

December 2013
Number 106

The Eider



A Cedar Waxwing on Tiree in September. This was only the second Scottish and third British record of this transatlantic vagrant ©Jim Dickson

South Shian tern rafts—an award winning project, pages 12-16

Cedar Waxwing on Tiree, pages 9-10

Recent bird sightings, pages 16-24

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Editorial

It's not very often that the newsletter is so full that the editor is left with little space to ramble on! This bumper issue is full of fascinating articles and superb photographs. You only have to look at the list of contributors/helpers below to realise how many folk make this all possible. So, please keep the contributions coming. The deadline for the March issue is the 24 February.

Another milestone has just been reached with the publication of the *Bird Atlas 2007-11* by the BTO. It's a magnificent tome (pages 10-11), for which many of you undertook field work. If you've not already pre-ordered a copy, this is definitely one to ask Santa for! It's one of those books that you'll keep dipping into for years to come.

Finally on behalf of the committee, I wish you all a merry Christmas and a happy New Year. Thank you for continuing to support the club. You make it what it is today!

From the Chairman

As many of you will know, Nigel Scriven stepped down as chairman of the Argyll Bird Club at the AGM in November and I was elected chairman for the coming year. Nigel has been a member of the club since its inception and has served on the committee in various roles for most of that time. I would like to thank Nigel for his many years of service to the club, especially as chairman for the last seven years, and I am glad to say that he is remaining on the committee as vice-chairman.

I am conscious that the club has a wide range of members, from social birdwatchers to professional ornithologists, with a similarly wide geographical distribution, both within and outwith Argyll. It is important that the club caters for all levels of interest with, as far as possible, activities which are reasonably accessible to all members. The committee is here

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to manage the club for members, but committee members do not have a monopoly on good ideas. We would welcome feedback from the wider membership on the current activities of the club—bi-annual indoor meetings, monthly field trips, the quarterly newsletter and annual bird report, website, financial support for ornithological research and conservation. We would particularly welcome ideas and suggestions for other activities or variations to those we currently organise. Please feel free to get in touch with me or any of the committee members with your comments and suggestions; after all, it is your club.

Mike Harrison

Acknowledgements

Very many thanks to the following for their contributions to this issue—John Bowler, Tom Callan, Malcolm Chattwood, Clive Craik, Paul Daw, Jim Dickson, Ian Fisher, Bob Furness (including photocopying & dispatch), Keith Gillon, Mike Harrison, Eddie Maguire, John Nardin, Katie Pendreigh, Linda Petty (proof reading), Simon Williams Photography, Andy Robinson, Nigel Scriven, Howard Stockdale, Nicholas Watts and Jeremy Wilson.

Club News

Field trips

Saturday 25 January 2014. Ormsary. Meet at the estate office car park at 10.00hrs, and bring your own lunch. Led by Stuart Crutchfield.

Saturday 22 February 2014. Loch Gilp/Add Estuary. Meet at Corran Car Park in Lochgilphead at 10.00hrs. Led by Jim Dickson

Saturday 29 March 2014. Sound of Gigha. Led by Paul Daw. For more information contact Paul (e-mail: monedula@globalnet.co.uk Phone: 01546 886260)

Indoor meetings

Spring meeting 2014. On Saturday 8 March 2014 at the Three Villages Hall, Arrochar. The programme is given below. Information about the venue is available at:

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

This is an excellent hall for our talks and has plenty of space for tables, posters etc. We have

also booked a separate room within the hall (adjacent to the main hall) for lunch. A soup and sandwich lunch will be available for £5.50 per person. Teas and coffees will be provided free as usual. There is a car park beside the hall, and in the event of us filling that car park, there is plenty of extra car parking space in front of the hotel next door. Peregrines and golden eagles nest just a few minutes flying time from the hall, and there are usually seabirds to be seen on Loch Long in front of the hall, so it is worth bringing binoculars.

Autumn meeting 2014. On Saturday 1 November at the Cairnbaan Hotel, near Lochgilphead. The programme will appear in a later issue of *The Eider*.

WeBS Counts

The October 2013 WeBS Counts for Argyll mainland and Mull are now available on the ABC website. Please contact Paul Daw at:

Programme for the ABC's Spring Meeting Saturday 8 March at the Three Villages Hall, Arrochar

Time	Session
0930	Doors open, coffee and tea
0950-1000	Welcome and introduction— <i>Mike Harrison</i> , Chairman of the Argyll Bird Club
1000-1030	Recent bird sightings and photographs— <i>Jim Dickson</i> , Argyll Bird Recorder
1030-1100	STAR: RSPB's seabird tracking and research in Argyll— <i>Tessa Cole</i> , RSPB
1100-1130	Coffee/tea
1130-1200	Argyll Bird Club's trip to Tiree— <i>David Palmar</i>
1200-1230	Thermography: from counting birds to assessing their moods— <i>Dominic McCafferty</i> , University of Glasgow
1230-1400	Lunch (provided in the hall—see above)
1400-1430	Ringling Jack Snipe and gulls in the Clyde area— <i>Iain Livingstone</i> , Clyde Ringling Group
1430-1500	Tracking Basking Sharks in Argyll— <i>Ruth Abernethy</i> , University of Glasgow
1500-1530	Tea/coffee
1530-1600	Catching and tracking Cuckoos: are Scottish Cuckoos different— <i>John Calladine</i> , BTO Scotland
1600-1620	Are wind, wave and tidal power threats to birds in Argyll— <i>Bob Furness</i> , MacArthur Green
16.20-1630	Raffle and close

e-mail monedula@globalnet.co.uk if you notice any errors.

RSPB conservation award for Clive Craik

Pioneers in Scottish nature conservation were honoured recently at the second annual RSPB Nature of Scotland Awards

Held at the Sheraton Grand Hotel in Edinburgh, and hosted by comedian and talk show host Fred MacAulay and broadcaster Sally Magnusson, the awards recognise and celebrate excellence, innovation and outstanding achievement in nature conservation.

The event brought together a range of industry professionals, public sector organisations, community groups, politicians, charities and conservationists, all of whom have an interest in safeguarding and conserving Scotland's greatest asset—its natural heritage.

After tough deliberations sifting through over seventy high quality entries, the judges managed to narrow it down to nine winners, each taking home the top prize in their category

Work to protect Common Terns in the west of Scotland earned Clive Craik and the South Shian Tern Raft Project the RSPB Species Champion Award. Clive devised a system using discarded mussel rafts to give breeding terns a safe place to raise young, out of reach of their two main predators—mink and otter (see Clive's article about the rafts in this issue, pages 12-16). Our hearty congratulations go to Clive who has for many years devoted most of his summers to tern conservation work in Argyll. The club has given financial support to the raft project.

Request for information

Philip Price runs Loch Visions, a professional wildlife photography workshop business based in Argyll, details below. He has been waxing lyrical about the virtues of corvids for many years, ever since a fantastic month photographing Hooded Crows in Oban and being blown away by their cunning and intelligence. He wishes to expand this project and wondered if anyone has any good examples of corvid behaviour that he could photograph? Such as leaving shells under cars so they break when the cars drive off, or pulling bags out



Species Champion Award being presented to Clive Craik (looking very dapper, centre right) by Euan McIlwraith (BBC Scotland) and Alistair Longwell, Ardmore Distillery Manager (sponsor of the award) ©Simon Williams Photography

of bins to get food etc. He is interested in anything and everything corvid! Any help would be very much appreciated. Contact details for Philip are:

Web: www.lochvisions.co.uk

Tel: 01866833272 Mob: 07767807123

Email: philipvprice@lochvisions.co.uk

Report of the ABC field trip on 26 October to Ledaig Point

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



ABC members braving the weather at Ledaig Point ©Mike Harrison

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 Ard-mucknish 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 14.30hrs and another forecasting 14.50hrs we turned for home as the first spots were felt at 14.40hrs. 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

Report of the ABC field trip to Tiree during 22-29 September

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). MB House is in the former smithy building, and the living-dining room still has the blacksmith's forge in the corner as a 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 species on the way to reach 20 with Rock Dove. Next to come were Merlin and Hen Harrier, and before long we

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 Tíree 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 (see photo opposite). 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 MB House is a small fenced-off garden with a 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 with permission that is a project for the future. 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

Birding in John Bowler's garden ©Nigel Scriven



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 was 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 (photo below).

