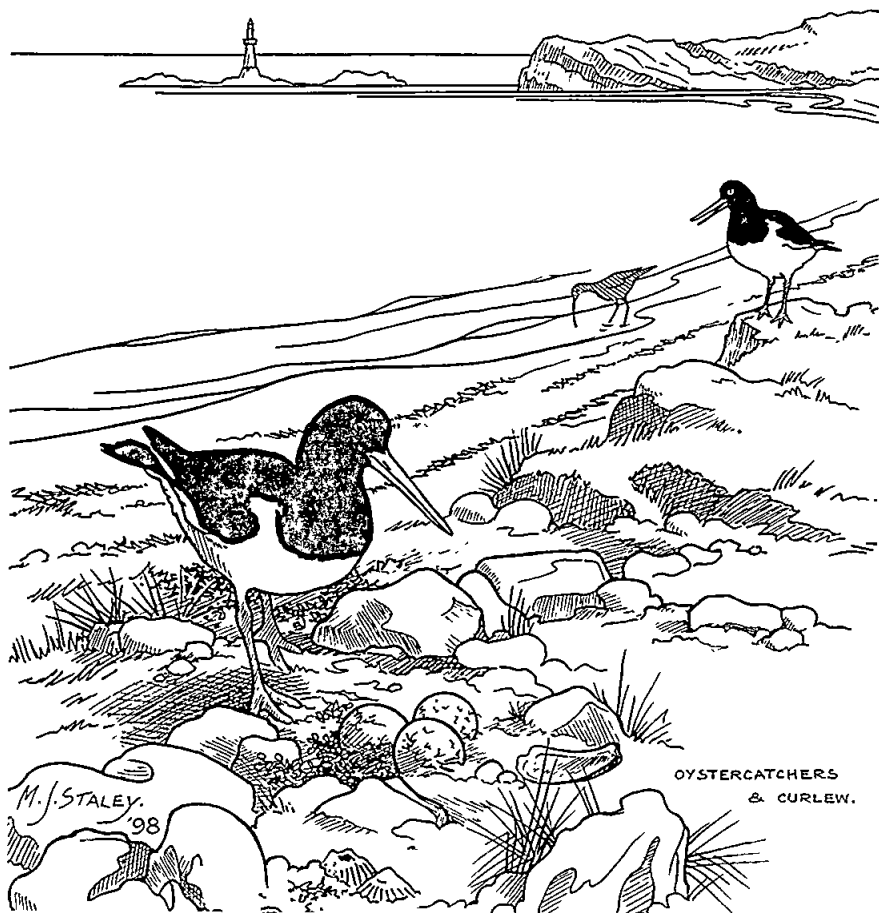

ARGYLL BIRD REPORT

Volume 16 (2000)

with Systematic List for the year
1999





Cover picture: Oystercatchers and Curlew
by Margaret Staley

The Sixteenth
ARGYLL BIRD REPORT
with Systematic List for the year
1999

Edited by
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Assisted by
Paul Daw

Systematic List by
Paul Daw

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ABOUT THE ARGYLL BIRD CLUB

The Argyll Bird Club was formed in 1985. Its main purpose is to play an active part in the promotion of ornithology in Argyll. It is recognised by the Inland Revenue as a charity in Scotland.

The Club holds two one-day meetings each year, in spring and autumn. The venue of the spring meeting is rotated between different towns, including Dunoon, Oban, Lochgilphead and Tarbert. The autumn meeting and AGM are held in a conveniently central location, usually Lochgilphead or Inveraray.

The Club organises field trips for members. It also publishes the annual *Argyll Bird Report* and a quarterly members' newsletter, *The Eider*, which includes details of club activities, reports from meetings and field trips, and articles by members and others.

Each year the subscription entitles you to the *Argyll Bird Report*, four issues of *The Eider*, and free admission to the two annual meetings. There are four kinds of membership: current rates (at 1 January 2001) are: Ordinary £10; Junior (under 17) £3; Family £15; Corporate £25. Subscriptions (by cheque or standing order) are due on 1 January. Anyone joining after 1 October is covered until the end of the following year.

Further information can be obtained from the Membership Secretary: Mrs Pam Staley, 16 Glengilp, Ardrishaig, Argyll PA30 8HT.

Argyll Bird Club
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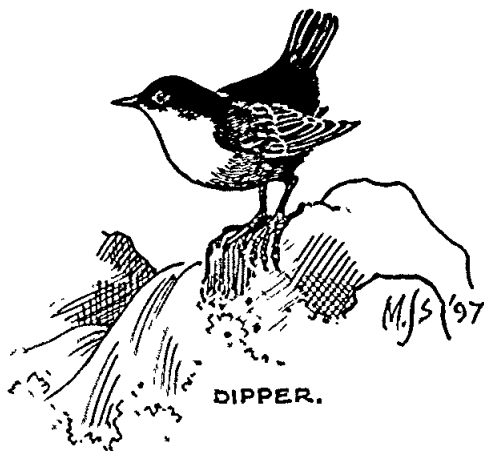
B.T.O. Representatives for Argyll: *North Argyll including Mull, Coll and Tiree:* Richard Evans, East Croft, Lochdon, Isle of Mull PA64 6AP. *Islay, Jura and Colonsay:* Dr Malcolm Ogilvie (address above). *South Argyll & Gigha:* David Wood, Drover's House, Bellanoch, Lochgilphead PA31 8SN.

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Further copies of this report can be obtained from Bill Staley, 16 Glengilp, Ardrishaig, PA30 8HT. Price £5 including postage. Some previous annual *Argyll Bird Reports* are also available at £4 including postage.

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Editorial

Once again, Argyll Bird Club owes a huge debt of gratitude to Paul Daw, the County Recorder, for carefully compiling a detailed and fascinating Systematic List that forms the bulk of this annual report. Each year, many people send their records to Paul. On his shoulders falls the immense task of reducing many thousands of individual records to a readable and logically arranged format. The result, as can be seen in this issue, is a fine summary of the status of the birds of the county. Besides being interesting as records of the immediate past, these annual snapshots of biodiversity are important messages to the future; indeed, many would argue that this is their main value. They are a detailed, although inevitably incomplete account of bird species and abundance in the county. By publishing them year by year, Argyll Bird Club creates a permanent record for use at any time in the future. Time will certainly reveal some increases and some decreases; these may be natural or caused by the activities of humankind. If we do not go on recording in this way, such revelations will not be possible.

To take just one example: suppose the Twite were to go the way of the Corn Bunting - not impossible, given the many sudden harmful changes that can occur in land use. Then it would be invaluable to have a detailed summary of its past occurrence, like that on p.97, something we do not and never will have for the Corn Bunting. Another species, the Yellowhammer is rapidly declining and has already disappeared from many areas. We should try to record the details of changes like these. So please continue to send records to Paul, as requested in the Introduction to his article.

On behalf of the club, I would like to thank Tristan ap Rheinallt and Paul Daw for their update on last year's Checklist of the Birds of Argyll, and Aubrey and Edith Colling for their valuable account of Red-throated Divers breeding on Islay.

I would also like to convey the club's warmest thanks to Margaret Staley for again producing a very attractive drawing, one of her best, for the cover of this report (*did you notice the eggs?*) Thanks also to Edith Colling for the excellent drawing of a Red-throated Diver, on p. 116, and to Margaret Staley again for the attractive vignette of a Dipper on p. 4.

May I repeat my request for more people to submit articles or notes to the Argyll Bird Report. A lot of impressive and interesting work on a variety of species is going on in Argyll, but little finds its way into these pages. Perhaps *you* can contribute something to next year's report.

Finally, Argyll Bird Club gratefully thanks all others who have contributed to this report, especially the many observers who have sent their observations to the Recorder, several committee members and others for helpful comments, and Julie and others at WestPrint, Oban, for their speedy and most helpful co-operation in printing the final product.

J C A Craik
Editor of *Argyll Bird Report*
November 2000

Systematic list for 1999

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Introduction

The systematic list below includes entries for 225 species, not including escapes or races. Three of these species viz. Black Kite, Semipalmated Sandpiper and White-winged Black Tern are additions to the Argyll List, which now contains 318 species. One of the 225 species (Black Kite) was recorded in 1997 but not in 1999 and two (Great White Egret, Bee-eater) in 1998 but not in 1999. The records in question were omitted from previous *Argyll Bird Reports*, due to lack of supporting evidence.

This leaves a total of 222 species recorded in Argyll during 1999, making this an exceptionally good year for numbers of species (cf revised totals of 215 in 1998 {delete *Goshawk* from and add *Great White Egret* to species in Systematic List published in ABR 15}, 209 in 1997 {add *Black Kite* and *Sabine's Gull* to species in Systematic List published in ABR 14}, 213 in 1996, 204 in 1995, 213 in 1994 and 213 in 1993).

Perhaps surprisingly, the following were not recorded in Argyll during 1999 and so have been omitted from the list below: Capercaillie *Tetrao tetrix*, Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix*, Golden Pheasant *Chrysolophus pictus*, Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* and Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*. Some of these may simply have been overlooked, but there have been no records of Nightjar since 1993 and it is the third successive blank year for Tree Sparrow.

ORNITHOLOGICAL REVIEW OF 1999

January to March

The weather in *Jan* was very variable. It began with gales and heavy rain; then a short mild period was followed by fine frosty conditions before gales returned mid month. There was snow on the hills later in the month before temperatures rose again at the very end.

Our wintering Ring Ouzel was still present in Jan and was seen at Cruachan Reservoir *N Argyll* on 5th.

At Loch Indaal *Islay* the flock of Scaup reached 1,120 on 3rd Jan, slightly higher than in 1998. They are a regular feature, but the immature Surf Scoter found at Balephetrish Bay *Tiree* on 8th Jan is only a rare visitor to Argyll. At the other end of the altitude range the record of 3 Ptarmigan near the summit of Ben Cruachan *N Argyll* on 5th Jan was one of only two reports received during the year.

Numbers of Bar-tailed Godwit were generally well up on 1998 and counts at Loch Indaal and RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* totalled 261 birds in Jan. On 8th Jan, the Grey Phalarope that appeared at Tayinloan *Kintyre* was a most unusual winter visitor.

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Most of the very few **Bramblings** present this winter were in found in Jan with six birds recorded at each of *Nerabus Islay*, *Slockavullin Mid-Argyll* and *Beinn Mhor Cowal* during the month.

Snow Buntings however were still present in good numbers with *ca* 50 at *Tayinloan Kintyre* on 3rd Jan, 30 at *Loch Gruinart Islay* on 9th and 28 at *Ardnave Islay* on 16th.

Feb started mild but this was followed by a colder spell with sleet and snow on higher ground. It remained cold with some rain until mid-month, when a milder week was again followed by cold weather. On 3rd Feb an amazing total of 180 **Goldeneye** were counted in *Loch Caolisport Mid-Argyll*, far and away the largest gathering of this species recorded in Argyll.

Our usual, possibly genuinely vagrant **Snow Goose** turned up with *Greenland White-fronted Geese* at *Loch a 'Phuill Tiree* on 7th Feb.

Four **Stock Doves** seen at *Slockavullin Mid-Argyll* on 9th Feb confirm that this small, isolated population still exists, even after more than a year with no records.

To see one **Kingfisher** in Argyll is fortunate, so to find 2 at *Airds Bay (Taynuilt) Mid-Argyll* on 20th Feb was something of a bonus.

A small influx of **Common Crossbills** took place during the month and small groups were seen at several localities in the *Loch Fyne* area of *Mid-Argyll*. These included a bright red-plumaged male in song at *Minard* on 20th.

Mar was cold at first, with northerly winds, but mainly dry. A short mild spell was followed by more cold northerly winds with some rain but also dry periods.

Pintail numbers on *Islay* were high, with a total of 70 at *Loch Gruinart* and *Loch Indaal* in Mar, while 62 **Shoveler** at *Loch Gruinart* on 18th Mar was a record total for the island.

Summer migrants began arriving in Mar and, as usual, **Wheatear** were first with one early bird near *Campbeltown Kintyre* on 7th. The first **Swallows** were also in *Campbeltown*, on 29th.

The co-ordinated goose count at the end of Mar found a total of 38,269 **Barnacle Geese** for the whole of Argyll, the highest number recorded since counts began. Also in late Mar, there were three records of **Magpies** away from their usual haunts. Single birds were at both *Tayvallich* and *Connel Mid-Argyll* on 26th and at *Campbeltown* on 29th.

April to June

Apr was mild and showery until the middle of the month. There followed a cold spell with northerly winds and some showers but mainly dry conditions. It became milder again towards the end of month.

Apr 1st saw our first **Sand Martins** arriving, when birds were reported at *Kilmichael Glen Mid-Argyll* and *Killbeg Mull*.

Four birds off *Crinan Harbour Mid-Argyll* on 2nd Apr was one of only two records of **Little Auk** during the year. A **Red-necked Grebe** in *Cable Bay Colonsay* on 8th Apr was in almost complete breeding plumage. An **American Wigeon** in the *River Add estuary Mid-Argyll* on 3rd Apr may perhaps have been the bird seen at *Loch Craignish* in Oct 1998. On *Tiree* two large flocks of **Golden Plovers** in the *Airport-Reef* area on 5th totalled an impressive 3,100 birds.

There are occasional reports of **Nuthatches** in Argyll but usually they are from a third party and not supported by a description. However, on 6th Apr an experienced

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observer was lucky enough to spot one feeding on peanuts in his garden at Glenbranter *Cowal*, the first confirmed record since the winter of 1975-76.

The adult Laughing Gull at RSPB L. Gruinart on 14th Apr was our second in two years but only the third ever. It obligingly stayed until 21st Apr and gave many observers excellent views.

At Gott Bay *Tiree*, 76 Pale-bellied Brent Geese on 12th Apr was the largest flock of the year, and numbers of Common Scoter at Loch Indaal reached their highest figure since 1994 when 142 were counted on 18th Apr. On the same day, Black-tailed Godwit numbers on *Tiree* reached a spring peak of 61 birds.

House Martins arrived earlier than usual when two were at Campbeltown Loch on 10th Apr, and Cuckoos were also slightly early with the first calling at Kintallan (Tayvallich) *Mid-Argyll* on 15th Apr. The first Tree Pipit was at Tainish NNR *Mid-Argyll* on 15th Apr.

After sightings of single birds earlier in the year, two drake Green-winged Teal were present at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* on 22nd Apr.

The single Wood Sandpiper at RSPB L. Gruinart on 24th Apr may have been the same bird that was recorded in May and Jun. A male Blue-headed (Yellow) Wagtail, also at RSPB L. Gruinart, on 28th Apr was only the third record of this race on *Islay*. A special spring census of Eiders that included the west coast and islands found 7,816 birds in the whole of Argyll immediately before the nesting season. Of these 5,253 were found in the area west and north of Kintyre, rather fewer than expected.

Most of May was dry and warm with plenty of sunshine. The last week of the month, however, saw a return of cold northerly winds and periods of heavy rain.

Migrant waders in early May included a Dotterel at RSPB L. Gruinart on 6th, the first on *Islay* since 1991. Among the more common species, an impressive 430 Ringed Plovers were counted in Gott Bay *Tiree* on 8th May and, next day, 576 Sanderlings between there and Hynish Bay was the largest gathering of the species noted anywhere in Argyll in recent years.

A male Ruddy Duck at Claddach Lochan *Islay* on 12th May was only our fourth accepted record of the species and the first since 1993. On 15th May a Ring-billed Gull in 2nd winter/adult plumage at Sorobaidh Bay *Tiree* was our first record of the species since 1996.

A Great White Egret in full breeding plumage found at Loch Gruinart on 18th May was only our third ever. One of its smaller relatives, a Little Egret, was seen next day at Bridgend Merse *Islay*.

Two Black Terns flying over The Strand *Colonsay* on 23rd May were our first since 1996 and the first spring record since at least 1980. More predictable was the single Turtle Dove at Mannal *Tiree* on 19th but a more spectacular migrant appeared on 18th May when a Hoopoe was seen between Tarbet and Arrochar *Cowal*.

The first half of Jun was mainly dry and sunny although with cool NW winds at times. A wet cool period in the middle of the month was followed by warmer and dryer weather with some sunshine.

A single Quail calling in Kilmartin Glen *Mid-Argyll* on 25th Jun was the only record for the year, as was the adult Long-tailed Skua reported over Lunga (Treshnish Isles) *Mull* on 26th Jun, the first known record of this species for the Treshnish Isles.

Jun was a good time for Common Rosefinches in Argyll. An adult male was singing at the top of a conifer in Arduaine Gardens *Mid-Argyll* on 10th and a first summer

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male, also in song, was found near Bowmore *Islay* on 23rd. There were reports of a third individual at this time, in *Kintyre*, but no description has been received. The other real rarity found in Jun, a **Black-headed Bunting** at Kirkapoll *Tiree* from 3rd to 8th, was only identified thanks to video footage taken of the bird by a visitor to the island.

The breeding season

Once again the productivity of our 9 prs of **Black-throated Divers** was low; only 3 young were fledged, all by pairs using rafts.

Among the wildfowl, **Mute Swans** had another poor year with only 6 or 7 of 27 pairs monitored producing any young: four of these pairs were at sites where mink were controlled. A survey of **Greylag Geese** on *Tiree* found 109 broods of goslings totalling 427 with a mean brood size of nearly 4. Records from *Mid-Argyll* and *N Argyll* suggest that **Canada Geese** are still spreading as a breeding species. **Shelduck** had a good year on *Colonsay*, where 10 broods totalling 70 young were seen in Jun, while a minimum of 6 broods of **Tufted Ducks** totalling 25 young were present on *Tiree*. **Eiders** on *Colonsay* also had a reasonable year and mean brood size for the 45 broods found with a total 142 young was 3.21 (cf 2.62 in 1998). No less than 22 week-old ducklings were seen with a single female **Red-breasted Merganser** at Ardrishaig *Mid-Argyll* on 24th Jul, although they probably came from more than one brood. There were no confirmed breeding records of **Goosander**, although birds were present during the season.

White-tailed Eagles had a good year in Scotland fledging a total of 11 young, several of which were reared in Argyll. **Hen Harriers** at Loch Gruinart, however, had a poor year with only 3 prs producing a total of 8 young. Reports from areas monitored also indicated a poor year for **Buzzards**, with only 8 young from 8 prs in Cowal an example of the generally low productivity. Productivity was also a problem for **Golden Eagles** with only 1.06 young per successful pr in 1999. Our **Ospreys** did rather better and all four prs were successful, raising 9 or 10 young.

In this generally poor year for raptors, low numbers of successful breeding sites were reported for both **Kestrel** and **Peregrine**.

A calling male **Spotted Crake** at RSPB L. Gruinart was heard only on 27th-28th Apr, but one was present during the breeding season at Coll RSPB Reserve. **Corncrakes** had an encouraging year with numbers holding their own and, on *Coll*, *Tiree* and *Colonsay*, achieving their highest populations in 10 years.

With **Lapwing** numbers declining alarmingly on a national scale, it was good to know that 174 prs bred at RSPB L. Gruinart raising at least 80 young, and that 72 prs were breeding at Coll RSPB Reserve. **Redshank** numbers at RSPB L. Gruinart were down again, however, to just 60 prs.

The most remarkable wader breeding record was the pair of **Red-necked Phalaropes** that re-appeared at their traditional Argyll site after a gap of 6 years. Behaviour indicated that they probably laid eggs although there was no evidence of fledging. Fewer pairs of **Black-headed Gulls** were found at the monitored sites but the number of young fledged (*ca* 75) was the same as 1998. Over 900 prs of **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** bred at the SAMS study area sites but fledged only 447 young. As with most of our ground-nesting (as opposed to cliff-nesting) seabirds, they were much affected by mink predation. This was even more apparent with **Herring Gulls** where removal of mink by trapping more than doubled the fledging rate. A census carried out for Seabird 2000 for the seabird colony at Ceann a' Mhara *Tiree*, not counted

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recently, gave totals of 1,035 AON for Kittiwakes and 1,947 AON for Guillemots. A similar census on the Treshnish Isles found 9,566 individual Guillemots and 1,232 Puffins, most of which were on Lunga. Once again, data from tern colonies in the SAMS study area showed that they benefitted from mink control. At 9 sites where Common Tern were monitored, 684 young fledged from 1,051 pairs (cf max. 495 from 826 in 1998).

Low vole numbers were identified as the probable cause of low productivity in Barn Owls. Only 15 young were fledged by 9 pairs using nest boxes in Cowal and none of the 25 prs of Tawny Owls monitored in Glen Branter raised more than 2 chicks to fledging. There was only one confirmed record of Short-eared Owl breeding, in Kintyre.

Numbers of Sand Martins at our two regularly monitored colonies held up well with ca 80 apparently occupied holes in Kilmichael Glen and 340 at North Connel sandpit. More small colonies were reported than usual.

Meadow Pipits had a record 8 territories in the CBC plots at Taynish NNR Mid-Argyll and are still the most widespread breeding bird in Argyll according to BBS data, occurring in 87% of Argyll squares.

Migrant warblers had mixed fortunes. There were no Grasshopper Warblers in the CBC plots at Taynish NNR and numbers generally were down on 1998. Sedge Warblers, on the other hand, were plentiful with a record-equalling 13 territories at Taynish and no less than 47 singing males on Colonsay. Whitethroats were also well represented with many more sites reporting birds during the breeding season than in 1998. There were very few reports of Garden Warblers, and Blackcap numbers also seemed to be low. Wood Warblers and Chiffchaffs had an average year, as did Willow Warblers although these are still, with Wren, the second most widespread breeding bird in Argyll.

Neither of our flycatchers had a particularly good year. Spotted Flycatcher numbers were down at the monitored sites, and survival of the few broods of Pied Flycatchers reared in nest boxes was poor due to a combination of predation and starvation.

Breeding prs of Chough on Islay were down again in 1999, although productivity of the 44 pairs was marginally better, so that numbers fledged fell only from 89 to 87.

July and August

The first week of *Jul* was mainly humid and overcast. Then a brief sunny spell was followed by a prolonged period of wet weather before warmer and drier weather returned near the end of the month.

A Green Sandpiper at Grasspoint Mull on 1st Jul was the first of six individuals of this species seen during the autumn, and a Spotted Redshank at Dervaig Mull on 11th Jul heralded a good year for that species, being the first of 3 or 4 records.

Aug was fine and sunny at first, although with a cool NE breeze. There were heavy showers from mid-month, with cool NE winds again until warmer and dry conditions returned toward the end of the month.

On 7th Aug, a Honey Buzzard soaring high over Ledaig Point N Argyll was the third in this area since 1980, out of a total of only seven seen in Argyll during this time.

A post-breeding flock of Red-breasted Mergansers at Blackrock (Loch Indaal) Islay reached a total of 167 birds on 11th Aug. It was a good month for Marsh Harriers with a male in the St Catherine's Cowal area for several days and a 'cream crown' at Moine Mhor on 12th.

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Unusual weather conditions gave an insight into the variety of birds that pass through Argyll at the peak of migration. On 12th Aug light drizzle and poor visibility at Machrihanish SBO produced a fall of a large number and variety of waders. As well as 7 **Curlew Sandpipers**, 2 **Ruff**, 16 **Black-tailed Godwits**, and 9 **Greenshanks**, common species included 280 **Oystercatchers**, 230 **Ringed Plovers**, 145 **Knot**, 42 **Sanderlings**, ca 600 **Dunlins**, 83 **Redshanks**, 39 **Common Sandpipers** and 58 **Turnstones**. No **Little Stints** were among them but on *Islay* 2 on 21st Aug were the first of several autumn records.

September and October

Sep was mild and misty at first but gales arrived on 8th. These were followed by cool dry conditions with a fair amount of sunshine.

On 3rd *Sep* a bird found at Balephetrish *Tiree* and originally reported as an unspecified small falcon was identified as the first **White-winged Black Tern** recorded in Argyll, the first of two species new to the county in the space of four days. Also in early *Sep*, a total of 11 **Balearic Shearwaters** passed Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* and Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* between 1st and 11th, and on 9th *Sep* no fewer than 62 **Sooty Shearwaters** flew south past Frenchman's Rocks in 3 hrs.

Early *Sep* was a remarkable time for waders on *Islay* and *Tiree*. On 5th, at RSPB L. Gruinart, a juvenile **Baird's Sandpiper** was our second record and a juvenile **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** was only our seventh. On 6th, a **Semipalmated Sandpiper**, a new species for Argyll, was found among **Dunlins** and **Ringed Plovers** at Gott Bay *Tiree*. Another of this species was identified at RSPB L. Gruinart on 9th although it may have been there since 6th. Eventually at least four **Semipalmated Sandpipers** were located on *Tiree* and *Islay*. These were followed by juvenile **Pectoral Sandpipers**, one at Barrapol *Tiree* on 11th *Sep* and one at RSPB L. Gruinart on 26th. These were among several rare or unusual species that were part of a record influx of North American waders to Scotland this autumn. **Sabine's Gulls** are always special birds in Argyll and the adult seen at Traigh Bail-a-Mhuilinn *Tiree* on 9th *Sep* was still in almost complete breeding plumage.

An unusual migration record came from a radio-tagged **Osprey** monitored by satellite as it flew down the Sound of Jura on 10th *Sep*.

An advance party of 20+ **Fieldfares** were at Kilmartin *Mid-Argyll* on 14th *Sep* but the main arrival was not until early Oct. The first **Redwings** arrived a week later, on 21st, when 6 were seen at Blarghour *Mid-Argyll*.

A roost containing ca 50 **Grey Herons** near Ederline Farm *Mid-Argyll* on 14th *Sep* was by far the largest congregation of this species during the year. Sadly, our first **Bittern** since 1982 was found as a road victim near Appin on 19th *Sep*. It turned out to be an adult male.

On 21st *Sep*, a **White-billed Diver** found at Machir Bay *Islay* was our first since 1991 and only our fourth ever.

Four **Grey Plovers** at Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* on 21st were only the second record of the species there in recent years and representative of the good numbers of records of this normally scarce species this autumn. It was a good autumn for wildfowl at RSPB L. Gruinart with record totals of 622 **Mallard** on 22nd *Sep* and 2,150 **Teal** on 23rd *Sep*. Some wader species also fared well there with a peak count of 120 **Knot** on 21st and a high count of 19 **Curlew Sandpipers** on 20th *Sep*. There were also impressive gatherings of **Jackdaws** at Loch Gruinart at this time and numbers peaked at 600 on 26th *Sep*.

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Some years we have no reports of Lapland Buntings in Argyll, so to have 3 records was well above average. They were all seen in Sep; one at The Reef *Tiree* on 16th, one at Ardnave *Islay* on 21st and two around the golf course on *Colonsay* on 23rd. The autumn Firth of Clyde Eider count found 5,519 birds in the Argyll part of the area, more than in 1998 (4,771) but similar to 1997 (5,715).

Gales early in Oct were followed by mainly dry weather with fair amounts of sunshine. There were gales on 21st and then a period of very mild conditions (up to 16° C) with sunshine and showers before gales returned at the end of the month.

A remarkable flock of 70 Great Shearwaters seen at sea some 10 km north of *Coll* on 3rd Oct, together with 10 or more Sooty Shearwaters, was the largest gathering of Great Shearwaters ever recorded in Scottish waters. Numbers of Wigeon at our five monitored sites reached a peak of 1,777 birds in Oct, slightly up on 1998.

Small numbers of Pomarine Skuas were seen earlier in the month, but the 18 that passed Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* in 3 hrs on 31st Oct were unprecedented at this site. It was a good year for Little Gulls and the first winter bird at Port Charlotte *Islay* on 30th Oct was the ninth individual since Jan.

A real rarity appeared at Gleanagaidh *Islay* on 13th Oct. The Yellow-browed Warbler found there was only our fourth. This and the last two records were all in Oct.

The autumn influx of Jays was especially marked this year in early Oct, when the species was widely reported in *Mid-Argyll*. On *Tiree* Starlings gathered in impressive numbers, with an estimated 1,100 in fields at Heylipol on 30th Oct. On the same day huge numbers of Chaffinches were found on The Laggan *Kintyre* and 2,000 birds were counted at just three sites there.

November and December

Early Nov saw a period of anti-cyclonic conditions producing dry, cold but fairly calm weather. It became very cold in mid-Nov before turning milder and wetter, with gales by the end of the month.

Whooper Swan numbers peaked at 217 on *Tiree* on 5th Nov. Most of these were at Loch a 'Phuill, a nationally important site for this species in winter. Some indication of how many Great Northern Divers we have around our coasts in winter came from counts on 20th Nov at Loch Indaal *Islay*, the Sound of Gigha *Kintyre* and around *Tiree*, which gave a total of 261 birds. There were also 35 Red-throated Divers in Loch Indaal.

The co-ordinated goose count in mid-Nov gave a satisfactory total of 18,710 Greenland White-fronted Geese but an estimate that only 10.4% were young birds showed that this was the 3rd worst breeding season in the last 10 years.

Slavonian Grebes in the Sound of Gigha reached an impressive 41 birds on 20th Nov and 60 Black Guillemots were counted there on the same day. Following a long period without any records of the species, a 'redhead' Smew at Oban *Mid-Argyll* on 27th Nov was our second in two years.

Despite a considerable influx of Waxwings on the east coast, 2 near Kennacraig *Kintyre* on 20th Nov and one in Campbeltown on 18th Dec were the only ones reported in Argyll.

Dec saw long periods of wet and windy weather. Some parts of west and south-west Scotland had their wettest Dec on record. The latter half of the month saw colder

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conditions with overnight frost and snow down to quite low levels. **Snow Buntings** were less numerous than at this time last year but *ca* 30 were found in marram grass at Balinoe *Tiree* on 10th Dec. **Reed Buntings** fared rather better with flocks of 45 at Tayinloan on 19th Dec and 50 in a reedbed at Kilchoman *Islay* on 22nd.

