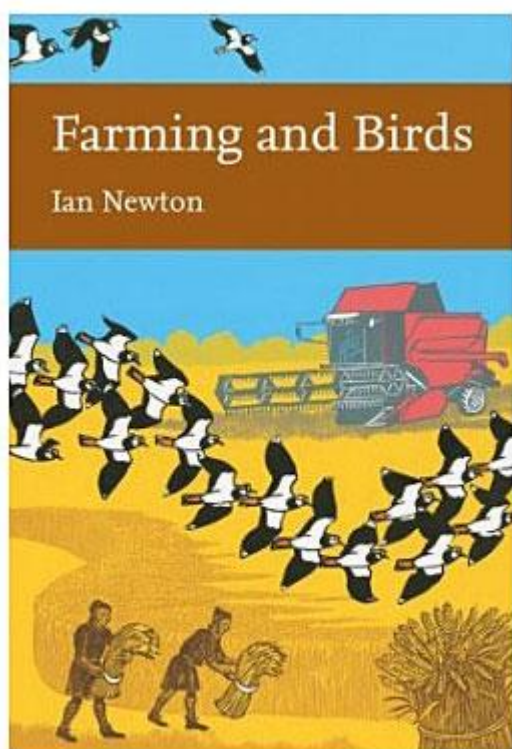
<https://www.bto.org/about-birds/nnbw>

### Seabirds Count

2019 is the final year of the national survey of seabird colonies (inland as well as coastal). If you know of any colonies near you, either new ones, or ones that have become unused, this is useful data. Please help by contacting local organizer Nigel Scriven ([njscriven@gmail.com](mailto:njscriven@gmail.com)).



## Book review



*Farming and Birds* (2017) by Ian Newton. Published by Harper Collins (Collins New Naturalist Library, volume 135). 640 pages. £35 paperback (ISBN 9780008147907) or £65 hardback (ISBN 9780008147891), but discounted from some sellers

This is a must read for anyone with an interest in the history, development and recent demise of the British avifauna. The author is legendary amongst the students of ornithology, having made an immense contribution to our knowledge of the relationships between man and birds through his professional work. Following his New Naturalist tomes on bird migration, bird populations, finches and raptors, it is written in an authoritative and very readable style, yet well referenced. If you really want to understand how changes in farming practice have impacted on birds over the years, then this is the book for you. Ask for it for Christmas or use up your gift tokens after Christmas. It demands to be read, not left on the shelf.

Nigel Scriven



## VSAS news

Below are extracts from the first VSAS (voluntary seabirds at sea surveys) newsletter.

It was a busy and rewarding year implementing plans to collect seabirds at sea data from CalMac ferries. This is part of CalMac's Marine Awareness Program, an initiative to raise awareness of the marine environment in the West of Scotland. We thank CalMac for this opportunity and will be working alongside MARINELife and other partners to collect seabird data with the help of volunteer mentors and surveyors.

### Progress so far

This year has focussed on training and we have, to date, 13 mentors and 14 volunteer surveyors ready to take part in surveys next year. The development of the mentor scheme has been a resounding success and we are confident that survey and data standards will be maintained in the future.

A key step towards going live with surveys next year was MARINELife's recruitment of a survey coordinator and Simon Pinder (a very experienced seabird surveyor and trainer) has taken on this role. Simon will be liaising with CalMac, mentors and surveyors to coordinate these initial surveys. We're really looking forward to working with MARINELife and Simon over the next couple of years and are sure his experience in the field (and behind a desk!) will be invaluable. Simon will be the main point of contact for mentors and surveyors

### What the future holds

Another volunteer training course was held in Tarbert during 3-4 November, and a final mentor course will be held in early spring 2019. If you are interested in attending the latter course, please contact Mark Lewis ([mark.lewis@jncc.gov.uk](mailto:mark.lewis@jncc.gov.uk)).

Surveys are scheduled to begin in spring 2019 and we are aiming to use three routes. However, ferries for some of these routes do not have suitable outdoor



VSAS surveyors at work

viewing platforms and we need to test options for surveying from the bridge before making a final decision. One of the main issues is that the surveys can be quite noisy, which is not ideal on the bridge of a ship, so we are developing solutions to reduce noise levels.