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

Rock Pipit ©Nigel Scriven



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 recorded: 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, Green-shank, 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

The French connection

A very small number of Sedge Warblers have been ringed on Colonsay in the Hebrides. Only 12 had been ringed when news came back that one ringed in June 2008 had been caught at Tours aux Mouton, Donges, Loire-Atlantique, in May 2010. So, it came as a bit of a surprise when another ringed on Colonsay in June 2012 was re-trapped in the same location a couple of months later. Moreover, on 21 May of this year, I caught a French ringed Sedge Warbler at Milbuie, Colonsay and jokingly remarked it will probably be from Tours aux Moutons—*incroyable*—when the recovery details came through in September, it did turn out to be from the same location. So, out of 21 Sedge Warblers caught on Colonsay over the last seven years, three have travelled through the same site in Loire-Atlantique, France—aren't some birds amazing!

To put these records further into perspective, Mark Grantham who rings Sedge Warblers in Cornwall

has had only seven recoveries from France in over 1000 ringed, and only one from Tours aux Moutons!

David Jardine



Sedge Warbler, Scalasaig, Colonsay
©Ian Fisher

Cedar Waxwing, Tiree, September 2013 ©Jeremy Wilson



Cedar Waxwing on the Isle of Tiree, September 2013

I was out working on the Reef reserve on Monday 23 September 2013, and came home in the afternoon to find a message on my answer-phone from a Tiree resident describing an odd bird that had briefly visited their garden at Vault, which they were unable to identify.

Such calls always get me thinking about exotic vagrants but generally turn out to be commoner species that happen to be scarce on Tiree. The bird in question had allowed a very close approach and had apparently fed on the berries of a small berberis bush, which combined with the mention of a yellow-tipped tail suggested Waxwing to me. However, the date seemed very early for one, whilst the description of a greyish body colour also sounded wrong, so I headed over to Vault to check it out. The bird was clearly no longer in the garden it had visited briefly and after two hours of checking adjacent gardens and with the light beginning to fade, it seemed that the bird had gone. But then at 16.50hrs I relocated an oddly grey looking waxwing feeding in a cotoneaster bush in a mature garden belonging to another island resident, who allows me access to look for birds there.

Close views of the bird revealed that this was clearly not an early Bohemian Waxwing. The overall body colour was a cold greyish-brown

rather than the salmon pink tones I associate with European birds. It was paler on the rump and belly, with slight yellowish tones apparent on the belly and vent, when viewed in good light. The flight feathers were a rather uniform bluish-grey colour lacking the black, yellow and red markings of Bohemian Waxwing. Instead there were paler edgings on the primaries and there was a rather bold white line down the inner edge of the tertials. The tail was a darker bluish grey with a



Cedar Waxwing, Tiree, September 2013. Also, see the front cover for another photo ©Jim Dickson

narrow yellow tip, whilst there was a bold black mask, bordered white, giving the impression of white spectacles when viewed front on. The bird showed a weak crest, which was held half-raised, whilst the bill and legs were blackish-grey, although the bill base looked paler as a result of an accumulation of berry skins. Rather incredibly, these features all proclaimed the bird to be a first-winter Cedar Waxwing, a species I had last seen in Texas in February 2011!

The bird was sometimes quite confiding, allowing me to take some digi-binned photos, although it often disappeared from view for long periods of time. Upon taking flight, it occasionally called a thin high-pitched trill, much weaker than Bohemian Waxwing. From discussion with the house-owner, it turned out that the bird had arrived in their garden on Saturday 21 September, or possibly late on Friday 20 September, and had been present more or less continuously thereafter, always feeding in the same berry-laden cotoneaster bush that was growing against the back-wall of their house.

Unfortunately, owing to the hidden location of the berry bush, plus the dense nature of the garden and its hedges, the bird could only be viewed from either inside the house or from within the garden itself, which was accessed via a gated door-way. I discussed the great rarity of the bird with the house-owner (a lady in her 90s) and she was clearly shaken at the prospect of potentially large numbers of birders wanting to come and see it, and therefore I decided not to put the news out that evening, which is something I would otherwise do. I returned the following morning to review the situation with Jeremy Wilson, Head of Conservation Science at RSPB Scotland, who happened to be birding on Tiree that

week. The bird was still feeding in the same bush, there was no way of viewing it from out-with the house or garden and the house-owner reiterated that she did not want us to broadcast the news more widely. It was therefore agreed that we would not release news of the bird in its current location and that instead we would await its movement to a more accessible site.

I continued to monitor the bird over the following days, together with Jeremy and also Jim Dickson, who had arrived in the meantime for his annual autumn birding week on the island. Frustratingly, the Cedar Waxwing remained entirely loyal to the hidden cotoneaster bush, despite attempts to lure it out into a more accessible area with cut-up apples. The bird had seemed tired when first seen, often falling asleep after a feeding bout. However, it appeared to become fitter and more wary as the days progressed and it steadily depleted the berry supply. The waxwing was last seen by the house owner on Sunday 29 September but not subsequently, despite further searches made of adjacent gardens and it is assumed that it departed on the Sunday night.

If accepted, this will be just the second Scottish and third British record of this numerous North American waxwing, following a bird on Noss, Shetland in June 1983 and another in Nottingham in February-March 1996. After a Buff-bellied Pipit on Tiree in September 2012, a Northern Parula in September 2010 and a Red-eyed Vireo in October 2008, it raises the intriguing question of what other American passerines might turn up in Tiree gardens in future autumns?.....

John Bowler

Balephuill, Isle of Tiree, Argyll

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All change for Britain's birds—Bird Atlas 2007-11

One of the most ambitious volunteer projects ever undertaken, to map all of our birds in both winter and the breeding season, and from every part of Britain and Ireland, is now realised with the publication of the Bird Atlas 2007-11, and the results are surprising.

Over 40,000 volunteers spent four years scouring the countryside in search of birds, submitting

their records to the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), to integrate local information on bird numbers into coherent national pictures of the state of Britain and Ireland's bird populations, and finding some startling results along the way.

Over the last 40 years the British breeding areas for 74 (38%) of our bird species have expanded beyond their previously known range,

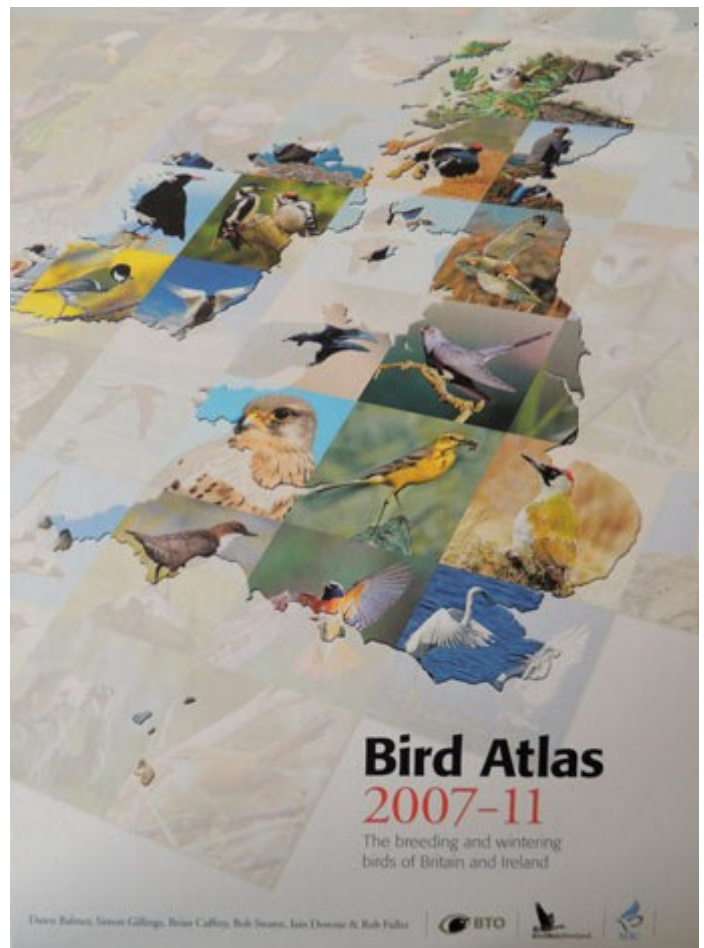
whilst for 72 (37%) of them the range has shrunk, and for 47 (24%) it has remained relatively unchanged. But what is rather surprising is that for nearly all of them there has been a shift in where they live. Every species has a story to tell.

