

**June 2013**  
**Number 104**

# The Eider

## **Tiree Winter Wader Survey**

**Latest *Argyll Bird Report* published**

**Recent bird records**

**Birding trips to Spain**



Ringed Plover ©Jim Dickson

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## Editorial

After an absence of four years I'm back as editor of the *Eider*. My first job is to thank Stuart Crutchfield for so ably editing the last three issues. The success of the *Eider* depends on all of you, so please consider writing something for future issues. I'm happy to print articles on a wide range of natural history subjects, including holiday experiences and accounts of your local patch. They don't necessarily have to be about birds. It makes an account more interesting if you can illustrate it with a few photos. Today, even relatively cheap digital cameras can produce staggering images, with some having an optical zoom function of over 40x, the equivalent of around a 1000mm lens on a single lens reflex camera. So taking pretty good bird photos, without having to resort to using a hide, is within the grasp of most people. On the other hand, if any of you would like to learn more about a particular subject, please let me know and I will try to find the best person to write such an account.

Paul Daw has finally decided to resign as the Argyll Bird Recorder after having spent a considerable amount of time trying to recruit a replacement. Unfortunately, nobody has come forward, so if you have inclinations in this direction please let one of the club officials know. Paul has done a remarkable job for the club, overseeing an overhaul of the bird recording system and so skilfully coping with a massive increase in the number of records submitted. The database he has built over many years was indispensable during the preparation of the *Birds of Argyll*. The club owe him a great debt of gratitude.

I'm writing this editorial in northern Spain. We arrived here on 13 May hoping to escape the dreadfully cold and late spring in Argyll, only to find the cold, wet weather had followed us south! Even so, spring is a lot more advanced here with most of the trees in full leaf. At the time of writing (28 May), all the summer migrants are back on territory, including Common Redstart, Blackcap, Red-backed Shrike, Wryneck and Bonelli's Warbler, which can be heard singing from our house, and first broods of some resident songbirds are on the wing (so far, Blackbird, Song Thrush and Marsh, Blue and Great Tits). All of the migrant raptors (Booted Eagle, Short-toed Eagle, Egyptian Vulture, Black Kite and Honey Buzzard) are back and displaying too.

We arrived a few weeks earlier than in previous years and with the spring being later; we're still able to see some of the spring flowers we usually miss. We live on the rim of a limestone gorge, and as you would expect, of all the flowers, orchids are particularly well represented. The photo opposite is of my favourites.

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Sawfly Orchid  
©Steve Petty

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## Club News

### Field trips

**Saturday 22 June 2013.** Sanda (from Campbeltown Harbour). Contact Nigel Scriven. E-mail [njscriven@gmail.com](mailto:njscraven@gmail.com) Phone 01505 706652

**Saturday 27 July 2013.** Loch Gilp, Crinan and Add Estuary. Contact Tom Callan E-mail [callansatcorra@aol.com](mailto:callansatcorra@aol.com) Phone 01700 821212

**Saturday 31 August 2013.** Holy Loch (Broxwood Hide) meet at 10.00hrs. Contact Nigel Scriven. E-mail [njscriven@gmail.com](mailto:njscraven@gmail.com) Phone 01505 706652

**Saturday 28 September 2013.** Skipness. Contact Katie Pendreigh. E-mail [katiependreigh@aol.com](mailto:katiependreigh@aol.com) Phone 01583 441359

**Saturday 26 October 2013.** Ledaig Point. Meet at the north end of Connel Bridge at 10.00hrs. Park on the piece of old road accessible from the unclassified road to Bonawe (NM911348). Bring your own lunch. Contact Mike Harrison. E-mail [jmharrison@iee.org](mailto:jmharrison@iee.org) Phone 01631 710656

**September/October 2013.** Hynish, Tiree. Contact Nigel Scriven. E-mail [njscriven@gmail.com](mailto:njscraven@gmail.com) Phone 01505 706652

### Indoor Meetings

**Autumn 2013 meeting.** Saturday 2 November at the Cairnbaan Hotel, near Lochgilphead. The programme will be in the September Eider.

**Spring 2014 meeting.** Saturday 8 March at Arrochar Village Hall.

### Other News

**Argyll Bird Report 23 (2010-2011).** Club members should have now received their copy. Additional copies are available from Bob Furness, The Cnoc, Tarbet, Dunbartonshire G83 7DG at £6.00 per copy, including free postage within the UK. Please make cheques payable to the *Argyll Bird Club*.

**Argyll Bird Report 24 (2012).** Preparation of the next report will start this autumn. It will be just for 2012, unlike the two-year reports of recent years. Do you have any good quality, unedited photos (jpeg format) taken in 2012 that could be used? They don't have to be of rarities. Please contact Paul Daw if you can help (contact details on back page). One advantage of going back to single-year reports is that there will be room for

short papers, which was a feature of earlier reports. If you feel you could produce a suitable paper, please get in touch with the editor, Tom Callan (contact details on back page).

**Argyll Bird Club website.** The 'recent reports' section of the website is now being updated almost daily, so if you've not accessed it recently, it's well worth a look! In particular there is a table giving arrival information on spring migrants, a condensed version of which appears later in this issue.

**E-eider.** If you are not receiving the electronic version of the *Eider*, please consider doing so as it saves the club postage. The club is also considering putting out information between issues of the *Eider* to those on the *e-eider* circulation list. If you don't want to receive these updates please let Bob Furness know (contact details on back page).

## Argyll Bird Report

Volume 23  
with Systematic List for the years

2010 – 2011



Firecrest – Tiree, Oct 2010

©Jim Dickson

Argyll Bird Club 2013

# Wintering wader survey on the Isle of Tiree, Argyll, February 2013



Tráigh Bhi, Tiree, March 2013 ©John Bowler

## Summary

*A survey of the entire coastline of the Isle of Tiree including the coastal sections of the Sleibhtean agus Cladach Thiriodh (Tiree Wetlands and Coast) Special Protection Area (SPA) was conducted during 2-4 February 2013, by a team of eight fieldworkers, using the same methodology as in previous counts. Results of the surveys are detailed here and placed in the context of the results of six similar mid winter coastal wader counts conducted since 1985. Whole island counts of key species in February 2013 included; 836 Ringed Plover, 798 Ruddy Turnstone, 653 Sanderling and 219 Purple Sandpiper. In contrast to sites in eastern Scotland, none of these species showed significant declines between 1985 and 2013, however counts of Ruddy Turnstone and Purple Sandpiper in 2013 were lower than in 2006. The Sleibhtean agus Cladach Thiriodh SPA still holds nationally important numbers of these four key wintering wader species.*

## Introduction

Tiree is the westernmost of the Inner Hebrides and is a flat, low lying island, roughly 20km long and 5km wide, which has long been known for its important bird populations (e.g. Bowler & Hunter 2007). The importance of its coastline for wintering waders is perhaps less widely known, but its mix of broad sandy bays with rocky outcrops, shelving rocky shores, numerous offshore skerries and sheltered inlets, provides a winter habitat for a

wide range of wading birds and other waterfowl (see Madders & Moser 1989, Newton 1989). Six mid-winter counts of waders and waterfowl of the entire Tiree coastline have been undertaken during 1985-2006 (see Bowler *et al.* 2008).

The results of these surveys were compiled in various reports to Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and the findings were used to designate the most important sections of the coastline as part of Sleibhtean agus Cladach Thiriodh SPA in 2001. In the light of recent reported declines in some key non-estuarine wader species throughout the UK (see Rehfishch *et al.* 2003, Austin *et al.* 2007, Holt *et al.* 2012), a repeat survey was organised in February 2013 involving a count of the entire coastline.

## Methods

The island was divided into 38 sections as in previous surveys and walked in stages by surveyors. Counts were carried out with care to minimise disturbing birds and to avoid duplication of results both within and between sections. A complete count of the island was conducted on 2-4 February, 2013. All counts were conducted within 3.5hrs of high tide and under favourable weather conditions—wind less than force 4, not during heavy or continuous rain and with good visibility on 2-3 February. Unlike mainland sites which are usually counted either

side of low tide, the Tiree coast is best counted either side of high tide, as at low tide many extensive offshore skerries become exposed and offer feeding opportunities for waders that are difficult to count by a land based observer. All waders encountered feeding or roosting below high water mark were recorded for each section. Additional waders that were feeding or roosting just inland of a count section but which were clearly associated with the shore, such as Ruddy Turnstone, Dunlin, and Ringed Plover, were also counted and coded separately (on 4 February). Such inland counts of predominantly coastal wader species were included in the totals in order to obtain a closer estimate of the true island totals for these species.

## Results

Whole island counts are shown in Table 1. A total of 5,812 waders of 14 species was recorded, the fourth highest total count for the island following the peak count of 6,848 waders in February 1995. Numerically the most abundant species was Ringed Plover (836) accounting for 14.4% of the total. It was followed by Curlew (13.8%), Ruddy Turnstone (13.7%), Northern Lapwing (12.0%), Eurasian Oystercatcher (12.0%), Sanderling (11.2%), Golden Plover (8.1%), Dunlin (4.6%), Redshank (4.2%), Purple Sandpiper (3.8%) and Bar-tailed Godwit (1.3%). Counts of species that occur mostly inland such as Lapwing and Golden Plover are included in the table as "other species".