Numbers of **Little Grebes** on Outer Loch Etive built up to a new record total of 34 on 30th Dec and late Dec also produced some unexpected visitors to Argyll. On 27th a wader found near the pier at Dunoon *Cowal* was identified as our second winter **Grey Phalarope** of the year; and on 30th a very rare visitor to Argyll was found by a fortunate club member at Laganbuidhe Farm (Dalmally) *N Argyll*. The **Firecrest** found in alders there was our first record for 17 years, although the species now occurs annually in Scotland in small numbers.

BIRD RECORDING IN ARGYLL

Advice to contributors

When submitting records, sightings should be listed in Voous order (as in this report) and should include the following details:

Species name. The commonly used English name is usually sufficient (*British Birds* – List of English Names... versions acceptable if preferred) but scientific (Latin) name is helpful if reporting sub-species.

EURING Code No. - if possible (helps to speed up computer input).

Date. Please give exact date whenever possible (rather than 'June' or 'Spring') as this makes the record much more valuable and enables us to relate it to other records received.

Grid reference if known (six figure ref. preferred but a four figure ref. is often sufficient).

Location. Use in conjunction with grid reference to avoid ambiguity *e.g.* there are umpteen Loch Dubhs in Argyll. However, mistakes can also occur with grid refs!

Number of individuals. Precise number whenever possible or, failing this, an estimate. Even a rough estimate is more useful than 'many', 'large flock', 'several' or 'few', which are too subjective to have much value.

Sex and age - if known

Other interesting comments are always welcome *e.g.* indications of breeding, behaviour, food, interactions with other birds/animals *etc.* Individual anecdotes add value to what can otherwise be rather a 'dry' report.

Rare birds

Details of rarities should be sent in as soon as possible after the sighting, if possible on a standard form (available from Recorder). They will be judged locally by the Argyll Bird Records Committee (ABRC) whose members are listed on p. 3, sent on to the *Scottish Birds* Records Committee (SBRC), or sent on to the *British Birds* Rarities Committee (BBRC), as appropriate.

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The list below details rare species whose occurrence in Argyll needs to be fully documented. It is made up of the ABRC list of Argyll rarities (in lower case) and the SBRC list of Scottish rarities (in capitals – NB this includes the species shown in both upper *and* lower case in the SBRC official list), but excludes the large number of UK rarities assessed by BBRC. Asterisked species have occurred in Argyll. No record of any of the species and plumage phases listed below will be published unless adequate supporting details (including a description) are available. In addition, brief details may be requested for occurrences of scarce species not on the list where the circumstances appear to warrant this.

List of SBRC and ABRC species and subspecies, 2000

Black-necked Grebe*	Roseate Tern*
CORY'S SHEARWATER*	Black Tern*
GREAT SHEARWATER*	Little Owl
BALEARIC SHEARWATER* #	BEE-EATER*
Bittern*	Wryneck*
LITTLE EGRET*	LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER
PURPLE HERON	GREATER SHORT-TOED LARK
WHITE STORK*	WOODLARK
SPOONBILL*	Shore Lark*
Bean Goose*	RICHARD'S PIPIT*
European White-fronted Goose*	TAWNY PIPIT
GREEN-WINGED TEAL*	WATER PIPIT
Red-crested Pochard*	NIGHTINGALE*
RING-NECKED DUCK*	Bluethroat*
SURF SCOTER*	CETTI'S WARBLER
Smew*	AQUATIC WARBLER
Ruddy Duck*	MARSH WARBLER
HONEY BUZZARD*	Reed Warbler*
MONTAGU'S HARRIER	ICTERINE WARBLER*
Goshawk*	MELODIOUS WARBLER
ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD*	DARTFORD WARBLER
HOBBY*	BARRED WARBLER*
CRANE*	Lesser Whitethroat*
Avocet*	PALLAS'S WARBLER
STONE CURLEW *	Yellow-browed Warbler*
LITTLE RINGED PLOVER*	FIRECREST*
KENTISH PLOVER	RED-BREASTED FLYCATCHER*
Temminck's Stint*	BEARDED TIT
PECTORAL SANDPIPER*	Marsh Tit
BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER*	Willow Tit*
Red-necked Phalarope*	Crested Tit*
Long-tailed Skua (except adult)*	Nuthatch*
MEDITERRANEAN GULL*	Red-backed Shrike*
SABINE'S GULL*	WOODCHAT SHRIKE*
RING-BILLED GULL*	EUROPEAN SERIN
HERRING GULL (yellow-legged races	Scottish Crossbill
<i>michahellis & cachinnans</i>)*	COMMON ROSEFINCH*

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Hawfinch*
CIRL BUNTING*

ORTOLAN BUNTING
LITTLE BUNTING*

Because of the frequency of records in Argyll, the SBRC has delegated decision making on this species to the Recorder. Normally a description will not now be required although the ABRC reserve the right to request one if the circumstances seem to require it.

INTERPRETATION OF THE SPECIES ACCOUNTS

In the species accounts below, English and scientific names are as in the latest *Scottish Bird Report*; the sequence of species follows the Vooous order as in the same report. Each species heading in the report contains the following information:

Common name	Scientific name	Gaelic name	EURING code
e.g. RAVEN	<i>Corvus corax</i>	Fitheach	1572

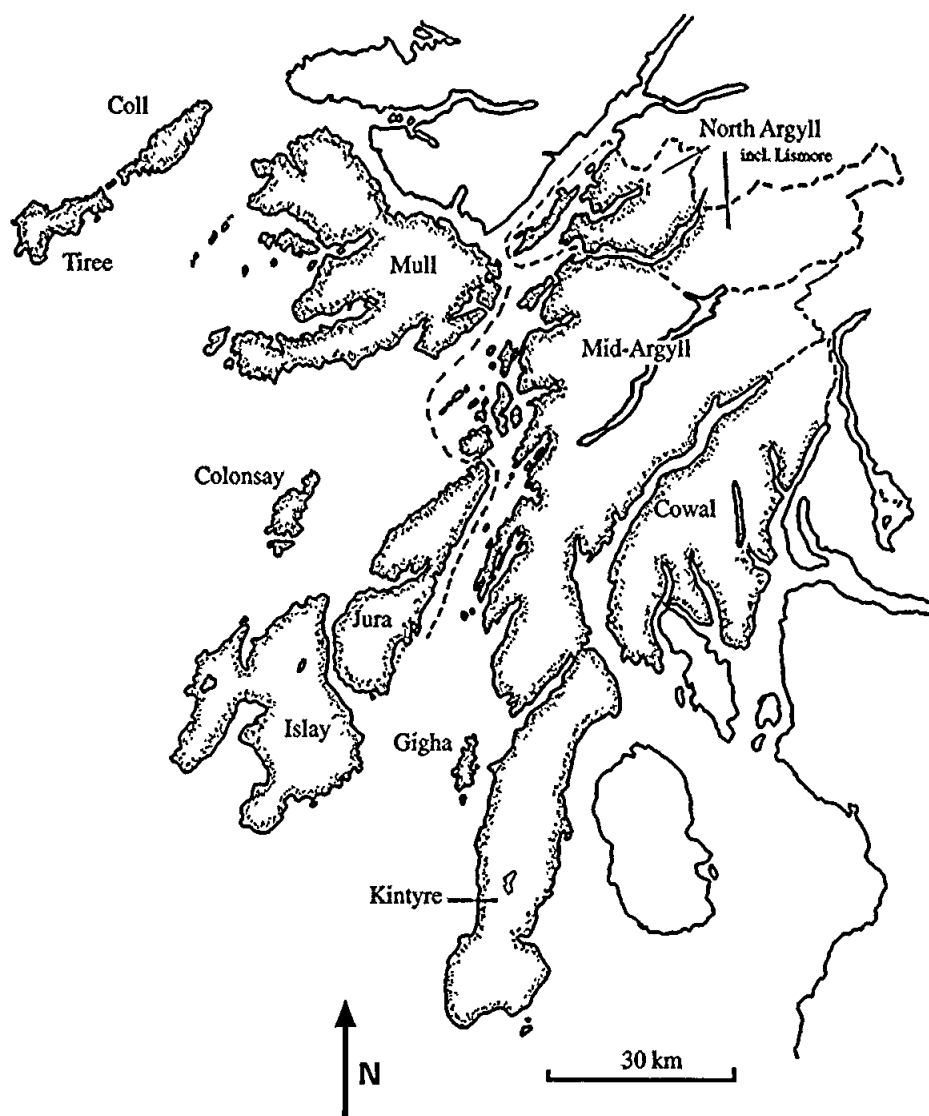
Each heading is followed by a summary of the bird's known status and distribution within Argyll (see species status categories, below), together with any other relevant information. The information regarding sites of national or international importance for wintering/passage birds is taken from Pollitt, M *et al.* (2000) *The Wetland Bird Survey 1998-99: Wildfowl and Wader Counts*. (The qualifying threshold for identification as such a site is usually that they hold, at some time during winter or passage, at least 1% of the national {Great Britain} or world population of the species. The minimum qualifying count is normally 50 birds, although a lower figure has sometimes been chosen if the British population is very small.) Significant 1999 records are then listed in approximate chronological order. For scarcer species, records for 1999 may be followed by late records or recent acceptances from earlier years.

For the purposes of this report, Argyll is divided into 11 areas, which are named on the accompanying sketch map (p 16). Because very few records have been received from Lismore in recent years, it is no longer considered a separate area but has been merged with North Argyll. Note that, for the moment at least, boundaries of the Argyll recording area remain unchanged despite local government reorganisation in 1996.

Records of rarities in the systematic list are followed in square brackets by the initials or names of the observers, starting with the finder(s)/identifier(s) (or, in the absence of this information, the person who first reported the bird to me), followed by the observer(s) who submitted details of the record, if different. An asterisk after the square bracket indicates acceptance by the relevant rarities committee. Summarised data from many surveys of breeding birds are also accompanied by the initials of the observers or organisations responsible, in order to help readers who are interested in obtaining more detailed information.

Place names

An attempt has been made to ensure that all place names in the systematic list feature on the 1:50,000 (Landranger Series) Ordnance Survey maps. An exception is The Laggan (Kintyre) which refers to the roughly triangular area west of Campbeltown,



Map showing the areas of Argyll used in this Report

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bordered by the B843, the A83, and Machrihanish Bay. Campbeltown Airport (previously RAF Machrihanish) is in this area. The Machrihanish Seabird Observatory (SBO) is situated at Uisaed Point on the western outskirts of Machrihanish (NR628209). In Mid-Argyll, Kilmichael Glen extends north-eastwards from Kilmichael Glassary at NR8593. On Mull, the Mishnish Lochs are the series of lochs extending from NM4652 to NM4853.

On Islay, the term 'Loch Gruinart' may refer to the Royal Society for Protection of Birds (RSPB) reserve at Loch Gruinart, or to parts of the loch lying outside the reserve. When a distinction has been made by the observer and when presenting counts of breeding pairs within the reserve, the abbreviation '**RSPB L. Gruinart**' is used throughout. The same applies to the use of the terms 'Moine Mhor' and 'Moine Mhor National Nature Reserve (NNR)' (Mid-Argyll); I have used the former term to cover an area extending west to the landward edge of Loch Crinan and north to Barsloisnoch.

Tables

Tables 2 to 5 are derived from Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) goose counts. Tables 1, 6 to 17 and 19-30 are based principally on data from the Wetland Birds Survey (WeBS), The Islay Bird and Natural History Report 1999 and John Halliday's (SNH) Moine Mhor NNR and Loch Crinan Bird Reports 1999, although higher counts have been included where available.

Figures in these tables for 'Loch Gruinart' represent the total for the RSPB Reserve at Loch Gruinart (in particular the area of flooded fields) and Loch Gruinart proper (below high water mark). In most cases the figures come from the respective WeBS counts for these areas although where higher counts are available these have been used. There were no WeBS counts at these sites from Jun to Sep. 'Outer Loch Etive' refers to WeBS counts covering the area from Connel Bridge to Taynuilt. 'Tiree' refers to WeBS counts covering the four main freshwater lochs on the island viz. Loch an Eilein, Loch Bhasapol, Loch Riaghain and Loch a 'Phuill. For certain species numbers on Tiree may be higher, at any given time, elsewhere on the island: where available appropriate counts are cited in the main text.

Special studies carried out in 1999

Regular monitoring of certain species and groups of species in Argyll continued in 1999; examples are the goose counts carried out by SNH, the monthly wildfowl and wader counts (WeBS) at several sites, monitoring of breeding birds of prey on Cowal by Arthur French and David Anderson, and the Common Birds Census (CBC) carried out on two plots at Taynish NNR (Mid-Argyll) by John Halliday. Other single-species studies, either new in 1999 or continued from previous years, are referred to in the species accounts.

Four further multi-species studies are summarised here to avoid repetition of details in the species accounts.

(1) Breeding Birds Survey (BBS)

The BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), which started in 1994, gives all birdwatchers a chance to take part in important survey work. Its objective is to extend and improve the monitoring of population changes of common breeding birds. It now

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counts birds annually in more than 2,300 randomly chosen one-km squares in the UK, using a line-transect method. If you have a few hours to spare each year and wish to take part in the BBS, please contact your local BTO Representative (see p. 3 for details) or Richard Bashford at the BTO, National Centre for Ornithology, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk, IP24 2PU, (01842) 750050 or e-mail: r.bashford@bto.org.

In 1999, 15 such squares were surveyed in Argyll. They were located in *Colonsay* (NR3588, NR3895), *Cowal* (NS0393*, NS0884, NS1280), *Mid-Argyll* (NM8224, NM9409*, NN0104, NN0615, NR7770, NR7992, NR8888*), *Mull* (NM3021, NM4421), and *N. Argyll* (NN1035). The squares marked * were surveyed in 1999 but not in 1998. Four squares (NM3939, NM8319, NR6829 & NR9275) were surveyed in 1998 but not in 1999.

New recruits are always needed for the BBS. If you think you might be interested but are not sure how much time it would take or how expert you need to be, or would like to know the location of the squares needing coverage, the BTO representatives listed on p.3 would be happy to talk to you about it.

In the systematic list below, BBS data are quoted for species which are widely distributed or for which little other information was available.

(2) *Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS) study of seabird breeding success* [J. C. A. Craik]

As part of a continuing wider study of seabird breeding success, selected species are monitored each year in a study area along the west coasts of *Kintyre*, *Mid-Argyll*, and *N. Argyll* (including *Lismore*), and at additional sites in *Loch Fyne* (*Cowall/Mid-Argyll*) and *Mull*. Further details can be found in *ABR 11*. In 1999, 71 Cormorant chicks at three breeding sites were colour-ringed (3-letter code, green on white). Please report date and place of any sightings to C. Craik (address p. 3).

(3) *Systematic sea-watching at Machrihanish SBO (Kintyre)* [E. J. Maguire].

Movements of seabirds, wildfowl and waders past this site are monitored regularly during certain months of the year. With a few exceptions, all individual birds flying past when the hide was manned are identified and logged.

More comprehensive data for Machrihanish SBO can be found in Maguire (2000).

(4) *Seabird 2000*

Seabird 2000 is the third census of breeding seabirds in Britain and Ireland, following Operation Seafarer in 1969-70 and the Seabird Colony Register census in 1985-87. The Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) and the Seabird Group jointly own the Seabird Colony Register (SCR), to which information on existing and new colonies is constantly added. JNCC also co-ordinates the Seabird Monitoring Programme (SMP) which, through contributions from other bodies and dedicated individuals, regularly monitors population size and productivity at a number of sites in Britain and Ireland. Seabird 2000 will determine whether population trends recorded at local levels by SMP, have actually been realised on a national scale; and will also identify long-term (last 30 years) national trends by comparison with the previous two censuses. Standardised counting techniques are being used to carry out the census work over the period 1999-2001. A good number of significant colonies are found in

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the Argyll area.

Categories of the British list (as revised by the BOURC - Jan 1998):

- Category A. Species that have been recorded in an apparently natural state at least once since 1st Jan 1950.
- Category B. Species that would otherwise be in Category A but have not been recorded since 31st Dec 1949.
- Category C. Species which, although originally introduced by man, either deliberately or accidentally, have now established breeding populations derived from introduced stock that maintain themselves without necessary recourse to further introduction.
 - C1. *Naturalised Introductions* Species that have occurred only as a result of introduction e.g. Mandarin Duck, Little Owl.
 - C2. *Naturalised Establishments* Species with established populations as a result of introduction by man, but which also occur in an apparently natural state e.g. Canada Goose.
 - C3. *Naturalised Re-establishments* Species with populations successfully re-established by man in areas of former occurrence e.g. Red Kite, Capercaillie.
 - C4. *Naturalised Feral Species* Domesticated species with populations established in the wild e.g. Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon).
 - C5 *Vagrant Naturalised Species* Species from established naturalised populations abroad (none accepted yet, although most Ruddy Shelducks occurring here must fall into this category).
- Category D. Species that would otherwise appear in Categories A or B except that there is reasonable doubt that they have ever occurred in a natural state.
- Category E. Species that have been recorded as introductions, transportees, or escapes from captivity, and whose breeding populations (if any) are thought not to be self-sustaining. E* indicates that breeding has been recorded in the wild.

Species status categories: definitions.

Resident	Resident and normally sedentary.
Breeding	Breeding and wintering ranges may differ.
Summer visitor	Breeds unless otherwise stated.
Passage migrant	Birds passing through on the way to breeding grounds or winter quarters.
Winter visitor	Includes species that are also resident but whose numbers are augmented by immigrants during the winter months.
Introduced	Introduced species recorded in Argyll that may or may not breed here.
Vagrant	Five or fewer records since 1980.
Site of national importance	Sites of national importance in Great Britain (as defined by The Wetland Bird Survey) (see above).

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Symbols and abbreviations

*	Record accepted by relevant rarities committee
ABR	<i>Argyll Bird Report</i>
ABRC	Argyll Bird Records Committee
ARSG	Argyll Raptor Study Group
AOB	apparently occupied burrows
AON	apparently occupied nest-sites
AOS	apparently occupied sites
b/-	brood of...young
BBRC	<i>British Birds Rarities Committee</i>
BBS	Breeding Birds Survey
BOURC	British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee
BTO	British Trust for Ornithology
ca	<i>circa</i> = approximately
c/-	clutch of...eggs
cf	confer = compare
CBC	Common Birds Census
CES	Constant Effort (ringing) Site
inc.	including
JNCC	Joint Nature Conservation Committee
juv./juvs.	juvenile/juveniles
max.	maximum (the highest of 2 or more counts at a given locality during the period being analysed)
NCC	Nature Conservancy Council
NEWS	European Non-estuarine Coastal Waterfowl Survey
NNR	National Nature Reserve
n/r	not recorded (in tables of counts, where no count was made)
pr/prs	pair/pairs
RSPB Loch Gr.	Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve
SAMS	Scottish Association for Marine Science
SBO	Seabird Observatory
SBR	<i>Scottish Bird Report</i>
SBRC	<i>Scottish Birds Records Committee</i>
SNH	Scottish Natural Heritage
TIARG	Treshnish Isles Auk Ringing Group
WeBS	Wetland Bird Survey

BIRD RECORDS IN ARGYLL DURING 1999

RED-THROATED DIVER *Gavia stellata* Learga ruadh 0002
Widely distributed but scarce breeder. Also winter visitor and passage migrant.

Jan-Apr. Reported widely, in small numbers, around coasts and islands, with counts of 10 or more birds at: Loch na Keal Mull (17 on 8th Jan), Loch Indaal Islay (max. 20 on 17th Apr) and West Loch Tarbert Kintyre (max. 17 on 24th Apr).

Breeding. Recorded in 3 of 15 BBS squares (20%), (cf 1 of 16 in 1998). In the Ederline-Eredine survey area *Mid-Argyll*, at least three prs nested and laid eggs, all on rafts. Adults with young were reported from three locations on Mull and birds were also recorded during the breeding season on Coll, Colonsay and Jura and in Kintyre.

Sep-Dec. Apart from 4 at Holy Loch Cowal on 10th Oct, all reports were from the islands and, except for Islay, were in single figures. The only site with individual counts exceeding 10 birds was Loch Indaal where a max. of 35 were counted on both 20th and 27th Nov. However, at Machrihanish SBO Kintyre 57 were counted flying past in 6 hrs on 11th Sep.

BLACK-THROATED DIVER *Gavia arctica* Learga dhubh 0003
Very scarce breeder in Mid- and N Argyll. Scarce in winter but more numerous on passage. Loch Indaal (Islay) and Loch Caolisport (Mid-Argyll) are sites of national importance for wintering birds.

Jan-Apr. Reported widely, in small numbers, around coasts and islands, with counts of 10 or more birds at: Loch Caolisport *Mid-Argyll* (16 on 7th Feb) and the Sound of Gigha Kintyre (23 on 24th Apr). On 8th Apr, 21 birds were counted along the east coast of Kintyre between Campbeltown and Skipness.

Breeding. 10 summering prs were monitored, including a pr of birds that summered (but did not breed) at a loch where breeding has not been recorded for many years. Breeding was confirmed at 9 sites (3 natural and 6 rafts); chicks were hatched at 5 sites (all rafts); and at 3 sites a total of 3 young survived to fledging, including one that moved to an adjacent loch before it was capable of flight.

Sep-Dec. One to 4 birds reported from Islay, Kintyre, *Mid-Argyll* and Mull. Counts of 10 or more birds were made at Sound of Gigha (max. 22 on 20th Nov) and West Loch Tarbert Kintyre (12 on 24th Apr).

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER *Gavia immer* Muir bhuachail 0004
Numerous visitor, both in winter and on passage. Birds in breeding plumage regularly recorded Apr to mid Jun. Pre-migratory gatherings occur off some coasts in late Apr and early May. A few individuals summer. Loch Indaal (Islay), Loch Caolisport (Mid-Argyll) and Lochs Beg & Scridain (Mull) are sites of national importance for wintering birds.

Jan-May. Reported from all areas. Counts of 10 or more birds came from: Loch na Keal Mull (14 on 8th Jan), Coll (54 around coasts during Eider Survey in mid-Apr), Sound of Gigha Kintyre (100+ east of Gigha during Eider Survey), Colonsay (20 approx. around coasts during Eider Survey), Tiree (68 around coasts during Eider Survey), Loch Indaal Islay (103 along west side of loch on 18th Apr) and Loch Buie Mull (max. 15 on 9th May). On 27th Apr 62 were counted from the Islay ferry between the mouth of West Loch Tarbert and Gigha.

Jun-Aug. Reported in ones or twos from Colonsay, Islay, Kintyre and Mull. In most cases no details of plumage were recorded. There were no records between

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7th Jul and 29th Aug, when one flew south past Frenchman's Rocks *Islay*.

Sep-Dec. All records received were from *Kintyre* and the islands. Three counts, all made on 20th Nov, give some indication of the numbers present in Argyll waters at this time of the year: 52 around the coasts of *Tiree*, 125 in Loch Indaal (inc. birds seen from Nerabus in the outer part of the Loch) and 84 in the Sound of Gigha. Other sites with 10 or more birds were Loch Scridain *Mull* (up to 10 during Oct) and West Loch Tarbert *Kintyre* (20 on 12th Nov).

WHITE-BILLED DIVER *Gavia adamsii* Learga Bhlar 0005
Vagrant seen on only three occasions, all since 1986.

A bird in its second calendar year, seen in Machir Bay *Islay* on 21st Sep, was our first record since the bird seen at Machrihanish SBO in 1991 [SCV/TapR]*.

LITTLE GREBE *Tachybaptus ruficollis* Spagrion 0007
Breeds locally in small numbers. Widespread in sheltered coastal waters in winter. Winter counts in outer Loch Etive (N Argyll) currently exceed the qualifying level for a site of national importance.

Jan-Apr. Once again, Outer Loch Etive *N Argyll* had the highest numbers, with a peak count of 22 on 3rd Jan. The only other locality with a count in double figures was Loch Gair *Mid-Argyll*, with 11 on 7th Mar. Elsewhere up to 7 birds were reported, from every area apart from *Coll* and *Jura*.

Breeding. Adults with young were reported from East Loch Fada *Colonsay*, Loch Tallant and Loch Ballygrant *Islay*, Lochan Taynish *Mid-Argyll* and Loch Peallach *Mull*; and a pr was seen nest-building on Loch an Droighinn *N Argyll*. Elsewhere, prs were present during the breeding season at two other lochs on *Colonsay*, at further single sites in *Islay*, *Mid-Argyll* and *N Argyll*, and at a site on *Tiree*.

Aug-Dec. Numbers on Outer Loch Etive built from 19 on 12th Sept up to a new record total of 34 on 30th Dec. Elsewhere, up to 8 birds were recorded at various places in *Islay*, *Mid-Argyll*, *Mull* and *Tiree*.

GREAT CRESTED GREBE *Podiceps cristatus* Gobhlachan Iaparan 0009
Uncommon winter and passage visitor, with 2-6 records annually since 1984. Recorded in all months except Jun.

Records were received of two individuals on *Islay*: one at Port Charlotte on 24th Mar and one on Loch an t-Sailein on 25th Oct.

RED-NECKED GREBE *Podiceps grisegena* Gobhlachan Ruadh 0010
Scarce winter and passage visitor. Of 17 records during 1980-98, 15 were during the period Sep-Mar, with one in May and one in Jun.

An excellent year, with three records. One was close inshore at Ronachan Point *Kintyre* on 1st Mar; and an individual in Cable Bay *Colonsay* on 8th Apr was in almost complete breeding plumage. Later in the year, one at Claggain Bay *Islay* on 10th Nov was the 9th record for the island.

SLAVONIAN GREBE *Podiceps auritus* Gobhlachan Mara 0011
Regular winter and passage visitor to sea lochs and sounds. Occasionally on inland waters. Loch Indaal (Islay), the Sound of Gigha (Kintyre) and Loch na Keal (Mull) are sites of national importance for wintering birds.

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Jan-Apr. Maximum counts at the key sites were: 20+ in Loch Indaal *Islay* on 8th Jan, 29 in Loch na Keal *Mull* also on 8th Jan, and 11 in the Sound of Gigha *Kintyre* on 1st Mar. The only other sites where birds were reported were Loch Caolisport *Mid-Argyll* (3 on 7th Feb), Loch Ba *Mull* (2 on 3rd Apr) and Loch Bhasapol *Tiree* (singles throughout Jan and on 20th Mar and 25th Apr).

May-Jul. No summer records received.

Aug-Dec. The first returning birds were 4 at Black Rock, Loch Indaal on 31st Aug. Numbers in Loch Indaal generally built up to 21 on 27th Nov, while the Sound of Gigha held an impressive 41 birds on 20th Nov. (No counts relating to Loch na Keal were received for this period.) The only record elsewhere was a single bird at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* on 2nd-8th Oct.

FULMAR *Fulmarus glacialis* Eun crom 0022
Common but localised breeding species in all areas except Cowal and N Argyll. Large numbers on passage off western headlands.

Jan-Apr. At Balephetrish Quarry *Tiree* 76 birds were counted on 26th Mar.

Breeding. A complete survey of the Treshnish Isles *Mull* (for Seabird 2000) produced a total of 1078 AON. The sub-total for Lunga (525 AON) was the lowest since 1995 (*cf* 579 in 1998) [TIARG]. On Sanda Islands *Kintyre*, there were 500 AON (*cf* 500 in 1998 and 480 in 1997) and breeding success appeared to be good. Counts at the sample census cliffs on *Colonsay* in June gave: 448 AOS at Urugaig (*cf* 523 in 1998), 57 AOS at Kiloran Bay (*cf* 52 in 1998) and 28 at Port Lobh (*cf* 23 in 1998). Further surveys for Seabird 2000 found 170+ birds on the NW cliffs of Eileach an Naoimh (Garvellachs) *Mid-Argyll* and 5 on Eilean Mor *Jura* on 9th Jun, 1,382 AON at Ceann a' Mhara *Tiree* on 22nd Jun, and 163 AON at Coll RSPB Reserve.

Jul-Dec. At Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* 512 passing southwards in 2 hrs on 21st was the peak count for Jul. In Aug a total of 720 were recorded passing there in 9.25 hrs (max. 210 in 1.5hrs on 17th), in Sep a max. of 501 passed in 2 hrs on 7th, and there were still 50 in 1.5 hrs on 28th Oct. Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* had 117 birds flying southwards in 6 hrs on 11th Sep; and the last report of the year was 30 passing off Balephuill *Tiree* on 20th Nov.

GREAT SHEARWATER *Puffinus gravis* 0040
Rare passage migrant, mostly in autumn.

Remarkably, a flock of 70 or more birds of this species, together with at least 10 Sooty Shearwaters, were seen at sea near Hawes Bank, *ca* 10 km north of Coll, on 3rd October. This is, at least in recent years, by far the largest number seen together in Scottish waters [D. Jackson]*.

SOOTY SHEARWATER *Puffinus griseus* Fachadh dubh 0043
Passage migrant almost exclusively recorded Jul-Oct. Sometimes in large numbers off headlands during Aug-Sep.

Aug-Oct. The first report of the year was one at Balevullin *Tiree* on 8th Aug. Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* had 9 flying south on 13th Aug and up to 4 on several dates in Aug until 9 on 28th and 20 on 29th. A single bird was off Clachan *Tiree* on 30th Aug. One or two birds were recorded at Frenchman's Rocks on three dates in early Sep but, on 9th, 62 were counted passing southwards in 3 hrs. Also in Sep, Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* recorded 8 flying south on 2nd, 2 on 9th and 26 on 11th. The only other Sep records were of birds passing Hynish/Balevullin *Tiree*, where 2 were seen on 8th,

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one on 9th, one on 11th and 2 on 15th.

The only Oct records were singles at Frenchman's Rocks on 1st and 10th, and at least 10 with the flock of Great Shearwaters at Hawes Bank off Coll on 3rd.

MANX SHEARWATER *Puffinus puffinus* Fachadh ban 0046/1
Breeding colonies confirmed only on Sanda (Kintyre) and Treshnish Isles (Mull).
Large numbers on passage, especially during Aug-Sep.