For those species that spend the winter months with us the changes have been very different. Over three quarters of species were found in more areas than three decades ago. Improved coverage of remote areas explains some but not all of these gains, but the 8% of species now found in fewer areas are of real concern.

So, what are the surprises? Forty years ago the Little Egret was very much a bird of the Mediterranean but in 1996 this small white heron bred here for the first time. Since then it has increased its range in Britain by a whopping 16,350% and has become a familiar bird for many and one that our children will grow-up with and associate with British wetlands. They'll assume that it was always there.

The charismatic Green Woodpecker exemplifies the complex changes we see. It has become more common in eastern England and has spread northwards into parts of eastern Scotland. Meanwhile, it has begun to disappear from western Wales, an area that is also losing its Lapwings, Kestrels and Starlings. The 'little bit of bread and no cheese' of the Yellowhammer is a sound that is disappearing from our countryside. Forty years ago the species could be heard singing in almost every village of Britain and Ireland but Yellowhammers are now missing from large swathes of Ireland, western Scotland, southern Wales and northern England, representing a 32% contraction for this formerly widespread breeding bird.

Dawn Balmer, Atlas Coordinator, commented "As the maps started to come together it was astonishing just how much had changed. There were stories that we knew, such as the disappearance of Tree Sparrows and the spread of Egyptian Geese, but why are we losing specialist species such as Willow Tit, now virtually extinct in southeast England, and what's driving the spread of Nut-



hatches?"

Simon Gillings, BTO Senior Research Ecologist comments, "Conservation scientists have been desperate for a new atlas. Its comprehensive coverage of all areas and all species gives us the depth of information we need to learn from our recent conservation successes, and plan for the challenges of tomorrow."

Andy Clements, BTO Director said, "Bird Atlas 2007-11 is the amazing product from the efforts of tens of thousands of wonderful volunteer birders who care passionately that their observations help birds. Their information, collected over four years, presents a richly detailed view of change brought to life in this beautiful book. It inspires future research to fuel bird conservation for a decade."

BTO press release

Balmer, D. E., Gillings, S., Caffrey, B. J., Swann, R. L., Downie, I. S. & Fuller, R. J. 2013 *Bird Atlas 2007-11: the breeding and wintering birds of Britain and Ireland*. Thetford: BTO Books. £69.99 (including P&P) from the BTO Services Limited, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU. Hardback. ISBN 978-1-908581-28-0

The South Shian tern rafts



The four rafts at South Shian in 2013 ©Nicholas Watts

This story began in 1996. Roger Thwaites then owned a mussel farm by his house at South Shian in Loch Creran, a site where I had often launched my small boat to get to islands in the Lynn of Lorn. Roger and I often discussed how Sgeir Caillich, a small island on his doorstep at South Shian, used to hold fair numbers of breeding Common Terns and Common Gulls in the 1980s and how these had quickly disappeared after predation by feral American Mink.

Roger had noticed how, early each summer, the terns still appeared at South Shian but never settled to breed, probably because their island now held resident mink. Together we discussed how we might provide mink-proof breeding areas on one of his mussel rafts. Roger nailed a sheet of plywood to the beams of a raft, we added some grassy turves and I provided some crude models of sitting terns. That first summer a single pair of Common Terns reared one young on the raft. Looking back now, it is amazing how crude the structure was—there was not even a fence! We have since found that fences are essential, otherwise chicks often fall into the sea. The rafts are about 500m from shore. Unable to climb back onto the raft, the young birds die from hypothermia within 10-20 minutes. Surprisingly, some commercially available tern rafts do not have fences.

Encouraged by this first success, and with

Roger's frequent help and encouragement, we fenced the breeding area and expanded it year by year. It continued to be, first and foremost, a working mussel farm. Roger, his wife Judy and others worked long hours on the raft with heavy, noisy machinery, a few metres from the nesting terns. The birds became accustomed to humans, just as they do at places like the Farne Islands. We could sit down inside the tern enclosure and adult terns would settle within a few metres and carry on incubating eggs or feeding young. Breeding birds learn to ignore frequent or constant human presence. Paradoxically, infrequent disturbances that perhaps keep the birds off their nests for hours are more harmful.

Roger sold the mussel farm in 2002 but continues to run an oyster farm by his house at South Shian. The mussel farm was sold on again in about 2007. All three successive owners were extremely kind in tolerating the tern raft. The third owner chose not to work the farm and, by 2010, it had fallen into disrepair. Except when we counted the nests and eggs, or ringed the chicks, almost nobody went there. One result of this lack of frequent disturbance was that the terns again became unaccustomed to humans. Never again would they be so tame.

An early disappointment was the finding that the mussel rafts themselves, as well as our early

fences, were not mink proof (Table). Mink were able to climb up mooring ropes and chains to get onto the rafts, then find a way over or under the inadequate fences. We think we have now solved this problem, but there were many adventures and discoveries along the way.

Mussel rafts like these each consist of about 20 12m-long horizontal beams from which ropes hang down into the sea. Mussels grow on the ropes. One raft at South Shian had not been used for growing mussels but instead had been fitted with thick wooden boards on which were stored unused farm equipment such as ropes, chains, predator nets, weights and buoys. Vegetation had grown on the spaces between these and, in 2009, terns unexpectedly chose to nest here as well as on the fenced raft intended for them. In early July there were over 30 pairs with eggs and small young on this dilapidated raft. With no fences, and numerous holes in the rotten boards, many young would certainly have fallen into the sea and died. Rob Lightfoot, Niall Lightfoot and I spent a whole day hastily fencing and repairing this area of c. 12mx6m, with all the breeding terns protesting close overhead. To stop the eggs and small young getting too cold, we did two hours on, one hour off throughout the day. The work was complicated as the fence had to go round heavy, unmovable farming gear projecting out over the water. But by evening the job was done.

This hastily-repaired raft was always meant to be temporary but, early in May 2011, we decided to use it for one more season. More repair work was needed. In preparation, on 8 May we placed a pile of five new plywood sheets (each 2.4mx1.2m) on a wooden pallet over a hole on this dilapidated raft. These were to be used on our next visit to strengthen the weak floor and repair the holes. The sheets were longer than the pallet and their projecting ends drooped under their own weight to touch the floor each side of the pallet. This curved "roof" made several convenient waterproof compartments, some inside and others just outside the pallet. We should have known better.

Not until 5 June did we find time to do the repairs. Terns were already present, some with eggs, mostly on the large raft but a few on this small one. As we started removing and using the plywood sheets one by one, Rob announced "I must be seeing things!" Out of the corner of his eye he thought he'd seen a mink disappearing into

the sea from the raft. We carried on for an hour or so and forgot about it. He had not been hallucinating. As we lifted the last plywood sheet, we found a mink den in the pallet. We had inadvertently provided a perfect weatherproof home. No wonder few terns had chosen to nest on this raft. There was a resident mink.