## Key Species accounts and discussion

### Ringed Plover

The highest count was recorded in 1985 (987), but there has been no significant trend since the mid 1980s ( $r_s =$

0.179, ns). Britain and Ireland are important for Ringed Plover, providing winter refuges for British and continental breeders of the nominate race *hiaticula*, and passage sites for the long distant migrants of the *tundrae* race. The breeding population, comprising a large proportion of the nominate race, is in decline (Conway *et al.* 2008). The number of passage Ringed Plover using UK sites in spring and autumn is far larger than those that overwinter. On Tiree, day counts of 1,000-2,000 birds are annual in May, with a peak count of 3,000 birds on 15 May 2005. The trend for wintering Ringed Plovers in the UK has been steadily declining for over 20yrs, the decline having been attributed to a shift of the core wintering range (Austin & Rehfish 2005, Maclean *et al.* 2008). The 2013 count of 836 birds was above the threshold for a site holding internationally important numbers (730 birds in 2010/11). Based on the most recently published WeBS counts for individual sites (mean of the five years up to winter 2010/11, Holt *et al.* 2012) the February 2013 count would be the eighth largest in Britain for this species. Ringed Plovers were encountered on 46% of the 37 sections, showing a strong affinity for sandy bays. The mean count was 41 birds and the largest on a single section was 112 birds at Tràigh Bhàigh.

### Sanderling

The highest count was recorded in 1995 (964), but there has been no significant trend since the mid-1980s ( $r_s = 0.464$ , ns). Nationally, numbers have increased since the mid 1970s (Holt *et al.* 2012). The reasons behind the changes in national trends remain poorly understood, but may be linked to the temporal changes in the use of a network of key sites in northwest Europe (Reneerkens

Table 1. Whole-island counts of key coastal waders on Tiree 1985-2013

Species	1985	1986	1995	1998	2000	2006	2013	Mean 1985-2013
<b>Eurasian Oystercatcher</b>	369	345	807	714	443	889	697	<b>609</b>
<b>Ringed Plover</b>	987	555	958	534	561	648	836	<b>726</b>
<b>Sanderling</b>	396	305	964	371	589	489	653	<b>538</b>
<b>Purple Sandpiper</b>	119	189	377	262	283	368	219	<b>260</b>
<b>Dunlin</b>	340	295	853	295	609	270	270	<b>419</b>
<b>Bar-tailed Godwit</b>	60	37	158	22	69	46	77	<b>67</b>
<b>Eurasian Curlew</b>	496	347	780	901	845	493	804	<b>667</b>
<b>Common Redshank</b>	503	291	611	415	415	483	247	<b>424</b>
<b>Rudy Turnstone</b>	996	861	1,096	905	858	1,191	798	<b>958</b>
<b>Other species</b>	832	228	244	1,429	1,621	1,837	1,211	<b>1,055</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	5,098	3,453	6,848	5,848	6,293	6,714	5,812	

Table 2. Numbers of four key species counted within the Sleibhtean agus Cladach Thiriodh SPA in relation to importance criteria

Species	Whole-island count	Within Sleibhtean agus Cladach Thiriodh SPA	1% criteria for sites if international importance	1% criteria for sites of national importance
Ringed Plover	863	685	730	340
Sanderling	653	651	1,200	160
Purple Sandpiper	219	194	710	130
Ruddy Turnstone	798	595	1,400	480

*et al.* 2009). As with Ringed Plover, numbers of passage birds using the Tiree beaches are of international significance. Day counts of 1,000-1,500 birds are annual in May, with a peak count of 1,900 birds on 14 May 2012, whilst rapid throughput of individually colour-ringed birds is indicative of high-turnover rates. The 2013 Tiree count of 653 birds was below the threshold for a site holding internationally important numbers (1,200 birds in 2010/11), but Tiree still holds nationally important numbers. Based on the most recently published WeBS counts for individual sites (mean of 5yrs up to winter 2010/11, Holt *et al.* 2012), the February 2013 count would be the sixth largest in Britain. Sanderling was encountered on 30% of the 37 sections, showing a strong affinity for sandy bays. The mean count was 59 birds and the largest count on a single section was 233 birds at Tràigh Shorobaidh.

#### **Purple Sandpiper**

The highest count was recorded in 1995 (377), a marked increase compared to the mid 1980s. However, over the longer term, there has been no significant trend since the mid 1980s ( $rs=0.429$ , ns). Nationally, numbers have significantly declined since the early 1980s but have remained fairly stable since the turn of the century (Holt *et al.* 2012). The 2013 count of 219 birds was below the threshold for a site holding internationally important numbers (710 birds in 2010/11), but Tiree still holds nationally important numbers of Purple Sandpiper. Based on the most recently published WeBS counts for individual sites (mean of the five years up to winter 2010/11, Holt *et al.* 2012), the February 2013 count would be the second largest in Britain for this species. Purple Sandpipers were encountered on 32% of the 37 sections, showing a strong affinity for rocky shores. The mean count was 18 birds and the largest count on a single section was 70 birds at Rubh a Chràiginis.

#### **Ruddy Turnstone**

The highest count was recorded in 2006 (1,191birds) but there has been no significant trend on Tiree since the mid 1980s ( $rs=-0.286$ , ns). Nationally, numbers have declined significantly since the mid 1980s (Holt *et al.* 2012). The 2013 count of 798 birds was below the threshold for a site holding internationally important numbers (1,400 birds in 2010/11) but Tiree still holds nationally important numbers of Ruddy Turnstone. Based on the most recently published WeBS counts for

individual sites (mean of 5yrs up to winter 2010/11, Holt *et al.* 2012), the February 2013 count would be the third largest in Britain for this species. Ruddy Turnstones were encountered on 59% of the 37 sections, showing a strong affinity for rocky shores. The mean count was 30 birds and the largest count on a single section was 138 birds at Crossapol.

#### **Key species encountered within the Sleibhtean agus Cladach Thiriodh (Tiree Wetlands and Coast) SPA.**

Under the Natura 2000 site designations, the Sleibhtean agus Cladach Thiriodh SPA was cited as holding 1% of the population of the Ruddy Turnstone and Ringed Plover and was therefore of international importance for these species. In addition, the SPA regularly held nationally important numbers of Sanderling and Purple Sandpiper (Bowler *et al.* 2008). The 2013 winter counts confirmed the SPA holds nationally important numbers of all four species, but no longer holds internationally important numbers of Ruddy Turnstone and Ringed Plover (Table 2).

There has been no significant long-term trend in numbers of the four key species. However, during the last ten years, since the Sleibhtean agus Cladach Thiriodh SPA was designated in 2001, the 1% criteria for sites of international importance has changed. For Ringed Plover, in 2000/2001, the 1% criteria for a site of international importance was 500 birds; in 2010/11 it was 730 birds. For Ruddy Turnstone, in 2000/2001, the 1% criteria for a site of international importance was 700 birds; in 2010/11 it was 730 birds. Thus, while numbers of Ringed Plover and Ruddy Turnstone have not changed significantly on the Sleibhtean agus Cladach Thiriodh SPA, the threshold by which sites qualify as holding internationally important numbers has increased.

#### **Acknowledgements**

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**Carl Mitchell, John Bowler, Yvonne Boles, Roger Broad, Jim Dickson, Mick Green, Ben Jones & Andy Robinson**



**Two key winter waders on Tiree. Sanderling (above) and Turnstone (middle) ©Jim Dickson. The Maze (below), a favourite site for Sanderling ©John Bowler**



## Is an upgrade ever worth it?



View from the decking—Kitsilano suburb of Vancouver  
©Malcolm Chattwood

*Those members who have taken a holiday on a cruise ship will have been faced with a great dilemma when trawling through the brochures. Can we afford the outside balcony rather than just a porthole on our cruise of a lifetime? How much time do we actually spend in our cabin anyway? If we go for the cheaper option then will we be able to afford another holiday later in the year?*

I confess that my “cruising” experiences have taken me as far as Roscoff and Tiree so the question in this context has never arisen. However, in 2011 our holiday was to be taken visiting our eldest son who had been working in Vancouver since the previous October. When asked by friends and family whether we would visit Alex my immediate reply was “Wednesday, 10:20hrs from Glasgow.” The date hadn’t been decided but a copy of the *Field Guide to the Birds of Western North America* was in my possession by Christmas. It was to be a bit of a family reunion as our younger son would be with us and a quick check of hotel rates confirmed that self-catering accommodation would be the order of the day. Fortunately this is our preference as we enjoy doing our own thing and are not keen on being cooped up in a hotel room for a fortnight.

The decision was made, the internet consulted and what seemed like an ideal apartment at the right side of town was identified. Only it wasn’t one apartment, it was a choice—a ground floor apartment or a second floor apartment with a deck. The catch of course was that the upper floor apartment attracted a premium of \$150 per week—around £200 for the fortnight chosen

in September. We’ve enjoyed many hours on holiday lounging on balconies or terraces with a glass of something local in hand so why break the habit of a lifetime? Besides, the chances of watching the local birdlife were also increased—at the time I didn’t realise how important this would be. The decision was made and following the liberation of moths from the inner depths of my wallet the booking was made for the upper apartment with the deck.