Mar-May. The first returning birds were reported from Tiree, where 7 were seen offshore from Hynish on 14th Mar, followed by 300+ seen from the ferry between Coll and Tiree on 23rd Mar. The highest single count in Apr was 488 off Hynish on 20th. The most reported elsewhere in spring was 116 flying south in 1.5 hrs off Easter Ellister Islay on 21st May.

Breeding. In the last half of Jun, presumed breeding birds were seen at night on Lunga and Bac Mor (Dutchman's Cap), Treshnish Isles Mull, and 7 birds were mist-netted on Lunga [TIARG]. On Sanda Islands Kintyre there were 200 AOB in Jun, including some newly dug burrows, and 46 nestlings were ringed.

Jul-Nov. The maximum number passing Frenchman's Rocks Islay in Jul was 1,642 in 1.5 hrs on 25th. Peak counts there were made in Aug with an estimated 12,500 passing southwards in 2.5 hrs on 13th, ca 6,000 in 3 hrs on 14th, 6,000 in 1.5 hrs on 25th and 6,000 in 2 hrs on 28th. Numbers there fell off rapidly after the end of Aug, the last being 3 on 2nd Nov. The largest counts at Machrihanish SBO Kintyre were made during early Sep when 1,600 flew south in 5 hrs on 1st, followed by 2,800 in 6 hrs on 2nd and 630 in 6 hrs on 11th. The last bird logged there was on 30th Sep.

BALEARIC SHEARWATER *Puffinus mauretanicus* 0046/2
A regular passage migrant since 1992, in very small numbers during Aug-Dec. Usually seen with Manx Shearwaters. The former Mediterranean Shearwater P. yelkouan has now been split into two species: Balearic Shearwater P. mauretanicus and Yelkouan Shearwater P. yelkouan. All Argyll records that have been specifically attributed relate to Balearic Shearwater. There are, as yet, no records of Yelkouan Shearwater in Great Britain.

Of 20 individuals reported, most records came from Frenchman's Rocks Islay, where one was seen on 4th Aug, 2 on 13th Aug, 2 on 28th Aug, 2 on 29th Aug, 2 on 7th Sep, 2 on 9th Sep and one on 10th Oct. Machrihanish SBO Kintyre had one on 1st Sep, 2 on 2nd Sep and 4 on 11th Sep. The only individual seen elsewhere was one off the north coast of Gigha on 19th Sep.

STORM PETREL *Hydrobates pelagicus* Paraig 0052
Summer visitor. The only large breeding colonies known are on Sanda (Kintyre) and Treshnish Isles (Mull). Breeding birds first come ashore in late May or Jun. Most sightings away from breeding colonies are during Jul-Sep.

The only pre-breeding season reports were a single bird seen from Easter Ellister Islay on 21st May; and, on 23rd May, 3 birds which had followed the ferry all the way from Barra were joined by 2 more near Lady's Rock in the Sound of Mull.

Breeding. On the Treshnish Isles Mull, birds were heard churring from burrows on Bac Mor (Dutchman's Cap), Lunga and Fladda. There was no count of breeding birds, but 732 new birds were ringed and there were 95 re-traps and 62 controls [TIARG]. On Sanda Islands Kintyre, an estimate of 200 AOB was made and 526

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adults were ringed (*cf* 150 AOB and 204 adults ringed in 1998). Breeding was proved for the first time on Staffa *Mull* (6 AOB) and confirmed on Soa, south of Iona *Mull* (3 AOB).

Jul-Sep. On 4th Jul 5 flew through Gunna Sound *Coll* and one was seen off the Cairns of *Coll*. On *Islay* single birds passed Frenchman's Rocks on 14th Jul and Easter Ellister on 20th Jul, followed by 9 past Frenchman's Rocks on 21st Jul. Meanwhile, at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre*, 18 flew past in 6 hrs on 21st Jul and 2 were seen on 22nd. In Aug, Frenchman's Rocks had up to 9 birds on each of 8 dates; one was seen over Loch na Keal *Mull* on 5th; and 42 were counted off Clachan *Tiree* on 30th. Up to 3 passed Frenchman's Rocks on 3 dates in early Sep. On 11th Sep 2 were offshore at Aird *Tiree* and 18 flew past Machrihanish SBO in 6 hrs. There were no further records after 5 were seen passing Hynish *Tiree* on 15th Sep.

Among birds controlled on the Treshnish Isles in 1999, 11 had been ringed as adults on Sanda (including one nearly 19 years old), one had been ringed at Yell, Shetland (550 km N) in 1983, 3 had been ringed in Norway and one at Faro, Algarve, Portugal (2166 km S).

LEACH'S PETREL *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* Gobhlan mara 0055
Scarce, but regular in autumn off western headlands following strong westerlies.

This species is seldom recorded in spring so 18 passing Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* on 22nd May in 4 hrs, during a westerly gale, was most unusual. One was seen close inshore at Port Charlotte *Islay* on the same day.

Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* recorded its earliest-ever autumn bird when one flew past on 21st Jul. The only other record there was of 2 on 11th Oct. Elsewhere, 3 were seen from Hynish *Tiree* on 15th Sep, singles flew past Frenchman's Rocks on 10th Oct and 2nd Nov, and the last was one seen from Dunoon Pier *Cowal* on 4th Nov.

GANNET *Morus bassanus* Sulaire 0071
The nearest breeding colonies to Argyll are Ailsa Craig (40 km east of Mull of Kintyre) and the Shiant Isles (140 km north of Mull). Common inshore from Apr to Oct, and often seen high up sea-lochs. Infrequently reported Nov/Dec.

Jan-Jun. Single birds were recorded off *Tiree* on several days in Jan and Feb and the most seen in Mar were 7 off Hynish on 14th. Seven were seen at Port Ellen *Islay* on 7th Feb.

Counts of 50 or more birds came from: Hynish *Tiree* (68 on 22nd Apr), Gunna Sound *Coll* (*ca* 50 on various dates in May), Sanda Islands *Kintyre* (several groups of 50 or more passing through Sanda Roads on 13th Jun) and Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* (200 fishing offshore on 16th Jun). Reported during the breeding season from all areas, apart from *Jura* and *N Argyll*.

Jul-Oct. Daily counts of birds passing Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* included 328 in 2 hrs on 21st Jul, 136 in 0.5 hr on 29th Aug, 789 in 1 hr on 30th Sep and 137 in 1 hr on 7th Oct. On *Tiree* at least 240 were counted passing in 2 hrs on 21st Sep, and the last reported birds of the year were 30 off Balevullin on 31st Oct.

CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo* Sgarbh 0072
Breeds in Cowal, Gigha, Jura, Kintyre, Mid-Argyll, Mull and N Argyll. Less numerous than Shag. Small numbers occur on some inland waters.

Jan-Apr. The only single count of ten or more was 10 at Loch Indaal *Islay* on 20th Feb.

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Breeding. In the Argyll part of the SAMS study area, 122 prs bred at 5 sites (colony size 3-58 prs). They fledged at least 162-177 young (1.3-1.5 young/pr) (cf 157+ from 111 prs in 1998) and there were no sites where no young were fledged. On Sanda Islands *Kintyre* there were 21 active nests (cf 31 in 1998); nesting success appeared excellent and this year, unlike 1998, late-hatching chicks also did well.

Jul-Dec. Ten or more birds were reported from: Holy Loch *Cowal* (max 13 on 29th Aug), Ronachan Point *Kintyre* (10+ on 10th Nov), and Loch Indaal (max. 19 on 27th Dec).

The only record from inland waters during the year was of one bird near Blarghour, Loch Awe *Mid-Argyll* on 7th Jun.

SHAG *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* Sgarbh an sgumain 0080
Very common resident breeding species on the coast and on islands in sea lochs. Widespread in winter but rare inland at all times.

Jan-Apr. Some indication of how numerous the species is locally is given by the count of 192 birds on Loch na Keal *Mull* on 8th Jan. No other counts of more than 20 birds were received for the period.

Breeding. In the Argyll part of the SAMS study area, ca 374 prs bred at 8 island sites (colony size 14-108 prs), (cf 351 prs at 8 colonies in 1998). Breeding was monitored at 7 sites with ca 350 prs which fledged 322-387 young (0.92-1.1 young/pr). Young fledged at all 7 sites, including one where 2 mink were killed in May-Jun to protect breeding seabirds. Elsewhere, a complete census of the Treshnish Isles *Mull* revealed 601 nests on 8 islands, and 78 adults & 22 chicks were ringed. Other censuses for Seabird 2000 were: 516 active nests on Sanda Islands *Kintyre*, where breeding success was again considered good with 371 young ringed; 38 AON on *Coll RSPB Reserve*; 149 AON on *Tiree*; 17 AON on Eilean Beag *Jura*; and 30+ individuals on the Garvellachs. Counts at sample census sites on *Colonsay* yielded 8 nests at Uragaig (as in 1998) and 31 nests at Pig's Paradise, mean clutch 2.20 (cf 42 in 1998, mean 2.15).

Aug-Dec. Sites with single counts of 20 or more birds were: Druim an Aoineidh (Iona) *Mull* (25 on 23rd Aug), Loch Indaal *Islay* (max. 55 on 12th Sep), Eilean Aoghainn *Mid-Argyll* (max. 66 on 24th Oct), Port Ellen *Islay* (40 on 25th Oct) and West Hynish *Tiree* (150 roosting during an easterly gale on 30th Oct).

BITTERN *Botaurus stellaris* Chorra-ghrain 0095
Vagrant to Argyll. Only two records since 1980: one at Dervaig (Mull) Jan-Mar 1982 and one near Rhunahaorine Point (Kintyre) on 4th Dec 1982.

It is sad to report that our first Bittern since 1982 should be the victim of a road accident. The bird was hit by a car near Appin *N Argyll* on 19th Sep. The corpse was later sent to the National Museums of Scotland in Edinburgh where it was identified as an adult male [D. Watson/JCAC].*

LITTLE EGRET *Egretta garzetta* Corra gheal bheag 0119
No Argyll records prior to 1958 but several since, mostly in spring and autumn. Might now be seen more frequently, since breeding colonies have recently been established in southern England and Ireland.

One was seen at Bridgend Merse *Islay* on 19th May, and presumably the same bird was at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* on 28th May [AJW/TapR]*. Reports of an

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unspecified egret at Loch Gorm *Islay* a few days earlier may well relate to the same individual.

GREAT WHITE EGRET *Ardea alba* Corra bhan mhor 0121
Vagrant. Only two previous records: one at Gruinart Flats (Islay) in Jun 1986 and one at Ballachuan Loch, Seil Island (Mid-Argyll) in Apr 1988.

1998. On the afternoon of 18th May an individual in full breeding plumage was found at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay*. It was seen by several observers before it flew off southwards that evening [CRM/MAO/GJ/JSt]*.

GREY HERON *Corra ghritheach* 0122
Widespread resident, breeding in all areas.

Jan-Apr. The only sites with counts of 10 or more birds were: outer Loch Etive *N Argyll* (max. 12 on 3rd Jan), inner Loch Scridain-Loch Beg *Mull* (max. 11 on 22nd Mar) and RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* (10 on 27th Apr).

Breeding. Recorded in 3 of 15 BBS squares (20%), (cf 1 of 16 in 1998). At Garvard *Colonsay*, 8 nests with 26 eggs produced at least 14 young; and two nests at Mid-West Loch Fada produced at least two young. No nests were found at the former heronry sites at Loch Cholla and Scalasaig. Two nests at Eilean nan Ron, Oronsay *Colonsay* produced a total of 3 young. Four occupied nests were noted, on 10th Apr, behind Kilfinichen Bay *Mull* at one of three heronries in the area. No other breeding records were received, although 27 birds were counted at Braevallich (Loch Awe) *Mid-Argyll* on 30th Jun.

Aug-Dec. Counts of 10 or more birds were made at: Bridgend (Loch Indaal) *Islay* (12 on 2nd Aug), RSPB L. Gruinart (max. 13 on 5th Aug), outer Loch Etive (max. 17 on 12th Sep), Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* (max. 11 on 12th Sep), Holy Loch *Cowal* (max. 16 on 26th Sep and 26th Oct), inner Loch Scridain-Loch Beg (max. 15 on 29th Sep) and Loch Don *Mull* (max. 16 on 26th Dec).

In addition ca 50 birds were reported at the roost at Ederline Farm *Mid-Argyll* on 14th Sep.

MUTE SWAN *Cygnus olor* Eala 0152
Widespread but uncommon breeding species, both inland and at sheltered coastal locations. Absent from Colonsay. Emigration from some breeding localities in winter, when flocks gather at favoured localities.

Jan-May. The highest count recorded for the freshwater lochs of *Tiree* was 48 birds on 2nd Jan. At Oban Harbour *Mid-Argyll*, the maximum total during this period was 50 on 5th Jan. The only other site with a count of 10 or more birds was outer Loch Etive *N Argyll* (max. 18 on 20th Mar).

One seen on Oronsay *Colonsay* on 8th May was the first recorded there for at least 50 years.

Breeding. In the Argyll part of the SAMS study area, 30 prs were noted during the breeding season. Fifteen nests were found, the other nests were not looked for. Productivity of each pr was measured by the number of large young in late summer or autumn but was unknown for 3 prs.

Eight prs were in areas where mink were controlled (to protect terns and gulls). Four of these raised 16 young (b/ 2, 4, 5, 5) and 4 prs raised no young (i.e. 2.0 young/pr). Mink were considered to be absent from the four sites that failed since seabirds bred well at all four.

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Nineteen of the 30 prs were in areas where mink were not controlled. Two or three of these raised a total of 7 or 8 young (b/0 or 1, 3, 4) and 16 or 17 raised no young (*i.e.* 0.42 young/pr). Of the 16 that definitely raised no young, mink predation took place at two sites, mink were not detected at one site, and at 13 sites the cause was not investigated (*i.e.* mink predation of eggs or young may have occurred).

Thus removal of mink from breeding sites raised average productivity by a factor of 4.8.

Two of a brood of four medium-sized cygnets on Loch Etive on 15th Jul were of the white or 'Polish' form.

Tiree improved upon last year's output, with 6 broods totalling 26 cygnets recorded in Jun. Elsewhere, a brood of 6 at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* had been reduced to 2 by 10th Sep; a brood of 7 at Peninver *Kintyre* was down to 5 by late Jul; a pr with 4 cygnets was present at Blairmore *Cowal* during Jul-Aug; a pr with 4 large cygnets were in Craighouse Bay *Jura* on 18th Aug; a brood of 6 at Loch Don *Mull* in Jun was down to 2 by the end of Sep; and Holy Loch *Cowal* had 2 prs with 5 and one cygnets respectively on 3rd Jul.

Jul-Dec. The peak count on *Tiree* was 68 on 20th Nov, of which 60 were on Loch a 'Phuill; and the highest reported total in Oban Harbour was 43 on 10th Dec. Other sites with counts of 10 or more birds were: Duine, Loch Craignish *Mid-Argyll* (20, all adults, on 8th Jul), outer Loch Etive (max. 31 on 12th Sep), Loch Sween *Mid-Argyll* (max. 27 inc. 11 juvs. on 10th Oct) and Loch Ballygrant *Islay* (max. 15 inc. 6 juvs. on 12th Nov).

WHOOPEE SWAN *Cygnus cygnus* Eala bhan 0154
Common on passage; smaller numbers winter. Loch a 'Phuill (Tiree) is a site of national importance for wintering birds. A few birds summer in most years and breeding has been recorded.

Jan-Apr. Numbers on the four main freshwater lochs of *Tiree* built up to an impressive 173 on 20th Mar [Table 1]. Smaller numbers were reported elsewhere, especially in Mar and Apr, from all areas except *Gigha*, *Jura*, *Kintyre* and *N Argyll*. Counts in double figures came from: Lochan na Nigheadaireachd *Islay* (11 on 2nd Feb), Loch Indaal *Islay* (max. 40 on 8th Mar), Dervaig *Mull* (40 flying north on 11th Mar), head of Loch Fyne *Mid-Argyll* (16 on 17th Mar), RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* (max. 43 on 24th Mar) [Table 1] and Arinagour *Coll* (48 flying north on 25th Mar). Numbers fell sharply after mid-Apr and the last were 8 at RSPB L. Gruinart on 24th Apr and 8 on *Tiree* on 28th Apr.

Summering birds. A single, presumably injured bird was present on Ardnave Loch *Islay* from May and was joined in Aug by a second bird. Another bird was on Claddach Loch *Islay* in Jul and Aug. On *Tiree*, seven birds, comprising an injured adult on Loch a 'Phuill, a family group on Loch Bhasapol and two adults at An Fhaodhail, were present throughout May and Jun but only 1-3 remained Jul-Aug and into Sep.

Sep-Dec. The first returning birds were on *Islay*, where one was on the Machrie golf course on 16th Sep, 2 were at RSPB L. Gruinart on 23rd and, by 29th Sep, 15 were present at Smaull.

Apart from a single bird at Moine Mhor *Mid-Argyll* from 30th Sep and 3 at Tayinloan *Kintyre* on 6th Oct, none was reported until mid-Oct. Then 18 were at The Laggan *Kintyre* on 11th Oct, 13 on Oronsay *Colonsay* on 14th and 7 at Tayinloan on 15th; and 7 flew down the Kyles of Bute at Tighnabruach *Cowal* on 16th Oct. Next day (17th) a

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total of 86 were found on *Tiree*, where numbers built rapidly to a peak of 217 on 5th Nov [Table 1]. Most of the *Tiree* birds were at Loch a 'Phuill.

On *Islay* flocks of up to 20 birds were widespread in Oct-Nov with a peak of 49 at RSPB L. Gruinart. Counts of 20 or more birds came from: Easter Ellister (max. 31 on 26th Oct), Ballymeanach (max. 50 on 3rd Nov), Portnahaven (max. ca 70 inc. 15 juvs. on 5th Nov), Lochan na Nigheadaireachd (20 on 13th Nov) and Loch Gorm (20 on 15th Nov).

Elsewhere, in the later part of this period, 10 or more birds were reported from: Tayinloan (13 on 7th Nov), Holy Loch Cowal (12 on 8th Nov), Loch Craiglin *Mid-Argyll* (10 on 13th Nov), Ulva Lagoons, Loch Sween *Mid-Argyll* (11 inc. 4 juvs. on 4th Dec) and Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* (10 on 12th Dec).

Table 1. *Maximum monthly counts of Whooper Swans at RSPB L. Gruinart (Islay) and on Tiree in 1999.*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L.Gruinart	9	0	43	26	0	0	0	0	2	49	12	7
Tiree	63	68	173	54	7	7	1	3	3	86	217	36

PINK-FOOTED GOOSE *Anser brachyrhynchus* Geadh gorm 0158

Variable numbers on passage, with occasional large flocks. Relatively few winter.

Jan-Apr. Up to 4 individuals (mostly singles) were seen at 9 locations on *Islay*, usually with flocks of other species. A single bird was seen on *Tiree*, usually in the Balephetrish area, throughout the period. Elsewhere, single birds were reported from: near Tobermory *Mull* on 30th Jan, outer Loch Etive *N Argyll* on 20th Feb, Loch Amlaimh *Coll* on 23rd Mar, and Loch Feochan *Mid-Argyll* on 16th Apr.

May-Aug. Single birds were at Heylipol *Tiree* (in May-Jun), RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* (on 29th May), Loch Assapol *Mull* (on 2nd Jun), Gunna Island *Coll* (on 4th Jul), and at Balephetrish *Tiree* (on 30th Aug).

Sep-Dec. After the influx into *Argyll* during Sep 1998, numbers in 1999 were lower than usual. The first passage birds were 51 at RSPB L. Gruinart on 23rd Sep, followed by 46 there on 27th and 20 on 29th Sep; the last birds there were 6 on 3rd Oct and one on 5th Oct. Apart from 2 during the goose count on *Tiree* on 17th Nov, only singles were recorded elsewhere, at various sites on *Islay* and at outer Loch Etive and Tayinloan.

WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE *Anser albifrons* Geadh bhlar 0159

Winter visitor. Birds are of the Greenland race A. a. flavirostris, apart from occasional vagrants of the European race A. a. albifrons. Argyll holds about 40% of the world population of the Greenland race, mainly on Islay. Most of the sites covered by the SNH goose counts are sites of international importance for wintering birds of this race. A small introduced population breeds on the Rhinns of Islay.

Jan-May. On *Islay*, there were 8,931 birds in Jan (cf 12,418 in 1998). A co-ordinated count in late Mar produced a total of 20,192 in *Argyll* [Table 2]. In *Kintyre* birds were at The Laggan (1,579), Clachan (180) and Tayinloan (1,532), and in *Mid-Argyll* at Danna (199), Keills (226), Ulva (62) and Moine Mhor (36) [SNH Goose Project]. MAO considers that the drop in January numbers on *Islay* was probably due to some birds wintering in Ireland and returning in time for the spring count. A whole-

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island census on *Tiree* on 6th Feb gave the slightly higher total of 1,330.

The main spring departure began in mid-Apr. On 16th, 664 migrants were counted passing over *Tiree* and the last birds there were 34 at An Fhaodhail on 24th Apr. There were still 250 at Loch Gorm *Islay* on 2nd May, and the last 3 were at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* on 14th May.

Breeding. Three prs of introduced birds again bred in the southern part of the Rhinns of *Islay*. Broods of 2, 4 and 4 were seen on 6th Jun, but these had been reduced to a total of 5 by 17th Jun. There were no other breeding season records, although an injured bird was seen on *Tiree* in Jul/Aug.

Sep-Dec. The first returning birds were 15 at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* on 29th Sep. Numbers here built up through Oct-Nov to a peak of 1,674 on 8th Dec. Elsewhere, birds did not appear until early Oct with 7 at Tayinloan on 2nd, while on *Tiree* 272 were counted at the four main freshwater lochs on 17th Oct. The co-ordinated count of mid-Nov gave a total of 18,710 birds in Argyll [Table 3] (cf 17,735 mid-Nov 1998). All the *Kintyre* birds were at The Laggan (748) and Tayinloan (1,544); and 303 of those in *Mid-Argyll* were on the Tayvallich peninsula, the other 33 being at Moine Mhor [SNH Goose Project].

Ageing of samples (n = 5,700+) on *Islay* in late autumn showed that 10.4% were young birds (cf 10-year mean of 15.5%), with a mean of brood size of 3.6 (cf 4.09 in 1998). These figures indicate the third-worst breeding season in the last 10 years [MAO].

Table 2. Numbers of White-fronted Geese in Argyll areas, 27th to 31st Mar 1999.

Kintyre	Mid-Argyll	Mull	Coll	Tiree	Colonsay	Oronsay	Islay	Jura
3,291	523	75	1,122	1,311	128	35	13,560	147

Table 3. Numbers of White-fronted Geese in Argyll areas, 13th to 18th Nov 1999.

Kintyre	Mid-Argyll	Mull	Coll	Tiree	Colonsay	Oronsay	Islay	Jura
2,292	336	52	845	1,148	166	0	13,871	0

GREYLAG GOOSE *Anser anser* Geadh glas 0161
Increasing breeding population on Colonsay, Mull, Tiree and Coll. These birds are most likely to be native birds that have colonised naturally from the Outer Hebrides, while birds of introduced origin breed in Mid-Argyll. Tiree and Coll are sites of international importance for the north-west Scottish population of this species. Migratory flocks also reported from most areas.

Jan-Apr. In late Mar, the SNH co-ordinated goose count recorded a total of 3,502 birds in Argyll, of which 51.5% were on *Tiree* [Table 4]. However, much higher numbers were recorded at three of the sites earlier in the winter, viz.: Moine Mhor *Mid-Argyll* (max. 324 in Jan), RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* (830 on 1st Feb) and *Tiree* (total for island 3,137 on 9th Jan). The Mar count on *Tiree* (and possibly elsewhere) is on the low side because of the elusive nature of the species when breeding*. These, together with counts at sites not covered by the Mar survey, suggest that numbers in Argyll were higher in mid-winter than in Mar. Migratory flocks of up to 40 birds were seen flying north over RSPB L. Gruinart in mid-Apr.

Breeding. Recorded in 3 of 15 BBS squares (20%), (cf 2 of 16 in 1998).

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Confirmed breeding records came from *Coll*, *Colonsay*, *Islay*, *Mid-Argyll*, *Mull* and *Tiree*.

On *Colonsay* (excluding Oronsay), 7 successful prs produced a total of 21 goslings. In *Mid-Argyll*, 3 prs bred at Kilmaraonaig (Connel) (8 goslings), a nest with c/7 was found on Eilean an Ruisg (Loch Feochan) (13th May), a nest with c/7 (eggs chipping) and another nest with an adult half-eaten by mink was found on Bach Island (Sound of Kerrera). In the Sound of *Mull* a hatched nest and 2 adults with 5 goslings were found on Ban Eileanan; 7 moulting adults with one well-grown gosling were found on Bac Mor (Dutchman's Cap) Treshnish Isles *Mull*; and a pr with b/5 were at Loch a' Chumhainn *Mull*. There were records of prs with eggs/young at 4 other sites on *Mull*.

On *Islay* prs bred on Loch Gorm where broods of 5, 3 and 3 were seen in mid-Jun, and a further newly-hatched brood of 3 was seen in late Jul; other, possibly breeding prs were seen at Gortantaoid Point and in the Ballimorny plantation [MAO].

A survey on *Tiree* during May, Jun and Jul revealed a minimum of 134 broods comprising a total of 495 goslings (mean brood size 3.69 - cf 3.67 in 1998); and on Gunna Island *Coll* there were at least 21 broods totalling 61 goslings.

Aug-Dec. In late summer numbers built up at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay*, from 58 on 31st Jul to a peak of 316 on 20th Aug, and then declined by early Sep. Of 2,890 found on *Tiree* during an all-island census on 29th Aug, 29.7% of an aged sample were juvs. A maximum of 122 were at Blarreen (Loch Etive) *N Argyll* on 10th Oct. In mid-Nov, the co-ordinated goose count produced a total of 4,410 in Argyll [Table 5] (cf 5,203 in 1998). Of this total 72% were on *Tiree* and all the *Mid-Argyll* birds were at Moine Mhor [SNH Goose project]. Later in the winter, 98 were at Portnahaven *Islay* on 9th Dec, 182 were counted at Ballure *Kintyre* on 19th Dec, 295 were at Moine Mhor *Mid-Argyll* on 20th Dec and 473 were found during an all-island count on *Coll* on 13th Dec.

Table 4. *Numbers of Greylag Geese in Argyll areas, 27th to 31st Mar 1999.*

Kintyre	Mid-Argyll	Mull	Coll	Tiree	Colonsay	Oronsay	Islay	Jura
444	102	0	912	1,804*	208	0	32	0

*See comment above under Jan-Apr.

Table 5. *Numbers of Greylag Geese in Argyll areas, 13th to 18th Nov 1999.*

Kintyre	Mid-Argyll	Mull	Coll	Tiree	Colonsay	Oronsay	Islay	Jura
281	165	39	578	3,109	121	38	79	0

NB. An SNH ringing project set up in 1998 continued, and in 1999 a further 284 birds were marked using either a yellow leg ring or a grey neck collar with, in both cases, black characters. This brings the total ringed to date to 524 birds on *Tiree*, *Gunna* and *Coll*. No ringed birds have yet been reported away from these 3 islands. Please report sightings to Alan J. Leitch, Shepherd's Cottage, Heylipol, *Tiree*, PA77 6TY.

SNOW GOOSE *Anser caerulescens* Geadh ban

0163

A small introduced population breeds on Coll and on Mull, wintering mainly on Coll. Stragglers among wintering Greenland White-fronts on Islay and Tiree may have a wild origin.

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Jan-Mar. An adult (white-phase) bird of unknown origin was seen with Greenland White-fronted Geese at Loch a 'Phuill *Tiree* from early Jan until 7th Feb. Interestingly, a single Snow Goose was then seen with White-fronts at Port Charlotte *Islay* from 9th-24th Mar.

Breeding. The only count of the *Coll* flock was 30+ seen from the ferry to *Tiree* on 25th Mar. No information from *Mull*.

Oct-Dec. A single white-phase adult again appeared with Greenland White-fronts on *Tiree* and was present in the Barrapol-Loch a 'Phuill area from at least 17th Oct to 21st Dec.

CANADA GOOSE *Branta canadensis* Geadh dubh 0166
Resident population on Colonsay, introduced in 1934. Regular breeding, since 1992, in Mid-Argyll, now in increasing numbers. Occasional breeding attempts elsewhere. A transatlantic origin seems probable for at least some of the medium-sized and small individuals seen in winter goose flocks on Islay

Jan-Apr. Possibly vagrant small or medium-sized birds were reported from *Islay* as follows: Ronnachmore (19th and 26th Jan), Wester Ellister (22nd Jan), Lyrabus (24th Feb), Bridgend (7th Mar), Loch Gruinart (10th Mar), Ballinaby (12th Mar), Sunderland Farm (16th Mar), Gartmain (2 on 26th Mar), Ardlarach (29th Mar), Corran Ban (29th Mar), Laggan (13th Apr), Rockside (14th Apr) and Loch Gruinart (16th Apr). Three large birds at RSPB L. Gruinart on 21st May were possibly wanderers from Colonsay.

Elsewhere, 23 were at Kiloran *Colonsay* on 14th Jan; and 53 were counted at the south end of Loch Awe on 10th Mar.

Breeding. Breeding was confirmed on *Colonsay* and in *Mid-Argyll* and *N Argyll*. On *Colonsay* (excluding Oronsay), 10 prs with broods totalling 29 young, together with at least 33 failed/non-breeders, were found in Jun; and a Barnacle x Canada hybrid paired with a Canada Goose was seen with b/3 at Baleromin More on 6th Jun. In *Mid-Argyll* 3 adults were seen with 7 goslings at Eilean Gamhna (L. Melfort) on 31st May; and 2 adults with 2 broods, of 5 and 4 goslings, were seen at Loch Craignish causeway on 29th Jun. In *N Argyll* 3 adults and 9 small goslings were seen at Loch an Droighinn on 3rd Jun.