We are also looking to make a major change to how we collect our data. During this winter, we will start to develop an application that will allow data to be entered directly onto a tablet, reducing the need to transcribe data from paper sheets to a computer. The app. will also contain lots of useful features such as the survey manual, guidance for environmental recording and 'cheat sheets' for coding. We are aiming to launch the app. in 2019 and, ideally, in time for the start of the first surveys.

In other technological news, we are aiming to provide an online platform for mentors, surveyors and anyone interested in getting involved with the project. Volunteers will be able to upload photos and trip reports; post and reply to questions; discuss methods and identification challenges; and anything else relevant to the project.

### Thank you

We'd like to thank everyone who has given their time, energy and enthusiasm to get this project off to a flying start. It wouldn't be possible without you! Exciting times lie ahead with the start of the first surveys next year, which we hope some of you will be able to take part in. We'll continue to build our volunteer base and would encourage anyone who would like to become involved with the project to get in touch, as there are further training courses on the horizon and opportunities to increase the number of surveys and routes in the future.

Of course, we'd also like to extend a huge thank you to all of the project partners who have contributed to getting this project off the ground (into the water?) so far.

**Editor's note.** Further information about this project was given on page 4 of the December 2017 *Eider*.





## Recent bird sightings August to October



Red-backed Shrike, Treshnish Farm, Mull on 24 September ©Anand Prasad

Presented is a summary of records of rare and unusual species, including high counts and movements of more common species recorded in Argyll during the period. I wish to thank everyone who sent in records and apologise for any errors or omissions. Ideally records should be submitted using the Argyll Bird Recording system or by using the BTO BirdTrack system. For information about either scheme please email:

[abcrcorder@outlook.com](mailto:abcrecorder@outlook.com)

A more detailed and up-to-date account of recent sightings, including a list of spring migrant arrival dates, is available on the Argyll Bird Club website.

**Notes:** MSBO = Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, Kintyre. Some records are pending acceptance by the various rare bird committees (Argyll, Scottish & British).

### Swans, ducks, geese & game-birds

**MUTE SWAN.** Jura; a "Polish" white morph cygnet was at Inver, Sound of Islay on 25 Aug.

**WHOOPEE SWAN.** Islay; 303 arrived at Gruinart on 19 Oct and a high total island count of 1,000+ was made on 21 Oct.

**PINK-FOOTED GOOSE.** Kintyre; at MSBO 80 flew south on 19 Sep. Mid-Argyll; birds heard passing over Cairnbaan early on 20 Sep and 20 were at the Add Estuary on 21 Sep. Mull; 175 were over Tobermory on 20 Sep.

**WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE.** Kintyre; at The Laggan; ca. 800 arrived at Strath on 27 Oct

then numbers swelled to 1,400 there on 28 Oct then there was a count of 1,150 at Drumlembie on 30 Oct. Mull; 460 were over Treshnish Farm on 25 Oct.

**RICHARDSON'S (CACKLING) GOOSE.** Colonsay; one was on Oronsay on 18-29 Oct (Patrick Styles *et al.*). Islay; one was at Gruinart on 18 Oct and a different bird there on 19 Oct.

**BARNACLE GOOSE.** Colonsay; first birds noted on Oronsay with 32 flying south on 28 Sep.

**PALE-BELLIED BRENT GOOSE.** Colonsay; 30 were on Oronsay on 18 Sep. Islay; first report was of 14 at Loch Indaal on 12 Sep with a peak of 84 at Loch Gruinart on 18 Sep.

**TEAL.** Islay; a high count of 1,350 at Gruinart floods on 12 Oct.

**PINTAIL.** Islay; a peak count of 64 at Gruinart floods on 31 Oct. Mid-Argyll; a female/immature was at the Add Estuary on 14 Oct.

**POCHARD.** Tiree; a male was at Loch a' Phuill on 14 Oct then at Loch Bhasapol on 15-18 Oct.

**GREATER SCAUP.** Kintyre; 12 at MSBO flying south on 15 Sep. Islay; first of the autumn was a pair at Loch Indaal on 1 Sep followed by a peak count there of 33 there on 28 Oct.