September in Vancouver is not a paradise for birdwatchers who might be effectively limited in their range to the city limits by the requirement to use public transport—excellent though it is. There are some wonderful forested areas within easy reach and the holes in the trees suggest that there are woodpeckers aplenty – just not in September. The trees are so tall that any birds in the canopy are so far away it’s very difficult to even see them let alone identify them. Vancouver is very much a city surrounded by water, which was reasonably productive with a **Belted Kingfisher** being probably the most impressive highlight. The city is also on the West Coast, and Argyll Bird Club members know what that means in terms of climate—precipitation. Thankfully it was three or four degrees warmer than Argyll and jumpers weren’t generally required. This is where our deck came into its own—it had a roof. Even when it was raining we could sit out and enjoy a cup of tea whilst watching what birdlife there was in neighbouring gardens. A birch tree about 50m away attracted a good variety of

species and we enjoyed excellent views of a **Northern Flicker** (looks a bit like a Mistle Thrush in flight but acts like a woodpecker when it lands), a **Steller's Jay** and a **Cooper's Hawk**. Smaller birds that were identifiable included **Dark-eyed Junco**, **Bushtit**, **Black-capped Chickadee** (very like a Coal Tit) and **Orange-crowned Warbler**. The birding highlight of the holiday was also viewed from the deck one morning—**Anna's Hummingbird**—in good light and unmistakable even 50m away in the birch tree. None of these sightings would have been possible from the ground floor flat, so I reckoned the \$200 was a good investment and turned the birdwatching experience from a mild disappointment into some-

thing pretty reasonable.

Upon our return we were asked by the same people – “Will you go back?” Yes we will—Wednesday, 09.35hrs from Glasgow, same top floor apartment. Forget September though, this time we're going in May—I want to hear the birdsong and see those woodpeckers.

### Malcolm Chattwood

*Editor's footnote:* Just as this was going to press, Malcolm e-mailed me upon his arrival in Vancouver saying ‘Bald Eagles and Violet-green Swallows over the balcony—great!’

## Nestbox notes

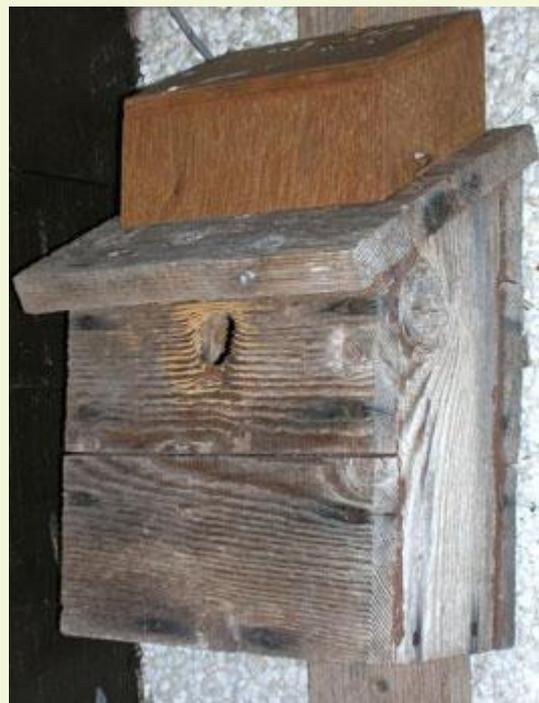
*When I took early retirement a few years ago my family presented me with a nestbox with a small TV camera fitted in the top. The box could be used open-fronted for Robins or with a small round hole for Blue Tits. As I had retired at the end of January I quickly substituted the new box for the home-made one which had been well used for many years and awaited events.*

Sure enough, a Blue Tit soon found the box and its every move could be watched in comfort from inside the house. Roosting was followed by nest-building which was followed by egg-laying and so on until a brood of Blue Tits left the nest and the box was silent. Splendid entertainment and, on this occasion, a happy ending. It transpired this would not always be the case.

I noted right from the start the new box was significantly smaller than the one I had made using the dimensions given in Tony Soper's *The New Bird Table Book*. Not being satisfied with the quality of the accommodation (me, not the birds) I decided to revert to the original box. I cut a suitable hole in the top lid of the box and mounted the camera in a natty little housing on top. The birds did not seem to mind the change when they used the box the following spring; but then there was no evidence that they welcomed it either.

One year, a Blue Tit roosted in the box all through the winter. When spring came, it went elsewhere and the box was not used - disappointing, but not unexpected according to Bob Furness. So the following winter I plugged the hole in the camera box and mounted the 'blind' box nearby as an alternative roost. Come the spring, the camera box was opened, the blind box was blocked and the birds nested in the camera box as intended. I would have done the same again last winter but the camera box has now been in continuous occupation, one way or another, for more than a year.

The last brood raised in the box fledged successfully on 8 June 2012 but when I checked the box the fol-



**Upper photo.** The camera housing opened up with the accumulation of droppings. **Lower photo.** The nestbox with camera housing in situ (©Mike Harrison).

lowing evening an adult bird was roosting in it. This had not happened before and I can only assume the brood had been taken by the local Hoodies or Herring Gulls and the female of the pair had returned to the box and just carried on roosting where she had been for the previous two months.

She continued to roost in the box all through the summer, autumn and into the winter, thus preventing me from blocking the hole to try to ensure a busy nestbox in the spring. I decided I would have to try to force a break in occupation when the weather got a bit milder in early spring but was surprised to find, come February, that the box was empty. Strange, I thought, as I was sure I had seen the bird around at dusk and the weather at the time was still very cold. Next evening I settled down to watch more carefully. Sure enough the bird appeared in the garden at dusk, flitted across towards the box and eventually appeared inside. I briefly looked away from the screen - and looked back to find an empty box. I paid more attention the following evening and was surprised to see the bird, having entered the box, look up towards the camera and then disappear past it. Not satisfied with the quality of the accommodation (the bird, not me), it

had decided that the penthouse suite looked more sheltered and had clambered up into the camera housing! That put me in a quandary. I did not want to evict the bird while the weather was so cold, but I wanted the box to be used for breeding rather than just as a winter roost.

By the beginning of March the weather became less cold and I modified the camera housing to block access from the box without obscuring the view. I watched the arrival of the bird that evening and after several attempts to get up into the camera housing it left the box and roosted elsewhere. However, it was back the next evening and, after a few more attempts to get up into the penthouse it settled down to roost in the corner of the box. Whether the time spent using the penthouse was a long enough break from using the box as a winter roost I do not know but the bird eventually began taking old material out of the box and bringing in fresh grass and moss for the nest. Now, in the middle of May, there is a female Blue Tit incubating six eggs in the corner and her mate is in and out regularly to feed her. And, all in full view of the camera!

**Mike Harrison**

## Short birding trips to Spain

*Are you interested in a short birding trip to Spain? Peter Roberts is an experienced tour leader and birdwatcher who lives on Islay. Last week, while on the island, I suggested he outlined plans for leading trips for birdwatchers in Argyll. Hopefully this will be of interest to those looking for cost effective and well-led trips with the promise of lots of excellent birdwatching. (Jim Dickson).*

I love birding in Spain and wondered if any Islay birdwatchers or Argyll Bird Club members had thought about banding together and for a short birding trip there? First of all, I am not touting this idea as a profit-making venture like the bird and wildlife tours I run as a livelihood! I'm trying to wind down the business/work side of my life, but if I don't go to Spain regularly I get withdrawal symptoms! This proposal is simply to enjoy travelling to Spain with a bunch of friends, sharing my knowledge of places and birds, and paying my own way to do it. I've been visiting Spain regularly since 1968 and have led over 20 birding tours, so I know the sites and where to find birds, and have excellent local contacts for up-to-date information on where "trickier" species are.

Below I've sketched out a few short six to eight day trips focusing on specific areas and special birds. These are ideas that can be modified for interested groups.

**1. Spring in the Pyrenees and Sierra De Guara:** Possibly six nights split between the high Pyrenees and the lower Sierra De Guara, flying in and out from Barcelona or Bilbao. Ideal times are April through to June, but from mid-April to mid-May is best. Highlights would be Wall-creeper, Bearded Vulture, Bonelli's Eagle, Black Woodpecker, Alpine Chough, Alpine Accentor, Black Wheatear,



European Bee-eater. One of the spectacular birds likely to be seen on many of the proposed trips to Spain ©Peter Roberts

Citril Finch and Snowfinch. It's possible to see 19 raptor species, including Griffon and Egyptian Vultures, Short-toed and Booted Eagles, and Montagu's Harrier, plus a good range of Mediterranean birds, such as Hoopoe, Bee-eater, Wryneck, Woodchat Shrike, Golden Oriole, Firecrest, Black Wheatear, Short-toed Treecreeper, both Rock Thrushes, warblers including Bonelli's, Cetti's, Orphean, Subalpine, Dartford, Melodious, Great Reed and plenty more.

**2. Spring in the Pyrenees (including Sierra De Guara) and**

**Steppes:** Eight nights split between the high Pyrenees, lower Sierra De Guara and the central steppes near Zaragoza, probably flying in and out from Barcelona or Bilbao, Zaragoza is a possibility too. Ideal times are April through to June, but it's best from mid-April to mid-May. Highlights are the same as 1 above, but there are special birds of the steppes including, Red-crested Pochard, Black-necked Grebe, White Stork, various herons, the possibility of both Great and Little Bustards, Pin-tailed and Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Great Spotted Cuckoo, Roller, Dupont's Lark (plus Calandra, Thekla, Greater and Lesser Short-toed), Spectacled Warbler and Black-eared Wheatear amongst other great birds.