Aug-Dec. A flock of 40 birds flew over Moine Mhor *Mid-Argyll* on 9th Aug. Possible vagrants accompanying migrant geese of other species on *Islay* included medium or medium-small individuals at: Craigens (5th Oct), Eresaid (2 on 16th Oct), Lyrabus (20th Oct), Ardlarach (7th Dec), Neriby (7th Dec) and Cornabus (21st Dec). A large-race bird was seen with Greylag Geese at Sandaig *Tiree* in Nov-Dec.

BARNACLE GOOSE *Branta leucopsis* Cathan 0167
Very large numbers of birds from the Greenland population winter on Islay, and smaller numbers elsewhere. Most of the localities covered by the SNH goose counts are sites of international importance for wintering birds. A few birds occasionally summer. A few introduced birds also breed on the Rhinns of Islay

Jan-May. On 20th Jan, an all-island count for *Islay* produced a total of 35,417 (cf 32,392 in Jan 1998). Peak winter counts elsewhere included: 150 at Balmeanach *Mull* on 3rd Jan, 472 near Toberonochy (Luìng) *Mid-Argyll* in Jan, 300+ on the golf course *Colonsay* on 14th Jan, and 1,572 on *Tiree* on 6th Feb. The *Argyll* total of 38,269 birds (cf 32,841 in 1998 and 35,053 in 1997) recorded during the SNH co-ordinated

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goose count on 27th–31st Mar is the highest count on record for this species. As usual, the great majority (35,172 or 91.9%) were on *Islay*, with 370 at *Danna Mid-Argyll*, 931 on *Coll*, 1,390 on *Tiree*, 178 on *Colonsay* and 228 on *Oronsay*. The only count from elsewhere was 150 at *Balmeanach Mull* on 3rd Jan. Birds were departing from mid-Apr: 2,000 flew off northwards from RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* on 19th and 52 flew over *Tiree* on 24th. Stragglers were recorded up to mid-May, with 3 at RSPB L. Gruinart on 11th and one on 19th.

Summering birds. A single bird was seen with Greylag Geese on *Tiree* on 25th May and 30th Aug; and a pr of feral birds was present throughout the summer in the Easter Ellister area of *Islay* but with no evidence of breeding.

Sep-Dec. The first wintering birds returned to *Islay* in early-mid Sep, with singles at RSPB L. Gruinart on 6th and Loch Indaal on 17th, and 3 at Ballinaby on 22nd. The main arrival took place during the first two weeks of Oct and by 11th 13,370 were at RSPB L. Gruinart, and 585 at *Balephetrish Tiree* on 20th. By the time of the co-ordinated count in mid-Nov, *Islay* had 35,429 birds (cf 33,544 in 1998) and accounted for nearly 94% of the Argyll total of 37,766 (cf 36,178 in 1998), with the remainder on *Coll* (303), *Oronsay-Colonsay* (576), *Tiree* (1,024), *Danna Island Mid-Argyll* (433) and a single bird at the *Laggan Kintyre* [SNH Goose project].

Elsewhere, 2 flew past *Machrihanish SBO Kintyre* on 11th Oct, one was at *Tayinloan Kintyre* on 11th Nov and 2 were at *Carsaig Mid-Argyll* on 20th Dec.

Ageing of a sample of 11,107 birds on *Islay* revealed that only 8.1% were young birds (cf 10-year average of 10.8%), with a mean brood size of 1.9, indicating a poor breeding season in 1999 [MAO].

BRENT GOOSE *Branta bernicla* Geadh got 0168
Passage migrant, uncommon in spring but sometimes in considerable numbers in autumn. Very few winter. Most birds seen in Argyll are of the light-bellied race B. b. hrota, which breeds in Greenland and arctic Canada, wintering mainly in Ireland. Birds of the dark-bellied race B. b. bernicla occur occasionally, and there has been one record of the Black Brant B. b. nigricans.

Jan-Apr. Apart from 4 birds at various locations on *Islay* from Jan to early Mar, all the records relate to birds on passage. *Oronsay Colonsay* had 4 birds on 30th Mar; *Tayinloan Kintyre* had 2 on 3rd Apr and 6 on 11th Apr; and Loch Indaal *Islay* had 5 on 9th Apr, 3 on 13th Apr and 2 on 17th Apr. However, the largest flocks were on *Tiree*, where there were 35 at *Balephetrish Bay* and 76 at *Gott Bay* on 12th Apr, and 45 at *Crossapol* (the last of spring) on 24th Apr.

Sep-Dec. The first birds of autumn were at *Machrihanish SBO Kintyre* where 12 flew south on 9th Sep. The next day (10th), 10 flew over *The Reef Tiree* and 28 were at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay*. In the following week small flocks were widely reported, 12 at Loch Indaal on 12th, 25 at RSPB L. Gruinart on 13th, and 30 at Loch Indaal on 16th being the largest.

Apart from singles at *Traigh nam Barc Colonsay* on 22nd Sep and north *Iona Mull* on 5th Oct, and 22 passing *Machrihanish SBO* on 11th Oct, all the remaining records were from *Islay*. Here significant counts of birds passing *Frenchman's Rocks* in Oct included 26 on 2nd, 31 on 9th and 40 on 10th. RSPB L. Gruinart had 46 on 20th Oct and 9 on 22nd. After this there were only one or two birds around Loch Indaal, apart from 5 there on 27th Dec.

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SHELDUCK *Tadorna tadorna* Cra-gheadh

0173

Widespread breeding species, especially on sandy coasts. The majority are absent from mid-Aug to late Oct, when they migrate to moulting grounds.

Jan-May. At Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart *Islay*, numbers peaked at 177 in Jan (cf max. 264 in Feb 1998) [Table 6]. Elsewhere, counts of 20 or more birds were made at Loch Don *Mull* (max. 33 on 6th Feb), The Strand *Colonsay* (max. 47 on 24th Feb), Ceann an t-Sailein (Loch Sween) *Mid-Argyll* (max. 20 on 21st Mar) and on *Tiree*, where an all-island coastal survey in Apr revealed a total of 72 birds.

Breeding. On *Colonsay* (inc. Oronsay), a total of 24 prs with 10 broods totalling 70 young were seen in Jun. Sanda Islands *Kintyre* had two prs with broods of 7 and 4 young; on *Mull* two prs with b/2 and b/7 were at Duart Bay on 3rd Jun; and 2 adults were seen with a total of 14 young at Camas Cuil an t-Saimh (*Iona*) on 29th Jun. A survey on *Tiree* in Jun found a minimum of 7 broods totalling 41 young.

Aug-Dec. After 3 were seen on the west coast of *Iona Mull* on 26th Aug, none were reported until 10th Oct, when 2 were at Loch na Cille *Mid-Argyll* and one was at Loch Beg *Mull*. By Dec numbers at Loch Gruinart and Loch Indaal had built up to 135 [Table 6]. No other sites produced counts of 20 or more birds.

Table 6. Maximum monthly counts of Shelduck at two sea-lochs on *Islay* in 1999.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L.Gruinart	134	127	114	102	42	11	n/r	38	0	30	111	97
L. Indaal	43	43	48	44	42	19	19	14	0	0	19	38

MANDARIN *Aix galericulata*

0178

Introduced species which has bred regularly at Loch Eck (Cowal) in recent years. The present size of the Argyll population (whose origin is unknown) suggests that it may well now be self-sustaining.

On 20th Dec 2 males and 2 females were seen on the River Shira *Mid-Argyll*, some 15 km north of the breeding area on Loch Eck.

WIGEON *Anas penelope* Glas lach

0179

Scarce and local breeding species. Common passage migrant and winter visitor to all areas.

Jan-Apr. Numbers at Loch Gruinart and Loch Indaal *Islay* peaked at 618 birds in Jan [Table 7] (cf 587 in Jan 1998). However, away from *Islay* numbers were generally lower than at this time in 1998 and, other than those listed in Table 7, the only site with a count of 100 or more birds was Campbeltown Loch *Kintyre* with 115 on 10th Jan. Flocks of 50-100 were reported from only 2 other lochs: outer Loch Etive *N Argyll* and Loch Don *Mull*.

Breeding. Breeding occurred at Loch Tulla *N Argyll* where 3 broods totalling 10 young were seen on 26th Jun. No evidence of breeding elsewhere was reported.

Sep-Dec. The combined counts at Loch Gruinart and Loch Indaal built up to a peak of 902 in Oct, when there was also the highest total (1,777) for all sites listed in Table 7 (cf 1,748 in Oct 1998). The only other sites reporting counts of 100 or more birds were: outer Loch Etive (max. 117 on 27th Nov) and Loch Don (max. 120 on 29th Nov).

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Table 7. *Maximum monthly counts of Wigeon at two sea-lochs on Islay, Loch Crinan (Mid-Argyll), Holy Loch (Cowal) and Tiree in 1999 (i.e. all sites which regularly held 100+ birds in the winter months).*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L.Gruinart*	438	308	358	176	33	0	0	6	275	642	366	231
L. Indaal	180	202	111	11	3	1	0	3	235	260	395	287
L. Crinan	106	53	53	25	0	0	0	4	450	492	280	188
Holy Loch	51	126	40	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	6	40	71	20	190
Tiree	270	147	210	41	7	0	0	5	67	312	250	280

* The majority of birds were on the flooded fields of RSPB Loch Gruinart.

AMERICAN WIGEON *Anas americana* 0180 *Vagrant. Four previous Argyll records, all since 1989 and all of single males.*

A male bird was found with a flock of (Eurasian) Wigeon, near Islandadd Bridge on the River Add estuary *Mid-Argyll*, on 3rd Apr. It was subsequently seen by several observers and last reported on 18th Apr [SCraw/PD/JHa/JDi]*. A report, although unsupported by a description, of a male bird at the same site on 4th and 5th Oct raises the possibility that this is the same returning bird as that first seen at Loch Craignish *Mid-Argyll* in Oct 1998.

GADWALL *Anas strepera* Lach glas 0182 *Scarce but regular on passage and in winter, with most recent records from Kintyre, Islay, Mid-Argyll and Tiree. Breeding confirmed on Tiree and probable on Islay 1986 - 1994.*

Jan-May. A single male bird was at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* from Feb to mid-May and was joined by a female from 4th Apr. Two males and a female were present there on 12th-13th May. The only other record was a single male at Ardnave Loch *Islay* on 11th May.

Breeding. Despite the presence of the pair at RSPB L. Gruinart in Apr-May, there was no evidence of breeding.

Sep-Dec. After 5 were seen near Loch a 'Phuill *Tiree* on 3rd Sep, none were recorded until 10th Oct when 2 flew south past Frenchman's Rocks *Islay*. In late Oct, a male and 2 females were at RSPB L. Gruinart on 23rd; 2 were on Loch an Eilein *Tiree* on 24th; and a pr were at the head of Loch Caolisport *Mid-Argyll* on 29th. Then a pr was seen at RSPB L. Gruinart on three dates in Nov-Dec; and a single male was on *Tiree* during the same period.

TEAL *Anas crecca* Crann lach 0184 *Widespread but uncommon breeding species. Common passage migrant and winter visitor.*

Jan-Apr. At Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart *Islay*, numbers peaked at 1,451 in Jan, when numbers at the other main sites were also at their highest [Table 8]. The only other sites with counts of 50 or more birds at this time were Loch Don *Mull* (max. 58 on 28th Feb) and Oronsay *Colonsay* (50 on 12th Mar).

Breeding. At RSPB L. Gruinart at least 6 broods were seen on the flooded fields. On *Tiree* in Jun, 2 prs with b/4 and b/7 were seen at Loch Garradh nan Capull

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and single prs were present at 5 other locations. Single prs were also present during the breeding season at Loch Gaineamhach Beg *Mid-Argyll* and on Oronsay.

Aug-Dec. Numbers at RSPB L. Gruinart reached an impressive 2,150 on 23rd Sep, the highest count on record for this site [Table 8]. Other than those listed in Table 8, the only sites with counts of 50 or more birds were: nr, Rhunaharine Point *Kintyre* (max. 102 on 19th Nov), Loch Don *Mull* (max. 100 on 29th Nov), and Ulva Lagoons (Loch Sween) *Mid-Argyll* (max. 70 on 28th Dec).

Table 8. Maximum monthly counts of Teal at two sea-lochs on Islay, Loch Crinan (*Mid-Argyll*) and Tiree in 1999.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L. Gruinart*	1,310	485	549	539	16	25	7	170	2,150	594	1,180	1,059
L. Indaal	141	71	47	40	2	0	0	13	52	100	97	119
L. Crinan	74	50	21	9	0	0	0	10	36	78	106	120
Tiree	265	151	77	51	24	14	6	47	148	67	125	319

* The majority of birds were on the flooded fields of RSPB Loch Gruinart.

TEAL x PINTAIL HYBRID

A male hybrid of these two species was present on the floods at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* from 20th Feb–13th Mar. This bird resembled a similar hybrid seen at Titchwell, Norfolk, in 1988-89, which was originally identified as a Baikal Teal *Anas formosa* [CRM/TapR].

NEARCTIC RACE ('Green-winged Teal') *A. c. carolinensis*

Rare visitor from North America with eight or more accepted records since 1980, mostly on Islay. Some records may well involve returning individuals.

A single drake was seen at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* on 9th Jan and on 9th Feb. Another (or the same) drake was present there from 9th Apr to 3rd May and two drakes were present on 22nd Apr [AJW/TapR *et al.*]* Later in the year, a drake was seen at Loch Bhasapol *Tiree* from 19th – 21st Dec [AJL]*.

NB: From Jan 2001 this race will be considered as a separate species: Green-winged Teal *A. carolinensis*.

MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos* Lach

0186

Common breeding, passage and wintering species.

Jan-Apr. Numbers at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart *Islay* peaked at 314 in Jan (*cf* 197 in Jan 1998) [Table 9]. Other than those shown in Table 9, the only count exceeding 50 birds at this time came from Cairndow (Loch Fyne) *Mid-Argyll* (*ca* 60 on 22nd Jan).

Breeding. Recorded in 3 of 15 BBS squares (20%), (*cf* 5 of 16 in 1998). On *Colonsay* 4 broods totalling 20 young were found in Jun, while three prs bred successfully on Sanda *Kintyre*. A partial count at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* identified at least 35 broods of young; and a minimum of 7 broods were found on *Tiree*. Elsewhere, there were scattered records in May-Jun of confirmed breeding by lone prs in *Kintyre*, in *Mid-Argyll* and on *Mull*.

Aug-Dec. The total of 662 birds at RSPB L. Gruinart on 22nd Sep was by far

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the highest count there in recent years, but numbers at Loch Crinan were well down on 1998 [Table 9]. Other than those shown in Table 9, the only sites holding 50 or more birds were Muircroft (Oban) *Mid-Argyll* (77 on 17th Aug) and Loch Caolisport *Mid-Argyll* (50 on 1st Dec).

Table 9. *Maximum monthly counts of Mallard at two sea-lochs on Islay, Loch Crinan (Mid-Argyll), Outer Loch Etive (N Argyll), Holy Loch (Cowal) and Tiree in 1999.*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L. Gruinart	217	77	62	38	102	40	129	194	662	335	173	301
L. Indaal	97	100	12	15	15	31	15	27	42	65	89	122
L. Crinan	28	8	0	8	9	33	3	50	60	66	37	10
L. Etive	98	74	45	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	10	208	127	143
Holy Loch	53	52	22	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	80	111	120	95	72
Tiree	95	33	27	40	64	73	76	217	189	115	38	60

PINTAIL *Anas acuta* Lach stiùireach

0189

Very scarce breeding species. Scarce passage migrant. Winter visitor, regular only on Islay and Tiree.

Jan-Apr. Numbers on *Islay* reached a peak in Mar when a total of 70 birds were at RSPB L. Gruinart and on Loch Indaal [Table 10]. The highest count on *Tiree* was on Loch Riaghain, where 10 birds were present for most of Jan. The last birds on *Islay* were 2 at RSPB L. Gruinart on 27th Apr. The only record elsewhere was on Oronsay Colonsay, where 2 were seen on 27th Apr.

Breeding. A pr present on *Tiree* during Apr-May were considered to be probable breeders, although the outcome was unknown. A second pr appeared briefly at the same location in early May.

Jul-Dec. Two females were on *Tiree* on 6th Jul and one on 6th and 8th Aug. The first returning birds at RSPB L. Gruinart were 3 on 1st Sep. Numbers there built up to 20 on 28th Sep, and 19 were at Gartmain (Loch Indaal) on 20th Nov [Table 10]. Elsewhere on *Islay*, one flew past Frenchman's Rocks on 15th Sep and 3 on 10th Oct. The highest count on *Tiree* was 8 at Loch Riaghain on 17th Oct. There were no records outwith *Islay* and *Tiree*.

Table 10. *Maximum monthly counts of Pintail at two sea-lochs on Islay in 1999.*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L. Gruinart	16	6	19	11	0	0	0	0	20	4	3	3
L. Indaal	5	12	51	9	0	0	0	0	2	10	19	11

GARGANEY *Anas querquedula* Lach crann

0191

Rare summer visitor and passage migrant. Bred in Kintyre in 1994 and on Islay in 1997.

A drake present at Loch Bhasapol on 9th May was the only *Tiree* record during the year. A drake was seen at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* on 13th May and a pr that flew in to RSPB L. Gruinart on 1st Jun remained until 4th Jun, but there was no sign of breeding.

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SHOVELER *Anas clypeata* Lach a'ghuib leathainn 0194
Scarce breeding species. More numerous as passage migrant and winter visitor, although largely restricted to Islay and Tiree.

The only records for the year were from *Islay* and *Tiree*.

Jan-Apr. Numbers at RSPB L. Gruinart were higher than usual and peaked on 18th Mar at 62, a record count for *Islay* [Table 11]. The only record for the island away from Loch Gruinart was 2 on Loch Indaal on 3rd Jan.

Breeding. At RSPB L. Gruinart, 11 broods were seen on the floods and 2 further prs on the old canal. On *Tiree* a minimum of 6 broods totalling 27 ducklings were located in Jun.

Sep-Dec. Numbers at RSPB L. Gruinart were again high and peaked at 56 on 12th Dec [Table 11]. There were no records from elsewhere on the island. The peak count on *Tiree* was 24 on 20th Nov, nearly all of which were on Loch a 'Phuill.

Table 11. Maximum monthly counts of Shovelers at Loch Gruinart (*Islay*), and at the four main freshwater lochs on *Tiree* in 1999.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L.Gruinart	49	45	62	44	10	30	0	8	52	25	47	56
Tiree*	21	15	10	11	9	4	13	14	4	10	24	21

* Mostly on Loch Bhasapol and/or Loch a 'Phuill.

POCHARD *Aythya ferina* Lach mhasach 0198
Winter visitor in small numbers. No confirmed breeding in recent years.

The few records received for 1999 were mostly of counts in single figures.

Jan-Apr. As usual, by far the highest count came from Loch Bhasapol *Tiree*, where 29 were present on 15th Feb. Apart from one on Loch Bhasapol on 21st Feb, all the remaining *Tiree* records came from Loch an Eilein, where there were 5 on 21st Feb, 8 on 8th Mar and singles on 3rd and 6th Apr. In *Mid-Argyll* the only records were from Loch Leathan (Kilmichael Forest), where there were 4 on 13th and 8 on 14th Feb, and Loch nan Druimnean with 11 on 9th Feb. *Islay* had just a single bird on Glenastle Loch on 8th Jan and 9 on Loch Ballygrant on 24th Feb.

Oct-Dec. The first returning birds were 4 on Loch Skerrols *Islay* on 9th Oct. Next day one flew past Frenchman's Rocks, and the only other *Islay* record was a single on Ardnave Loch from 23rd Oct to 3rd Nov. The few records from *Tiree* comprised 3 at Loch a 'Phuill on 5th Nov, a single there on 20th Nov, and singles on Loch Riaghain and Loch an Eilein on 21st Dec. The only other record was 3 males on Loch nan Druimnean on 10th Dec.

TUFTED DUCK *Aythya fuligula* Lach thopach 0203
Scarce breeding species. Common winter visitor.

Jan-Apr. The highest count was 92 on *Tiree* (of which 71 were on Loch Bhasapol) on 21st Feb [Table 12]. The only other sites with counts of 10 or more birds were: Loch nan Druimnean *Mid-Argyll* (10 on 10th Jan), Loch Ballygrant *Islay* (20 on 24th Feb) and Loch Leathan (Kilmichael Forest) *Mid-Argyll* (max. 11 on 10th Apr).

Breeding. A minimum of 6 broods totalling 25 ducklings were found on *Tiree*. During Apr, 2 prs were present at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* and another 2 prs at Loch Fada Colonsay, but none were seen later in the season.

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Sep-Dec. Numbers peaked in Nov when there were 106 on *Tiree* on 20th and 22 at Ardnave Loch *Islay* on 3rd [see Table 12]. Other counts of 10 or more birds came from: Loch Gorm *Islay* (17 on 22nd Sep), Loch Ballygrant (10 on 8th Oct), Ardnave Loch *Islay* (20 on 14th Nov), Easter Ellister (Loch Indaal) *Islay* (24 on 4th Dec), and Dubh Loch (Glen Shira) *Mid-Argyll* (19 - all but one drakes - on 14th Dec).

Table 12. *Maximum monthly counts of Tufted Ducks at Ardnave Loch (Islay) and at the four main freshwater lochs on Tiree in 1999.*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Ardnave L.	10	10	14	21	2	n/r	n/r	n/r	4	18	22	2
Tiree	85	92	85	56	36	13	24	11	7	50	106	38

SCAUP *Aythya marila* Lach mhara 0204
Winter visitor and passage migrant. Large numbers at Loch Indaal (Islay), which is a site of national importance for wintering birds, but scarce elsewhere. Occasionally summers.

Jan-May. Numbers at Loch Indaal peaked at 1,120 on 3rd Jan, similar to last year (1,110 on 18th Jan) [Table 13]. There were still 160 present on 1st May and 6 on 21st May.

The only other records were from *Tiree* where 2 each were on Loch Bhasapol and Loch a 'Phuill on 2nd Jan. Two females stayed on Loch Bhasapol until 17th Apr, and the last record there was a single male on 23rd Apr.

Summering birds. A single bird was on Loch Indaal on 17th and 30th Jun.

Jul-Dec. The first returning birds were 4 flying south past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 21st Jul. Numbers at Loch Indaal built up from 36 on 4th Aug to a peak of 900 on 27th Dec [Table 13]. Elsewhere on *Islay*, Frenchman's Rocks had 6 passing southward on 17th Aug and 2 on 10th Oct; and RSPB L. Gruinart had single birds on various dates from 1st Oct to the year end. The only other records were from *Tiree*, where a single female was in Sorobaidh Bay on 11th Sep, 3 were located at Loch a 'Phuill on 5th Nov with 2 still there on 20th, and 3 were at Loch Bhasapol on 9th Dec.

Table 13. *Maximum monthly counts of Scaup at Loch Indaal (Islay) in 1999.*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L.Indaal	1,120	870	380	222	160	1	0	36	57	360	625	900

LESSER SCAUP *Aythya affinis* 0205
Vagrant, first recorded on Islay in Nov 1998.

The first-year female found in 1998 on *Islay* remained into early 1999 and was last seen on Ardnave Loch on 9th Jan [MAO].

EIDER *Somateria mollissima* Lach lochlannach 0206
Resident breeding bird, common on all suitable coasts. Large flocks of moulting drakes and first-year birds gather at some sites during Jun to Aug. Many Argyll breeding birds apparently winter in the Firth of Clyde.

Jan-Apr. Flocks of 100 or more birds were reported from: Campbeltown Loch

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Kintyre (136 with 64% males on 21st Jan), *Machrihanish SBO Kintyre* (208 with 65% males on 25th Feb) and *Dererach (Loch Scridain) Mull* (150+ on 3rd Apr).

Spring Eider Census. To confirm the supposed wintering of Argyll's breeding Eiders on the Firth of Clyde, a census was carried out during 8th – 24th Apr, when it was assumed that birds would be close to breeding sites. This covered both the Clyde Estuary and the west coast and islands of Argyll. The overall total, including areas outside Argyll on parts of the Clyde Estuary and along the coast of Morvern, was 17,996. Of these only 5,253 (29%) were found west and north of Kintyre to Ardnamurchan, suggesting that a large proportion breed in the Clyde area. The total number of birds found in the Argyll recording area was 7,816, which included the following island totals: Gigha 498, Islay 594, Jura 30, Colonsay 416, Kerrera 180, Tiree 668, Coll 339, Mull 581 and Lismore 220.

The count in Sep 1998 found only 1,910 Eiders west and north of Kintyre compared to 5,253 in Apr 1999. This suggests that over 60% of the Eiders breeding in the exposed north and west move in autumn to the Clyde (or possibly elsewhere), where they form only a small proportion of the wintering population.

Breeding. On *Colonsay* a census in Jun found 22 males and 52 females with no young as well as 45 females with 45 broods totalling 142 young (mean size of 14 broods on Ardenish peninsula was 3.21 [cf 2.62 in 1998]). On *Sanda Kintyre* 22 broods were noted in Jun. Reports of females with young also came from many sites in *Kintyre, Mid-Argyll, Mull* and *Tiree*.

Autumn Eider Survey The co-ordinated count of Eiders in the Firth of Clyde (i.e. not including west coast and islands) during 11th–26th Sep gave a total of 5,519 for the Argyll part of the area (cf 4,771 in 1998 and 5,715 in 1997). Juv. males were not distinguished but 64.1% of the total were adult males. The main concentrations were at Otter Ferry-Creagan Dubh (968), Ardentinn-Holy Loch (1,056) and Dunoon Pier-Toward Point (1,131).

Aug-Dec. Numbers at Loch Indaal *Islay* peaked at 215 on 15th Aug [Table 14]. Significant counts elsewhere included 240 off Hynish *Tiree* on 8th Sep and 270 in Holy Loch *Cowal* on 26th Oct. A series of counts made at Blairmore (Loch Long) *Cowal* reached a peak of 872 birds on 3rd Sep falling to maxima of 250 in Oct, 243 in Nov and 139 in Dec.

Table 14. *Maximum monthly counts of Eider at Loch Indaal (Islay) in 1999.*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L. Indaal	69	121	101	165	121	170	169	215	210	155	143	91

LONG-TAILED DUCK *Clangula hyemalis* Eun buchainn 0212
Uncommon winter visitor, most frequent in Sound of Gigha (Kintyre), Islay, Coll and Tiree. Usually marine but occasionally seen on inland lochs. Occasional summer records.

Jan-Apr. The highest count was 21 off Hynish *Tiree* on 16th Apr. Otherwise the largest numbers were in the Sound of Gigha *Kintyre*, with 11 on 1st Mar, 8 on 31st Mar and 18 on 24th Apr. Small numbers were seen regularly in Balephetrish Bay *Tiree* with monthly maxima of 5 on 9th Jan, one on 5th Feb, 6 on 19th Mar and 6 on 9th Apr, and on Loch Indaal *Islay* with counts of 4 on 3rd Jan, 3 on 20th Feb and 2 on 21st Mar. Loch Gair *Mid-Argyll* was an unusual location for the lone female seen with Eiders on 9th Feb. The last bird of spring was a drake in Balephetrish Bay on 30th Apr.

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Oct-Dec. The first birds of autumn were 2 on Loch Indaal on 10th Oct; and 3 males flew past Machrihanish SBO on 11th Oct. Subsequently small numbers were present regularly on Loch Indaal, monthly maxima being 8 on 27th Nov and 4 on 27th Dec. Elsewhere on *Islay*, one was at Loch Gruinart on 3rd Nov and one on Ardnave Loch on 23rd Nov. The highest counts were in the Sound of Gigha, where there were 8 on 20th Nov and 22 on 19th Dec. A female on Loch nan Druimnean *Mid-Argyll* on 10th Dec was an unexpected inland record.

COMMON SCOTER *Melanitta nigra* Lach bheag dubh 0213
Very rare breeding species in Islay, Mid-Argyll and N Argyll. Present throughout the year in the Sound of Gigha (Kintyre) and at Loch Indaal (Islay). Scarce winter visitor elsewhere.

Jan-Jun. Numbers at Loch Indaal *Islay* peaked at 142 on 18th Apr, the highest count there since 1994 [Table 15]. Counts in the Sound of Gigha totalled 73 on 1st Mar, 75 on 31st Mar and 80 on 24th Apr. Elsewhere, the only records were 5 in Sorobaiddh Bay *Tiree* on 31st Jan and 2 in Loch Buie *Mull* on 2nd May.

Breeding. The highest count at the regular breeding site on *Islay* was on 17th June, when 5 prs and 6 further males were present; no information on breeding success is available. Five prs were seen in May at a breeding site in *Mid-Argyll*; and one pr was present in May at a breeding site in *N Argyll* where the female stayed until mid-Jul.

Jul-Dec. The Loch Indaal flock peaked at 69 on 18th Jul, very similar to 1998 (68 on 11th Jul) [Table 15]. The only count received for the Sound of Gigha was 82 on 20th Nov. There were only three other records: at Frenchman's Rocks *Islay*, 9 flew past on 15th Sep and one on 17th Sep; and on 20th Sep 4 were seen from Ardmore Point *Mull*.

Table 15. Maximum monthly counts of Common Scoter at Loch Indaal (*Islay*) in 1999.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L. Indaal	42	32	72	142	70	46	69	67	65	38	30	49

SURF SCOTER *Melanitta perspicillata* 0214
Rare. Only 8 Argyll records, mostly in spring.