**LONG-TAILED DUCK.** Islay; a peak count of seven at Loch Indaal on 28 Oct.

**VELVET SCOTER.** North Argyll; a male was at Ardmucknish Bay, Benderloch on 3 Sep.

**GOOSANDER.** Cowal; a count of 80 at Loch Riddon on 12 Aug.

## Seabirds (divers, grebes, shearwaters, petrels also egrets & herons)

**RED-THROATED DIVER.** Kintyre; at MSBO a total of 125 were seen flying south during Sep.

**GREAT SHEARWATER.** Kintyre; an unconfirmed report of one from the I slay Ferry on 9 Aug.

**SOOTY SHEARWATER.** I slay; two were seen off Frenchman's Rocks on 20 Sep. Kintyre; two were seen from the I slay Ferry on 17 Aug and six on 23 Aug. Tiree; a total of 29 birds in Sep with a peak of 12 passing southwest off Hynish on 17 Sep. Singles were seen off Aird on 2 Oct and off Hynish on 7 Oct.

**BALEARIC SHEARWATER.** Tiree; one headed southwest off Hynish on 26 Aug.

**LEACH'S PETREL.** Kintyre; at MSBO one well offshore flying south on 12 Sep in a WNW force 5 wind with light squalls. A total of 21 were seen flying south on 16 Sep in a WSW force 5-6. wind. I slay; one was off The Oa on 20 Sep and one was seen from the I slay ferry on 9 Oct. Tiree; one passed southwest off Hynish on 19 Sep, one passed west off Aird on 2 Oct, one passed west off The Green on 2 Oct and one was close in at Gott Bay on 29 Oct.

**CATTLE EGRET.** Mull; one was seen at Calgary Machair on 12 Oct and still present on 31 Oct and remained into Nov (photo opposite).

**LITTLE EGRET.** Colonsay; one was at Loch Fada during 30 Sep-4 Oct. Cowal; one was at the Holy Loch from Jul and seen regularly until end of Oct. Kintyre; one was at Campbeltown Loch on 10 Oct and one was at Waterfoot, Carradale on 31 Oct and into Nov. Mid-Argyll; one was at the Add Estuary on 25 Oct and into Nov. Mull; singles were at Buinessan on 11 and 14 Oct and possibly the same at Loch Cuin on 21 Oct. I slay; two appeared at Loch Indaal on 2 Oct and remained on the island until 15 Oct with one staying into Nov.

**SLAVONIAN GREBE.** Mull; nine were at Loch na Keal on 8 Oct. I slay; first returning bird was at Loch Indaal on 1 Sep with a peak count of 34 at Loch Indaal on 28 Oct.

**PIED-BILLED GREBE.** Mid-Argyll; the long staying adult male was still present at Loch Feorlin throughout this period.



**Upper photo:** Cattle Egret, Calgary, Mull on 15 October ©Anand Prasad

**Lower photo:** Dotterel, Scarinish, Tiree on 2 October ©Jim Dickson

**RED-NECKED GREBE.** Mid-Argyll; a report (per Birdguides) of one at Connel, Loch Etive on 29 Oct. We require more details please.

## Raptors to rails

**RED KITE.** I slay; two were seen over Kindrochid, north of Loch Gorm on 28 Oct. Mid-Argyll; one was at Achnacoich, Loch Etive on 17 Oct, three were together flying above Lochgilphead and Ardrishaig on 29 Oct, and one was foraging at Lochan Shira on 29 Oct.



**COOT.** Mid-Argyll; one was at the Ulva Lagoon on 22 Oct. Mull; one was at Der-vaig on 7 Aug. Tiree; two were at Loch Bhasapol during 3-24 Oct.

**COMMON CRANE.** Colonsay; one flew over Oronsay on 31 Oct (Patrick Styles *et al.*).

## Waders

**DOTTEREL.** Tiree; a 1 calendar-year (CY) juvenile was at Scarinish on 2 Oct and again on 23 Oct (photo, previous page).

**GOLDEN PLOVER.** Kintyre; 800+ were at Westport Marsh on 26 Oct. Islay; a peak count of 1,200 at Loch Gruinart on 31 Oct. Tiree; peak flock count was of 1,200 on 25 Oct, although other large flocks noted.

**AMERICAN GOLDEN PLOVER.** Tiree; the moulting adult (from Jul) was at Sandaig on 29 Aug remaining there to 24 Sep and was joined by a second adult on 12 Sep.

**LAPWING.** Kintyre; 330 were at Westport Marsh on 26 Oct. Tiree; 2,465 were counted around the island at end of Aug.

**RED KNOT.** Kintyre; a total of 31 flying south in Aug and 43 flying south in Sep. Islay; a peak count of 41 at Loch Indaal on 7 Sep.