**3. Spring in the Pyrenees** (including Sierra De Guara) and Ebro Delta: Eight nights split between the high Pyrenees, lower Sierra De Guara and the Ebro Delta on the Mediterranean coast, probably flying in and out from Barcelona. Ideal times are April through to June, but it's best from mid-April to mid-May. Highlights are the same as 1 above, but in addition there are some special birds of the Ebro Delta, including Red-crested Pochard, Greater Flamingo, Balearic Shearwater, various herons including Little Bittern and Squacco Heron, Glossy Ibis, Purple Swamphen, Kentish Plover, Collared Pratincole, Slender-billed, Audouin's and Mediterranean Gulls, Caspian Tern and Moustached and Savi's Warblers.

**4. Winter in the Pyrenees (including Sierra De Guara) and Steppes:** Eight nights split between the high Pyrenees, lower Sierra De Guara and the central steppes near Daroca and Zaragoza, probably flying in and out of Barcelona or Bilbao, though it might be possible to fly in/out of Zaragoza. This trip is designed to see the huge (60,000+) population of wintering Common Cranes, along with high Pyrenean birds that are easy to see at low elevations at this time of the year, including Wallcreeper, Snowfinch and Alpine Accentor. Ideal times are during November—February. Highlights are the same as 1 above, but some of the summer species will be absent. In the Pyrenees there will still be some excellent raptors—Bearded Vultures, Griffons etc, and in the steppes many of the larks (including possibly Dupont's), the bustards and sandgrouse, some of which are often easier to see at this time.

**5. Spring in the Estremadura:** Six nights centred on Monfrague National Park. This area offers a similar range of raptors to the Pyrenees. However there are no Bearded Vultures, but three additional species—Black-shouldered Kite, Black (Cinereous) Vulture and the endemic Spanish Imperial Eagle. Other birds special to this area include Black Stork, Red-necked Nightjar, Pallid Swift, Azure-winged Magpie, Red-rumped Swallow and Spanish Sparrow. This is the best area to see larger numbers of Great and

Great Bustard—a bird of the steppes ©Peter Roberts



Little Bustards, plus possibly both species of sandgrouse. Many widespread and classic Mediterranean/Spanish species will also be found including warblers, larks, buntings, Lesser Kestrels and a lot more.

#### Below are some estimated costs

Based on a group of six, a six night/seven day trip would be close to £600 each sharing a twin room.

An eight night/nine day trip would be about £740 each sharing a twin room. Single rooms would be available at an extra cost of c.£80-£100.

These costs includes full board accommodation (really nice, small "birder-friendly" hotels with good food and wine included), transport in a self-drive nine-seat minibus (I'd be happy to drive or share driving with anyone else) and fuel.

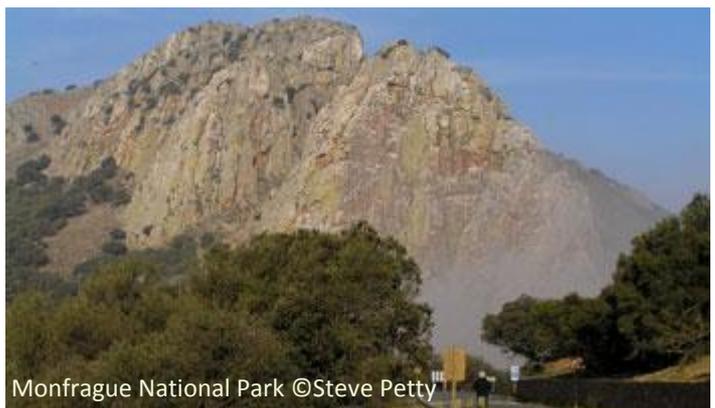
Not included are flights—these can be anything from £150-£250 return depending on time of year and destination.

The above prices may come down a bit once I have time to do more accurate costings. It might even be possible to reduce costs further by renting self-catering accommodation and preparing our own meals and/or eating out (but you wouldn't want me to cook for you!)

If anyone is interested (this year, next year or whenever) get in touch and we can start planning how to modify the above suggestions. I would be happy to make all arrangements and check out flights etc.

#### Peter Roberts

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Monfrague National Park ©Steve Petty

## The arrival of migrants and other notable bird records in Argyll—spring 2013



*It's already been a very unusual spring for migrant birds, with some species arriving a good deal later than usual (e.g. hirundines, Garden Warbler, Wood Warbler, Spotted Flycatcher) while others have appeared at more or less the usual time (e.g. Osprey, Common Cuckoo, Tree Pipit). As to why this might have been, one must imagine the poor spring weather was a significant contributing factor.*

The records listed below are an attempt to show the pattern of arrival in Argyll as a whole, and not just the first sightings. If you have records that do not appear here please let us know—it doesn't matter if someone else has already recorded a species.

**Garganey:** First report was of a male in front of the new hide at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve, Islay on 12 May (Peter Roberts). Following records:

13 May: A male at Ruaig, Tiree (John Bowler).

**Marsh Harrier:** First report was of a female nr. Westport, Kinyre on 30 April (Neil Brown). Following records:

9 May: A female at Loch Bhasapol, Tiree at lunchtime (John Bowler).

**Osprey:** Among the few early arrivals were Ospreys. One was flying up the E side of Loch Awe, Mid-Argyll on 29 March and one was flying over Achnamara, Loch Sween, Mid-Argyll on 30 March (John Halliday). Following records:

5 April: One at Loch Melldalloch, nr. Millhouse, Cowal (Tom Callan).

6 April: One above Dunadry Lock, Crinan Canal, Mid-Argyll (Stu Crutchfield).

9 April: The Ford, Mid-Argyll pair arrived on 8 or 9 April (John Halliday) and one was over Poltalloch, Mid-Argyll (Brian John).

13 April: One at Loch Craignish, Mid-Argyll (BirdTrack).

15 April: One at Loch Crinan, Mid-Argyll (Jim Dickson).

**Corn Crane:** The first so far was on Coll on the morning of 19 April (Ben Jones). Following records:

23 April: One was calling at Hynish, Tiree from about 20.00hrs (Simon Wellock).

24 April: One was calling by the cemetery at Sorobaidh Bay, Tiree this morning (John Bowler).

2 May: One was calling on Iona, Mull (BirdTrack).

20 May: Outwith the usual range, one was calling on Eilean na Cille, off Crinan, Mid-Argyll (Bill Alexander).

**Common Crane:** On 25 March one was photographed near Campbeltown by Neil Brown flying past his living room window! Common Cranes have never been considered traditional spring migrants in Argyll, but as they've made an appearance for the second year running this may have to be reconsidered!

**Dotterel:** Three seen on Oronsay on 3 May (Mike Peacock). Following records:

5 May: Two seen at the N end of Iona (Richard and Liz Airey, per Alan Spellman).

21 May: A female on The Oa, Islay (Mark Shields).

**Ruff:** A female arrived at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree at lunchtime on 10 May (John Bowler).

**Black-tailed Godwit:** Three were at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 4 April, rising to five on 18 April (John Bowler). One was seen with Bar-tailed Godwits and Red Knot at the mouth of Loch Gilp on 16 April (Jim Dickson). Following records:

19 April: Four were at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve, Islay, with 20 there on 21 April (Roger Broad).

21 April: A flock of 34 birds Loch Gilp including four colour-ringed birds (Jim Dickson).

24 April: Flocks on Tiree included 75 at Loch an Eilein, 57 at Loch Bhasapol and 20 at Loch a' Phuill, including two colour-ringed birds (John Bowler).

28 April: Record numbers for Argyll with birds held up on their way to Iceland by strong NW winds with 118 Loch Gilp, Mid-Argyll, 630 Gruinart, Islay, 530 Loch an Eilein and 130 Loch a' Phuill, Tiree.

29 April: Records shattered today! Eight hundred and ninety one were at Gruinart, Islay and 1,520 on Tiree, including 28

colour-ringed birds. Also of note were 11,320 Golden Plover on Tiree, which is a all-time record count for Argyll. Ornithologists in Iceland are wondering where their waders are!

**Bar-tailed Godwit:** A record passage flock of 85 birds noted flying past Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, Kintyre on 14 April (Eddie Maguire).

**Whimbrel:** One was at Rhunahaorine, Kintyre on 13 April (David Jardine). Following records:

14 April: Two were at Bellanoch, Moine Mhor, Mid-Argyll (BirdTrack).

17 April: One was at Balinoe, Tiree (John Bowler).

20 April: Three in the Add Estuary (Jim Dickson) and four on Isle of Luing (David Jardine).

21 April: Eight at Loch Gilp (Jim Dickson), one at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve, Islay and one at Ardfin Pier, Jura (Roger Broad).

22 April: Seven at Crossapol, Tiree (Simon Wellock).

23 April: At least 95 were around W Tiree this afternoon including 55 at Sandaig (John Bowler).

24 April: 50+ at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, Kintyre (Eddie Maguire).

26 April: 26 at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, Kintyre (Eddie Maguire).

30 April: Ten were on Coll (Ben Jones).

1 May: Records widespread but high counts on Islay with at 98 Nerabus, 18 at Bruichladdich and 11 at Ardnavé (Jim Dickson).