The mink had used the various compartments in different ways. The draughty space with a big hole in the floor, opening directly to the sea, was its latrine. Near this hole there were huge quantities of faeces. Many of them were liquid and yellow from the yolk of the tern eggs. Others contained feathers and bones. A second space, the bedroom, contained a nest made by the mink from grass, placed by us on the raft the previous summer as nesting material for the terns. A third compartment, the dining room, held eaten remains of an adult Oystercatcher, an adult Common Tern and an immature Herring Gull. The fourth room was the larder. Here, laid neatly parallel alongside each other, were two headless but otherwise in-

Details of Common Terns nesting on the South Shian rafts, 1996-2013

Year	Pairs	Young fledged	Comments
1996	1	1	
1997	1	3	
1998	3	5	
1999	12	0	Mink attack, all deserted
2000	14	19	
2001	12	0	
2002	5	1	
2003	27	55	
2004	80	109	
2005	40	0	Mink attack, all deserted
2006	0	0	
2007	1	0	
2008	36	10	Mink killed 5 large young before it was caught
2009	104	140	
2010	177	110	Mink caught on raft on 25 June
2011	300	400	Mink caught on raft on 8 June
2012	600	500	
2013	450	440	

tact adult Common Terns. Both were freshly killed and each had a numbered ring that I recognised as mine. Both had been ringed as chicks, one at Glas Eileanan in the Sound of Mull in July 2004, the other here on the tern raft in July 2000. Sadly, this was the first-ever recovery of a tern ringed at South Shian.

All this showed that mink must have been living there for several days. To protect the hundreds of nesting terns, I placed mink traps on this raft and on the main breeding raft. Next day I had caught the mink, a male, on the main raft. The scene was unforgettable. The terns must have (slowly?) realised the mink was confined to the trap. By the time I arrived they were sitting on their eggs all around the trap, some only a metre or so from the live mink.

So far, all terns that have bred on the South Shian rafts have been Common, except for one pair of Arctics that bred there in 2011. As they would at natural sites, this pair nested slightly away from the Commons, on the plastic floor of one of the walkways. Here, on 9 July, we found two newly-hatched chicks in a nest. This was outside the fence, so action was needed to stop the two chicks falling to their deaths. The area could not easily be fenced, so on 15 July we ringed the two chicks and moved them into the nearest part of the fenced area, a distance of about 20m. We didn't know if the adults would accept this irreversible movement of their young, away from their nesting territory and into a Common Tern colony. However, on 3 August I caught one of the newly-flying young Arctics, recognisable by its numbered ring, on the sea near the rafts. So at least one young had flown, probably both, showing that chick removals like this can be successful!

In 2011 a team led by Julie Black of JNCC, using a fast RIB, tracked foraging adults from the South Shian colony. They found that many were making 34km round trips to fish at the south end of the Sound of Mull (only one fish per trip so perhaps 340km/day!). This had been the usual feeding area of the now much reduced colony of Common Terns at Glas Eileanan in the Sound of Mull, which once held 800 pairs of this species. Many of the adults at South Shian in 2011-2013 were wearing rings, and many of these had certainly been ringed as chicks at Glas Eileanan.

There was another important finding in 2011. In the days before they can fly properly, tern chicks test their wings by making short, almost vertical ascents. On a windy day they can be

blown some distance. At a natural site they would swim and walk back to their territory, but there is no way chicks can climb back onto the raft. Their dry plumage becomes wet and, often, the wings are too weak to lift the increased weight. Unable to get out of the water, they die from hypothermia within twenty minutes. From the mainland I watched with horror through a telescope as chicks weakened and died after early flights took them into the sea. The problem is worse if many young are scared onto the sea at once, perhaps by a predator or by ringers arriving on the raft. All the young that can just fly will do so and almost all end up on the water.

Common and Arctic Tern wings grow at 8mm a day, so a chick that can't lift itself from the sea today will be able to do so tomorrow. Thus there is rapid turnover of young that are at this critical stage, but some are present every day for much of the season. In our experience, this is a serious problem of tern rafts that is not widely known, particularly of ringing on tern rafts. Our first solution was to tie floating wooden pallets to the rafts for swimming young to climb onto. We saw young using them almost immediately, before we had even left the site (Fig 1, next page).

From land, I watched through a telescope to see what happened to young terns on the pallets. Some flapped and preened until they had dried off and were able to fly back onto the raft. Others seemed to like it there, forming small flocks with flying young, swimming from pallet to pallet, and being fed and guarded by their parents. However, some swimming chicks seemed to find it difficult to see the pallets, repeatedly swimming past them before weakening and dying. In 2013 the method was improved by fixing the pallets at an angle, one end in the sea, one end on a walkway at the raft edge, outside the fence (they are easily seen in Mike Harrison's picture on page 16 of *The Eider* of September 2013). Swimming chicks converge on these more quickly, sometimes in numbers, perhaps because they see them more easily. They use them like a ladder to climb well clear of the water, so they dry more quickly.

For the first 14yrs or so, we used cheap plywood or Bristol board as flooring. To minimise cost we bought the thinnest boards that would take our body weights. These lasted only a few years and we often found ourselves putting our feet



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

- Fig. 1 Young tern on rescue pallet ©Clive Craik
 Fig. 2 Remains of young terns after otter predation in 2012 ©Clive Craik
 Fig. 3 Mink kill of young terns, Sound of Mull 1989 ©Clive Craik
 Fig. 4 Socialising raft in 2013 ©Mike Harrison

through rotten boards. Usually just one foot or leg went through and we saved ourselves with our arms, but I once fell through into the sea, and Audrey Lightfoot once fell through but luckily ended upon the underlying walkway of the raft rather than in the sea. These accidents usually happened with numerous tern chicks all around, so the new holes had to be repaired immediately with any board that happened to be there, weighed down with any available large stones. At regular intervals, when there were too many holes to repair, boards would be replaced with more cheap plywood, and the cycle repeated....

This could not go on and, in 2010, Rob Lightfoot suggested a much better design. Now each raft is floored with fifty 2.4 x 1.2m sheets of marine plywood 25mm thick. This 12 x 12m area is surrounded by fencing of plastic mesh sold for fruit cages, carefully chosen so that chicks do not get their heads stuck in the holes. The fences have wooden top rails and mink traps are incorporated into the fences. Construction of each raft has been a team effort by Rob, his son Niall, Willie Smith and myself, with much help from several others. Special among these are Roger Thwaites who helped in many ways, particularly moving heavy materials with his fork-lift truck and workboat; and Ali MacLeod who in 2012 undertook a memorable solo dive to inspect the then-dilapidated moorings, something many professional divers considered too dangerous!

This design has proved successful. Mink still gain access to the rafts but are trapped as they try to get through the fences towards the eggs and young. As shown in the Table, mink attacks caused complete desertion and the death of all chicks in some earlier years but are now, we hope, a thing of the past. Otters, the other main predator of tern chicks and adults in this habitat, are also excluded by the fences and are too large to enter the traps. Otters still make nightly visits to kill and eat fledged young that have settled outside the fences (Fig 2). Otters only leave inedible parts, mainly wings, heads and legs, but mink kill far more

than they eat (Fig 3).

The mussel farm lease has lapsed and the structures are now licensed as stand alone tern rafts. In 2013 there were four rafts (title photo). Three were fenced breeding rafts while the fourth was fitted with horizontal beams for perching. Large numbers of flying young and adults preen, rest and possibly exchange information on this "socialising" raft (Fig 4).

Other species have nested on the rafts but their eggs or young usually die when the adults are excluded by the aggressive terns. Single pairs of Black-headed Gulls, Common Gulls and Oystercatchers have lost eggs or young in this way, but Black Guillemots successfully raised young in 2012 and 2013, perhaps because they nest in purpose-built boxes placed in the corners of the tern enclosures where the adults can surreptitiously sneak in and out (Fig 5).