**SANDERLING.** Kintyre; a total of 688 flying south at MSBO in Aug.

**PURPLE SANDPIPER.** Kintyre; at MSBO the first autumn birds were three flying south on 20 Sep.

**DUNLIN.** Islay; a peak count of 2,000+ at Loch Gruinart on 22 Aug.

**LITTLE STINT.** Islay; a juvenile was at Machir Bay on 10 Oct. Tiree; a juvenile was at Gott Bay on 13 Aug.

**BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER.** Tiree; a juvenile was at Sandaig on 1-5 Sep (Keith Gillon), two juveniles were at Vaul Golf Course on 12 Sep (Keith Gillon) with the same two juveniles 3hrs later at Kenovay and a juvenile at Loch a' Phuill on 21 Sep (John Bowler).

**PECTORAL SANDPIPER.** Mull; a juvenile was at Iona Golf Course on 18 Sep (Laurence Potter *et al.*). Tiree; a very vocal juvenile was at Loch a' Phuill on 27 Sep (John Bowler).

**RUFF.** Kintyre; first one at MSBO this year was on 12 Aug, then singles on 16 and 28 Aug. Islay; singles at Loch Gruinart on 5 Aug then 1-5 Sep and two there on 18 Sep. Tiree; one moulting adult male was at Loch a' Phuill on 13 Aug, one at Greenhill on 15 Aug and one juvenile at Sandaig on 29 Aug, only six or seven juveniles in Sep with a peak of two at Sandaig on 2 Sep.



Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Sandaig, Tiree on 1 September  
©Keith Gillon

**COMMON SNIBE.** Tiree; during heavy rain 500+ were noted on 17 Sep and 1,000+ on 8 Oct.

**JACK SNIBE.** Colonsay; one was at Ardskenish on 18 Oct. Tiree; one was at Hough dunes on 2 Oct.

**BLACK-TAILED GODWIT.** Kintyre; A total of 255 flying south at MSBO during Aug, with 144 there on 19 Aug. Islay; a peak count of 67 at Loch Gruinart on 30 Aug. Tiree; peaks of 120 juveniles at Balephetrish Bay on 22 Aug and 205 at Kenovay on 28 Aug.

**WHIMBREL.** Cowal; two late birds were at the Holly Loch on 27 Oct. Kintyre; a total of 30 flying south at MSBO in Aug. Islay; a peak count of 23 over Machir Bay on 5 Aug.

**GREEN SANDPIPER.** Mid-Argyll; one was at a pool just south of Ardrishaig on 3 Aug.

**GREENSHANK.** Tiree; a peak of seven at Loch a' Phuill on 2 Aug.

**GREY PHALAROPE.** Tiree; singles headed southwest past Hynish on 16 Oct and in Gott Bay on 29 Oct.

## Skuas, gulls, terns & auks

**POMARINE SKUA.** Tiree; a 2CY was off Hynish on 6 Aug, an adult was flying southwest of Coll on 20 Oct and single immatures headed west off Aird on 23 and 26 Oct.

**ARCTIC SKUA.** Tiree; peak count of six flying southwest past Hynish on 7 Oct.

**LONG-TAILED SKUA.** Kintyre; a 1CY was reported (per Birdguides) from the Islay Ferry on 23 Aug—description details are required for this please. Mull; an adult was seen over Tobermory on 23 Aug.

**LITTLE GULL.** Mid-Argyll; an adult was at Loch Crinan on 26 Aug.

**BONAPARTE'S GULL.** Mid-Argyll; an adult was at the head of Loch Gilp on 20 Oct (Jim Dickson).

**MEDITERRANEAN GULL.** Kintyre; two 1CY birds were at MSBO on 19 and 20 Aug and 1CY birds there on 12 and 18 Sep. Islay; from 1 Sep four birds were at Loch Indaal; two 1CY and two 2CY. Mid-Argyll; two 1CY birds were at Loch Crinan on 23 Aug with another 1CY at the Add Estuary on 12 Sep. An adult was at Blackmill Bay, Luing on 3 Oct.



**Upper photo:** Mediterranean Gull, MSBO on 8 October ©Eddie Maguire

**Lower photo:** Icterine Warbler, Balephuil, Tiree on 7 September ©Keith Gillon

**RING-BILLED GULL.** Tiree; an adult was at The Maze on 14 Aug (Nick Wall).

**ICELAND GULL.** Kintyre; a 2CY was at Drumlemble on 29 Sep. I say; an adult flew past Port Charlotte on 12 Oct.

**GLAUCOUS GULL.** I say; one was at Uiskentuie on 26 Oct. Tiree; a juvenile was at Loch a' Phuill on 28 Oct.

**LITTLE TERN.** I say; a report of an exceptionally late bird

at Port Charlotte on 8 Oct.