**Common Sandpiper:** The first reported so far was at Dervaig, Mull on 14 April (BirdTrack). Following records:

16 April: One flying down the Crinan Canal at Islandadd Bridge, Mid-Argyll 16 April (Stu Crutchfield), two at Islandadd Bridge, Moine Mhor (Jim Dickson),

19 April: One at Hynish, Tiree (Simon Wellock).

20 April: One Add Estuary (Jim Dickson) and one on Loch Fyne between Ardkinglas and Ardno, Cowal (Glyn Toplis).

21 April: One Loch Leathan, Mid-Argyll (John Halliday).

23 April: Two seen in Brainport Bay this morning (Minard), Mid-Argyll and one at Otter Ferry, Cowal this afternoon (Tom Callan).

24 April: Two were at the Powder Dam, nr. Millhouse, Cowal and one was at Ormidale, Loch Riddon, Cowal (Tom Callan).

26 April: One on Loch Etive at Connel, Mid-Argyll (Mike Harrison).

29 April: One at Toward, Cowal (George Newall).

**Greenshank:** On 7 April one was at Balemartine, Tiree 7 April (John Bowler) and another was in the Add Estuary with three there on 12 April (Jim Dickson) and four on 14 April (John Halliday). Following records:

13 April: Four near the old pier at Loch Gilp, Mid-Argyll (Jim Dickson). One which was colour ringed and turned out to have been marked in the Ythan Estuary, NE Scotland on 20 July 2006.

14 April: Six were feeding on mud flats at the head of Loch Riddon, Cowal (Graham and Danielle Clark). Five



A Whimbrel at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory (©Eddie Maguire) and one of the hundreds of Black-tailed Godwit on Tiree in May (©Graham Todd).

were around the head of Loch Scridain, Mull (Tom Callan).

**Wood Sandpiper:** One was seen in front of the new hide at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve, Islay on 17 May (Bob Davidson) and again on 19 May (James How).

**Pomarine Skua:** Two were seen off Treshnish, Mull on 6 May (Ewan Miles per Mullbirds). Following records:

14 May: Three adults seen from the ferry off Coll (Mark Finn).

23 May: Two in the Sound of Gigha (Andy Robinson) and two off Crinan, Sound of Jura (Jim Dickson).

**Arctic Skua:** One off West Hynish, Tiree 21 April (John Bowler). Following records:

23 May: Four dark-phase birds off Crinan, Sound of Jura (Jim Dickson)

**Long-tailed Skua:** The first report was of a bird flying towards Gruinart, Islay on 11 May (per Islaybirdblog). Following records:

21 May: A 'fabulous sight' of 14 adults flying in off the sea over the RSPB Reserve on The Oa, Islay (David Wood).

22 May: An Argyll record of 40 adults over the Ross of Mull (Bryan Rains) and eight seen off the Cairns of Coll (Ewan Miles).

23 May: Twenty-four plus a single from Colonsay (David Jar-

A fantastic sight of Long-tailed Skuas flying over the Ross of Mull ©Bryan Rains



dine), seven in the Sound of Gigha (Andy Robinson), 32 (flocks of 11, 2 and 19) off Crinan, Sound of Jura (Jim Dickson), nine (flocks of 4 and 5) off West Hynish, Tiree (John Bowler) and 10 (plus a possible 80 further out) off Treshnish, Mull (Anand Prasad).

24 May: Seventy-two off Treshnish (Anand Prasad), giving total of at least 211 and possibly 290 during 11-23 May in Argyll!

**Great Skua:** First report Oronsay 19 April (Mike Peacock). Following records:

25 April: One flew past Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, Kintyre (Eddie Maguire).

8 May: One was at Milton, Tiree (BirdTrack).

**Little Tern:** The first reported so far was on Islay on 14 April (Peter Roberts). Following records:

17 April: One at Gott Bay, Tiree (John Bowler).

5 May: Two at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree this morning (John Bowler).

**Sandwich Tern:** The first sighting reported so far was one at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, Kintyre (MSBO) on 25 March (Eddie Maguire). Following records:

7 April: One at Sorobaidh Bay, Tiree (John Bowler).

12 April: Three flying around in the bay at Colintravaie, Cowal (Graham Clarke).

13 April: Five were at Tayinloan, Kintyre and one on Gigha (David Jardine).

15 April: One just off Iona, Mull on buoy in front of pub (Tom Callan).

21 April: Two in Loch Gilp, Mid-Argyll at lunch-time (Jim Dickson) and two at Otter Ferry in the evening (possibly same birds?) (Tom Callan).

24 April: A group of 15 were resting on the shores of West Loch Tarbert near Ardpatrik, Mid-Argyll at lunch-time (Paul Daw).

25 April: Five were roosting on mooring buoys at Sandbank (Dunoon), Cowal (Nigel Scriven).

30 April: Eleven flying past Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, Kintyre (Eddie Maguire).

4 May: Sixty-three flying past Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, Kintyre (Eddie Maguire).

**Common Tern:** the first reported so far were three over Loch Gilp at Ardrishaig, Mid-Argyll on 12 April (Lynsey Gibson). Following records:

5 May: One or more at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree this morning (John Bowler).

**Arctic Tern:** The first reported so far was at off Traigh Thodhrasdail, Tiree on 14 April (John Bowler—early for here says John). Following records:

15 April: One Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, Kintyre (Eddie Maguire) with two there 18 April.

19 April: Two at Port Ellen, Islay (Roger Broad).

5 May: Twenty or more at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree this morning (John Bowler).

**Turtle Dove:** One at Balemartine, Tiree on 13 May (John Bowler).

Common Cuckoo at Cairnbaan on 8 May ©Jim Dickson



**Common Cuckoo:** One was heard calling at Carsaig, Tayvallich, Mid-Argyll on 17 April (per Morag Rea). Following records:

18 April: A very tired looking Cuckoo flew past Graham Clark at Colintrave in the rain then, after landing in a tree for a rest, started calling about 10min later. One was calling at Clachan, Kintyre (John Halliday).

19 April: One calling at Tullochgorm, Minard, Mid-Argyll at 14.50hrs (Paul Daw). Others were calling at: Lochdon, Mull (Alan Spellman), Appin, North Argyll (BirdTrack) and Drimfern, nr. Inveraray, Mid-Argyll.

20 April: One was calling at Moine Mhor, Mid-Argyll at 05.30hrs (Jon Close) and two were seen there later (Jim Dickson). One calling at Treshnish, Mull (Anand Prasad) and one at Blarchasgaig, Appin, North Argyll (Mike Harrison).

21 April: One calling at Tarbert, Kintyre at 09.30hrs (Linda Garwood) and one at Achahoish, Knapdale, Mid-Argyll in the afternoon (per Valerie Wells).

24 April: First heard calling at Ardchylene Farm, St Catherine's, Cowal this morning (Pauline Bishop per Graham Thomas).

25 April: One heard calling at Goirtein, nr. Otter Ferry, Cowal (Tom Callan).

2 May: One seen in Glen Lean, Cowal (George Newall).

**Common Swift:** The first report, a single bird over the water at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, Kintyre on 5 May (Eddie Maguire). Following records:

7 May: The first seen in the Dunoon area were at Kirn, Cowal this morning (George Newall).

10 May: One was seen just N of Cairnbaan, Lochgilphead, Mid-Argyll (Jim Dickson).

17 May: Twelve seen over Oban and six over Connel, Mid-Argyll (Mike Harrison).

**Sand Martin:** The first reported so far were two at Loch Leathan, Lochgilphead, Mid-Argyll on 12 April (John Halliday) and five at Loch Awe on the same day (Andy Robinson). Following records:

13 April. One was over Loch Pottie, Mull (Tom Callan).

14 April: One flying over mud flats at the head of Loch Ridon, Cowal (Graham and Danielle Clark).

15 April: One was at Loch Crinan, Mid-Argyll (Jim Dickson) and three at The Oa, Islay 15 April (David Wood).

18 April: One over Loch Loskin, Dunoon, Cowal (Nigel Scriven). One at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, Kintyre (Eddie Maguire).

19 April: Two at Loch an Eilein, Tiree (John Bowler).

20 April: Five at Dunadd, Mid-Argyll and 12+ in the Barsloisnoch area (Jim Dickson). 30+ Isle of Luing (David Jardine), five at Loch Gruinart, Islay (James How) and five at Loch Laich, North Argyll (per Nigel Scriven).

24 April: At least 50 were feeding over Loch Melldalloch, Cowal (Tom Callan).

**House Martin:** Three at the Oa, Islay 15 April (David Wood) and one at Loch Leathan, Lochgilphead, Mid-Argyll (John Halliday). Following records:

18 April: One was seen at Slockavullin, nr. Lochgilphead,

Mid-Argyll (Brian John).

19 April: One at Connel, Mid-Argyll (Mike Harrison) and two in Appin Village, North Argyll (BirdTrack).

20 April: One near Barsloisnoch, Mid-Argyll (Jim Dickson) and one at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, Kintyre (Eddie Maguire). Five were at Ardkinglas, Cowal (Glynn Toplis) and one on the Isle of Luing (David Jardine).