The first-winter bird found in Balephetrish Bay *Tiree* on 14th Dec 1998 was still present on 8th Jan [AJL]*. A first-year male was seen off Bruichladdich Pier (Loch Indaal) *Islay* on 11th Apr and presumably the same individual was at Black Rock (Loch Indaal) on 25th Apr [SCV/JDi]*. On 13th May a first-summer male was found in Craginure Bay *Mull*. It stayed until 19th May and was seen by several observers. Probably the same individual was seen at Loch Spelve *Mull* on 19th May and remained until at least 25th May [ASp/RJE/BH *et al.*].

1998. An individual considered to be juvenile but of uncertain sex was found on Loch Indaal on 29th Oct. A similar bird on Loch Indaal on 2nd and 5th Dec was probably the same individual [MF/ASC/RJE]*.

It is possible that all the Loch Indaal records during 29 Oct 1998-25 Apr 1999 refer to the same individual. There have now been records of this species in each of the years 1996-1999.

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VELVET SCOTER *Melanitta fusca* Lach dubh 0215
Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant. Most often on the west coast of Kintyre and at Loch Indaal (Islay), rare elsewhere. Occasional summer records.

In spring, 8 were seen in flight off Croig Mull on 27th May. More typical records were 4 males flying south past Machrihanish SBO Kintyre on 9th Sep, and 9 (inc. 5 males) in the Sound of Gigha on 19th Dec.

GOLDENEYE *Bucephala clangula* Lach bhreac 0218
Common winter visitor. Birds regularly present in all areas of Argyll from early Oct to late Apr. Occasional summer records.

Jan-Apr. By far the highest count at this time was 180 at Loch Caolisport Mid-Argyll on 4th Feb; over 100 were still there on 7th Feb. This is, by a large margin, the highest number ever counted at one locality in Argyll. Numbers on Tieve reached a peak of 61 on 21st Feb, mostly on Loch Bhasapol and Loch a 'Phuill [Table 16]. The only other sites holding 20 or more birds were Loch Feochan Mid-Argyll (56 on 20th Mar) and Loch Gair Mid-Argyll (max. 35 on 7th Mar).

There were no records of summering birds.

Sep-Dec. Four early returning birds were at Tayinloan Kintyre on 9th Sep. Numbers started to build up later in Oct, but many sites had their first birds in Nov. The only site not listed in Table 16 holding 20 or more birds at this time was Port Ellen Bay Islay where 25 were counted on 25th Nov and 39 on 21st and 31st Dec.

Numbers at Holy Loch were strikingly down on last year. The average of the monthly counts was 3.5 (cf 9.6 in 1998). However, new record counts have been made at other locations in the last two years. It is difficult to know whether this reflects changing winter distribution or improved observer coverage. The Ayrshire Bird Report for 1999 remarks on a sharp drop in Goldeneye numbers in winter/spring in South Ayrshire, attributed to improved sewerage arrangements.

Table 16. Maximum monthly counts in 1999 of Goldeneyes at two sea-lochs on Islay, Holy Loch (Cowal), outer Loch Etive (N Argyll), Loch Sween (Mid-Argyll) and at the four main freshwater lochs on Tieve. No birds were reported at these sites from May to Aug.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr		Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Loch Indaal	10	12	6	2		2	15	9	17
L. Gruinart	14	11	8	0		n/r	13	10	6
Holy Loch	7	1	1	7		0	1	4	7
Loch Etive	13	23	19	n/r		0	0	3	25
Loch Sween	23	17	32	15		0	0	24	20
Tieve	48	61	56	6		0	6	49	34

SMEW *Mergus albellus* Sioltaich breac 0220
Rare winter visitor

A 'redhead' was found, by a visitor, in Oban Bay Mid-Argyll on 27th Nov and was subsequently seen by one of our members [HB/EDP]*. After a gap following the bird seen on Colonsay in 1994, this is the second Argyll record in two years.

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RED-BREASTED MERGANSER *Mergus serrator* Siolta dhearg 0221
Common resident breeder. Large moulting flocks gather at some sites during Jul-Aug. Loch Indaal (Islay) is a site of national importance for wintering birds.

Jan-Apr. The peak count at Loch Indaal Islay was 49 on 17th Apr [Table 17]. The only other counts of 20 or more birds came from: Loch na Keal Mull (max. 30 on 8th Jan), Tiree (max. total for island 35 on 31st Jan), and Loch Gair Mid-Argyll (max. 22 on 7th Mar).

Breeding. Adults with recently hatched young were reported from several sites in Kintyre, Mid-Argyll and Tiree. A pr with b/2 found on Sanda Island Kintyre in late Jul was the first definite evidence of breeding on those islands in recent years. On 10th Jul a female was seen with 19 small young at Loch Crinan Mid-Argyll (cf one with 18/19 young at Dunstaffnage in 1998); and a female with 18 well-grown young at the same site on 12th Sep could have been the same family. Even this was exceeded by the single female at Ardrishaig Mid-Argyll on 24th Jul with no fewer than 22 small young about a week old. When numerous, young of this species tend to pack with a single female; nonetheless, hatching must have been closely synchronised in these cases, as the young in each group were of a very similar size.

Aug-Dec. A flock of moulting birds at Uiskentuie (Loch Indaal) Islay numbered 110 on 1st Aug and had increased to 167 by 11th Aug. Aug was also the month of the peak WeBS count on Loch Indaal, where 185 were recorded on 15th [Table 17]. The only other counts of 20 or more birds later in the year were: 27 in Holy Loch Cowal on 29th Aug, 20 on Oronsay Colonsay on 2nd Sep, and 20 at Pennycross Mull on 21st Sep.

Table 17. *Maximum monthly counts of Red-breasted Mergansers at two sea-lochs on Islay, Loch Crinan (Mid-Argyll) and Loch Sween (Mid-Argyll) in 1999.*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L. Gruinart	11	12	14	7	8	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	26	2	10
L. Indaal	31	19	12	49	21	38	68	185	127	101	75	68
L. Crinan	6	1	2	12	5	1	1	0	30	23	3	28
L. Sween	3	7	5	17	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	8	12	20	18

GOOSANDER *Mergus merganser* Siolta 0223
Scarce breeding species, mainly in Cowal, Mid-Argyll, Mull and N Argyll. More widespread in winter but only in small numbers.

Jan-Mar. Up to 4 birds were seen in Cowal (2 sites), Mull (2 sites), Mid-Argyll (5 sites) and N Argyll (one site). The only gatherings of 5 or more birds were 8 on Loch Awe near Lochawe Station Mid-Argyll on 9th Jan, and 9 on Loch an Losgainn Mor Mid-Argyll on 9th Mar.

Breeding. There were records of females or prs during the breeding season in Cowal (one site), Mid-Argyll (7 sites), Mull (3 sites) and N Argyll (2 sites).

Jul-Dec. There were records of 5 birds on Holy Loch Cowal on 3rd Jul, on outer Loch Etive N Argyll on 12th Sep, and on Loch Eck Cowal on 17th Oct. A pr was on Loch Buie Mull on 5th Aug; 3 'redheads' were fishing near Eilean an Ruisg (Loch Feochan) Mid-Argyll on 9th Aug; and 4 females were on Kilmartin Burn Mid-Argyll on 14th Sep. The only other records involved singles: at Bridgend (Loch Indaal) Islay

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(a moulting female) on 1st-2nd Aug and, presumably, the same bird at Traigh an Luig (Loch Indaal) on 4th Aug, on outer Loch Etive *N Argyll* on 17th Oct, at Crinan Ferry *Mid-Argyll* on 6th Nov, on Holy Loch on 13th Nov, at Loch Staoisha *Islay* (a male) on 26th Nov, and in inner Loch Scridain *Mull* on 26th-27th Dec.

RUDDY DUCK *Oxyura jamaicensis* 0225
Vagrant. Three previous accepted records in Argyll: a female at Loch na Beiste, Clachan (Kintyre) on 15th May 1984, and males on Tiree on 8th and 13th May 1987 and at Loch Crinan (Mid-Argyll) on 25th Oct 1993.

A male in breeding plumage was seen at Claddach Loch *Islay* on 12th May [AJW]*.

HONEY BUZZARD *Pernis apivorus* 0231
Very rare passage migrant. Six accepted records in Argyll since 1980, the last on Islay in 1994.

One was seen from Ledaig Point *N Argyll* soaring and gliding high over Ardmucknish Bay on 7th Aug [ARJ]*. This is the third record in this area since 1980: individuals were seen at Connel in Aug 1983 and Jun 1990.

BLACK KITE *Milvus migrans* 0238
Vagrant. No previous Argyll records.

1997 On 16th May, good views were obtained of one flying eastwards over Vaul Tiree, being mobbed by a Great Black-backed Gull. The bird flew off along the north coast of the island, gaining height, and it was not seen again [C. R. McKay]*. This species is less than annual in Scotland as a whole, so the fact that there were two other records in 1997 (Orkney-Shetland 2nd May-19th Aug and Loch Ryan, Dumfries and Galloway 9th Aug) is most unusual.

RED KITE *Milvus milvus* Clamhan gobhlach 0239
In an attempt to re-introduce this species to Scotland, Red Kites have been released in Highland Region since 1989 and Central Scotland since 1996. Genuine vagrants have occurred in the past, but most recent Argyll records involve these birds. All records are requested, ideally with details of presence or absence of wing tags.

A untagged adult was seen at Foreland *Islay* on 21st Mar. On *Mull* reports of an untagged bird at several locations between 5th and 7th May presumably all refer to the same individual. Also on *Mull*, a bird was reported from the Torosay-Loch Don area in late Sep/early Oct; again no wing tags were seen [ARSG].

WHITE-TAILED EAGLE *Haliaeetus albicilla* Iolair mhara 0243
Formerly resident breeder in Argyll. A re-introduction programme involving the release of 82 birds on Rum between 1974 and 1985, and 59 in northern Scotland between 1993 and 1998, has been successful in establishing breeding pairs in the wild. However, the species is placed in Category E of the British list (population not yet thought to be self-sustaining). All records are requested, ideally with details of age, activity and presence or absence of wing tags.*

Breeding. In Scotland, there were 18 prs/birds holding territory (cf 17 in 1998). Six successful prs fledged a total of 11 young [RSPB].

Wandering or dispersing birds were reported from Oronsay Colonsay, *Islay*,

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Jura, Mid-Argyll (Crinan, Kerrera, Otter Ferry and between Rubha Fiola & Scarba), Glen Kinglass *N Argyll* and Ben Hynish *Tiree*. Most records were during winter and some may have involved the same individual.

MARSH HARRIER *Circus aeruginosus* Clamhan Ioin 0260
Scarce but now more or less annual passage migrant, with records in every year but one since 1986. Most records Apr-Jun.

A good year with four widely spread sightings. A male was at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* on 26th Apr and another was near St Catherine's *Cowal* during Aug. A female reported at Moine Mhor *Mid-Argyll* on 12th Aug was seen there again on 13th Sep; and an immature bird at Knockvologan *Mull* on 20th Sep stayed in the area for several days.

HEN HARRIER *Circus cyaneus* Breid air toin 0261
Sparse but widespread breeding species. A survey in 1998 produced an estimate of 66-189 breeding pairs (at 95% confidence levels) in Argyll and Bute.

Jan-Apr. After a poor year in 1998, numbers at the two roosts at Moine Mhor *Mid-Argyll* recovered well in 1999. The combined total of 15 in Jan was one of the highest counts in recent years and there were still up to 12 birds during Feb. By contrast, the roost at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* was well down in numbers: only 5 were found there on 21st Jan and 4 on 19th Feb. Elsewhere, hunting birds were reported from Oronsay *Colonsay* and *Tiree* and from several sites in *Islay, Mid-Argyll* and *Mull*.

Breeding. Samples were monitored in *Cowal, Islay, Kintyre, Mid-Argyll* and *Mull*. On 24 territories fully monitored, 21 prs laid eggs. Of these, 16 prs produced a minimum of 39+ young [ARSG]. A poor season at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve where only 3 prs produced a total of 8 young [RSPB].

Aug-Dec. As in the earlier part of the year, the Moine Mhor roosts did well, with maxima of 8 birds in Oct and Nov and 11 in Dec. The RSPB L. Gruinart roost only reached 4 birds on 8th Nov and 3 on 2nd Dec. A male and a female were seen on Oronsay *Colonsay* on various dates in Aug and Sep; and *Tiree* also had a male and a ring-tail regularly from mid-Sep to the year end. Birds were widely reported on *Islay* and *Mull* and from 4 locations in *Mid-Argyll* and 2 in *Kintyre*.

[GOSHAWK *Accipiter gentilis* 0267]
Status uncertain. Last confirmed reports were in Cowal and on Mull in 1993.

The record of a female near Glengorm Castle *Mull* on 27th Sep 1998 (ABR 15) should be deleted since a full description was not provided for circulation to the ABRC.

Casual reports of this species are received regularly but are seldom supported by detailed descriptions. Goshawks are often seen only fleetingly and are easily confused with large female Sparrowhawks (or sometimes with other raptors). Observers are therefore asked to make detailed notes of any claimed sightings.

SPARROWHAWK *Accipiter nisus* Speireag 0269
Widespread, resident breeding species.

During the year, birds were reported from every area of Argyll except *Jura*.

Breeding. Recorded in one of 15 BBS squares (7%), (cf one of 16 in 1998). In *Cowal*, 8 of 9 monitored occupied sites were known to be successful and fledged

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34 young (4.25 young/successful territory) [ARSG]. A pr were seen with juvs. at Connel *Mid-Argyll*; and adults carrying food for young were reported from Colonsay House Colonsay, Balinakill Kintyre and Minard *Mid-Argyll*. A pr at Fearnoch *Mid-Argyll* nested in a larch plantation but the outcome was unknown.

BUZZARD *Buteo buteo* Clamhan

0287

Resident breeding bird, common in all areas.

A total of 15 birds was counted on *Coll* during a goose survey on 24th Mar.

Breeding. Recorded in 5 of 15 BBS squares (20%), (cf 7 of 16 in 1998). On Colonsay, including Oronsay, 19 occupied territories were located. Of these, a minimum of only 8 prs laid eggs and 7 of these hatched young. This poor productivity, the lowest recorded in 10 years, was attributed to poor weather and low rabbit population [DCJ]. 26 occupied territories were located in the Glenbranter study area Cowal. From these, 8 prs are known to have fledged only 8 young. Elsewhere in Cowal, only 5 young fledged from 4 known successful territories [DA, AF]. The 17 territories known to have produced young in SW Mull fledged a minimum of 20 young [P. Haworth]. Overall, a poor breeding season with a total of only 40 young known to have fledged from the monitored territories and only 1.32 young per successful territory [ARSG].

Four prs held territory on *Tiree* and all were feeding young in Jun. A nest with b/2 was also found in Jun on Gunna Island *Coll*. Breeding records were received for 4 sites in *Mid-Argyll*.

GOLDEN EAGLE *Aquila chrysaetos* Iolaire

0296

Scarce resident breeding species. Immatures tend to wander and may be recorded in areas where breeding does not occur.

Recorded away from the breeding areas, in winter, in Colonsay, *Mid-Argyll* and Mull.

Breeding. 61 known territories were checked and 57 were occupied. From these, 16 nests (28% of those occupied) were successful, fledging a total of 17 young, including only one brood of two. At 1.06 young per successful pr, productivity was poor (cf 1.22 in 1998) [ARSG].

OSPREY *Pandion haliaetus* Iolaire iasgach

0301

Summer visitor. Very scarce breeding species. Occurs more widely on passage.

Apr-May. Single birds on passage were reported at Loch Spelve and Lochdon Mull on 10th May. A bird seen thermalling off the coast of Colonsay at Rubha Dubh on 12th May and one flying in from the sea at Scoor Mull on 13th May, apparently from Colonsay, may well have been the same individual.

Breeding. Another good breeding season. The 4 known prs all bred successfully and reared a total of 9 (probably 10) chicks, 3 of which were colour-ringed. One of the 1999 chicks was shot in both legs in SW France. It was taken into captivity until fit enough for release. An account of this event will be publicised locally in France in an attempt to combat these illegal activities [ARSG].

Jul-Sep. One, sometimes two, birds were regularly seen fishing in the River Add estuary *Mid-Argyll* from Jul to Sep. The last record there was 4th Sep. One was seen at Muasdale, flying south down the coast of Kintyre, in late Jul; and one was seen in the Loch Gruinart area of Islay from 20th to 28th Aug.

At 0914hrs on 10th Sep, a radio-tagged bird was tracked by satellite at 55.36N,

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5.55W as it flew down the Sound of Jura in the direction of Northern Ireland. By 17th Sep it had reached southern Portugal. This individual was one of a brood of 3 ringed at Nairn (Highland Region) on 21st Aug; another of this brood was relocated to Rutland Water in England.

The last bird of the year was one seen fishing in inner Loch Scridain Mull on 20th Sep and possibly for a day or two longer.

KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus* Clamhan ruadh 0304
Widespread but uncommon breeding bird. Population in some areas appears to fluctuate from year to year. Emigration from some areas in autumn (e.g. Mull) and immigration to others.

There were records from all areas except *Jura* and *N Argyll* during the year. Away from known breeding areas, one or two were seen regularly on *Tiree* from Jan to May and from Aug to Nov. On *Oronsay Colonsay* singles were present during Aug-Sep.

Breeding. Recorded in one of the 15 BBS squares surveyed (7%), (cf 2 of 16 in 1998). In *Cowal*, the number of occupied territories was well down on 1998 and the 12 sites known to have been successful produced a minimum of only 41 young. The productivity of 6 prs fully monitored was 4.0 young/successful nest (cf 5.0 in 1998) [DA, AF]. Numbers on *SW Mull* appeared well down on 1998 [P. Howarth] and no occupied sites were found on *Colonsay* [DCJ] [all per ARSG]. A pr was present on *Oronsay* in Apr-May but there was no evidence of breeding. Four birds, apparently two prs, were seen over the cliffs at Sgeir nan Gabhar (Scarba) *Mid-Argyll* on 9th Jun.

The most seen at one site were 5 birds (possibly a family group) hunting simultaneously over the same hillside at Cnoc nan Sgolb Mull on 4th Aug.

MERLIN *Falco columbarius* Meirneal 0309
Scarce breeding species, possibly under-recorded. More widely distributed on passage and in winter.

Jan-Apr. Birds were reported regularly on *Oronsay Colonsay*, on *Islay* and on *Tiree* (up to 4 individuals). There were also records from 4 localities on *Mull* and 2 in *Mid-Argyll*.

Breeding. Of 7 territories checked 5 were occupied. Of these 3 (probably 4) were successful and produced a minimum of 7 (max. 12) fledged young. On *Mull* birds were reported from 4 separate areas in the breeding season (more than usual); and a bird was reported in a suitable breeding location on *Jura*. Other successful prs bred in *Kintyre* and *Cowal* [ARSG].

Birds were also seen during the breeding season on *Colonsay*, *Islay* and in *Mid-Argyll*.

Aug-Dec. The first autumn migrant at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* was seen on 12th Aug. Between Aug and Nov, single birds were seen at 9 localities on *Islay*, at 4 sites in *Mid-Argyll* and at 2 sites on *Mull*. At least 2 birds were present on *Tiree* from 9th Sept onwards, and a minimum of 3 were there on 17th Nov.

PEREGRINE *Falco peregrinus* Seabhag 0320
Sparsely distributed but widespread breeding species. Found throughout the year in all areas. Breeding recorded in fifty-two 10 km squares in 1991 survey [RSPB et al.].

Outside the breeding season, there were records from all areas except *Jura* (where birds were almost certainly present but not recorded).

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Breeding. Of 19 known territories fully monitored in *Cowal*, 14 were occupied. However only 2 sites were known to be successful and these fledged only 5 young. Ten of the remaining sites failed at the egg/small young stage [DA, AF]. Elsewhere in Argyll, 9 sites were monitored. All 9 were occupied and all produced fledged young (min. 12) [ARSG]. These figures include a pr with brood of at least 1 found on *Colonsay* and a pr at *Coll RSPB Reserve* that also fledged young. Birds were reported during the breeding season from all Argyll areas except *Jura* and *N Argyll*. NB A national survey of breeding Peregrines will take place in 2001. All breeding season sightings are requested.

RED GROUSE *Lagopus lagopus* Coileach fraoich 0329
Sparsely distributed resident breeding bird.

Breeding. Recorded in 2 of 15 BBS squares (13%), (cf 3 of 16 in 1998). Two females accompanied by 8+ well-grown chicks were seen near Loch Seileach (Eredine) *Mid-Argyll* on 8th Jun; and an adult with a brood was found at Lang Aoineadh *Jura* on 10th Jul. Birds were recorded during the breeding season at 7 other sites in *Mid-Argyll*, one site on *Islay* and one on *Mull*.

Outside the breeding season, birds were reported from 4 additional sites on *Islay*, 2 in *Mid-Argyll* and 2 in *Cowal*.

PTARMIGAN *Lagopus mutus* Tarmachan 0330
Very localised resident breeding bird, generally above 800 m. All records required.

The only records received involved 3 birds in winter plumage on Ben Cruachan *N Argyll* on 5th Jan, and one calling on Ben More *Mull* on 8th May.

BLACK GROUSE *Tetrao tetrix* Caoileach dubh 0332
Scarce and local resident breeding bird. Populations in some areas may derive from released birds. Numbers apparently in steep decline: all records required.

Breeding. Birds were recorded in one of 15 BBS squares (7%), (cf 3 of 16 in 1998). Lekking males were reported from *Kintyre* (Glen Barr and near Corranbuie) and *Mid-Argyll* (Ormsary Estate). A female with b/8 was seen near Laglingarten *Cowal* on 29th Aug; and birds were also reported during the breeding season from near Clashgour *N Argyll*.

The only other records involved 2 males near the Kennacraig-Claonaig *Kintyre* road in Oct, and a female in a garden on the outskirts of Dunoon *Cowal* in Nov.

RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE *Alectoris rufa* Cearc thomain dhearg chasach 0358

Birds (some hybrids with Chukar A. chukar) introduced to several areas. Although this species is in Category C of the British list, populations in Argyll do not appear to be self-sustaining.

The only birds reported were on *Islay* (one at Craighfad on 19th Jan and 3 at Nerabus on 17th Oct) and on *Colonsay* (2 near Kiloran on 8th Apr, 9th May and 5th Jun).

QUAIL *Coturnix coturnix* Gearradh gort 0370
Rare and irregular summer visitor.

There were just two records of calling birds: one was at Carnduncan *Islay* during the third week in Jun and the other was in Kilmartin Glen *Mid-Argyll* on 25th Jun.

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PHEASANT *Phasianus colchicus* Easag 0394
Long-established, widespread and common resident breeding bird. Birds also annually reared and released on some estates.

Breeding. Recorded in one of 16 BBS squares (38%), (cf 6 of 16 in 1998). On Colonsay, where there was evidence of recent releases, a total of 18 calling males were found in Jun (cf 16 in 1998).

During the year birds were reported from all areas except *Coll, Jura* and *N Argyll*. A flock of 21 at Ard Mor on 1st Nov was large for *Tiree*; and the only other location reporting flocks of 20 or more birds was RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* (max. 105 feeding on stubbles on 28th Nov).

WATER RAIL *Rallus aquaticus* Snagan allt 0407
Scarce breeding bird, numbers augmented by passage migrants and winter visitors. Under-recorded.

Jan-Mar. Single birds were seen near Strachur *Cowal* in Jan and Feb. One was flushed from the roadside at Balemartine *Tiree* on 10th Jan; and one was seen at Ariogan (nr. Oban) *Mid-Argyll* on 8th Feb.

Breeding. The species was not recorded in any of the 15 BBS squares surveyed, (cf one of 16 in 1998). Calling birds were heard during the breeding season at: 6 localities on *Tiree*, Loch Fada *Colonsay*, *Coll* RSPB Reserve, RSPB L. Gruinart and two other sites on *Islay*.

Aug-Dec. Birds were reported from 3 locations on *Tiree* from Aug to Nov. On *Islay*, one was at Ardnave Loch on 26th Oct and birds were regularly recorded at RSPB L. Gruinart until the year end. In Nov two birds were found dead: one at Ardmaddy (Loch Etive) *N Argyll* on 10th and one at Carsaig *Mid-Argyll* on 13th.

SPOTTED CRAKE *Porzana porzana* Traon breac 0408
Rare and irregular summer visitor. First confirmed breeding record for Argyll in 1993.

A male bird was calling at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* on 27th-28th Apr but it was not heard subsequently. A calling male was present during the breeding season at *Coll* RSPB Reserve.

CORNCRAKE *Crex crex* Traon 0421
Localised summer visitor. Breeding mainly on Islay, Colonsay, Iona (Mull), Tiree and Coll.

The first confirmed record of spring was at Totronald *Coll* on 23rd Apr followed by birds at Balephuill *Tiree* and Oronsay *Colonsay* on 24th April. The first bird on *Islay* was at RSPB L. Gruinart on 30th Apr.

Breeding. After a disappointing year in 1998, numbers of Corncrakes in all areas of Argyll held their own or showed a welcome increase in 1999. *Coll, Tiree* and *Colonsay* (inc. Oronsay) achieved their highest totals of calling males for at least 10 years and *Islay* climbed back to 7 birds after the low of 4 in 1998.

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Table 18. *Numbers of calling Corncrakes in Argyll areas in 1999, with revised totals for 1998, 1997, 1996 and 1995 for comparison.*

Area	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Coll	37	40	42	40	48
Tiree	140	117	136	136	144
Mull	0	0	0	2	2
Iona	4	5	8	12	13
Colonsay & Oronsay	12	8	8	14	21
Islay	14	7	17	4	7
<i>Total</i>	<i>207</i>	<i>177</i>	<i>211</i>	<i>208</i>	<i>235</i>

In addition, 9 calling birds were reported (6 on Lunga, and at least one each on Cairn na Burgh More and Cairn na Burgh Beg) on the Treshnish Isles *Mull* [TIARG] and one on Eilean Mor (McCormaig Islands) *Mid-Argyll*, sites that are not censused annually.

Most birds seemed to have left by mid-Sep, but a late individual was seen at RSPB L. Gruinart during barley harvesting on 1st Oct.

MOORHEN *Gallinula chloropus* Cearc uisge

0424

Localised resident breeding species.

Breeding. Three prs bred at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay*, and a pr at Easter Ellister *Islay* raised 3 successive broods. The only other definite breeding was the regular pr at Benderloch Gravel Pit *N Argyll*. Prs were also present in the breeding season at Loch Bhasapol *Tiree*, Lochan Luing *Kintyre* and in Oban *Mid-Argyll*.

In 1999 the species was more widely reported than usual. Birds were recorded on *Islay* at Carnain (Loch Indaal), Kilchiaran and Loch Allan; on *Tiree* at Salum; in *Kintyre* at Tayinloan; in *N Argyll* at Keil Crofts; and in *Mid-Argyll* at Kilmory Lake, Cairnbaan, Laggan Pond (Gleann Sheileach), Glen Lonan Lake and Loch Ederline.

COOT *Fulica atra* Lach a bhlair

0429

Very scarce breeder and uncommon winter visitor.

Jan-Mar. The usual flock on Loch Bhasapol *Tiree* numbered 10 birds throughout Jan and Feb with a maximum of 11 on 30th Jan. The only other records at this time were singles: on McCaig's Loch (Oban) *Mid-Argyll* on 2nd and 16th Jan, at Loch Ballygrant *Islay* on 24th Feb, at the south end of Loch Awe *Mid-Argyll* on 10th Mar, and at Lochan Luing *Kintyre* on 31st Mar.

Summering birds. One was at Carnain Pools *Islay* from 2nd to 4th May, and a pair on Loch Bhasapol on 31st Jul could have been failed breeders.

Aug-Dec. Numbers on Loch Bhasapol varied, from 6 on 8th Aug and 3 in early Sep to peak counts of 8 on 24th Oct and 9th Dec. Two were also present on Loch a 'Phuill *Tiree* on 13th Oct and 5th Nov. The only other records were on *Islay*, where one was on Loch nan Cadhan on 12th Nov and one at RSPB L. Gruinart on 30th Dec.

OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ostralegus* Gille brighde

0450

Widespread and common breeding species. Flocks congregate at favoured locations outside the breeding season.

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Numbers at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart *Islay* peaked at 936 in Apr (cf peak of 1,003 in Mar 1998) [Table 19]. Apart from Loch Indaal, where the average monthly counts were up 2.6%, monthly maxima at most sites were well down on 1998.

Jan-Apr. The only counts of 100 or more not listed in Table 19 were 180 at Loch Gilp *Mid-Argyll* on 1st Feb and an all-island count of 334 on *Tiree* on 20th Mar. A totally albino bird was seen and photographed near Hunter's Quay (Dunoon) *Cowal* on 25th Jan.

Breeding. Recorded in 2 of 15 BBS squares (13%), (cf 2 of 16 in 1998). Five confirmed and 18 probable breeding prs were located on the Treshnish Isles *Mull*; 4 prs bred at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll*; 10 breeding prs were found at RSPB L. Gruinart; and at least 30 prs were judged to have bred on the Sanda Islands *Kintyre* (cf 20+ in 1998). Records of one or two breeding prs came from 6 sites in *Mid-Argyll*, one in *Cowal* and 4 on *Mull*. Two examples showed how tolerant of disturbance this species can be. A pr nested in a stone flower-pot at Ardrishaig Bowling Club *Mid-Argyll* and, despite frequent disturbance, fledged 3 young; and near the shore at Sandbank *Cowal* another pr nested successfully beside the much-used drive of a bungalow.

Aug-Dec. Southward passage was observed at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* in Aug. A total of 770 was counted flying south on 6 dates with a maximum of 280, grounded during poor visibility, on 12th. Other counts exceeding 100 birds came from Otter Ferry *Cowal* (169 on 1st Aug) and Oronsay *Colonsay* (155 on 16th Oct).