**LITTLE AUK.** Tiree; a summer plumage adult flew close past Aird on 30 Sep and two flew west off Aird on 26 Oct.

### Doves, cuckoos, owls, swift, kingfisher & woodpeckers

**TURTLE DOVE.** Mull; a report of a 1CY in a garden on Ross of Mull on 22 Oct.

**SHORT-EARED OWL.** Mid-Argyll; one was at Balvicar Bog (Seil) on 22 Sep.

**COMMON SWIFT.** Kintyre; 21 were over Longrow, Campbeltown on 6 Aug. Cowal; 30 were over Du-noon on 5 Aug.

**HOOPOE.** Colonsay; one was at Lower Kilchattan on 11 Oct (Carol & David Paterson). This is the first confirmed record for Colonsay.

**KINGFISHER.** Several reports of 1-2 birds from the mainland. Colonsay; one at Loch Fada on 11 Oct (Steve Bental) was the first on Colonsay since 1945!

### Passerines (larks to buntings)

**RED-BACKED SHRIKE.** Mull; a 1CY was at Treshnish Farm during 21-24 Sep (Anand Prasad). Tiree; a 1CY frequented the Heylipol Church area from 23 Sep to 10 Oct (John Bowler *et al.*).

**HOUSE MARTIN.** Kintyre; a loose flock of 30 flying south over the sea at MSBO on 20 Sep.

**LONG-TAILED TIT.** Mull; a high count of 20 birds at Treshnish Farm on 8 Oct.

**YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER.** Mull; one was at Baile Mor, Iona on 17 Oct (Tony Disley). Tiree; one was at Balephuil on 14 Oct and this bird or another was at Carnan Mor on 16 Oct (John Bowler).

**LESSER WHITETHROAT.** Mid-Argyll; one was in a hedge by the Tesco fuel station in Oban on 7 Oct. Tiree; singles were at The Glebe during 1-5 Oct, Balephuil during 1-6 Oct and Cornaig on 5 Oct.

**BARRED WARBLER.** Tiree; a 1CY was near the school at Cornaig on 30 Sep (Jim Dickson/Neil Ham-matt).

**ICTERINE WARBLER.** Tiree; a 1CY bird was on rose bushes at



Rosy Starling, Kenovay, Tiree on 17 August ©John Bowler



Goldcrest, Point Sands, Kintyre on 27 October ©Jim Dickson



### STOP PRESS

**WAXWING.** Five in Oban, Mid-Argyll on 8 Nov.

**GREAT WHITE EGRET.** One at Loch Ederline, Mid-Argyll on 5 Nov.

**RING-BILLED GULL.** A 2CY at Sandaig, Tiree on 11 Nov.

**TUNDRA BEAN GOOSE.** Five at Kilmichael floods, Kintyre on 11 Nov.

**RING-NECKED DUCK.** Three at Loch Bhasapol, Tiree on 12 Nov.

Balephuill on 7 Sep (Keith Gillon/John Bowler) (photo on previous page). This is only the fourth record for Argyll.

**RING OUZEL.** Tiree; a 1CY was at Balephuill on 14 Oct.

**NUTHATCH.** Reports from the mainland continue to increase.

**ROSY STARLING.** Islay; the adult at Ardnave from Jul remained until at least 4 Aug. Tiree; a female (from Jul) remained near Traigh Bhi on 1-2 Aug and perhaps same bird at Kenovay on 9 Aug to 4 Sep (photo opposite).

**MISTLE THRUSH.** Mid-Argyll; peak count noted was of 57 at Crinan Ferry on 11 Sep.

**FIELDFARE.** Kintyre; 200+ flying west near Southend on 28 Sep and 300 at Machrihanish Airbase on 27 Oct. Mid-Argyll; first report was of a single at the Moine Mhor on 30 Sep and peak of 300 over Cairnbaan on 18 Oct. Mull; 100 were at Lochbuie on 17 Oct. Islay; a peak count of 200 at The Oa on 26 Oct.