The terns and I are enormously grateful to Argyll Bird Club for two very generous financial contributions. Most unexpectedly, the South



Fig 5. Tern chicks and Black Guillemot box ©Nicholas Watts

Shian Tern Rafts won the Species Champion award in the RSPB Nature of Scotland Awards 2013. I am most grateful to Bob Furness for independently nominating me and I am sure his recommendation was crucial. The BBC Scotland Landward team filmed each of the short-listed entries and you may have seen the clip they made at South Shian. Perhaps you agree that the real star of the show was the peregrine that chose that precise moment to make a spectacular but unsuccessful attack on the terns!

Clive Craik

Recent bird sightings September and October 2013



Brambling, MSBO, Kintyre on 24 October ©Eddie Maguire

Presented here are a wide range of rare and unusual species as well as counts and movements of more common species recorded in Argyll during this period. Many thanks to folks who have sent in records and in particular for the comprehensive reports from Islay (Ian Brooke), Tiree (John Bowler), Machrihanish Seabird Observatory (Eddie Maguire) and Mull (Alan Spellman). Also many thanks to Morag Rea and Tom Callan for in-

putting vast amounts of information onto the Argyll bird database and Malcolm Chattwood for managing the database. Paul Daw continues to assist with the club's website recent reports, which is greatly appreciated.

(Note: MSBO= Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, Kintyre. ABRC = Argyll Bird Records Committee, BBRC= British Birds Rarities Committee).

Swans, Ducks, Geese & Gamebirds

WHOOPEE SWAN. Four early birds were at Gartmain, Islay on 12 Sept. Twelve were flying S past Glenacardoch Point (Glenbarr), Kintyre on 23 Sept. Main arrivals early Oct: On Tiree, 17 at Loch a' Phuill on 1st Oct increasing to 19 on 5th, 48 on 8th, including the first cygnet, 149 including 14 cygnets on 10th, 116 including 18 cygnets on 22nd, 189 including 35 cygnets on 24th. Three flocks totalling 35 flying in off the sea on 13 Oct at MSBO, Kintyre and a max. of 33 at The Laggan, Kintyre on 24 Oct. Max count of 64 Loch Gruinart, Islay on 22 Oct.

PINK-FOOTED GOOSE. On Tiree, 17 flew south over Corraig on 6 Sept and flocks of 35 and 60 flew SE and SW respectively over Gott Bay on 26 Sept. Forty-five at Loch Crinan, Mid-Argyll on 25 Sept, 18 at Loch Gruinart, Islay on 16 Oct, seven flying past MSBO on 23 Oct and 42 between Campbeltown and Machrihanish on 30 Oct.

WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE. On Tiree, 23 at Loch a' Phuill on 10 Sept were the first, with 32 there on 24th. An all island count on 14-15 Oct found a total of 154 birds. On Islay a max. count of 474 at Loch Gruinart on 10 Oct. Four hundred and thirty were at Tayinloan and 1,194 were between Campbeltown and Machrihanish, Kintyre on 30 Oct.

SNOW GOOSE. A white and an intermediate bird were at Tayinloan, Kintyre on 16 Oct (John Nadin). Birds were present there until



Snow Geese, Tayinloan, Kintyre, 15 October ©John Nadin

the end of Oct.

CANADA GOOSE. A count of 235 at Barsloisnoch, Mid-Argyll on 22 Oct.

LESSER CANADA GOOSE. Two were at Loch Gruinart on 9 Oct with one at least until 25 Oct (James How).

BARNACLE GOOSE. The first three were at Loch Gruinart on 15 Sept with a huge arrival on 9th of 31,570, the biggest single day arrival in 13 years (James How), and 36,040 were counted there on 10th. On Tiree, three at Balephetrish on 8 Oct were the first. An all island count on 14-15 Oct totalled 1,524 birds.

PALE-BELLIED BRENT GOOSE. First on Tiree with two at Gott Bay on 1-5 Sept and the first four on Islay at Bruichladdich, Islay on 3 Sept, where there was a max. 176 birds at Loch Gruinart on 15 Sept. The first two flew past MSBO, Kintyre on 4 Sept with a max. there of 18 on 16th.

DARK-BELLIED BRENT GOOSE. Two birds at Otter Ferry, Cowal on 7 Oct (Tom Callan).

WIGEON. The largest count was of 520 at Gartmain, Islay on 13 Oct.

GADWALL. Two were at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 3-9 Sept with one there 10th and 30th Sept. One at Balemartine on 3 Oct and one at Loch a' Phuill on 5-15 Oct. A flock of seven flew S past MSBO, Kintyre on 22 Oct.

TEAL. The largest count was 530 at Loch Gruinart, Islay on 17 Sept.

PINTAIL. Six were at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 5-22 Sept with two there on 24 Oct. A flock of five flew S past MSBO, Kintyre on 16 Sept, three flew S on 2nd and eight flew S on 20 Oct. A max. count of 28 at Loch Gruinart, Islay on 14 Oct.

GARGANEY. A female/immature bird at Loch Gru-

Pink-footed Goose, Otter Ferry, 30 Sept. ©Tom Callan



inart RSPB reserve on 25 Oct (Naturetrek tour).

SHOVELER. A max. count of 16 at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve, Islay on 14 Oct.

POCHARD. A lone drake at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 12-15 Oct was the only report of this increasingly rare duck (John Bowler).

GREATER SCAUP. A count of 132 at Gartmain, Islay on 7 Sept. An immature/female at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 28 Sept and an immature there on 12-15 Oct. Seven flew past MSBO, Kintyre on 16 Oct and 10 past on 20th.

EIDER. Count of 980 off Otter Ferry on 22 Sept.

LONG-TAILED DUCK. On Tiree, one off Aird on 23 Oct and one at Sorobaidh Bay on 28th. One at MSBO, Kintyre on 14-24 Oct and one at Bowmore, Islay on 26-28 Oct.

SURF SCOTER. A drake reported off Ardnave Point, Islay on 23 Oct with five Common Scoters (Dan Brown).

GOLDENEYE. First report of the autumn was of two in the Add Estuary on 13 Oct.

GOOSANDER. A count of 118 birds at Loch Rid-don, Cowal on 6 Sept.

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

SOOTY SHEARWATER. Four off Point, Calgary, Mull on 1 Sept, two flew past Aird, Tiree on 1 Sept with 14 past on 16th, one on 17th and a raft of 40 at the mouth of Gunna Sound on 21 Sept. Two flew west in 2hrs off Aird on 9th. Two flew past MSBO, Kintyre on 15 Sept.

MANX SHEARWATER. Tiree counts of 308 flying past Aird on 1 Sept and 425 past Aird on 16th. At MSBO, Kintyre a max. of 478 flying past on 1 Sept and unusually low numbers recorded there this autumn.

BALEARIC SHEARWATER. One flying S past MSBO, Kintyre on 1 Sept (Eddie Maguire/Ross Chapman).

STORM PETREL. One flying S past MSBO, Kintyre on 2 Sept, 17 flying S on the 11th and 12 singles on 15 Sept.

LEACH'S PETREL. One flying S past MSBO, Kintyre on 15 Sept, three on 16th and one on 28 Oct (Eddie Maguire/Martin Conway). Eight flying W past Aird on 16 Sept, seven on 17th and two on 18 Sept (John Bowler). One off Glengorm, Mull from the Tiree ferry on 31 Oct (Andy Robinson).

GREAT CRESTED GREBE. One flying S past MSBO, Kintyre on 11 Oct (Eddie Maguire).

Raptors to Rails

RED KITE. Two, possibly three birds were seen in Kintyre in Oct: One Largiebaan on 8th (tagged: yellow right/red left: Central Scotland 2004—per Jimmy MacDonald), one Baraskomill, Campbeltown on 17th (no tags noted—Kevin Hamilton) and soaring off MSBO then flying N on 19th (untagged—David Millward/Eddie Maguire/Martin Conway *et al.*). One high over Low Askomil, Campbeltown on 27th (no tags—Eddie Maguire). Also one reported near Tayinloan, Kintyre on 11 Oct (per David Jardine).