Table 19. *Maximum monthly counts of Oystercatcher at two sea-lochs on Islay, Loch Crinan (Mid-Argyll), Holy Loch (Cowal), The Strand (Colonsay) and at the four main freshwater lochs on Tiree in 1999.*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L. Gruinart	158	330	169	435	167	10	120	200	1	124	101	62
L. Indaal	411	424	680	501	442	427	367	367	355	462	401	455
L. Crinan	27	31	75	55	48	31	87	60	38	35	40	31
Holy Loch	301	404	116	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	302	432	621	288	489
The Strand, Colonsay	18	136	56	23	35	56	49	n/r	32	34	40	83
Tiree	18	12	193	170	41	n/r	121	n/r	n/r	2	0	0

RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius hiaticula* Trilleachan traghaidh 0470
Widespread and common breeding species. Flocks of birds congregate at favoured locations outside the breeding season, especially on passage. Tiree is a site of international importance for wintering birds.

Jan-Apr. Numbers at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart *Islay* peaked at 424 in Apr [Table 20]. Significant counts on *Tiree* at this time were: 205 between Sorobaidh Bay and Balephetrish Bay on 2nd Jan, 95 at Balephetrish Bay on 19th Feb, 105 at Balephetrish Bay on 14th Mar, 83 between Balephetrish and Gott Bay on 6th Apr, and an impressive 430 in Gott Bay alone on 8th May. The only other site with 50 or more birds was Ledaig Point *N Argyll* (ca 70 on 7th Jan).

Breeding. Recorded in 1 of 15 BBS squares (7%), (cf 1 of 16 in 1998). On *Colonsay* at least 29 breeding prs were located in Jun and a possibly incomplete

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count on Oronsay found 12 more prs (*cf* 36 prs on *Colonsay* and Oronsay 1998). On Treshnish Isles *Mull* 2 prs were incubating eggs or young and 2 more prs were probably breeding. Up to 8 prs bred on Sanda Islands *Kintyre* and 5 prs were seen with young. Prs with recently fledged young were also seen at 4 sites on mainland *Mull*.

Aug-Dec. Numbers at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart peaked at 299 in Aug [Table 20]. Southward passage was at its peak at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* when 230 were grounded by poor visibility on 12th Aug. On 13th 162 were counted at Balephetrish Bay and numbers on *Tiree* built up to 297 birds at Balephetrish and Sorobaidh Bays on 24th Oct. Later in the year, Balephetrish Bay produced counts of 156 on 1st Nov and 185 on 12th Dec.

Other sites with counts of 50 or more birds were: Traigh nam Barc *Colonsay* (94 on 22nd Sep), Ceann Loch Caolisport *Mid-Argyll* (50+ on 29th Oct), Ledaig Point (max. 150 on 9th Nov), Killinallan Point *Islay* (140 on 7th Nov), and south of Rhunahaorine Point *Kintyre* (max. 72 on 19th Nov).

Table 20. Maximum monthly counts of Ringed Plover at two sea-lochs on *Islay* and on Oronsay in 1999.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L. Gruinart	49	1	18	215	97	n/r	n/r	198	40	78	0	14
L. Indaal	49	68	25	109	111	32	35	101	95	68	80	85
Oronsay	30	73	34	33	0	4	0	15	48	48	30	19

DOTTEREL *Charadrius morinellus* Amadan-mointich 0482
Scarce migrant, mostly in late Apr and May. Occasional breeding records in N Argyll.

One was seen at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* on 6th May, a typical date. Two juvs. at Ardnave Point *Islay* on 22nd Sep were more unusual. These are the first records of the species on *Islay* since 1991.

GOLDEN PLOVER *Pluvialis apricaria* Feadag 0485
Sparse but widespread breeding species. Upland afforestation has greatly reduced available breeding habitat in some areas. More numerous in winter and especially on passage.

Jan-May. By far the largest numbers were on *Tiree*, where 3,100 were counted in two main flocks in the Reef-Airport area on 5th Apr [Table 21]. On *Islay* a flock of 70 was at Ardnave Loch on 10th Feb; 230 were counted at Killinallan Dunes on 11th Feb; 140 were at Loch Indaal on 21st Mar; 240 were at RSPB L. Gruinart on 11th Apr; and 225 were there on 1st May. Oronsay *Colonsay* also regularly had more than 50 birds and the maximum monthly counts were 149 on 19th Feb, 73 on 18th Mar and 83 on 21st Apr. The only other sites with counts of 50 or more were Traigh an Tobar Fhuair *Colonsay* (150+ on 14th Jan) and Fidden *Mull* (320 on 17th Apr).

Breeding. Recorded in 2 of 15 BBS squares (13%), (*cf* 2 of 16 in 1998). Otherwise, records of territorial birds came from one site on *Jura*, 6 sites on *Mull* and 2 in *N Argyll*.

Aug-Dec. Numbers on *Tiree* peaked on 17th Nov, when 2,025 were counted during the island goose count [Table 21]. At The Laggan *Kintyre* the peak autumn count was 260 on 11th Sep but up to 310 were present during Nov-Dec. RSPB L.

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Gruinart had monthly maximum counts of 190 on 20th Oct, 35 on 22nd Nov and 180 on 14th Dec, while the equivalent figures for Loch Indaal were 200 on 20th Oct, 350 on 3rd Nov and 301 on 27th Dec. On 6th Nov, 370 (the Loch Indaal birds) were feeding inland at Loanbaan and 50 were at Storakaig Islay. The only other site with 50 or more birds was Oronsay Colonsay (149 on 31st Oct).

Table 21. Maximum monthly day-counts of Golden Plover on Tiree in 1999.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Tiree*	410	1,200	2,500	3,100	225	0	10	435	508	1,466	2,025	330

*Most were in The Reef area

GREY PLOVER *Pluvialis squatarola* Trilleachan 0486
Uncommon passage migrant, mostly to islands. A few winter, mainly on Islay.

Jan-Apr. Relatively few records were received for this period. One was present at the head of Loch Gilp *Mid-Argyll* from early Jan to mid-Feb; and 2 were found in Loch na Cille *Mid-Argyll* on 22nd Feb. A single bird was in Balephetrish Bay *Tiree* from mid-Jan and 2 were there on 19th Feb. On *Islay*, 3 were at Loch Gruinart on 19th Jan and 26th Feb; and one was at Loch Indaal on 20th Feb. There were no records in Mar, and the only Apr records were singles on *Tiree* at Loch Bhasapol on 28th and at The Reef on 30th.

Aug-Dec. The first returning birds were singles at RSPB L. Gruinart on 20th, 22nd and 24th Aug, and one was at Bridgend on 26th Aug. After this birds were seen regularly at RSPB L. Gruinart, with 7 on 15th Sep rising to a peak autumn-winter count of 23 on 23rd Sep. The most seen there in Oct was 18 on 20th but there were no reports after 12 on 23rd. Loch Indaal had singles on 3rd and 5th Oct, 3 on 10th Oct and 2 on 27th Nov.

There were more reports than usual from other areas. In Sep, 3 were seen at Port Ramsay (Lismore) *N Argyll* on 10th; one was at Loch Don *Mull* on 21st; 4 were at Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* on 21st-22nd (only the second record here in recent years); and 6 were at Traigh nam Barc *Colonsay* on 22nd. Then 4 flew south past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 1st Oct; one was in the River Add estuary *Mid-Argyll* on 25th Oct; and singles were in Balephetrish Bay *Tiree* on 24th Oct and 1st Nov. The only Dec records were 3 south of Rhunahaorine Point *Kintyre* on 19th and 2 in Loch na Cille on 28th.

LAPWING *Vanellus vanellus* Carracag 0493
Localised breeder and widespread wintering species.

Jan-Apr. Numbers, generally, peaked in Mar, when in addition to the counts shown in Table 22, there were 600 at The Reef *Tiree* on 17th. The largest single count, however, was 907 between Loch a' Phuill and Loch Bhasapol *Tiree* on 30th Jan. The only other site with a count of 50 or more was Oronsay *Colonsay* (max. 99 on 29th Apr).

Breeding. Recorded in 3 of 15 BBS squares (20%), (cf 3 of 16 in 1998). At RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* 174 prs reared at least 80 young; 72 prs were found breeding at Coll RSPB Reserve; and a survey on Oronsay *Colonsay* on 28th Apr identified 49 apparent nests. At least 4 prs were found breeding on The Laggan *Kintyre*; and breeding prs were reported from one site in *Mid-Argyll* and 5 localities on *Mull*.

Aug-Dec. In addition to the counts shown in Table 22, over 1,000 birds were

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seen at the west end of *Tiree* on 29th Aug; and 408 were counted in the air over Cornaigmore *Tiree* in Dec. Flocks of 30 or 40 birds were more widely reported than usual, but the only other count of 50 or more was in the River Add estuary *Mid-Argyll* (50+ on 28th Nov).

Table 22. *Maximum monthly counts of Lapwing at two sea-lochs on Islay and at the four main freshwater lochs on Tiree in 1999.*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L. Gruinart	230	595	748	23	255	439	27	25	239	240	450	640
L. Indaal	0	45	100	2	7	4	0	36	39	68	100	90
<i>Tiree</i> *	310	200	272	172	98	72	140	n/r	529	254	45	73

* See above for higher counts elsewhere on *Tiree* but, in general, the species is under-recorded on the island.

KNOT *Calidris canutus* Luatharan gainmhich 0496
Uncommon passage migrant with main passage Aug-Sep. A few winter.

Jan-May. The only spring records were: 20 at Loch Indaal *Islay* on 21st Mar and 2 there on 26th, 2 in Gott Bay *Tiree* on 9th May, and 6 at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* on 26th May.

Jul-Dec. The first returning birds were at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* where 6 flew south on 30th Jul, followed by 41 on 2nd Aug and 70 on 5th Aug. Then, on 12th Aug, 145 birds were counted there, part of an influx of waders grounded by poor visibility. No more were recorded there until 31 on 2nd Sep, and 8 on 11th Sep were the last of the year. *Islay* had 3 at Bridgend on 1st Aug and 4 there next day, 22 on 4th and 30 on 26th Aug. The peak count at this site came later, when 40 were seen on 24th Oct, and the last birds here were 6 on 27th Nov. The first birds noted at RSPB L. Gruinart were 10 on 15th Aug, and numbers here built up from 52 on 20th Aug to 130 on 12th Sep and 120 on 21st Sep before falling to 20 on 23rd Dec. Smaller numbers were recorded elsewhere on the island. Away from *Islay*, up to 4 were present on Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* from 15th to 20th Aug and up to 9 from 4th to 14th Sep. A group of 11 birds at Ledaig Point *N Argyll* on 25th Aug included 2 birds still in breeding plumage. On *Tiree* the highest count in Gott Bay was 9 birds on 12th Sep, and 3 were at Ard Mor on 24th Oct. Only single birds were reported from *Colonsay*, on 2nd Sep and 14th Oct.

SANDERLING *Calidris alba* Luatharan glas 0497
Main passages in late Apr to May and in Aug. Some winter, mainly on Islay and Tiree. Occasionally recorded in summer. Tiree is a site of national importance for passage/wintering birds.

Jan-Jun. Notable counts on *Tiree* included: 385 on 6th Jan and 318 on 5th Feb in Balephetrish Bay and 315 on 24th Apr in Gott Bay. The peak count was a remarkable 576 between Hynish Bay and Gott Bay on 9th May, the largest gathering anywhere in *Argyll* in recent years. An unusual freshwater flock was 45 birds at Loch a 'Phuill on 29th May.

Most records on *Islay* were in the Loch Gruinart area. On 13th Feb 30 were near Killinallan Point and 27 were still there on 27th Feb. The WeBS count on 18th Mar found a total of 51 birds in Loch Gruinart.

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Elsewhere, a single bird at West Parkfergus *Kintyre* on 20th Jan was an unusual winter record for that area; 64 were counted in Crossapol Bay *Coll* on 24th Mar; 3 were on Oronsay *Colonsay* on 4th May; and 6 were at Camas Cuil an t-Saimh (Iona) *Mull* on 18th May.

Unusually there were several records in Jun, including 36 in Gott Bay on 2nd, 4 near Knockangle Point *Islay* on 5th, 7 at Ardskenish *Colonsay* on 7th, and 10 near Killinallan Point on 27th.

Jul-Dec. Autumn passage at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* started with 78 passing southwards on 21st Jul, followed by 37 on 2nd Aug and 42 on 12th Aug. On *Tiree* there were 32 birds in Gott Bay on 19th Jul and 181 in Balephetrish Bay on 13th Aug. Combined totals for Gott, Balephetrish and Sorobaiddh Bays were 240 on 11th Sep and 144 on 24th Oct. Later in the year, maximum monthly counts for Balephetrish Bay were 160 on 17th Nov and 148 on 9th Dec. The first birds at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* were 10 on 2nd Aug; numbers there peaked at 55 on 20th Aug and the last record was of 30 on 20th Sep. Elsewhere on *Islay*, 10 or more birds were counted at Traigh Nostaig (max. 67 on 12th Sep), Loch Indaal (max. 40 on 10th Oct) and Ardnave Point (65 on 2nd Nov). Away from *Tiree*, the only Dec records were singles at RSPB L. Gruinart on 11th and at Rhunahaorine Point *Kintyre* on 19th.

SEMPALMATED SANDPIPER *Calidris pusilla*

0498

Vagrant. No previous Argyll records.

On 6th Sep a juvenile bird of this species was seen with Dunlin and Ringed Plovers in Gott Bay *Tiree*. This is the first record of this North American species in Argyll. To the amazement of the finder, on 9th Sep it was there again, together with an adult, and both remained until at least 11th [AJL/MW]*. Also on 9th Sep, a juv. was identified at Loch Gruinart *Islay* together with a second bird which may well have been another juv [AJW/TapR]*. One of these may have been present since 6th Sep but it was not definitely identified then. At least one juv. was present until at least 11th Sep and, on 10th Sep, an adult was also present there [TapR]*. Thus, in total, at least four individuals of this very rare species were recorded in Argyll over a period of five days.

These sightings should be seen in the context of a record influx of North American waders to Scotland in the autumn of 1999, when at least 65 individuals of 8 species were recorded.

LITTLE STINT *Calidris minuta* Luatharan beag

0501

Scarce but annual passage migrant, with most records in autumn.

Spring. A single bird in breeding plumage was seen on 4th Jun at Loch a 'Phuill *Tiree*.

Autumn. Apart from 2 juvs. on Oronsay *Colonsay* on 24th Sep, all records were from *Islay*. Up to 3 were in the Loch Gruinart area on several dates in Aug-Sep but some consecutive records may refer to the same individuals. The first were 2 on 21st-22nd Aug, followed by one on 23rd, 3 on 5th Sep, singles on 9th-10th Sep, 3 on 11th and singles on 15th, 17th, 19th, 20th 23rd and 24th Sep. At Loch Indaal one was at Carnain on 27th Aug and 2 were there on 28th Aug. Then one was at Bridgend on 11th Sep and one at Gartbreck on 17th Sep. The last report involved a single at RSPB L. Gruinart on 27th Sep. Many of these were identified as juvs.

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BAIRD'S SANDPIPER *Calidris bairdii*

0506

Vagrant. Only one Argyll record, on Islay in 1979.

On 5th Sep a juvenile bird was found at Loch Gruinart Islay. It was subsequently seen by several observers on various dates until the last sighting on 21st Sep. This is only the second Argyll record of this transatlantic vagrant (see comment under Semipalmated Sandpiper regarding autumn 1999 influx) [ASC/SB/RAB/TapR/SCV *et al.*]*.

PECTORAL SANDPIPER *Calidris melanotos*

0507

Less than annual transatlantic visitor with eight accepted Argyll records between 1980 and 1998.

An excellent year for this species with two accepted records. A juvenile was seen with Dunlin and Curlew Sandpiper in a flooded field at Barrapol Tìree on 11th Sep [AJL]*. Later in the month, another juv. was found at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve Islay on 26th and was seen by several observers during the following two days [PRo/GJ/CRM/TapR *et al.*]*. Yet another manifestation of the autumn influx of transatlantic waders.

CURLEW SANDPIPER *Calidris ferruginea* Luatharan crom

0509

Scarce but more or less annual passage migrant, with most records in autumn.

Spring. Unusually there were several spring records, starting on 8th May with 3 birds at Gott Bay Tìree and one in partial breeding plumage at RSPB L. Gruinart Islay. The next records were also at RSPB L. Gruinart where there were 2 birds on 20th, 3 on 22nd and 2 on 23rd May. The last records involved singles at Loch a 'Phuill Tìree on 29th May and at The Reef Tìree on 1st Jun.

Autumn. Another good passage with many more records than normal. The first birds were 7 at Machrihanish SBO Kintyre on 12th Aug, grounded in poor visibility with other migrant waders. The first of many records at Loch Gruinart came when 5 were seen on 20th and 23rd Aug. These were followed by counts of 4 on 5th Sep, 33 on 6th (a record count for Argyll), 10 on 7th and 18 on 9th Sep. Then up to 9 daily until 11 on 19th and 19 on 20th Sep. The last birds at Loch Gruinart were a single on 24th and 3 on 27th. The only Loch Indaal record was one at Carnain on 26th-27th Aug. Away from Islay, there were birds on Tìree daily from 9th to 13th Sep with a maximum of 9 on 12th. A juv. in the River Add estuary Mid Argyll on 12th and 14th Sep was only the second record there in recent years.

PURPLE SANDPIPER *Calidris maritima* Luatharan rioghail

0510

Widely but sparsely distributed along rocky coasts from Oct to May. Tìree is a site of national importance for wintering birds.

Jan-May. The Big Strand Islay was an unusually sandy location for the 9 birds seen on 18th Jan, but small numbers were recorded regularly in Loch Indaal with 12 on 3rd Jan, 11 on 20th Feb, 8 on 24th Mar and 4 on 17th Apr. Slightly larger numbers were found at Balephetrish Bay Tìree with 13 on 14th Jan, 24 on 2nd Feb and 10 on 14th Mar. On 7th Apr, 24 were seen near Aird Mor and smaller numbers were found elsewhere on Tìree. Other records came from Oronsay Colonsay with 6 on 24th Jan and 2 on 24th Mar; and 8+ were at Ardskenish Colonsay on 6th Apr. Three birds were seen on Kerrera Mid-Argyll on 17th Apr; and the last was at Bruichladdich Islay on 2nd May.

Sept-Dec. Machrihanish SBO Kintyre had the first returning bird, a single on

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30th Sep, but the only other record there was 8 on 16th Dec. Three birds flew southwards past Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* on 1st Oct and one was there on 2nd Nov. There were no records elsewhere on *Islay* until Nov when 9 were at Ardnave Point on 2nd. Numbers in Loch Indaal rose from 4 on 7th Nov to 15 on 27th Nov before falling to 11 on 27th Dec. The first birds on *Tiree* were 4 at Balephetrish Bay on 31st Oct, and the only other records for the island were 17 between Hynish and Sorobaith Bay on 5th Dec and 10 at Balevullin on 19th Dec. The only other location that reported birds was *Oronsay* Colonsay with 2 on 31st Oct.

DUNLIN *Calidris alpina* Graillig 0512
Very localised breeding species. Numbers are generally highest on passage but large numbers winter on Islay and Tiree.

Jan-Jun. Apart from those listed in Table 23, the only sites with counts of 50 or more birds were on *Tiree*. Here the maximum monthly totals were: 211 in Balephetrish Bay on 30th Jan and 446 in Gott Bay on 31st Jan, 310 in Balephetrish Bay on 19th Feb, 85 in Balephetrish Bay on 17th Mar, 150 in Gott Bay on 25th Apr, and 145 at Loch a 'Phuill on 9th Jun. Total numbers at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart *Islay* peaked at 690 in the second half of Feb [Table 23].

Breeding. Displaying males were reported from Feur Lochan and Lossit on *Islay* and West Loch Fada *Colonsay*; and a pair was on moorland near Lossit *Islay* in May.

Jul- Dec. Autumn migration began at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* with 30 birds recorded on 26th Jul and peaked on 12th Aug when ca 600 were counted with the other grounded waders.

Numbers on *Islay* reached a peak in mid-Aug with a total of 818 at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart [Table 23]. On *Tiree* numbers were slow to build up with 60 at Balephetrish Bay on 13th Aug, 74 in Gott Bay on 11th Sep, 95 at Balephetrish Bay on 24th Oct and 68 there on 17th Nov. Then in Dec 200 were seen at Balephetrish Bay on 13th and 95 at Sorobaith Bay on 18th. The only other site with 50 or more birds at this time was Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* (max. 50 on 12th Sep).

Table 23 *Maximum monthly counts of Dunlin at two sea-lochs on Islay and on Oronsay in 1999.*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L.Gruinart	432	468	59	2	332	1	122	715	430	415	340	456
L. Indaal	181	222	21	52	19	15	55	103	75	95	80	190
Oronsay	25	73	18	10	150	19	0	10	0	5	11	73

BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER *Tryngites subruficollis* 0516
Rare transatlantic visitor with only 6 accepted Argyll records, involving 9 birds, since 1980. One was in May, one in Jun and the remainder in Sep.

A juvenile bird found at Loch Gruinart *Islay* on 5th Sep was present until at least 7th Sep and was seen by several observers [TapR/JAr/ASC *et al.*]*.

RUFF *Philomachus pugnax* Gibeagan 0517
Scarce but annual passage migrant, more numerous in autumn.

Apr-Jun. A single male was at Loch Bhasapol *Tiree* on 29th Apr and 1st May.

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Single females were recorded at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* on 6th, 17th and 19th May and one was at The Reef *Tiree* on 22nd Jun.

Jul-Oct. Single birds were at RSPB L. Gruinart on 5th and 7th Jun and on 2nd Aug. Then there was a gap until 2 appeared there on 9th Sep, after which there were birds on most days until 28th Sep. The maximum count was 8 on 22nd Sep. Two birds were at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* with the other grounded waders on 12th Aug, followed by 9 flying south on 2nd Sep and 2 on 9th Sep. The first on *Tiree* were singles at Loch a 'Phuill and Loch an Eilein on 12th Aug followed by 3 at Middleton on 28th Aug. In most days of Sep there were one or two birds at various sites on *Tiree*. Elsewhere, 2 were seen at Camas Cuil an t-Saimh (Iona) *Mull* on 23rd Aug, one on Oronsay *Colonsay* on 10th Sep and one at Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* on 22nd Sep. The last birds were in Oct, when there were singles at West Machrihanish *Kintyre* on 11th, Loch a 'Phuill on 17th and RSPB L. Gruinart on 22nd.

JACK SNIPE *Lymnocyrtes minimus* Gobhrag bheag 0518
Scarce, but probably under-recorded, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Jan-Mar. The only records were from East Kames (Loch Fyne) *Mid-Argyll* where 2 were flushed from tussock grass on 9th Feb and 4 on 7th Mar.

Aug-Dec. Unusually for this species, there were two Aug records, involving single birds at Sgeir a 'Chaisteil (Treshnish Isles) *Mull* on 10th and Quinish *Mull* on 27th. Two flushed at The Reef *Tiree* on 18th and 20th Oct were more typical, as was one at Bruichladdich *Islay* on 22nd Oct. The remaining records were all in Nov and involved singles at Ardlarach *Islay* on 13th, Rubha Garbh (Appin) *N Argyll* on 17th and Loch na Cille *Mid-Argyll* on 29th, and 2 at Balevullin *Tiree* on 17th.

SNIPE *Gallinago gallinago* Naosg 0519
Widespread and locally common breeding species. More numerous on passage and as a winter visitor.

Jan-Mar. One or two birds were reported from various localities in *Coll*, *Colonsay*, *Islay*, *Mid-Argyll*, *Mull* and *Tiree* during the winter. The only counts of 10 or more at this time came from Heylipol *Tiree* (14 flying over on 13th Jan), Mannal *Tiree* (10 on 31st Jan), RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* (33 on 8th Mar) and Loch Bhasapol *Tiree* (14 flying over on 17th Mar). On 30th Mar, 38 were recorded during the SNH goose count on *Coll*.

Breeding. Recorded in 4 of 15 BBS squares (27%), (cf 3 of 16 in 1998). A bird was found on Oronsay *Colonsay* sitting on 4 eggs on 21st Apr; and a survey there on 29th Apr located 33 adult birds. A circuit of the road network at dusk on *Colonsay* itself on 11th Jun located 40 drumming birds (cf 35 in 1998); and a bird was flushed from a clutch of eggs at The Reef *Tiree* on 24th Jul but no census was carried out there in 1999. A partial count at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* during the breeding season located 24 breeding pairs; and at least 4 pairs were considered to be breeding on the Treshnish Isles *Mull* in late Jun. Birds were also reported in suitable habitat during the breeding season from 9 sites on *Mull* and 2 sites in *Mid-Argyll*.

Aug-Dec. By far the largest count reported was the total of 179 birds found on *Tiree* on 11th Sep including 76 in a single field. Significant counts later in the year on *Tiree* included min. 40 at The Reef on 20th Oct, 47 there on 2nd Nov, and 58 between Hynish and Sorobaidh Bay in Dec. The other site holding large numbers was RSPB L. Gruinart where numbers built up from 14 on 14th Sep to 25 on 29th Oct and 38 on 7th Nov, peaking at 68 on 25th Nov before falling to 33 on 14th Dec. Once again small

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numbers were widely reported, but no other sites had counts in double figures.

WOODCOCK *Scolopax rusticola* Coileach coille 0529
Widespread but under-recorded breeder. Numbers augmented in winter by visiting birds.

Jan-Mar. Fewer records than usual, with single birds reported only from RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* and Kames (Loch Melfort) and Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll*.

Breeding. A circuit of the *Colonsay* road network at dusk on 11th and 15th Jun located 7 roding birds (cf 9 along the same route in 1998). Elsewhere, roding birds were reported from 3 sites on *Mull*, and an adult with a newly hatched brood of 2 young was found at a fourth. An adult giving alarms at Linne Mhuirich *Mid-Argyll* on 2nd Jun may well also have had young.

Sep-Dec. The first autumn migrant reported was at Heylipol *Tiree* on 15th Sep; and one was seen in Minard Woods *Mid-Argyll* on 21st Oct. From mid-Nov records were more frequent with one or two birds reported from sites in *Colonsay*, *Islay*, *Kintyre* and *Mid-Argyll* until the year end. An example of the relatively high altitudes at which this species may be encountered was the two birds found at ca 350m on the slopes of Beinn Sgulaire *N Argyll* on 12th Dec.

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa limosa* Cearra ghob 0532
Increasingly regular passage migrant, especially on Islay and Tiree. Scarce elsewhere.

Apr-Jun. After the first arrival at Loch an Eilein on 3rd Apr, birds were seen on *Tiree* almost daily until late May. Numbers peaked at 61 (including 2 birds colour-ringed at the Ouse Washes) on 18th Apr, mostly at Loch an Eilein and Loch a 'Phuill. Thereafter 25 were counted at Loch an Eilein on 1st May falling to 6 on 16th May, with the last bird there a single on 3rd Jun. Smaller numbers were recorded at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* starting with 2 on 6th Apr. Then up to 5 were present on most days until 22nd, when 6 were seen. The highest count there was 9 on 4th May, after which there were 2 on 11th and 14th May with the last single bird recorded on 29th May.

The only other records were single birds in the River Add Estuary *Mid-Argyll* on 9th Apr (the first spring record noted there) and at Ardnave Loch *Islay* on 3rd May.

Jul-Oct. The first returning birds were 14 at RSPB L. Gruinart on 25th Jul. These were followed by up to 5 birds there on 7 dates in Aug, then 6 on 10th Sep, 5 on 15th, 6 on 16th, 2 on 17th, 2 on 19th and 6 on 21st Sep. The last single bird was seen there on 17th Oct. Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* had 3 passage birds on 27th Jul followed by 8 on 31st and one on 1st-2nd Aug. There were many fewer records on *Tiree* than in spring: the first were 3 at Loch a 'Phuill and one at Heylipol on 13th Aug and the only other record was 12 at Loch a 'Phuill on 12th Sep. The highest count of the autumn was 44 on Oronsay *Colonsay* on 6th Aug. Elsewhere, 5 were at Loch Don *Mull* on 4th Aug, one at Tayinloan *Kintyre* on 8th Aug, one at Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* on 15th Aug, and 2 in the River Add Estuary on 12th Sep.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa lapponica* Cearra ghob mhor 0534
Recorded throughout the year especially at passage times. Most frequent and numerous on the islands with smaller numbers on the mainland. Wintering birds most numerous on Islay.

Jan-Jun. Numbers at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart *Islay* peaked at 261 in

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Jan (cf 165 in Feb in 1998) and were generally well up on 1998, especially at Loch Gruinart [Table 24]. The only other sites with counts of 10 or more birds at this time were Gott Bay *Tiree* (max. 26 on 31st Jan) and Oronsay *Colonsay* (max. 14 on 25th Jan). Smaller numbers were recorded from: Tayinloan *Kintyre*, Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll*, Loch Riaghain *Tiree*, Loch Don *Mull*, Sorobaidh Bay *Tiree*, Kilnaughton Bay *Islay* and Ardyne Bay *Cowal*. There were records in Jun from *Cowal*, *Islay*, *Kintyre* and *Tiree*.

Jul-Dec. The only birds reported in Jul were 32 counted in Loch Indaal on 18th. At Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* there were 16 passage birds on 12th Aug, 19 on 11th Sep and one on 30th Sep. Birds were generally most numerous and widespread in Sep, when numbers at RSPB L. Gruinart peaked at 220 on 17th [Table 24]. Other Sep records included 40 in Gott, Balephetrish and Sorobaidh Bays *Tiree* on 11th, 20 in Loch Crinan on 12th, and single figure counts from Campbeltown Loch *Kintyre*, Oronsay *Colonsay*, Port Ramsay (Lismore) *N Argyll*, Loch Sween *Mid-Argyll* and Loch Don. Later in the year, the only count of 10 or more birds outside *Islay* was 11 at Sorobaidh Bay on 18th Dec, but additional sites with records in single figures included The Laggan *Kintyre*, Loch Gilp *Mid-Argyll* and south of Rhunahaorine Point *Kintyre*.