**REDWING.** Kintyre; 800+ were at Machrihanish Airbase on 27 Oct. Islay; a peak count of 800 at The Oa on 26 Oct. Mid-Argyll; 100 over Cairnbaan on 18 Oct. Tiree; first one at Scarinish on 25 Sep.

**WHITE WAGTAIL.** Kintyre; a total of 96 flying south at MSBO during Aug and 292 flying south during Sep.

**BRAMBLING.** Kintyre; a peak of eleven birds in a garden at Port Righ, Carradale on 26 Oct. Islay; a peak count of eight at Kinnabus on 30 Oct. Tiree; up to six singles in Oct and two at Balinoe on 13 Oct.

**COMMON ROSEFINCH.** Tiree; a 1CY was at Balephuill on 3-4 Oct (John Bowler).

**COMMON REDPOLL.** Tiree; several Mealy type birds were noted as well as large Greenland (NW types) with two at Balemartine on 6 Oct and singles at The Reef on 8 Oct and Balephuill on 9-10 Oct.

**PINE BUNTING.** Mid-Argyll; an unconfirmed report of a 1CY male in a Scammadale garden on 2 Oct (Bill Alan).

**SNOW BUNTING.** Coll; one was at Tortonald on 18 Oct. Islay; one was at Ardnave on 28 Oct. Tiree; one was at Hough Machair on 1 Oct.

**LAPLAND BUNTING.** Tiree; two were at Sandaig on 23 Sep.

**Jim Dickson**

**Argyll Bird Recorder**

Articles for the March issue of the *Eider* should with the editor before the 20th February 2019

#### Officials and Committee of the Argyll Bird Club (2018/2019)

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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 unedited digital photographs (jpeg files preferred) of birds and their habitats to the editor. Please do not embed digital images in word files. Digital photographs of Schedule 1 species taken at or near the nest will not be accepted for publication unless the photographer was covered by an appropriate SNH licence.

The *Eider* is published during the first week of March, June, September and December. Articles for each issue must be with the editor before the 20th day of the month prior to publication. However, it greatly helps if material can be submitted well before these deadline dates. Contributions are accepted in the order they are received, which may result in some late submissions being held over until the next issue.

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

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

#### More about the Argyll Bird Club

The club was established in 1985 and has around 400 members. Its main role is to encourage an interest in wild birds and their habitats in Argyll; an area of outstanding natural beauty and biological diversity.

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

Ordinary	£10
Age 25 and under	free
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).



**Scottish Birdwatchers' Conference, 26-27 March 2019**  
**Booking Form**

## BOOKING FORM

Ideally please book online at [www.bto.org/sbc2019](http://www.bto.org/sbc2019). Alternatively, please complete the following booking form in block capitals and return with a cheque payable to British Trust for Ornithology to: **Anne Cotton, BTO Scotland, Unit 15, Beta Centre, Stirling University Innovation Park, FK9 4NF**. If you have any queries please call 01786 458021.

Name(s) and any affiliation: (to appear on badge)	
Address:	
	Postcode:
Tel:	Email:
Any special dietary requirements?	
Please tick if you have limited mobility <input type="checkbox"/>	
Do you wear a hearing aid?	
Where did you hear about the conference?	
Would you be interested in joining staff, volunteers and other delegates for an informal meal on Saturday evening (not included in booking fee) in the Oban area? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Would you be interested in joining an organised outing on the Sunday? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If yes, it would be helpful if you could indicate your preferred location (see 'Local Birdwatching' overleaf): Mull <input type="checkbox"/> North Connell <input type="checkbox"/> Seil and Luing <input type="checkbox"/> Loch Laich <input type="checkbox"/> Lismore <input type="checkbox"/> Kerrera <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Conference and booking fee:</b> The charge for the conference is £30* (incl. VAT) per person. A limited number of discounted places are available to under 25s and students, priced at £20. This includes registration fee, lunch and teas/coffees. Please book online or return the booking form along with payment, to arrive no later than 23rd February 2019. Booking will be confirmed by email (or post, as applicable). We regret that no refunds can be issued after 5th March. *Argyll Bird Club members should contact the ABC Treasurer if they wish a partial refund on the conference fee.	
I enclose a cheque payable to the British Trust for Ornithology <input type="checkbox"/>	
The BTO's data protection policy is available at <a href="http://www.bto.org/about/privacy-statement">www.bto.org/about/privacy-statement</a> Data from this booking form may be shared with SOC and ABC for the purpose of administering the conference only.	