MARSH HARRIER. A male near Minard, Mid-Argyll on 10 Sept (John Halliday) and a juvenile hunting over reedbeds at Balephuill, Tiree on 21 Sept (John Bowler).

OSPREY. The latest report was on 24 Oct at Ulva, Mull (per Anand Prasad).

MERLIN. Several single birds on Tiree in Sept and up to five birds on the island in Oct. Singles were seen on five dates at MSBO, Kintyre and on several dates on Islay in Oct.

COOT. One submitted to BirdTrack, Dunoon 6 Sept (no further details). One at Loch Bhasapol, Tiree on 1-15 Oct (John Bowler).

Waders

AMERICAN GOLDEN PLOVER. A good showing with two different adults and two different juveniles; one adult at Sandaig, Tiree on 5 Sept (Keith Gillon) then moved to Greenhill on 6th, Middleton 9-10th and Barrapol on 10th; a juvenile at Ruaig 9-10th (John Bowler), a juvenile at Greenhill/Barrapol/Loch a' Phuill on 9-11th (John Bowler) and an adult at Ruaig on 12th (Roger Broad) and on 17th, which also visited Vault on 16th and Sandaig on 22nd (Jerry Wilson) and 23rd (David Palmar).

GOLDEN PLOVER. Max. counts on Tiree of 3,500 around the island on 28 Sept and an all island count on 14-15 October found 3,810 birds. In Kintyre a flock of 800 birds at Clochkiel on 11 Oct.

GREY PLOVER. On Tiree, three were at Clachan during 4-8 Sept, two at Sorobaidh Bay on 29-30 Sept, two at Gott Bay on 1 Oct and two at Aird on 9 Oct. A total of 30 flew S on five dates dur-

ing 5-9 Oct including an exceptional eleven on 8th at MSBO, Kintyre.

LITTLE STINT. Two juveniles at Gott Bay, Tiree on 8-9 Sept (Keith Gillon), with one there on 12th, one juvenile at Clachan, Tiree on 8-11 Sept (Keith Gillon), two juveniles there on 12th (Roger Broad) and one juvenile at Miodar on 9-16 Sept (John Bowler). Two at Stinky Hole, Campbelltown Loch on 20 Sept (Bob Relph). One reported Gruinart RSPB Reserve on 22 Sept.

PECTORAL SANDPIPER. A juvenile at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 5 Sept (Keith Gillon), another at Balinoe on 11th (John Bowler) flew to Loch a' Phuill and another juvenile at Loch a' Phuill on 24 Sept (John Bowler) and 25th (Jerry Wilson).

CURLEW SANDPIPER. Two were in the Add Estuary on 4 Sept (Dan Brown), one juvenile at Gott Bay, Tiree on 6-9 Sept (Keith Gillon), one juvenile at Balephetrish Bay on 20th, two juveniles east of Salum on 26th (Nigel Scriven). Single juveniles were at Gott Bay on 1st, Vaul Bay on 9th and at Sandaig on 9 Oct (John Bowler). A single was with Sanderling on 29 Sept at MSBO, Kintyre (Eddie Maguire). One was at Croggan, Mull on 30 Sept (P&A Brown).

PURPLE SANDPIPER. One on 15 Sept at MSBO, Kintyre and max. 12 flying S on 27 Oct. One at Dunoon on 4 Oct was the first record there of a returning bird.

SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER. A juvenile was at Gott Bay, Tiree on 6-7 Sept (Keith Gillon), with presumably the same bird at Clachan, Tiree on 6th and 8-12 Sept (John Bowler/Roger Broad). An adult at Blackmill Bay, Isle of Luing on 7 Sept (David Jardine).

BAIRD'S SANDPIPER. A juvenile was at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 5 Sept (Keith Gillon).

BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER. A juvenile was at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 17 Sept (John Bowler).

RUFF. Groups of up to three birds on Tiree in Sept and a max. count seven at



Upper photo. Semi-palmated Sandpiper, Gott Bay, Tiree, 6 September ©Keith Gillon

Middle photo. Jack Snipe, Tiree, 30 October ©Andy Robinson

Lower photo. Grey Phalarope, MSBO, Kintyre, 17 September ©Eddie Maguire

Loch a' Phuill on 4 Oct. A max. of two on Islay on 14 Oct.

JACK SNIFE. One in a wet flush on Ceann a' Mhara, Tiree on 27 Sept (Jerry Wilson), and one by a puddle in the road at Balephuill, Tiree on 30 Oct (Andy Robinson/John Bowler).

SNIFE. Max. count of 220 at Middleton, Tiree on 16 Sept.

WOODCOCK. One over Heylipol Church, Tiree on 26 Sept. Four at Carnan Mor, Tiree on 14 Oct and a max. of five on 22 Oct at Balephuill, Tiree.



Upper Photo. First-winter Mediterranean Gull, Lochgilphead, 15 September ©Jim Dickson

Lower Photo. Turtle Dove, Tiree, 25 September ©Jeremy Wilson

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT. A steady passage in Sept with max. of 53 at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 5 Sept.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT. Max. count of 189 at Bowmore, Islay on 23 Sept.

COMMON SANDPIPER. A very late bird reported at Balephetrish Bay, Tiree on 30 Oct.

GREENSHANK. Max. counts of four at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 12 Sept and nine at Lochdon, Mull on 2 Oct.

GREY PHALAROPE. One at Portnahaven, Islay on 15 Sept (Mary McGregor), one flew W past Aird, Tiree on 9 Oct (John Bowler). Four birds were logged at MSBO, Kintyre on 16 Sept and an off-passage bird was by the old lifeboat station all day on 17 Sept (Eddie Maguire/Rod Angus *et al.*).

Skuas, Gulls, Terns & Auks

POMARINE SKUA. One flew past Treshnish Point, Mull on 9 Sept (Anand Prasad), one flew S off Aringaur, Coll viewed from the ferry on 28 Sept (Jerry Wilson). One juvenile flew west off Aird, Tiree on 9 Oct (John Bowler).

GREAT SKUA. Max. counts of 81 flying W past Aird, Tiree on 16 Sept and 37 flying W off Aird on 9 Oct. Six flying S off MSBO, Kintyre on 15 Sept.

SABINE'S GULL. One reported from the Tiree to Coll ferry on 21 Sept (further details required).

KITTIWAKE. Max. count 3,000 flying S in one hour off Keillmore, Mid-Argyll on 15 Sept.

LITTLE GULL. One winter adult in the Add Estuary on 15 Sept (Jim Dickson).

MEDITERRANEAN GULL. A 2nd-calendar-year bird reported at Gruline, Mull on 1 Sept (description still to be submitted). An adult at Lochgilphead on 8 Sept (Stuart Crutchfield), a first-winter bird on

the front green at Lochgilphead on 15 Sept, Mid-Argyll was colour-ringed and had been ringed as a juvenile in France SE of Paris on 23 June. Presumably this was the same bird seen again at Inverneill on 16 Oct (Jim Dickson). Two (un-ringed) first-winter birds in the Add Estuary on 15 Sept during a storm (Jim Dickson). An (un-ringed) adult seen at Inverneil on 13 and 15 Oct (Jim Dickson). A first-winter bird at Gott Bay, near Ruaig on 1 Oct (Jim Dickson). At MSBO, Kintyre a (ringed) first-winter bird on 27 Oct and a different bird on 28 Oct (Eddie Maguire), with an adult there on 27 Oct (Dave Milward) and probably the same bird flying past there on 29 Oct (Eddie Maguire).

RING-BILLED GULL. A 3rd-calendar-year bird in the SW corner of Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 30 Aug (John Bowler).

SANDWICH TERN. A late bird at Otter Ferry on 19 Oct (Tom Callan) and possibly the same individual in Loch Fyne two miles south of Tarbert on 27 Oct (Jim Dickson).

ARCTIC TERN. Max. count of 52 flying W past Aird, Tiree in 1hr on 1 Sept.