Table 24. Maximum monthly counts of Bar-tailed Godwits at two sea-lochs on *Islay* in 1999.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L.Gruinart	150	120	51	70	6	n/r	n/r	12	220	168	176	171
L. Indaal	111	120	88	25	30	19	32	46	11	17	62	60

WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus* Eun bealltain 0538
Regular passage migrant in small numbers, mainly from late Apr to May and late Jul to early Sep. Summer records not infrequent.

Apr-May. Birds apparently arrived later than usual, the first record being 2 at Tayinloan *Kintyre* on 23rd Apr. The only other Apr records were counts in single figures from *Colonsay*, *Islay* and *Tiree*. However, birds were widespread in the first half of May. The highest count was 59 birds between Ruaig and Heylipol *Tiree* on 5th, and the largest single flock was 46 at Heylipol on 8th May. Other flocks of 10 or more were reported from: Coull Farm *Islay* (10 on 1st May), Kintra *Islay* (10 on 1st), Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* (11 in fields nearby on 6th), Ardtalla *Islay* (12 on 7th), Tayinloan (15 on 9th) and Loch Gruinart *Islay* (11 on 16th). Small groups of up to 8 birds were reported until the end of May from other sites in *Colonsay*, *Cowal*, *Islay*, *Mull* and *Tiree*.

Summering birds. One was at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* from 30th May to 2nd Jun; and single birds were reported at The Reef *Tiree* on 1st Jun and on Oronsay *Colonsay* on 7th and 17th. There were 2 at Ruaig *Tiree* on 10th Jun.

Jul-Sep. Returning migrants first appeared at Machrihanish SBO, where one was seen on 26th Jul followed by 5 on 12th Aug and 11 on 16th Aug. Apart from 9 on *Tiree* on 4th Sep and 7 at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* on 9th Sep, no more than 4 birds were reported elsewhere. Most records came from *Islay* where up to 4 were seen almost daily in the Loch Gruinart area from 5th to 12th Sep. Up to 3 were seen at Frenchman's Rocks on 5 dates in Aug; and Loch Indaal *Islay* had one or two birds on 4 dates in early Aug followed by 2 on 11th Sep and one on 16th. Otherwise there were records

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from Iona *Mull* (singles on 24th and 30th Aug) and *Tiree* (single figures from 28th Aug to mid-Sep). The last bird was at Gartbreck (Loch Indaal) on 17th Sep.

CURLEW *Numenius arquata* Guilbneach 0541
Widespread and locally common breeding species. More numerous on passage and in winter.

Jan-Apr. Numbers on *Islay* reached a peak in Feb, with a total of 497 at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart (cf 646 in Feb in 1998) and numbers generally were well down on last year [see note to Table 25]. The only other localities with counts of 50 or more at this time were The Strand *Colonsay* (53 on 24th Feb) and *Tiree* where, between Loch a 'Phuill and Loch Bhasapol, 172 were counted on 2nd Jan and 139 on 7th Feb.

Breeding. Recorded in 1 of 15 BBS squares (7%), (cf 1 of 16 in 1998). A partial count at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* gave a total of 13 breeding prs; but, for the first time since regular monitoring began, there were no birds breeding at Moine Mhor NNR *Mid-Argyll*. Otherwise, birds were reported during the breeding season from several localities in *Mid-Argyll* and *Mull*.

Jul-Dec. Numbers at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart peaked during Dec with a total of 664 (cf 808 in Dec 1998), whereas the max. of 180 at Holy Loch was reached on 29th Aug [Table 25]. Flocks of up to 40 birds were widely reported from Sep to Dec, but the only sites with counts of 50 or more birds were: The Reef *Tiree* (165 on 10th Sep), Loch Sween *Mid-Argyll* (max. 54 on 12th Sep), The Strand *Colonsay* (max. 52 on 14th Oct), Lossit Bay *Islay* (80 on 30th Oct) and Tayinloan *Kintyre* (max 55+ on 19th Nov). Whole-island counts on *Tiree* produced totals of 103 on 18th Nov and 193 on 19th Dec.

Table 25. *Maximum monthly counts of Curlew at two sea-lochs on Islay and Holy Loch (Cowal) in 1999.*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L.Gruinart	156	236	343	129	32	13	8	5	12	237	262	187
L. Indaal	202	261	102	53	51	27	222	447	509	379	295	477
Holy Loch	80	63	83	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	180	100	81	85	0

Average monthly total for the two sites on *Islay*, for the months when systematic counts were made at both (Jan-May and Oct-Dec), was 15.8% down on the figure for 1998.

SPOTTED REDSHANK *Tringa erythropus* Gearradh bhreac 0545
Rare passage migrant, with only 13 records during 1980-98: 2 in Apr, 3 in May, 5 in Aug, 2 in Sep and one in Oct.

Another good year for this species, with at least three and probably four records involving four or five individuals. The first bird was an adult, still in breeding plumage, at Dervaig *Mull* on 10th Jul. Then 2 juvs. were found at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* on 14th Sep. They both stayed until 20th Sep after which one remained until 29th Sep. One at Ardnave Point *Islay* on 25th Sep was probably a different individual; and one at RSPB L. Gruinart on 13th Oct, showing traces of adult plumage, almost certainly was.

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REDSHANK *Tringa totanus* Cam ghlas

0546

Localised breeder and widespread passage migrant and wintering species.

Jan-Apr. By far the highest count at this time came from *Tiree* where 162 were recorded during the WeBS survey on 18th Apr. Apart from those listed in Table 26, the only sites reporting counts of 20 or more birds were: Loch Gilp *Mid-Argyll* (max. 25 on 1st Feb), Kilm (Dunoon) *Cowal* (20 on 6th Mar) and Balesphetrish Bay *Tiree* (32 on 19th Mar). A partially albino individual seen at Dunoon in late Jan and photographed by one of our members was reported to Birdline Scotland as a Spotted Redshank.

Breeding. Recorded in 2 of 15 BBS squares (13%), (cf 3 of 16 in 1998). At Coll RSPB Reserve 26 prs bred and young were fledged. A total of 60 prs bred at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* (cf 85 in 1998, 95 in 1997 and 114 in 1996). On *Colonsay* (excluding Oronsay), 16 prs were found (cf 11 in 1998) while a possibly incomplete count on Oronsay itself located 10 prs. There was no count on *Tiree* this year but it was described as a common breeder. There were 3 breeding prs at Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* and breeding prs were reported from 2 sites on *Mull*.

Jul-Dec. The first birds of passage at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* were 20 flying past on 27th Jul. They were followed by 44 on 1st Aug and 83 were counted among the waders grounded by poor visibility on 12th Aug. Elsewhere, autumn passage numbers were down on 1998 and the highest count was 100 in one field at RSPB L. Gruinart on 23rd Aug [Table 24].

Other than those in Table 24, the only sites with 20 or more birds were: Loch na Cille *Mid-Argyll* (max. 20 on 12th Sep), Loch Gilp (max. 26 on 26th Sep) and the head of Loch Caolisport *Mid-Argyll* (40+ on 29th Oct).

Table 26. Maximum monthly counts of Redshank at two sea-lochs on *Islay*, Loch Crinan (*Mid-Argyll*), Holy Loch (*Cowal*) and at the four main freshwater lochs on *Tiree* in 1999.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L. Gruinart	28	18	46	80	65	120	n/r	100	41	34	14	18
L. Indaal	21	11	31	10	12	19	11	17	11	11	14	14
L. Crinan	24	23	36	15	4	6	5	25	35	19	15	29
Holy Loch	14	5	31	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	55	50	10	15	4
Tiree	29	21	19	162	54	n/r	14	n/r	27	15	2	5

GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia* Deoch bhuidhe

0548

Very scarce breeding species (only in Mull and N Argyll in recent years). Small numbers on passage with a few birds wintering in some localities.

Jan-May. Seen regularly during the winter months at Loch Beg *Mull* (max. 3 on 21st Mar) and on Oronsay *Colonsay* (max. 4 on 24th Feb). Four were seen in Loch Don *Mull* on 17th Feb; and one or two birds were at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* (on 19th Jan, 26th Feb and on 4 dates in Apr and 4 in May), Ardencaple (Seil) *Mid-Argyll* on 12th Feb, Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* on 12th Feb, Traigh nam Barc *Colonsay* on 6th Apr, and Ardnadrochit *Mull* on 18th May.

Breeding. No breeding records were received for 1999.

Single birds were seen in Jun at: Oronsay on 16th-17th, Loch Indaal *Islay* on

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17th and RSPB L. Gruinart on 23rd.

Jul-Dec. One was at Loch an Eilein *Tiree* on 8th Jul and birds were widely reported from 18th Jul (when 6 were recorded during the WeBS count on *Tiree*) onwards. Other records of 5 or more birds came from: Loch Crinan (5 on 24th Jul and up to 5 regularly 6th Aug–12th Sep), RSPB L. Gruinart (max. 7 on 1st Aug), Loch a 'Phuill *Tiree* (max. 6 on 8th Aug), Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* (9 among fall of migrant waders on 12th Aug), and a notable 12 on The Strand *Colonsay* on 23rd Sep and 14th Oct. From Aug to mid-Oct, up to 4 birds were seen regularly at RSPB L. Gruinart and at various other sites in *Colonsay*, *Islay*, *Kintyre*, *Mid-Argyll* and *Mull*. Records of one or two birds in Nov and Dec came from Loch Gruinart and Loch Indaal on *Islay* and Loch Beg and Loch Don *Mull*; and 5 were seen on The Strand *Colonsay* on 16th Nov and 19th Dec.

GREEN SANDPIPER *Tringa ochropus* Luatharan uaine 0553
Scarce passage migrant. Recorded in 14 of the 19 years 1980-98. Most records in autumn; very rare in spring.

More records than usual, all involving single birds in autumn. The first was at Grasspoint *Mull* on 1st Jul followed by a bird at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* on 5th–6th Jul. The remaining records concerned birds at Easter Ellister *Islay* on 5th Aug, Loch an Eilein *Tiree* on 8th Aug, RSPB L. Gruinart on 31st Aug and Easter Ellister again on 22nd and 26th Sep.

WOOD SANDPIPER *Tringa glareola* Luatharan coille 0554
Scarce passage migrant. Recorded in 11 of the 19 years 1980-98, with 8 of the 13 records in spring.

The records of single birds at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* on 24th Apr, 17th May and 9th Jun may possibly all refer to the same individual.

COMMON SANDPIPER *Actitis hypoleucos* Luatharan 0556
Widespread and common breeding summer visitor.

The first arrivals were on 21st Apr when birds were seen at several localities in *Mid-Argyll*. The main arrival followed shortly afterwards and from 22nd–27th Apr birds were reported from many sites in *Kintyre*, *Mid-Argyll*, *Mull* and *Tiree*.

Breeding. Recorded in 2 of 15 BBS squares (13%), (cf 2 of 16 in 1998). In *Mid-Argyll* 4 prs bred successfully at Taynish NNR; 5 prs were noted between Rubha na Frangach and Furnace (Loch Fyne); and breeding prs were noted at 4 hill lochs in the Ederline-Eredine Forest area. A total of 44 prs was found on *Colonsay* in Jun (cf 30 in 1998); and on *Mull* at least 10 prs were noted between Croggan and Fellonmore (Loch Spelve) and 5 prs between Scarisdale Point and Derryguais (Loch na Keal). Single birds were recorded displaying or alarming on four of the Treshnish Isles *Mull*; and there were confirmed breeding records from *Cowal* and *Islay*.

Returning birds on passage were recorded at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre*, where a loose flock of 18 flew past on 31st Jul and 39 were counted among the grounded waders on 12th Aug. One at Tayinloan on 23rd Sep was the last record of the year.

TURNSTONE *Arenaria interpres* Trilleachan beag 0561
Widespread and common passage migrant and winter visitor, mainly from Aug to May. Tiree is a site of national importance for wintering birds. Summer records not unusual.

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Jan-mid-May. Numbers at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart *Islay* peaked in late Feb when 148 were found during WeBS counts [Table 27]. Significant counts on *Tiree* included 51 around West Hynish and Loch a 'Phuill on 2nd Jan, 65 between Salum and Miodar on 6th Feb, and 125 in Balephetrish Bay on 14th Mar; the highest count at this time was 255 at Balephetrish Bay on 9th Apr. Away from *Islay* and *Tiree*, other sites with peak counts of 20 or more birds were: Oronsay *Colonsay* (max. 30 on 24th Jan) and Oban Bay *Mid-Argyll* (max. 29 on 1st Apr). One was seen on Oronsay on 30th May.

Summering birds. Four were present on Oronsay on 23rd Jun.

Jul-Dec. The only Jul records were 12 in Loch Indaal on 18th and one at RSPB L. Gruinart on 25th. At Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre*, 58 were counted among the grounded waders there on 12th Aug. Numbers at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart reached a total of only 62 in Oct (cf peak of 172 in Dec in 1998) [Table 27]. At Balephetrish Bay numbers climbed from 34 on 13th Aug to 73 on 11th Sep and an autumn peak of 152 on 24th Oct before falling to 28 on 12th Dec. Otherwise, the only counts of 20 or more birds were 70 at Ardnave Point *Islay* on 26th Sep, 26 in Sorobaidh Bay *Tiree* on 1st Dec and 34 at Tayinloan *Kintyre* on 19th Dec.

Table 27. *Maximum monthly counts of Turnstone at two sea-lochs on Islay in 1999.*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L.Gruinart	39	77	0	12	0	0	1	9	25	22	15	7
L. Indaal	38	71	41	18	15	0	12	2	25	40	25	72

RED-NECKED PHALAROPE *Phalaropus lobatus* Deargan allt 0564
Very rare and irregular passage migrant and former very rare breeding species.

A pair returned to the former breeding site last occupied in 1992; behaviour indicated that they probably laid and hatched eggs but there was no evidence of successful fledging [RSPB].

GREY PHALAROPE *Phalaropus fulicarius* Liathag allt 0565
Irregular passage migrant particularly associated with autumn gales. Rare in winter. All but 5 of 39 records during 1980-98 were in the period mid-Sep to mid-Oct.

Quite exceptionally, all three records of the year came during the winter months. Excellent video footage was obtained of an individual at Tayinloan *Kintyre* on 8th Jan; one flew past Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* on 2nd Nov; and one was seen near the pier at Dunoon *Cowal* on 27th Dec. Winter records are not unknown in Scotland but are certainly infrequent.

POMARINE SKUA *Stercorarius pomarinus* Fasgadair donn 0566
Scarce but annual passage migrant. Most are seen in autumn.

The first record of the year was a 1st-summer bird flying south past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 21st Jul. The only other record there was a single bird flying south on 11th Oct. Apart from an adult passing Balevullin *Tiree* on 8th Aug and two immature birds seen from the Kennacraig-*Islay* ferry on 9th Oct, all the other records were from *Islay*.

Frenchman's Rocks had single birds on 25th and 29th Aug, then single juvs. on 9th and 10th Oct followed by 6 juvs. on 28th Oct and a remarkable 18, passing in a 3-hr period,

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on 31st Oct. The last record there was a single bird on 2nd Nov. Elsewhere, single birds were seen at Smaull and at RSPB L. Gruinart on 11th Nov (possibly the same individual). The last was a single bird at Killinallan Point on 20th Nov. Altogether a very good autumn for the species.

ARCTIC SKUA *Stercorarius parasiticus* Fasgadair 0567
The commonest skua in Argyll, regularly seen in small numbers near large seabird colonies. Small breeding colonies on Jura and Coll. Passage birds regular and widespread in spring and especially autumn.

May-Jun. The only record in May was of a dark-phase bird chasing terns in Gott Bay *Tiree* on 8th. A light-phase bird was seen at the same location on 1st Jun; and other Jun records came from: Loch Shiffen *Jura* (2 on 26th), The Reef *Tiree* (light-phase bird on 10th), Pigs Paradise *Colonsay* (2 dark-phase birds on 10th and one on 15th), Lunga (Treshnish Isles) *Mull* (up to 7 birds of light and dark phases between 12th and 26th), Oronsay *Colonsay* (one on 16th) and Sanaigmore and Killinallan Point *Islay* (one on 20th).

Breeding. No information was received from *Coll* or *Jura*.

Jul-Nov. In Jul there were 5 sightings of dark-phase birds in Gunna Sound *Tiree*; two were seen on Oronsay on 18th; one flew through Ardmucknish Bay *N Argyll* on 24th; at least 6 birds of both colour phases were seen around Lunga (Treshnish Isles) *Mull* on 29th; and 3 were seen from the Kennacraig-*Islay* Ferry on 31st. Southward passage past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* began on 21st Jul, when 3 adults passed through. These were followed by 2 on 2nd Aug and 5 on 9th Sep.

Regular sea-watching at Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* produced records of 3 birds on 6th Aug, 4 on 15th Aug, 4 on 14th Sep, 4 on 1st Oct, 3 on 9th Oct and 4 on 10th Oct as well as one or two birds on 5 other dates in Aug, 5 dates in Sep and 2 in Oct. Further sightings from the Kennacraig-*Islay* Ferry included singles on 8th and 27th Aug, 2 on 5th Sep and 4 on 9th Oct.

Elsewhere, 4 were seen from the ferry between *Coll* and *Tiree* on 28th Aug; and singles were at the north end of *Iona Mull* on 29th Aug and at Craighers *Islay* on 12th Sep. On 17th Sep one was seen, accompanied by a Great Skua, attacking and killing an Oystercatcher at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay*. The last bird recorded was one close offshore, at Ard More *Tiree*, on 1st Nov.

LONG-TAILED SKUA *Stercorarius longicaudus* Fasgadair stiuirich 0568
Less than annual passage migrant. Recorded in both spring and autumn off western coasts and islands.

An adult bird seen flying over Lunga on 26th Jun is the first known record of this species for the Treshnish Isles *Mull* [TIARG].

GREAT SKUA *Stercorarius skua* Fasgadair mor 0569
Uncommon passage migrant and summer visitor. Bred successfully on Treshnish Isles (Mull) in 1998 and has also attempted to breed on Coll in recent years.

Apr-Jun. The first bird of the year was one in the Sound of Gigha *Kintyre* on 7th Apr. On 13th Apr a noticeable passage occurred on *Islay* during strong NW winds when a total of 12 birds, in small groups, flew up Loch Indaal and out over Loch Gruinart. Elsewhere, single birds were seen over The Laggan *Mull* on 17th Apr, above Hynish Bay *Tiree* on 18th Apr, offshore near Ardtalla *Islay* on 8th May, at Scoor *Mull* also on 8th May, at Balnoe *Tiree* on 17th May, over the gull colony at Na h-Urrachann

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(Scarba) *Mid-Argyll* on 9th Jun, and off Grasspoint *Mull* on 25th Jun.

Breeding. Up to 6 birds were present on Lunga (Treshnish Isles) *Mull* in the latter part of Jun, including a pair apparently holding territory, but no evidence of breeding was found [TIARG].

Jul-Oct. On 9th Jul one was in Gunna Sound *Tiree*; and an adult was seen with gulls accompanying the ferry off Duart Point *Mull* on 6th Aug. The first autumn migrants at Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* were 2 on 3rd Aug, followed by one on 9th and 6 on 13th Aug. Then up to 3 birds were seen on 6 more dates in Aug, followed by 4 birds on 1st Sep and one on 7th. The peak count at Frenchman's Rocks occurred on 9th Sep when no less than 22 were counted flying southwards in 3 hrs. After this up to 4 birds were seen on 14th and 25th Sep and on 6 dates in Oct. Also on *Islay*, 3 were seen near the Mackenzie Island on 24th Aug, and single birds were seen at four other sites in Aug, at Loch Gruinart on 17th Sep and at Black Rock (Loch Indaal) on 3rd Oct. Elsewhere, singles were seen from the ferry between Coll and *Tiree* on 28th Aug, from the Kennacraig-*Islay* Ferry on 5th Sep, and on *Tiree* on 9th and 13th Sep. The 6 birds at Frenchman's Rocks on 31st Oct were the last of the year.

LAUGHING GULL *Larus atricilla*

0576

Vagrant. Only two previous records: on Islay in 1974 and on Coll in 1998.

After a gap of 14 years between our first and second records, the third occurred after only five months. On 14th Apr an adult in breeding plumage was found at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay*. It was present until 21st Apr providing excellent views for many observers [CMu/TapR/CRM *et al.*]*

LITTLE GULL *Larus minutus* Crann fhaoileag

0578

Irregular visitor, with records in all but 3 years since 1980. Typically seen Aug to Oct, but there are records for every month of the year.

An excellent year for this species with records involving 9 individuals. The first of the year was a bird in first-winter plumage, found dead at Loch Buie *Mull* on 5th Jan. Then two first-summer birds were seen on *Tiree*: one at Balephetrish Bay on 16th May and another at Loch Bhasapol on 22nd Jun. A juv. found at Campbeltown Loch *Kintyre* on 27th Jul was badly injured and had to be destroyed. There were 3 records in Aug: a first-summer bird on Scallastle beach *Mull* on 3rd, a moulting adult at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 12th, and an adult at Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* on 15th. Machrihanish SBO had a second bird, this time a juv./first winter, on 11th Sep; and the last record of the year was a first-winter bird at Port Charlotte *Islay* on 30th Oct.

SABINE'S GULL *Larus sabini*

0579

Irregular passage migrant, mainly in autumn, with records in all but 2 of the last 10 years.

An adult at Traigh Bail-a-mhuilinn *Tiree* on 9th Sep was still in almost complete breeding plumage [AJL]*.

1997. Five juvs. were recorded at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* during 7 hrs of sea-watching on 13th Oct [EJM]*. They occurred at a time of NW gales during which several other scarce seabirds occurred.

BLACK-HEADED GULL *Larus ridibundus* Faoileag a'chinn duibh

0582

Patchily distributed resident breeder. Reduced or absent at some sites due to mink predation. Scarce in many areas in winter.

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Jan-May. Other than those in Table 28, the only sites with counts of 50 or more birds were: Holy Loch *Cowal* (50+ on 8th Jan), Inveraray *Mid-Argyll* (58 on 3rd Mar), Loch Bhasapol *Tiree* (242 on 25th Apr) and Balephetrish Bay *Tiree* (max. 292 on 16th May).

Breeding. Not recorded in any of the 15 BBS squares surveyed, (cf 1 of 16 in 1998).

In the Argyll part of the SAMS study area, 242 pairs were noted breeding at 8 sites (6 in *Mid-Argyll*, 2 in *Kintyre*); the colonies varied in numbers from one to 100 pairs. Breeding success of 236 pairs at 7 sites was monitored. They fledged ca 79 young, all at 3 sites where mink were controlled. Four sites with 88 prs fledged no young; mink were responsible at one of the sites (with only 1 pr), (cf 318 pairs at 8 sites raised ca 75 young in 1998). One colony with 71 prs in the Sound of Jura failed completely for unknown reasons. Two pairs probably bred at Sgeir na Sgeilidh (Linne Mhuirich) *Mid-Argyll*, the first attempt since 1996 at this site where the species was once numerous. Elsewhere, 4-5 prs were breeding on Black Rock (Loch Crinan) *Mid Argyll* on 10th Jun; and 2 prs were on the Garvard Islands (off *Colonsay*) on 17th Jun.

Aug-Dec. The only counts of 50 or more birds, other than those in Table 28, were at Inveraray (78 on 28th Aug) and Loch Gilp *Mid-Argyll* (80 on 24th Dec).

Table 28. *Maximum monthly counts of Black-headed Gulls at two sea-lochs on Islay and at Loch Crinan (Mid-Argyll) in 1999.*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L.Gruinart	0	10	75	114	0	n/r	n/r	170	4	93	0	0
L. Indaal	10	5	60	53	57	29	67	105	47	71	14	14
L. Crinan	27	0	33	21	2	47	164	111	24	1	2	10

RING-BILLED GULL *Larus delawarensis*

0589

Scarce visitor from North America. There are records from Argyll for every month of the year and from 11 of the 16 years since the first confirmed sighting in 1983.

After a gap of two years, a bird in 3rd-winter/adult plumage was seen at Sorobaidh Bay *Tiree* on 15th May. An adult seen on 19th Jul at Heylipol Farm *Tiree* may have been the same individual [AJL]*.

COMMON GULL *Larus canus* Faoileag

0590

Widespread and common resident breeding species but reduced or absent at some sites after repeated predation by mink.

Jan-Apr. Winter numbers on *Islay* were down on 1998, with a peak total at Loch Gruinart and Loch Indaal of 714 in late Feb (cf 1,201 in Feb 1998) [Table 29]. Other than those in Table 29, the only sites with counts of 100 or more were: Balephetrish Bay *Tiree* (max. 190 on 15th Mar), Loch Sween *Mid-Argyll* (max. 109 on 21st Mar) and Tayinloan *Kintyre* (100+ on 8th Apr).

Breeding Recorded in 2 of 15 BBS squares (13%), (cf 6 of 16 in 1998). In the Argyll part of the SAMS study area, 1,055 pairs were noted breeding at 36 sites (colony size 1 to 302 prs). Of these 1,043 prs at 30 sites were monitored and fledged 422 young (0.40 young/pr). In areas where mink were removed shortly before the breeding season, 701 prs at 13 sites fledged 364 young (0.519 young/pr). In areas where mink were not removed, 342 prs at 17 sites fledged 58 young (0.169 young/

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pr). Thus mink removal raised productivity by 3.07 times. Mink predation is known to have occurred at 5 of the 17 sites. Large gulls and Buzzards were also significant predators of young. Elsewhere, further censuses were undertaken at various locations as part of Seabird 2000. These revealed a total of 8 pairs on the Treshnish Isles *Mull*, 44 active nests on the Sanda Islands *Kintyre* (68 young ringed), 12 pairs breeding (with fledged young) at *Coll* RSPB Reserve, 20 active nests on Oronsay *Colonsay*, 12 active nests on Loch Clachaig *Mid-Argyll*, and 15 nests (all empty except one c/1) at Loch Don *Mull*.

Jul-Dec. In autumn the only counts of 100 or more (excluding Table 29 sites) came from: *Cornaigmore Tiree* (105 on 2nd Aug), *Hough Tiree* (178 on 6th Sep), *Machir Bay Islay* (300 on 22nd Sep), *Loch Gilp Mid-Argyll* (max. 920 on 15th Dec), and *High Dunashry Kintyre* (100+ on 19th Dec).

Table 29. *Maximum monthly counts of Common Gulls at two sea-lochs on Islay and at Loch Crinan (Mid-Argyll) in 1999.*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L. Gruinart	66	384	156	54	29	12	n/r	200	91	123	210	87
L. Indaal	121	330	252	290	170	110	95	301	297	70	123	127
L. Crinan	0	0	220	33	25	33	8	10	110	142	135	97

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus fuscus* Faoileag bheag 0591
Widespread breeding species, generally present from Mar to Sep. Some colonies much affected by mink predation. A few remain in winter.

Jan-May. The only records before mid-Mar were single birds at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* on 1st Feb and on 5th and 11th Mar, 3 at Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* on 28th Feb and 2 at Bridgend (Loch Indaal) *Islay* on 9th Mar. Returning birds appeared on *Tiree* from 14th Mar and numbers built up in all areas during the following week. By 20th Mar, 45 were on territory on *Tiree* and 537 were counted around Loch Bhirceapol on 12th May.

Breeding. Recorded in 2 of 15 BBS squares (13%), (cf 5 of 16 in 1998). In the Argyll part of the SAMS study area, 906-926 prs bred at 17 sites (colony size 1-ca 300 prs) and fledged at least 447 young. Mink predation of eggs and chicks is known to have occurred at 3 colonies, reducing fledging to zero at two of them. Elsewhere, censuses undertaken as part of Seabird 2000 revealed: a total of ca 40 pairs breeding on the Treshnish Isles *Mull*, 66 active nests on the Sanda Islands *Kintyre* in Jun (34 young ringed), 100+ nests on Oronsay *Colonsay* (3rd-7th Jun) and 24 active nests at Na h-Urrachann (Scarba) *Mid-Argyll*.

Sep-Dec. The only count of migrant birds was 19 passing Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* in 45 minutes on 2nd Sep. The last birds on *Tiree* were 8 at Loch an Eilein on 11th Sep. Single birds were reported in late autumn/winter at: Loch Gilp *Mid-Argyll* (on 11th Oct and 2nd Dec), RSPB L. Gruinart (on 29th Oct), Bridgend *Islay* (on 10th Nov), Portnahaven *Islay* (on 15th Nov) and in the River Add estuary *Mid-Argyll* on 3rd Dec.

HERRING GULL *Larus argentatus* Faoileag an sgadain 0592
Widespread and abundant resident breeding species. Productivity at many colonies much affected by mink predation. Some evidence for immigration into Argyll in winter; colour-ringing studies have shown that some of these birds are from the

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Clyde and NE England.

Jan-Apr. Other than those in Table 30, the only counts of 200 or more birds were at: Holy Loch *Cowal* (1,000+ on 8th Jan), Campbeltown Loch *Kintyre* (281 on 21st Jan), Lingerton rubbish tip (Loch Gilp) *Mid-Argyll* (850 on 4th Mar) and Eilean Aoghainn (Loch Fyne) *Mid-Argyll* (max. 360+ on 10th Apr).

Breeding. Recorded in 7 of 15 BBS squares (47%), (*cf* 11 of 16 in 1998).

In the Argyll part of the SAMS study area, 6,722 pairs were noted breeding at 47 sites (colony size 1-810 pairs). At 14 sites (totalling 33 prs) there were less than 10 prs each, and seven of these had only single pairs. Thus only 0.49% were at colonies of less than 10 prs.

Considering colonies with ten or more prs: at 6 colonies with 1509 prs where mink were removed, 1,272 young fledged (0.843 young/pr); and at 27 colonies with 5,180 prs where mink were not removed, 1,870 young fledged (0.361 young/pr). Thus mink removal raised the fledging rate by 2.3 times. There was definite mink predation at 7 of these 27 colonies and no young fledged at 5 of the 7. The larger colonies which raised few or no young because of well-documented mink predation were: Bach Island (Kerrera) (33 young from 810 prs); E. nan Caorach (Lismore) (no young from 248 prs; predation filmed this year by BBC); Geasgill Mor (Ulva) (no young from 180 prs); Inn Island (Lismore) (no young from 140 prs) and E. Loch Osaic (Lismore) (no young from 59 prs).