21 April: One at Bridgend, nr. Lochgilphead, Mid-Argyll (Malcolm Chattwood) and one at Hynish, Tiree (Simon Wellock).

25 April: One at Loch an Eilein, Tiree (John Bowler).

**Barn Swallow:** The earliest Barn Swallow was a month later than last year, but was seen by the same observer (Lynsey Gibson) at Seal Point (Ronachan) Kintyre on 7 April. Following records:

12 April: One at Kilkenneth, Tiree on evening of 12 April (John Bowler).

13 April: One at Loch Spelve, Mull (Mullbirds) and two at Ardrishaig, Mid-Argyll (Lynsey Gibson).

14 April: Four seen at Bellanoch, Mid-Argyll (BirdTrack).

15 April: One at Crinan, Mid-Argyll (Stuart Crutchfield), 12 at The Oa, Islay (David Wood), one at Dervaig, Mull (BirdTrack) and two at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, Kintyre (Eddie Maguire).

16 April: One at Dunadd (Jim Dickson) and three heading N up Meadows Road, Lochgilphead and five over Cairnbaan (Jim Dickson and Malcolm Chattwood). One was seen at Balephuill, Tiree (John Bowler).

17 April: One at Connell, Mid-Argyll (Tom Callan).

18 April: One at Skipness, Kintyre this morning (Valerie Wells), one at Ardkinglas, Loch Fyne, Mid-Argyll this evening (Glyn Toplis) and six over Loch Loskin (Dunoon), Cowal (Nigel Scriven). Several were seen at Slockavullin, nr. Lochgilphead, Mid-Argyll (Brian John).

19 April: One seen in Minard, Mid-Argyll (Paul Daw), four around Otter Ferry, Cowal (Tom Callan) and one at Crinan Ferry (John Halliday). Three were seen at Kirkapol/Caolas, Tiree (John Bowler).

20 April: Widespread in small numbers around Kilmartin valley/Moine Mhor, Mid-Argyll (Jim Dickson). Twenty passing through Loch Laich, North Argyll (per Nigel Scriven).

21 April: Four just arrived at St Catherine's, Cowal (Graham Thomas) and five near Ulva Lagoons (Loch Sween) Mid-Argyll (Morag Rea).

**Wood Warbler:** First records were of birds seen singing in Minard Woods, Mid-Argyll (Paul Daw), Loch Awe, Mid-Argyll (BirdTrack) and at Benderloch, North Argyll, both on 5 May (Mike Harrison). Following records:

10 May: Three singing between Cairnbaan and Islandadd Bridge, Mid-Argyll (David Jardine).

19 May: A migrant over Balephuill, Tiree (John Bowler).

**Common Chiffchaff:** One singing at Balephuill, Tiree with a few other migrants on 2 April (John Bowler) was the first Chiffchaff reported so far. Following records:

6 April: One singing at Portnacroish, North Argyll on 6 April (BirdTrack, H. Nicol).

10 April: One singing at Killail, Otter Ferry, Cowal (Tom Callan).

12 April: One at The Oa, Islay (David Wood),

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13 April: One singing Bellanoch, Mid-Argyll (David Jardine)

15 April: One was singing at Cairnbaan, Mid-Argyll (Jim Dickson).

16 April: One singing at Knockvologan, Mull (Tom Callan).

18 April: One seen and heard at Ardkinglas (Loch Fyne), Mid-Argyll (Glyn Toplis).

19 April: Singles singing at Otter Ferry, Cowal (Tom Callan), Connel, Mid-Argyll (Mike Harrison), Dunoon, Cowal (George Newall), near Tayness, Kilmartin, Mid-Argyll (Brian John) and Kilmory Loch (David Jardine/Malcolm Chattwood).

21 April: Two singing at Turbuskill Farm, Tayvallich, Mid-Argyll (Morag Rea).

24 April: One was singing at Ardpatrik, West Loch Tarbert, Mid-Argyll at lunch-time (Paul Daw).

**Willow Warbler:** The first report was Bridgend Woods, Islay 11 April (Jeff ?) Following records:

15 April: Four at The Oa, Islay 15 April (David Wood).

16 April: One at Balephuill, Tiree in the evening (John Bowler) and one singing at Knockvologan, Mull (Tom Callan).

17 April: One in a garden in Campbeltown (Ian Teasdale).

18 April: One singing in Minard Woods, Mid-Argyll (Paul Daw) and another singing at Clachan, Kintyre (John Halliday).

19 April: Many singing at Otter Ferry, Cowal (Tom Callan) and at Ardkinglas, Cowal (Glyn Toplis), and one at Connel, Mid-Argyll (Mike Harrison). Two or three were singing at Bellanoch, Moine Mhor, Mid-Argyll, one at Dervaig, Mull (BirdTrack), one seen and heard near Tayness, Kilmartin, Mid-Argyll (Brian John) and one at Kilmory Loch, Mid-Argyll (David Jardine).

20 April: Two singing Duntrune, Mid-Argyll (Jim Dickson).

21 April: Two singing at Danna, Loch Sween, Mid-Argyll (Morag Rea).

22 April: Singing at Kilmory, Lochgilphead, Mid-Argyll (Malcolm Chattwood).

24 April: One singing at Loch Eck, Cowal (Nigel Scriven).

**Blackcap:** early records are always complicated by the presence of overwintering birds, but the following birds were probably arriving migrants. Following records:

13 April: One singing at Balephuill, Tiree on 13 April (John Bowler).

17 April: A male on a bird feeder at Minard Castle, Mid-Argyll (Reinold Gayre).

19 April: Females seen at Otter Ferry, Cowal (Tom Callan) and Connel, Mid-Argyll (Mike Harrison).

22 April: One was at Lochbuie, Mull (BirdTrack).

25 April: One seen at Kilmory, Lochgilphead, Mid-Argyll at lunch-time (Malcolm Chattwood).

27 April: Two singing at Crinan Ferry, Mid-Argyll (Jim Dickson).

**Garden Warbler:** Another late arrival this year. A migrant was at Balephuill, Tiree on 19 May (John Bowler) and one was at Ormsary, Mid-Argyll on 20 May (Stuart

Crutchfield).

**Common Whitethroat:** One was seen at Otter Ferry, Cowal on the afternoon of 1 May (Tom Callan). Following records:

5 May: One seen at Balephuill, Tiree this morning (John Bowler).

6 May: One at Loch Leathan, nr Lochgilphead, Mid-Argyll (John Halliday).

**Grasshopper Warbler:** The first report was of one heard in Appin Village, North Argyll on 19 April (BirdTrack). Following records:

20 April: One at Loch Laich, North Argyll 20 April (Nigel Scriven).

22 April: One singing at Loch Leathan, Mid-Argyll (John Halliday).

24 April: One was reeling at Corra, Otter Ferry, Cowal (Tom Callan).

27 April: Four singing on Colonsay (David Jardine).

6 May: One reeling at Balephuill, Tiree this morning (John Bowler).

**Sedge Warbler:** First report Portnahaven, Islay 19 April (Mary McGregor). Following records:

26 April: One Lochgilphead 'Meadows' (Jim Dickson).

30 April: One new in Balephuill, Tiree (John Bowler).

2 May: One on Coll (Ben Jones).

5 May: one at Loch Leathan, nr Lochgilphead, Mid-Argyll (John Halliday).

**Spotted Flycatcher:** Another late arrival this year with the first report on The Oa, Islay on 17 May (David Wood). Following records:

22 May: One seen at Carnan Mor, Tiree (John Bowler).

**Pied Flycatcher:** A male was seen briefly at Balephuill, Tiree on 8 May (John Bowler). Following records:

10 May: One was singing in Minard Woods, Mid-Argyll in the morning (Paul Daw).

20 May: A male bird, another migrant, at Balephuill, Tiree (John Bowler).

**Black Redstart:** One reported on Coll on 6/7 May (Ben Jones).



Female Common Redstart.  
Add Estuary, 24 April ©Jim  
Dickson



Whinchat. Add Estuary, 7 May ©Jim Dickson

**Common Redstart:** First reported at Gruinart, Islay on 20 April. Following records:

23 April: One singing in Knapdale Forest, Mid-Argyll (David Jardine).

27 April: One female at Islandadd Bridge, Mid-Argyll (Jim Dickson), one male at Dunamuck, Mid-Argyll (Malcolm Chattwood).

5 May: One was singing in Minard Woods, Mid-Argyll (Paul Daw).

**Whinchat:** First reports; a male near Islandadd Bridge, Mid-Argyll (Jim Dickson) and a male near Otter Ferry, Cowal (Tom Callan) both 26 April. Following records:

1 May: One Loch Gorm area, Islay (Jim Dickson)

5 May: Two females at Dalvore, Mid-Argyll (Jim Dickson).

**Northern Wheatear:** The earliest report so far was of one at Sanaigmore, Islay on 19 March (per I. and M. Brooke). Following records:

5 April: Males were at Ceann a' Mhara, Tiree and near the hide at Loch a' Phuill (John Bowler).

7 April: One was at Keills, Loch Sween, Mid-Argyll (Morag Rea).

8 April: Singles at Kinlochruel, nr Colintrave, Cowal and Derryguaig, Mull (BirdTrack).

9 April: Three at Ulva Lagoons, Loch Sween, Mid-Argyll (Tom Callan).

12 April: Male and female between Loch Crinan and Barsloisnoch, Mid-Argyll (Jim Dickson) and four at West Hynish, Tiree (John Bowler).