Doves, Cuckoos, Owls, Swift, Kingfisher & Woodpeckers

TURTLE DOVE. One seen at Kilkenneth, Tiree on 25 Sept (Jerry Wilson), one at Manna, Tiree which later flew to Balemartine on 3 Oct (Jim Dickson), one again at Manna on 6th and one at Kirkapoll, Tiree on 8 Oct (John Bowler). One at Glenbarr Village, Kintyre on 30 Sept to 16 Oct (Peter Sinclair *et al.*).

SHORT-EARED OWL. One seen at The Reef, Tiree on 30 Sept.

COMMON SWIFT. A flock of 10 flying E over The Laggan, Kintyre on 3 Sept.

KINGFISHER. One at the head of Loch Gilp on 8 Sept (Stuart Crutchfield), two on 20 Sept (David Jardine), one on 23 Sept (Colin MacFarlane), one at Inverneill on 13 Oct (Jim Dickson) and one at Ardrishaig on 14 Oct (David



Upper Photo. Red-backed Shrike, Dervaig, Mull, 6 September ©Howard Stockdale

Lower Photo. Yellow-browed Warbler, Tiree, 27 September ©Jim Dickson

Jardine). One on Islay at the River Laggan on 23 Sept (Frank Warren) and one on Mull at Killiechronan on 11-14 Oct (Dave Skeets/Glynn Jones).

Passerines (Larks to Buntings)

RED-BACKED SHRIKE. A juvenile was at Dervaig, Mull on 5-14 Sept (Howard Stockdale *et al.*). Another juvenile was at

Gruinart, Islay on 14 Oct (Emily Platt) and again 19-26 Oct (James How *et al.*).

SKYLARK. Max. count of 200 at Octomore Hill, Islay on 8 Oct.

SWALLOW. A late bird at Traigh Bhagh, Tiree on 28 Oct.

LONG-TAILED TIT. A flock of 11 birds noisily feeding in gardens and along fence-lines at Baugh, Tiree on 30 Oct (John Bowler/Andy Robinson).

YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER. One very vocal bird briefly at Balephuill, Tiree on 25 Sept followed by another/the same there on 26-30th with another nearby at Carnan Mor on 27-28th, one at Vault on 26 Sept (Jerry Wilson), one at Balevullin on 29th (Jim Dickson) and one at Baugh on 29th (Bill Allan/Simon Wellock). One was at Balephuill on 1-3 Oct with three together there on 4-5th and two there on 6th, one at Balemartine on 4th (Jim Dickson), one at Cornaigbeg on 4th (Jim Dickson) one at Vault on 4th (John Bowler/Jim Dickson), one at Baugh 24th (John Bowler/Simon Wellock). On Islay, one at The Oa on 29 Sept (David Wood) and one on Colonsay at Colonsay House Gardens on 16 Oct (John Calladine). A remarkable run of sightings with 12-13 birds in total.

CHIFFCHAFF. Oddly scarce on passage. Two at Carnan Mor, Tiree on 8 and 30 Sept were the first. *Abietinus*-type birds were at Balephuill on 26-27 Oct and Vault on 29th. A long-staying classic *tristis* bird was at Balephuill on 17-31 Oct (John Bowler).

GARDEN WARBLER. One was seen at Balephuill, Tiree on 4 Oct.

BARRED WARBLER. A juvenile was at Vault, Tiree on 6 Sept (Keith Gillon) and juvenile at Balephuill on 26 Sept (John Bowler).

LESSER WHITETHROAT. An elusive bird at Carnan Mor, Tiree on 19 Oct followed by another at West Hynish on 22 Oct (John Bowler).

REED WARBLER. An immature photographed at Balephuill on 24-25 Sept, is only the second record for Tiree (John Bowler).

CEDAR WAXWING. A juvenile/first-winter bird in a garden at Vault, Tiree during 23-29 Sept was first seen there by locals on 20/21st (John Bowler *et al.*) (see article on pages 9-10 and photo on front cover). This is the second record for Scotland and third for UK of this North American species, if accepted by the BBRC.

WAXWING. One was amongst an influx of thrushes at Balephuill, Tiree on 26 Oct (John Bowler).

TREECREEPER. One seen at Scarinish, Tiree on 3 Oct (Jim Dickson) was just the third record for Tiree.

NUTHATCH. One was heard calling repeatedly at Dalintober, Campbeltown on 15 Sept (Eddie Maguire). This was only the second record for Kintyre.

RING OUZEL. Three at Carnan Mor, Tiree on 13 Oct with an influx of other thrushes (John Bowler).

FIELDFARE. The first report was of six birds at Loch Ba, Mull on 22 Sept (Ewan Miles). A massive influx occurred on Tiree on 22 October with groups of up to 900 passing S over Balephuill/Carnan Mor. Many birds were involved (at least 1,900) with smaller numbers elsewhere. At Gairtein Point, Cowal there were 1,500 on 22 Oct.

SONG THRUSH. Many on Tiree including at least 20 warm brown "continental-type" birds at Balephuill on 22 Oct associated with a massive thrush movement.

REDWING. A big influx in mid-Oct with max. counts of at 1,200 at Crinan Ferry 22 Oct and 1,500 at Gairtein Point, Cowal on 26 Oct.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER. One at Vault, Tiree during 1-4 Oct (Jim Dickson).

PIED FLYCATCHER. Two together at Carnan Mor, Tiree on 29 Aug (John Bowler). One record was submitted to BirdTrack from Colonsay/Oronsay on 16 Oct (no further details).

REDSTART. A very bright immature male bird



Pied Flycatcher, Tiree, 29 August ©John Bowler



Upper Photo. 'Greenland' Wheatear, Tiree, 29 September ©Jim Dickson

Lower Photo. 'Northwest (Greenland)' Common Redpoll, Tiree, 27 September ©Jim Dickson

was seen at Balephuill, Tiree on 25-29 Sept (John Bowler).

WHINCHAT. A late bird was at Balephuill, Tiree on 5 Oct (Jim Dickson).

WHEATEAR. Many birds seen during September on Tiree were thought to be "Greenlandic" (i.e. large and dark with many orangey tones above and below). High counts: 40 at West Hynish including 35 in one small field on 7 Sept and 60 around Tiree on 9 Sept. The last report was of one at Loch an Eilein, Tiree on 22 and 24 Oct.

RICHARD'S PIPIT. A bird inland from Kiloran Bay, Colonsay on 18 Oct (John Calladine) will be the first for Argyll since 1973 and only our third record if accepted by the ABRC.

BRAMBLING. Two at Kilkenneth, Tiree on 8 Oct, one at Carnan Mor on 13th, one at Balephuill on 21st, one at Carnan Mor on 22nd, one at Uig, Coll on 22nd, two at Balephuill on 24th. One at MSBO feeding station on 24-29 Oct. One at Pennyseorach, Southend, Kintyre on 25 Oct. Two at Otter Ferry, Cowal on 28 Oct.

GOLDFINCH. Max. count of 100+ at Kilmall, Cowal on 22 Sept. Flocks totalling 90 were found in the Machrihanish area, Kintyre on 4 Oct and 56 were trapped and ringed at MSBO, Kintyre.

SISKIN. Max. count of 100 at Ardtalla, Islay on 28 Oct.

COMMON REDPOLL. Up to four locally produced juveniles remained at Balephuill, Tiree during 10-30 Sept. An adult Northwest (Greenland) bird at Balephuill on 21 Sept with five there on 22nd, up to seven 23-27th, 11 on 28th and one on 30th (John Bowler). Also three at Barrapol, Tiree on 22 Sept (Jerry Wilson). Records of Northwest birds in Oct: two at Balephuill on 2nd with four there on 3rd, increasing to a flock of 12 there during 4-11th then one on 19-21st. Four juvenile Mealy Redpolls from nests on Tiree at Balephuill during 1-11th with two there during 3-16th. Two new Mealy Redpolls at Balephuill on 24th and two more at West Hynish on 24. A big dark "*rostratd*" bird was seen at West Hynish on 12 Oct.