13 April: Two were at Tayinloan, Kintyre (David Jardine).

14 April: Four at Gribun Cliffs, Mull (Tom Callan).

19 April: One seen on Coll this morning (Ben Jones).

20 April: Five at Gruinart, Islay (James How)

21 April: Four in the Add Estuary (Jim Dickson).

**Yellow Wagtail** (Blue-headed race: *flava*). One was photographed at Craignure, Mull on 24 April (Ruth Fleming per Alan Spellman). A 'Blue-headed' type male seen at Gruinart, Islay on 1 May (Peter Roberts) had a head pattern more like a 'Channel Wagtail' (hybrid between *flava*

and *flavissima*).

**White Wagtail:** the first sighting reported so far was one at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, Kintyre (MSBO) on 21 March (Eddie Maguire). Following records:

5 April: One with Pied Wagtails at Traigh Bhi, Tiree (John Bowler).

12 April: One at West Hynish, Tiree (John Bowler).

19 April: Nineteen at Ballymeanoch, Mid-Argyll and 10 in the Add Estuary (Jim Dickson).

20 April: Sixteen at Ballymeanoch, Moine Mhor, Mid-Argyll (Jim Dickson) and the best day so far at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, Kintyre with 30+ recorded (Eddie Maguire).

**Tree Pipit:** One at Portnacroish, North Argyll on 7 April (BirdTrack) and two were at Ormsary on 8 April (Stu Crutchfield). Following records:

19 April: One singing in Minard Woods, Mid-Argyll (Paul Daw).

20 April: One Ardkinglas, Cowal (Glynn Toplis), one at Tainish NNR, Mid-Argyll (BirdTrack) and three in Kil-michael Forest (David Jardine).

21 April: One at Barsloisnoch (Moine Mhor), Mid-Argyll (Jim Dickson), one at Carnan Mor, Tiree (John Bowler), one at Loch Leathan, Mid-Argyll (John Halliday) and one singing at Sanaig Forest, Jura (Roger Broad).

24 April: One singing at Corra, Otter Ferry, Cowal (Tom Callan) and one at Loch Eck, Cowal (Nigel Scriven).

### Some other notable reports during March-May 2013

**Goose reports-early March:** John Nadin, who visited Kintyre at this time reports that the Todd's interior Canada Goose was at the entrance of Point Sands Holiday Park, Kilberry. At Westport Marsh there was a 'Blue' Snow Goose and a Pale-bellied Brent Goose. John also saw a neck collared Greylag, presumably an Icelandic bird (per John Bowler). Also noted was the regular flock of 27 Barnacle x Canada hybrids at the Laggan near Campbeltown.

**Green-winged Teal:** Mike Peacock recorded the first occurrence of this species for Oronsay/Colonsay during 4-6 May.

**Northern Eider** (North American race): John Bowler on Tiree managed to pick out a *borealis* race bird at Hough Bay 8 May, only the second ever report for Argyll. It was seen again off West Hynish on 16 May (JB).



White-billed Diver. Uisead Point, Kintyre on 5 March Eddie Maguire

**Stop Press:** Two independent sightings of a Black Stork on north Mull; at Fanmore (Paul Toner, a birder from N Ireland) and at Dervaig (a German birder) on Sunday 26th May. If confirmed this would be a new species for Argyll. Also seen on 26th May was a Glossy Ibis in the reeds at Dervaig (details required). Jim Dickson.

**White-billed Diver:** A non-breeding plumaged bird was found off Uisead Point (Machrihanish Seabird Observatory), Kintyre on 5 March by Eddie Maguire. The sea was relatively calm and Eddie Maguire managed to get a good photo at 400m showing the characteristic bill and head shape, and neck markings (see photo on previous page). This was a very good find for mainland Argyll, with the last record off Inverneill, Mid-Argyll in Feb 2005. There was a previous record from Uisead Point in May 1991, a couple of years before the observatory opened.

**Little Egret:** A bird was seen and photographed by Carl Reavey at Ardbeg, Islay on 19 April.

**Great Bittern:** A fresh road killed bird was picked up on the meadows road 1km north of Lochgilphead on the morning of 18 March by David Jardine; a sad end to a beautiful bird. Last records in Argyll were at Craobh Haven in December 2009 (died in care) and Appin 1999 (found dead). Another was reported from the Isle of Luing on 25 March (awaiting full account).

**Red Kite:** One was reported on 1 April by Willie Henderson at Strachur, and another was flying down Loch Fyne in early May (Bob Furness).

**Water Rail:** More often heard than seen, a bird seen 2 April in Norrie McDonald's garden on N side of Moine Mhor was more obliging than usual. This bird would pop out of cover to feed for a few seconds.

**Little Ringed Plover:** One was found and photographed by a small muddy pool to the west of Loch Gorm on Islay 1 May (Jim Dickson, see photo opposite). This is only the fourth record for Argyll and the first on Islay since 1983.

**Buff-breasted Sandpiper:** One was seen and photographed at Gruinart Flats, Islay on 22 May (James How).

**Long-billed Dowitcher:** One was found at Ardnave Loch, Islay on 1 May by Mary McGregor who also found a female Ring-necked Duck at the same place. The last dowitcher in Argyll was a very similar looking bird found nearby at Gruinart in April 2009.

**Spotted Redshank:** Mike Peacock reports a sighting of one on Oronsay on 19 April.

**Iceland Gull:** An adult was seen and photographed at Loch Laich, Appin on 21 April (Nigel Scriven). The long staying adult on Islay at Bunnahabhain was still present to at least 30 April (see photo, page 19). Bill Allan found a first-summer bird on the Lagan nr. Machrihanish on 3 May.

**Glaucous Gull:** A first-winter bird was photographed at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on



**Top photo.** Great Bittern killed by a vehicle nr. Lochgilphead on 18 March ©Jim Dickson.

**Middle photo.** Water Rail in a garden at Moine Mhor on 2 April ©Jim Dickson

**Bottom Photo.** Little-ringed Plover, Machrie, Islay on 1 May ©Jim Dickson

27 March, emphasising just how bleached white the plumage can become in late winter/early spring.

**White-winged gulls:** Unlike last winter, which saw record numbers of Iceland (130+) and Glaucous (50+) in Argyll, this winter has seen only a handful, with a few birds on Islay, Tiree and mainland Argyll. Please let us know if you have seen any.

**Snowy owl:** A report of what, from the description, can only be a female bird of this species was made by walkers coming down from Glas Bheinn, Jura on 28 Mar (Rodney Shaw *et al.*). The bird was seen only 10m away and then flew off close to the ground.

**Woodchat Shrike:** A small 'fall' of migrants on Tiree (Carnan Mor, Balephuill) 19 May included only the second record of this species for Argyll, with the first record on Islay in Sept 1996. Well done to John Bowler! Other migrants included a Wood Warbler and Garden Warbler.

**Magpie:** One was reported from Tarbert, Kintyre on 14 April (Brian Baird per David Jardine) and one seen in Campbeltown on 14 April with two the next day (Davie Robertson, Malcolm Cook *et al.*). Another was reported from Ardfern over a few days at the end of April (Andy Chadwick), and one (possibly the same bird) at Kilmelford in early May (John McAvoy).

**Shore Lark:** Three birds were reported at Killinallan, Islay on 5 May (Hammils per Ian Brooke). A full description will be required—please let Jim Dickson know if you have any further details. The only other Argyll record was on Islay in 1976.

**Nuthatch:** There were four records of this species, which is expanding its range into Argyll. One was reported in a garden in Taynuilt on 5 April (Mary MacIntyre), one was seen at a bird table on Kerrera, Mid-Argyll on 3 May (per Mary McGregor), one seen along the railway line between Cruachan Visitor Centre and Loch Awe Village and one seen and photographed at Lochdon, Mull on 14 May (Sheila Weir per Alan Spellman). The birds at Ardkinglas (Loch Fyne) are still in residence and it is hoped they may breed again this year (Glyn Toplis).

**Tree Sparrow:** one seen at Toberonochy, Luing on 30 March was presumably a migrant (David Jardine).

**Arctic Redpoll:** A bird was reported from the Loch Gruinart Reserve on 19 April on Islay by Michal Sur. Initial reports suggest that it was a large individual of Hornemann's sub-species.

**Hawfinch:** A male was watched at close range in a Yew tree in Lochgilphead (Oakfield) on 30 March (Dave Payne).

**Snow Bunting:** A bird first seen on 18 April at Glen-gorm, Tobermory, Mull was seen again on 3 May (Steph. Cope).

**Lapland Bunting:** One was at The Reef, Tiree on 25



**Top photo.** Long-billed Dowitcher, Ardnave, Islay on 1 May ©James How

**Middle photo.** Adult Iceland Gull, Bunnahabain, Islay 30 April ©Jim Dickson

**Bottom Photo.** Lapland Bunting, Westport Marsh, Kintyre on 1 May ©David Millward

April (John Bowler), three males were at Rockside, Islay on 29 April (Jim Dickson) and at least five at Westport Marsh, Kintyre on 30 April (Dave Millward, photo above). A single bird was seen on Oronsay 16 May (Mike Peacock).

**Yellowhammer:** John Bowler recorded a male bird near Loch a' Phuill, Tiree from 23 March—amazingly the first reported from the island in 101 years—well worth the wait!