CROSSBILL. Max. count of 20 at Ardmore Forest, Mull on 14 Sept (Ruth Fleming). Five at Loch an t-Suidhe, Mull on 14 Sept (David Jardine).

BULLFINCH. Two at Corra Farm, Cowal on 3 Sept was the only report received.

SNOW BUNTING. Three on the west coast of Jura on 21 Sept (Gordon Muir), a male at Traigh Gharbh, near Torastan, Coll on 22 Sept (Christina MacMillan), one at Traigh Bhi, Tiree on 22 Sept (Jerry Wilson), four at Balephetrish Bay on 14 Oct, four on the beach at Caoles on 17th,

seven at Brock, Ruaig on 22nd, 12 at Gott Bay on 28th with 22 there on 29 Oct (John Bowler) and one male at Balephetrish on 30 Oct (Graham Todd). One seen at Machrihanish Bay, Kintyre on 4 Oct (Marie Zenick). Thirteen were at Ardnave Point, Islay on 28 Oct (Peter Clement).

LAPLAND BUNTING. One calling over Balephuil, Tiree on 7 Sept (John Bowler), two at Milton on 24th (Jerry Wilson) and one calling over West Hynish on 28 Sept (John Bowler). One at Loch Gorm, Islay on 18 Sept (Louise Muir). One flying N (calling) on 10 Oct at MSBO, Kintyre (Eddie Maguire).

REED BUNTING. Max. count of 65 at Kilcho-man, Islay on 17 October.

Jim Dickson

Argyll Bird Recorder (contact details on back page)

STOP PRESS: November: A Water Pipit at West Hynish, Tiree on 19 Nov (John Bowler, and John's photo below) will be a new species for Argyll if accepted. A drake Green-winged Teal at Gruinart RSPB reserve, Islay from 4 Nov (per Ian Brooke), a Little Egret at Kilfinan, Cowal on 15 Nov (Tom Callan), a late Swallow reported at Port Charlotte, Islay on 13 Nov (Carol Andrews) and a late Arctic Tern at Port Charlotte, Islay on 8 Nov (per Ian Brooke).



Request for information



Mute Swan carrying four cygnets ©Steve Petty

Every year since the 1990s I have recorded Mute Swan families I've seen in my study area (mainland shore between Mallaig and West Loch Tarbert). Productivity has declined recently and in 2013 I have seen no large cygnets at all. If you have 2013 records of cygnets in Argyll and neighbouring Highland region, I would be most grateful for any details (ideally numbers, date and grid reference). I have some evidence that mink predation is an important factor, so it would be useful to receive details from mink-free islands such as Colonsay, Coll and Tiree. Records from Islay and Jura would also be most welcome, together with any comments on the presence of mink on those islands.

Clive Craik

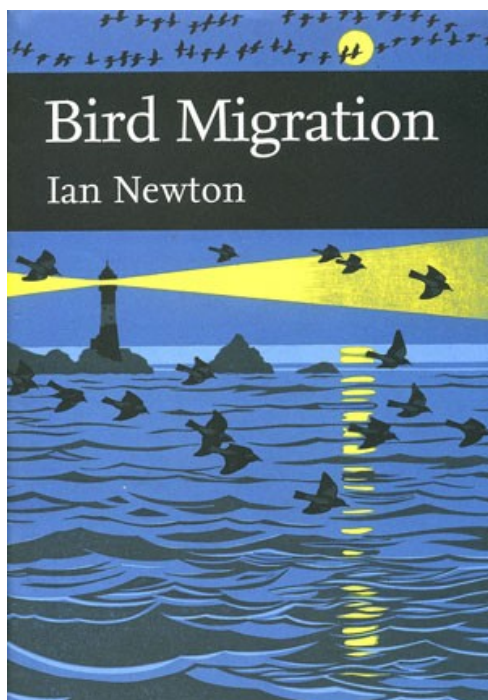
E-mail: Clive.craik@sams.ac.uk

Tel: 01631 559308 (please leave messages)

Book reviews by Nigel Scriven

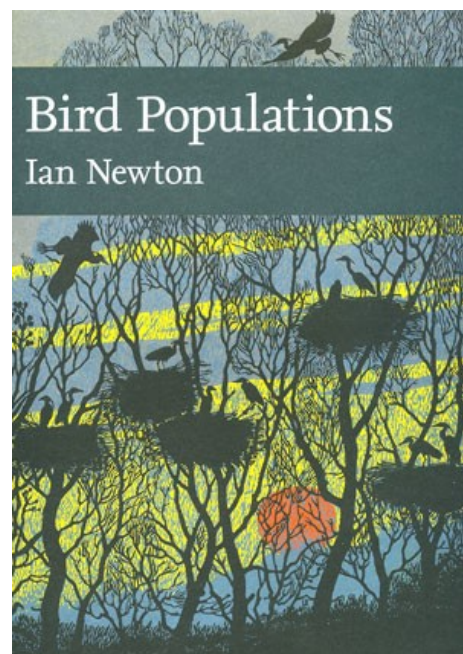
Bird Migration New Naturalist No 113 by Ian Newton, HarperCollins 2010

If you have any interest in birds, this book is essential reading, and this is not something I would say lightly. Bird migration has long been a fascination to naturalists. Knowledge of the phenomenon has been advanced immensely in recent years, and Ian Newton's masterly synthesis is a highly readable account of the subject in comparison to his academic tome *The Migration Ecology of Birds* (2007) Academic Press, which is authoritative but not the easiest of reads. Even during those three years between publications, technology and understanding had progressed, as it has since 2010. His New Naturalist volume covers the early years of migration studies, identifying the different kinds of bird movements, and the reasons behind them. He looks at how birds make their journeys, how this fits in their annual cycle, the influence of weather conditions, timing the journeys, how they fuel their flights and how they find their way. As well as the historical perspective of ice age legacies, it looks at changes in migratory behaviour in the context of recent climate change, and changes in populations and distributions. This book is a modern classic, and now out of print, although Collins do offer a print on demand facsimile service.



Bird Populations New Naturalist No 124 by Ian Newton, Harper Collins 2013

In many ways this is a companion volume to *Bird Migration*, and likewise is also essential reading. My interest in bird ecology stems from when I was at school, reading the writings of David Lack, such as his *Population Studies of Birds* (1966), and *Ecological Isolation in Birds* (1971). Forty years later Ian Newton gives us a highly readable survey of the science of bird numbers using mainly British birds as his material, but straying overseas when it comes to migratory species. Now that so many bird species are declining and the red list of endangered species is getting longer, the understanding of the processes that determine the numbers of birds has even greater relevance to nature conservation. This book makes a significant contribution to that understanding, and is a seminal work destined to be a modern classic. The good news is that it is still in print. Not only is it a much easier read than his academic tome *Population Limitation in Birds* (1998), it is able to use much recently published information previously unavailable. While the price is £55 hardback, its 596 pages work out at less than 10p per page, which is pretty good value. Since the hardbacks go out of print fairly quickly, buy it for Christmas. In fact buy two: one to read, and one as an investment. They will go up in value as soon as they go out of print. Check e-bay if you don't believe me.



Articles for the March issue of the *Eider* should with the Editor before the 24th February 2014

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Argyll North—Mull, Coll, Tiree & Morvern: Arthur Brown/Rod Little

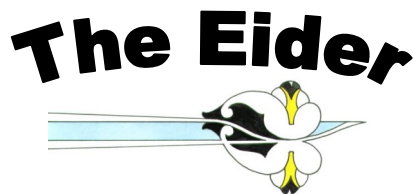
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The *Eider* is the quarterly newsletter of the **Argyll Bird Club**. The editor welcomes articles about birds, wildlife conservation and ecology in Argyll, including articles of a wider natural history interest, notices of forthcoming events, book 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 24th 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, Oban and Lochgilthead. The autumn meeting/AGM is held in a convenient central location, usually near Lochgilthead. 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
Junior (under 17)	£3
Family	£15
Corporate	£25

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