**Sperm Whale:** Not exactly a bird, but a Sperm Whale that appeared in Oban Bay the last few days of March was quite a sight and caused a good deal of excitement!

**Paul Daw (with updates from Jim Dickson)**

## ABC field trip on 25th May 2013

### A circular route from Clachan Village Hall Car Park (West Loch Tarbert)

*Weather during weeks immediately prior to 25 May had produced extremes of low temperature, strong wind, rain and hail but we were lucky—a calm, sunny day had at last arrived! Four of us anticipated good sightings of summer migrants, as in the past, with perhaps some new species to add to our list for the area.*

This outing took place two months earlier than in previous years and perhaps that was why there was only one Wheatear and one Spotted Flycatcher seen, and no Redstarts—all having featured in earlier years. With the exceptions of Oyster Catchers and Common Sandpipers no waders showed, and on a day when we might have expected to enjoy an abundance of skylarks, they were also marked by their absence. However, butterflies were out enjoying the sunshine with an abundance of Green Veined Whites, as well as good numbers of Small Tortoiseshells and Orange Tips.

As we followed the track beside the Clachan Burn towards the sea, Swallows were very much in evidence, House Martins were busily flitting to and fro feeding and collecting mud for nests and we were glad to see the usual river-bank Sand Martin colony was clearly in good health. Our single Spotted Flycatcher of the day was discovered perched high in a sycamore tree, and two Grey Wagtails flew downstream towards where a Dipper was found last year—but not today! At the coast the sea was calm with a Red Throated Diver, and two Great Northern Divers, handsome in their summer plumage, being easily visible through binoculars. As well as Gannets and Sandwich Terns diving for fish, several of the Sandwich Terns were carrying out courtship rituals; also two Arctic Terns were seen briefly flying past.

Lunch was enjoyed in glorious warm sunshine with discussions on to how the recording of birds in Argyll should proceed without anyone offering to contribute their services as Argyll Bird Recorder now that Paul Daw has retired - all to the accompaniment of Willow Warblers, Whitethroats, Tree, Rock and Meadow Pipits and Lesser Redpolls. Continuing on our walk

past Corran Farm energetic Malcolm decided to explore another track which went further into the hills and this is where he found the only Wheatear of the day. As we neared the car park we decided it had been a fruitful day, which we had produced 55 bird species, several presenting clear signs of courtship display, nest building activities or the of feeding young.

A list of birds in the order they were first seen as the walk progressed were Rook, Collared Dove, Swallow, Blackcap, Greenfinch, Chiffchaff, Wren, House Sparrow, Chaffinch, Herring Gull, Goldfinch, Starling, Dunnock, House Martin, Blackbird, Willow Warbler, Grey Wagtail, Sand Martin, Pied Wagtail, Heron, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Song Thrush, Hooded Crow, Common Buzzard, Robin, Spotted Flycatcher, Whitethroat, Lesser Redpoll, Sandwich Tern, Arctic Tern, Mallard, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Common Gull, Eider, Red Throated Diver, Rock Dove, Greylag Goose, Meadow Pipit, Shag, Oyster Catcher, Great Northern Diver, Gannet, Kestrel, Jackdaw, Rock Pipit, Shelduck, Tree Pipit, Razorbill, Raven Common Sandpiper, Sedge Warbler, Wheatear, Linnet and Siskin. The following butterflies seen, Green-veined White, Small Tortoiseshell and Orange Tip

#### Katie Pendreigh



Numerous Sandwich Terns were seen diving for fish and displaying ©Jim Dickson

## Review

### ***Fighting for Birds: 25 years in nature conservation***

**by Mark Avery. Pelagic Publishing**

*The name Mark Avery may be well known to RSPB members and to conservation scientists alike. Starting work for the RSPB as a research biologist, Mark made his way up to Conservation Director, just short of the top job. In that time he witnessed many changes in bird conservation and was responsible for some of them. His early days as a schoolboy birdwatcher in Somerset was familiar to me and in some ways mirrored my own.*

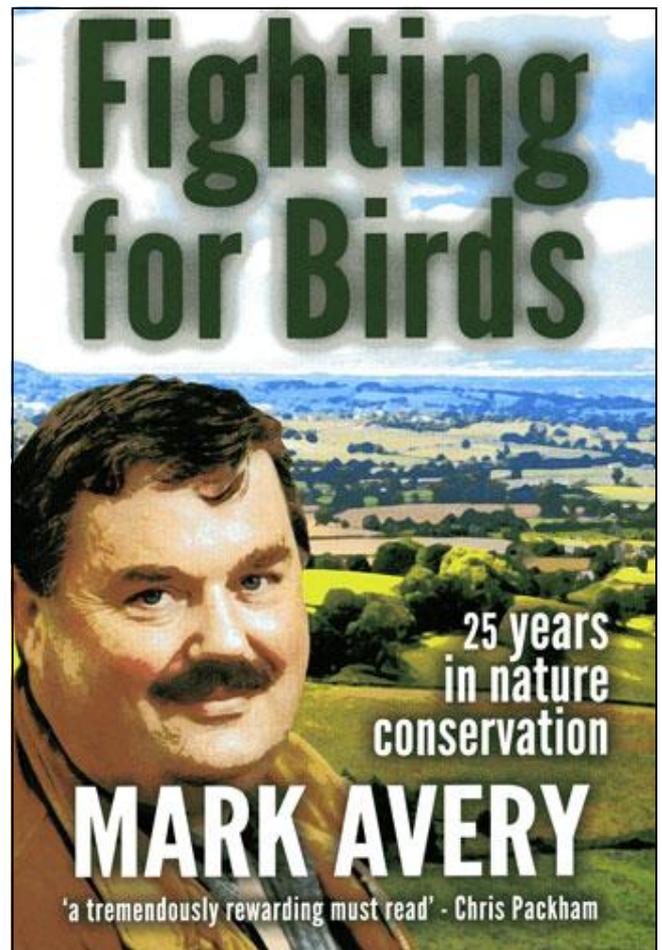
The story developed through university, and into his Ph.D. on bats. Further research on birds led to a two-year contract for the RSPB on the impacts of forestry on moorland birds. This was during the 1980's when the Flow Country was being covered with conifers, which was controversial. This chapter sets a pattern for the rest of the book. We all read the headline stories, and know the big picture, but Mark fills in some of the background detail on the people involved and some of the processes of decision making in the organisations involved. In doing so he emphasises the importance of a good scientific basis to inform these decisions. He also asks (and answers) some big questions such as "is it ever right to be nasty to birds?" (Answer: sometimes)

Other chapters on farmland birds, nature reserves and re-introductions were given from a very personal perspective that made a great deal of sense. He really gets down to business in the big issue of climate change, and issues a wake-up call to all of us about our current lifestyles, their implications and the inescapable and inconvenient choices we will face.

Raptor conservation is always a hot topic, and covers a multitude of sins, the principal of which is (in Mark's opinion) driven grouse shooting. He doesn't beat about the bush. In other chapters he deals with how the world works, and how that works for and against wildlife. In the snippets chapter he tells a series of unconnected short stories from his working life. They are interesting nevertheless. Also interesting is his take on the future for the RSPB, but you will have to read the book to get that.

Chris Packham, in his foreword, said he read it without putting it down. It is very readable and interesting, but also easy to pick up again after putting it down. The mix of personal anecdotes and passionate argument makes it engaging. The practical tips and philosophy for the challenges ahead are helpful and re-affirming. Please read this book, and encourage others. At £13 it is good value.

**Nigel Scriven**



Articles for the September issue of the *Eider* should with the Editor before the 24th August 2013

### Officials and Committee of the Argyll Bird Club (2013)

**Chairman:** Nigel Scriven, 14 Taylor Avenue, Kilbarchan, Johnstone PA10 2LS (phone 01505 706652 & 01369 840606)

**Vice Chairman:** Mike Harrison, 8 Ferryfield Drive, Connel, Oban PA37 1SP (phone 01631 710656)

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

**Treasurer:** Bob Furness, The Cnoc, Tarbet, Arrochar, Dunbartonshire G83 7DG (phone 01301 702603)

**Membership Secretary:** Sue Furness, The Cnoc, Tarbet, Dunbartonshire G83 7DG (phone 01301 702603, e-mail [sue.cnoc@gmail.com](mailto:sue.cnoc@gmail.com))

**Committee:** Tom Callan (Otter Ferry), Malcolm Chattwood (Lochgilthead), Paul Daw (Minard), Steve Petty (Ardentinny), Andy Robinson (Partick).

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**Editor of the Eider:** Steve Petty, Cluaran Cottage, Ardentinny, Dunoon, Argyll PA23 8TR (phone 01369 810024)

**ABC Website:** <http://www.argyllbirdclub.org>

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### BTO Regional Representatives in Argyll

**Argyll Mainland, Bute & Gigha:** Position vacant

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

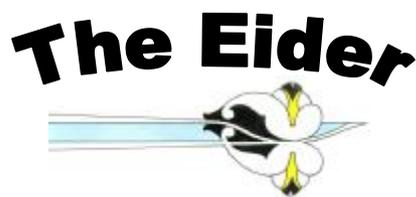
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**T**he *Eider* is the quarterly newsletter of the **Argyll Bird Club**. The editor welcomes articles about birds, wildlife conservation and ecology in Argyll, including articles of a wider natural history interest, notices of forthcoming events, book 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. 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).