Annual mink-caused breeding failures on this scale are occurring throughout the SAMS study area in Argyll and Lochaber (and doubtless beyond). Their eventual effect can be viewed at other islands *e.g.*, the Creag group (Lismore) and the E. nan Coinean group ("Rabbit Island" south of Carsaig in the Sound of Jura); together these held a few thousand prs of Herring Gulls in the 1980s but, after repeated failures like those above, are now empty. Other colonial ground-nesting species (mainly gulls and terns) are being affected in the same way, but the effects are most easily measured with Herring Gulls since they are the most abundant. The resulting large decreases in regional numbers of five species of gulls and terns were detailed in *Argyll Bird Report* 14 (1998) 98-110.

Elsewhere, censuses undertaken as part of Seabird 2000 revealed: a total of *ca* 225 prs breeding on the Treshnish Isles *Mull* (largest colony 54 prs on Cairn na Burgh More), 821 active nests on the Sanda Islands *Kintyre* (*cf* 700 in 1998), 29 pairs breeding (and young fledged) at *Coll* RSPB Reserve, 300+ prs on Oronsay *Colonsay*, and 166 active nests at Na h-Urrachann (Scarba) *Mid-Argyll*.

Aug-Dec. The highest counts at this time were: 305 at Crarae Point *Mid-Argyll* on 15th Aug, 960 at the head of Loch Feochan *Mid-Argyll* on 19th Aug, 380 at Loch Gruinart *Islay* on 20th Aug [Table 30], 500+ at Loch Feochan *Mid-Argyll* on 21st Sep, 320 at Loch an Eilein *Tiree* on 19th Oct, and 260 at Loch a 'Phuill *Tiree* on 20th Nov. No other site recorded numbers exceeding 200 birds.

Table 30. *Maximum monthly counts of Herring Gulls at two sea-lochs on Islay and at Loch Crinan (Mid-Argyll) in 1999.*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L.Gruinart	58	27	68	62	268	n/r	n/r	380	65	119	30	18
L. Indaal	240	290	102	117	190	25	48	117	227	180	195	229
L. Crinan	42	100	110	29	60	12	8	86	55	60	69	126

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ICELAND GULL *Larus glaucoides* Faoileag liath 0598
Scarce but regular winter visitor, most frequent Jan-Mar.

Jan-May. At least 9 individuals were recorded. At Oban *Mid-Argyll* 1st-winter birds were seen on several dates from 3rd Jan to 28th Feb, usually near the ferry terminal, and birds in 2nd-winter plumage were reported there on 22nd Jan and 6th Feb. On *Islay* an adult was at Bunnahabhain on 15th-16th Feb, and a 1st-year bird was present at Gartbreck on 7th and 16th Mar. In Apr, birds in 1st-winter/summer plumage were reported from: Campbeltown Loch *Kintyre* on 1st and 8th, Loch Feochan *Mid-Argyll* on 16th and Oban on 21st. An adult was reported in Oban harbour on 9th Apr. A bird described as being in 1st-summer plumage was in Oban harbour on 3rd May; and a 2nd-summer bird was seen off the north end of *Colonsay* on 7th May.

Oct-Dec. The only record at this time involved a 2nd-winter bird at Loch a 'Phuill *Tiree* on 20th Nov.

GLAUCOUS GULL *Larus hyperboreus* Faoileag mhor 0599
Scarce but regular winter visitor, most frequent Jan-Mar.

Jan-Apr. At least 4 individuals were recorded. First-winter birds were reported in Oban harbour *Mid-Argyll* on 3rd and 5th Jan and 2nd Feb. One in 1st-summer plumage was there on 3rd Apr. A 2nd-winter bird found dead at Balemartine *Tiree* on 31st Jan was presumably the same individual as one seen briefly at Balephetrish on 17th Jan. On *Islay*, single 1st-winter birds were at Lossit Bay on 31st Jan and at RSPB L. Gruinart on 2nd and 26th Feb. Curiously, another 2nd-winter bird was found dead on *Tiree* (at Mannal) on 3rd Apr.

Summering birds. For the second year running, a single bird summered in Campbeltown Loch *Kintyre*. In 1st-summer plumage when first seen on 26th Jul, it had moulted into 2nd-winter plumage by the time it was last seen on 30th Oct.

Oct-Dec. The only record at this time was of a 1st-winter bird first seen in Campbeltown Loch on 2nd Nov that stayed on into Dec.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus marinus* Farspag 0600
Common and widespread resident breeding bird. Also occurs as passage migrant and winter visitor.

Jan-May. The only sites with counts of 50 or more birds at this time were: Holy Loch *Cowal* (98 on 8th Jan), Lingerton rubbish tip (Loch Gilp) *Mid-Argyll* (220 on 4th Mar), Loch a 'Phuill *Tiree* (max. 105 on 9th May) and Loch Bhasapol *Tiree* (max. 92 on 9th May).

Breeding. Recorded in 3 of 15 BBS squares (20%), (cf 8 of 16 in 1998). In the *Argyll* part of the SAMS study area, 454-455 prs were noted breeding at 53 sites (colony size 1-55 prs, incl. 22-23 single prs). 45 sites with 437 prs, incl. 18 single prs were monitored. They fledged ca 393-397 young (0.899 young/pair). At 18 sites no young were produced (13 of these being single prs) and mink were definitely the cause at 7 of the 18. Elsewhere, censuses undertaken as part of Seabird 2000 revealed: a total of ca 342 prs breeding on the Treshnish Isles *Mull* (largest colony 52 prs at the south end of Lunga), 54 active nests on the Sanda Islands *Kintyre* (highest count in recent years), 44+ nests on Oronsay *Colonsay*, and 4 nests each on Eilean Mor *Jura* and at Na h-Urrachann (Scarba) *Mid-Argyll*.

Of a sample of 302 birds passing Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* 18th Sep-12th Nov, 228 (75%) were non-adults (mostly 1st-winter).

Aug-Dec. Counts of 50 or more birds came from: head of Loch Feochan (101

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on 19th Aug), Loch a 'Phuill (max. 195 on 19th Oct), Balephuill *Tiree* (210 roosting on beach during northerly gales on 18th Nov), Bridgend Merse *Islay* (115 on 9th Dec), and Loch Crinan (max. 97 on 12th Dec – the highest count there in recent years).

KITTIWAKE *Rissa tridactyla* Ruideag 0602
Normally strictly marine. Main breeding area on Colonsay, with other important colonies on Islay, Treshnish Isles (Mull) and Tiree. Rare in winter and very scarce inland.

Jan-Apr. On 21st Mar 23 were at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* at a time of strong NW winds. At Kiloran Bay *Colonsay* 108 birds were counted bathing on 8th Apr.

Breeding. On *Colonsay*, the Uragaig sample colony totalled 117 pairs (cf 121 in 1998), and the sample ledge at Pigs Paradise held 15 nests (cf 14 in 1998) with a mean clutch size of 1.93 (cf 1.86 in 1998). After a single nest on Glunimore, Sanda Islands *Kintyre* in 1998, following a gap of 3 years with no breeding birds, 9 well-built nests were found there this year and 26 birds were present on the ledges. A complete census of the Treshnish Isles *Mull* for Seabird 2000 revealed a total of 786 AON, most of which were on Lunga. Other Seabird 200 censuses provided the following counts: Ceann a' Mhara *Tiree* (1,035 AON on 22nd Jun), Eilean Mor *Jura* (14 AON on 9th Jun) and Eilean Beag *Jura* (7 AON on 9th Jun).

Jul-Dec. At Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* 160 passed in 1.5 hrs on 14th Jul, and the mean hourly rate in Aug (total of 9.25 hrs) was 180.1 with a maximum of 510 in one hour on 11th. The first birds of autumn at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* were 2 juvs. on 3rd Aug, and by 11th Sep 900 were counted (24% juvs.) passing southwards in 6 hrs. On *Tiree*, 250 were in Hynish Bay on 30th Oct and a minimum of 650 were counted off Ard Mor point on 1st Nov. Also in Nov, 180 were seen at Ballinaby *Islay* on 11th, and 50 at RSPB L. Gruinart on 30th were the last birds reported.

SANDWICH TERN *Sterna sandvicensis* Stearnag mhor 0611
Uncommon passage migrant. Very rare and irregular breeding species.

Jan-May. The first record of the year concerned 2 at Dunaverty Bay *Kintyre* on 9th Apr. The next was not until 18th Apr when one was at Sandaig *Tiree*. Eight seen at Campbeltown Loch *Kintyre* on 22nd Apr were the first of a sequence of records there, including 2 on 27th Apr, 21 on 30th Apr and 5 on 17th May. Elsewhere, 2 were in the Sound of Gigha *Kintyre* on 24th Apr, 4 at Blairmore (Loch Long) *Cowal* also on 24th Apr (and 2 there on 30th Apr), 4 at Tayinloan *Kintyre* on 25th Apr (and 2 there on 12th May), 2 at Loch Indaal *Islay* on 4th May, one at Easter Ellister *Islay* on 13th May, and one at Mannal *Tiree* on 27th May.

Summering birds. There were no indications of breeding in Argyll. The only summer records were 2 birds at The Reef *Tiree* on 23rd Jun and 2 at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* on 6th Jul.

Jul-Nov. Autumn passage at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* began early, with one juv. on 16th Jul, followed by 2 more on 17th and 11 (inc. 3 juvs.) on 26th Jul. RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* had 2 on 30th and one on 31st Jul. In Aug birds were seen at: Tighnabraich *Cowal* (2 offshore on 1st), Bridgend *Islay* (2 on 2nd), Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* (3 on 4th), Tayinloan (3 on 9th and one on 23rd), Blairmore (5 on 14th and one on 20th) and Skipness *Kintyre* (2 on 22nd). Further migrants were seen at Machrihanish SBO in Sep, with 7 on 9th, 12 on 11th and 2 on 30th. Apart from 2 fishing off the coal pier at Dunoon *Cowal* on 9th Sep, the only other record was a very late bird at Frenchman's Rocks on 2nd Nov.

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COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo* Stearnag 0615
Locally common summer visitor, considerably more numerous than Arctic Tern, at least on small islands close to the mainland. Many colonies near mainland and Mull severely affected by mink predation and often unproductive where no trapping is undertaken.

Apr-May. The first birds of the year were on *Tiree* where 3 were at Loch a 'Phuill on 6th May. The other May records were at: Loch Gruinart *Islay* (2 on 13th), Campbeltown Loch *Kintyre* (25 on 17th) and Loch Indaal *Islay* (4 on 21st).

Breeding. In the Argyll part of the SAMS study area, 1,051 prs breeding at 9 sites (colony size 1-772 prs) fledged 684 young (cf 476-495 young from 826 prs at 9 sites in 1998). At 6 sites where mink were removed, 972 prs fledged a total of 668 young (0.687 young/pr). At 3 sites where mink were not removed, 79 prs fledged 16 young (0.2025 young/pr). Thus mink control increased productivity by a factor of 3.4. At two of these 3 sites, mink predation caused whole-colony failure (one of these sites was a mussel raft at South Shian, Loch Creran, on which 12 prs laid). At the largest colony (possibly still the largest colony of Common Terns in the British Isles) where 772 prs bred and fledged ca 550 young, mink control is now annually effective. An important finding of the SAMS study in Argyll and Lochaber has been that almost all colonies of Common and Arctic Terns that were not protected from mink fledged no young in 1999, 1998 and 1997 because of mink predation.

Elsewhere, a total of 6 prs were found breeding on Treshnish Isles *Mull* in Jun (cf 50 prs in 1995). On mainland *Mull*, of 15 nests examined at Lochdon on 30th May only one contained a single egg, and 2 prs were attempting to breed at Scoor on 15th May. Two pairs were breeding at Port Olmsa on *Colonsay* and birds were also present at islands in The Strand. At Glenramskill Jetty (Campbeltown Loch) *Kintyre* ca 16 prs bred on the eastern 'dolphin' and 8 recently fledged young were seen on 26th Jul. Eight birds were recorded at Loch Indaal on 17th Jun but there were no breeding records from *Islay*.

Jul-Sep. Three were at outer Loch Etive *N Argyll* on 1st Jul; 10 were at RSPB L. Gruinart on 8th; 7 were in Loch Indaal on 18th; and passage had begun at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* when one flew south on 21st Jul. The only other autumn birds at Machrihanish were an adult and juv. on 3rd Aug and 2 juvs. on 11th Sep. Other presumed migrants were 30 at Grasspoint *Mull* on 1st Aug, an adult at Loch an Eilein *Tiree* on 8th Aug, one at Frenchman's Rocks on 25th Aug, one at Bridgend *Islay* on 26th Aug and the last bird, at Ardnave Point *Islay*, on 12th Sep.

ARCTIC TERN *Sterna paradisaea* Stearnal 0616
Summer visitor and localised breeding species. Many colonies near mainland and Mull severely affected by mink predation and often unproductive where no trapping is undertaken.

Apr-May. The first bird of the year was seen on *Tiree* on 25th Apr; and there were 15+ at Loch Bhasapol by 29th Apr. Two were on Oronsay *Colonsay* on 8th May; one or more were in the Sound of Iona *Mull* on 9th May; and the first record on *Islay* was not until 11th May when one was seen at RSPB L. Gruinart. By 16th May 77 birds were counted around the freshwater lochs on *Tiree*; and 26 were in Loch Indaal *Islay* on 21st May.

Breeding. In the Argyll part of the SAMS study area, 146 pairs bred at 6 sites (colony size 1-40) and fledged 72 young (cf 60-84 young from 112 pairs at 7 colonies in 1998). Mink were removed from 5 of these sites, where 98 prs fledged 72 young.

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At the one site where mink were not removed, 48 prs laid but none fledged; on 9th July, shells and eggs were found cached neatly in long grass at the edge of the breeding area, showing that a mink had attacked the colony. (*See general comment under Common Tern.*)

Elsewhere, censuses undertaken as part of Seabird 2000 found: a total of 143 nests on two islands and *ca* 340 individual birds, including presumed non-breeders, on Treshnish Isles *Mull*, three colonies on *Colonsay* with a total of *ca* 45 prs in Jun, 64 adults flushed from the breeding areas at *Coll* RSPB Reserve, and *ca* 120 AON on Oronsay *Colonsay*. At least 3 prs were breeding at the Airport *Islay* on 5th Jun.

Jul-Nov. The peak count later in the season on *Tiree* was 417 at Loch an Eilein-Loch a 'Phuill on 12th Jul. Of these, 40+ were of the form formerly known as 'portlandica' (*i.e.* year-old birds in first-summer plumage that have retained their white forehead). The first migrants passing Machrihanish SBO were 2 adults on 21st Jul followed by 4 adults on 3rd Aug. Four were seen at Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* on 29th Aug with 4 more on 9th Sep and singles on 9th and 10th Oct. On 9th Sep, 5 birds passing Balevullin were the last seen on *Tiree*; but the very last bird reported was one at Ardnave *Islay* on 4th Nov.

LITTLE TERN *Sterna albifrons* Stearnag bheag 0624
Very scarce breeding species, confined to Islay, Tiree and Coll. Scarce passage migrant elsewhere.

Apr-May. As in 1998, first bird returning to *Tiree* was seen on 6th Apr. The first report from *Islay* was of 17 birds counted on the Big Strand at Kintra on 6th May, and the first birds seen at RSPB L. Gruinart were 10 on 13th May. The highest count at one site was 29 at The Reef *Tiree* on 14th May.

Breeding. On *Tiree* a total of 59 AON were located on the main island with another 12 AON on Gunna Island, giving a total of 71 breeding prs. At least 12 chicks near fledging were found at The Reef on 9th Jul [AJL].

At *Coll* RSPB Reserve 28 adults were flushed from the breeding areas. There was no information on breeding status of birds on *Islay*.

Jul-Aug. The only autumn records away from *Tiree* were at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre*. Here the first were 2 adults on 23rd Jul, followed by one on 3rd Aug, 4 adults and 2 juvs. on 4th Aug and one juv., the last record of the year, on 14th Aug.

BLACK TERN *Chlidonias niger* Stearnal dhubh 0627
Scarce and irregular passage migrant. Only 6 records 1980 – 1998.

On 23rd May, following overnight westerly gales, two adult birds were seen flying north over The Strand, between Oronsay and *Colonsay*. The is our first record since one on *Islay* in Sep 1996 and the first spring record since at least 1980 [JH]*.

WHITE-WINGED BLACK TERN *Chlidonias leucopterus* 0628
Vagrant. No previous Argyll records.

Following up a report of an unidentified small black-and-white falcon seen at Balephetrish on the evening of 2nd Sep, our observer on *Tiree* was amazed to find a moulting adult White-winged Black Tern there the following morning (3rd Sep). It was an adult bird in the process of moulting out of breeding plumage and it obligingly circled around a field, catching flying insects at just above grass height. There were no subsequent sightings [Alan J. Leitch]*. As a less-than-annual vagrant to Scotland from south-east Europe, almost exclusively recorded in the northern isles or on the

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east coast, this is an unexpected addition to the Argyll list.

GUILLEMOT *Uria aalge* Eun dubh an sgadain 0634
Highly colonial, locally abundant breeding species. Adults with small young appear on the sea far from colonies in late summer. Large numbers of passage migrants may be seen from headlands, and smaller numbers are regular in sea-lochs in winter.

Jan-Apr. One or 2 birds were reported from Blairmore (Loch Long) and Holy Loch Cowal and Campbeltown Loch Kintyre at this time; and no less than 156 were counted in Loch na Keal Mull on 8th Jan. Two in Oban harbour Mid-Argyll on 5th Apr were still in winter plumage.

Breeding. Censuses undertaken as part of Seabird 2000 provided the following counts at breeding colonies. An estimated total of 9,566 individuals were found on Treshnish Isles Mull, mostly on Lunga (cf 6,791 in 1998). There were 2,174 adult birds on the Sanda Islands Kintyre (116 young birds ringed) where the species is now almost restricted to Glunimore. Only 4 pairs now remain on Sheep Island, which has been taken over by Razorbills in recent years. A total of 119 birds was recorded on the new sample cliff at Uragaig Colonsay (cf 92 in 1998). Lastly, at Ceann a' Mhara Tiree, 1,947 AON were found on 22nd Jun.

Oct-Dec. Single birds were again reported regularly at Blairmore; and, on Islay, 2 were at RSPB L. Gruinart on 5th Nov.

RAZORBILL *Alca torda* Falc 0636
Locally common breeding species, although less numerous and with smaller colonies than Guillemot. Large numbers of passage migrants may be seen from headlands, and smaller numbers are regular in sea-lochs in winter.

Jan-Apr. Three were in Loch na Keal Mull on 8th Jan; and at Blairmore (Loch Long) Cowal, one was present on 29th Jan, followed by 23 on 5th Apr and 19 on 12th Apr.

Breeding. A complete census of the Treshnish Isles Mull for Seabird 2000 revealed an estimated total of 1,232 individuals, mostly on Lunga (cf 1,589 in 1998). Other Seabird 2000 censuses found 2,944 adult birds (and 430 young birds were ringed) at colonies on Sanda, Sheep Island and Glunimore in Sanda Islands Kintyre, and a total of 10 AON on Eilean Beag and Eilean Mor Jura. On the new sample cliff at Uragaig Colonsay a total of 25 birds was counted (cf 20 in 1998).

Oct-Dec. One at Upper Killeyan Islay on 3rd Nov was the only record at this time.

BLACK GUILLEMOT *Cephus grylle* Gearra-breac 0638
Common resident breeding species, on coasts and islands in sea lochs.

Jan-Apr. Counts of 10 or more birds came from: Heanish Tiree (16 on 6th Jan), Loch na Keal Mull (20 on 8th Jan), Campbeltown Loch Kintyre (10+ on 21st Jan), Craobh Haven Mid-Argyll (10+ on 21st Jan), Hynish Bay Tiree (11 on 31st Jan), Oban harbour Mid-Argyll (23 on 4th Apr) and Kiloran Bay Colonsay (20 on 6th Apr).

Breeding. In the Argyll part of the SAMS study area, 112 adults were counted at 26 sites and a further 8 adults were seen at sea between sites. Proof of breeding was obtained at 6 of the sites, and 10 young are known to have fledged at 4 of these. A complete census of the Treshnish Isles Mull for Seabird 2000 revealed a total of 70 individuals (recorded around most islands), with nests located on Fladda and Lunga

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(cf 44 individuals in 1998). Other Seabird 2000 censuses found: a record total of 268 individuals on the sea around Sanda Islands *Kintyre* (no signs of mink this year), 21 adults around Eilean Aoghainn (Loch Fyne) *Mid-Argyll* on 18th Apr, 40+ adults around Oronsay *Colonsay* (19th-24th Apr) and 24 adults off Camas nam Bairneach (Scarba) *Mid-Argyll* on 9th Jun. Elsewhere, 4 prs were found in Oban Bay *Mid-Argyll*, 2 prs of which were nesting in old pipes in the harbour car park wall.

Oct-Dec. The only substantial counts were in the Sound of Gigha *Kintyre* where numbers peaked at 60 on 20th Nov.

LITTLE AUK *Alle alle* Colcach bheag 0647
Scarce and irregular winter visitor, usually seen during sea-watches or after severe gales.

Unusually, the only records during the year were in Apr. Four were seen off Crinan Harbour *Mid-Argyll* on 2nd, and one was close inshore at Sorne Point *Mull* on 9th Apr.

PUFFIN *Fratercula arctica* Buthaid 0654
Very localised breeding species with main colonies on Sanda (Kintyre) and Treshnish Isles (Mull). Occasionally recorded in winter.

Apr-May. The only birds reported away from breeding colonies were 2+ off Scoor *Mull* on 12th May and 3 offshore at Easter Ellister *Islay* on 31st May.

Breeding. A complete census of the Treshnish Isles *Mull* for Seabird 2000 revealed an estimated total of 1,232 individuals, mostly on Lunga (cf 1,589 in 1998). A similar census of the Sanda Islands *Kintyre* found a record total of 354 birds. The main concentrations were on Sheep Island and Glunimore with only small colonies on Sanda.

Jul-Dec. At Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* 10 flew past on 14th Jul, followed by 3 on 3rd Aug and singles on 6th Aug and 25th Sep. Elsewhere, 2 were seen in Gunna Sound *Coll* on 6th Jul, one was at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 21st Jul, 4 flew past Grasspoint *Mull* on 5th Aug, and 2 were off Hynish *Tiree* on 15th Sep. The only mid-winter record was one at Kintallan (Tayvallich) *Mid-Argyll* on 27th Dec.

ROCK DOVE *Columba livia* Calman creige 0665
Resident breeder except in Cowal. Large flocks often gather on arable fields outwith breeding season. Genetic integrity of most populations now in doubt because of interbreeding with feral pigeons but those on the islands probably nearest 'pure' Rock Dove. Feral Pigeons recorded from most areas, but no information on population size.

Jan-May. Flocks of 50 or more birds were reported from: Ballygrant *Islay* (70 on 5th Jan), Caolas *Tiree* (51 on 9th Jan), Kiloran *Colonsay* (80+ on 14th Jan; flock included at least 2 feral-type birds), Craigens *Islay* (100 on 20th Jan), Heylipol *Tiree* (max. 55 on 21st Jan) and Killinallan *Islay* (50 on 16th May).

Breeding. Recorded in 2 of 15 BBS squares (13%), (cf none of 16 in 1998). A pair was found in each of two caves on Lunga (Treshnish Isles) *Mull*; and on the Sanda Islands *Kintyre* two prs bred on Glunimore and one on Sanda (cf one pr on each in 1998).

Jul-Dec. On *Islay* flocks of 50 or more birds were found at: Easter Ellister (max. 64 on 13th Oct), Eresaid (76 on 14th Nov), RSPB L. Gruinart (max. 55 on 7th

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Dec) and Laphroaig (159 on 21st Dec). The only flock of similar size reported on *Tiree* was at Heylipol (max. 135 on 20th Oct).

Records of Feral Pigeons came from: Connel *Mid-Argyll*, Sandbank *Cowal*, Campbeltown *Kintyre*, Inveraray *Mid-Argyll*, Kiloran *Colonsay* and Dunoon *Kintyre*.

STOCK DOVE *Columba oenas* Calman gorm 0668
Very scarce and local resident. Only regularly reported in Mid-Argyll in recent years (with just one confirmed breeding record) but with other records in Cowal, Kintyre and Mull in the past 10 years.

After no records in 1998, there were six in 1999. Most were in the traditional area around Kilmartin *Mid-Argyll*, with 4 birds near Slockavullin on 9th Feb, 4 at Poltalloch on 8th Mar and 3 at Poltalloch on 5th Oct. Three were seen near Ormsary (Knapdale) *Mid-Argyll* on 9th May; and one was flushed near the Mull of *Kintyre* on 2nd Jun. The most unexpected record was of a single bird on The Airport *Tiree* on 7th Apr. This is the first record of the species on *Tiree* for at least 20 years.

WOODPIGEON *Columba palumbus* Calman fiadhaich 0670
Common resident breeding species except in some areas, such as Mull, where more numerous in winter. Normally absent from Coll and Tiree.

Breeding. Recorded in 3 of 15 BBS squares (20%), (cf 7 of 16 in 1998).

Aug-Dec. The only flocks reported were 20+ at Blarghour (Loch Awe) *Mid-Argyll* on 20th Sep, 28 between Poltalloch and Slockavullin *Mid-Argyll* on 5th Oct, and 30 at Sunderland Farm *Islay* on 30th Oct. There were reports from all areas except *Coll, Jura, N Argyll* and *Tiree*.

COLLARED DOVE *Streptopelia decaocto* Calman a chrios 0684
Sparse but widespread distribution throughout Argyll. Some island populations emigrate in winter.

Jan-May. Six birds were at Colonsay House *Colonsay* on 4th Apr, and birds returned to Oronsay *Colonsay* on 18th Apr. The only count in double figures was 19 at Loch an Eilein *Tiree* on 27th May.

Breeding. Not recorded in any of the 15 BBS squares surveyed (cf one of 16 in 1998). There were 5 singing males at Colonsay House in Jun; and a pair in Kim (Dunoon) *Cowal* nested on a balcony next to a window opened daily.

One seen perched near the village on Lunga (Treshnish Isles) *Mull* on 17th Jun was a rare visitor to the islands.

Aug-Dec. Flocks of 10 or more birds were seen at: Whitehouse *Tiree* (20 on passage 13th Sep), Bruichladdich *Islay* (25 on 1st Nov) and Port Ellen *Islay* (max. 28 on 8th Dec).

TURTLE DOVE *Streptopelia turtur* Calman tuchan 0687
Scarce but annual passage migrant. Majority recorded during May-Jun.

Only one spring migrant, at Mannal *Tiree* on 19th May. The other two records were in autumn. One at Port Wemyss *Islay* stayed for about 2 weeks in mid-Aug. On *Tiree* a single bird that arrived at Whitehouse on 6th Sep stayed until 13th, when it was joined by a second bird. They both remained until 27th Sep.

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CUCKOO *Cuculus canorus* Cuthag

0724

Common summer visitor. Main host species is Meadow Pipit.

Apr-May. Arrival seemed a little earlier than normal. The first bird was calling at Kintallan *Mid-Argyll* on 15th Apr and this was soon followed by one at Loch Don *Mull* on 17th and, on 19th Apr, by 2 at Loch an Losgairn Mor *Mid-Argyll* and one at Low Cuilidrynoch (Knapdale) *Mid-Argyll*. By 29th Apr calling birds had also been heard in *Cowal*, *Islay* and *N Argyll*.

Breeding. Recorded in 9 of 15 BBS squares (60%), (cf 12 of 16 in 1998). There were 2 territories in CBC plots at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* (cf 3 in 1998).

Jul-Aug. The only records after the end of Jun were: single birds at Cam Loch (Ederline) *Mid-Argyll* on 4th Jul and at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* on 28th and 30th Jul, 3 at Tayvallich *Mid-Argyll* on 20th Aug, and a juv. at Balevullin *Tiree* on 29th Aug.

BARN OWL *Tyto alba* Comhachag

0735

Scarce breeding species, but probably under-recorded. All records required.

Breeding. On *Cowal* 21 occupied sites were located. Many of these were at inaccessible crags but more pairs are now using boxes; that the 9 prs using boxes fledged only 15 young was attributed to low vole numbers [DA, AF]. The Forest Enterprise scheme, in West Argyll District, located 9 occupied barrels in Kintyre and Knapdale. Young were ringed at 2 sites, 3 sites failed and the outcome at 3 sites was unknown [Forest Enterprise: BB, JW, AM]. Elsewhere in *Kintyre*, 7 pairs attempted to breed and several more occupied sites were found where breeding was apparently not attempted; at least 11 young fledged from 3 successful nests [RAGA]. On *Islay*, 25 occupied sites were checked at 17 of which pairs laid a minimum of 50 eggs; a maximum of 30 young fledged from 12 sites. Low productivity (2.5 young/successful pair) was attributed to poor weather in June [MAO]. In total at least 59 young are known to have fledged from 26 successful territories in Argyll [ARSG].

A survey on *Mull* located prs at 7 additional localities including two where successful breeding was confirmed; single birds were reported from 11 other localities.

One bird was also reported from Achnaba *N Argyll* on 30th Dec.

TAWNY OWL *Strix aluco* Comhachag dhonn

0761

Widespread and common resident breeding bird, but absent from Tiree and Coll.

Breeding. In the Glen Branter study area *Cowal*, 44 pairs laid eggs, as in 1998. Of these, 25 pairs reared a total of 36 young and none of the pairs reared more than 2 chicks. Eight pairs elsewhere on *Cowal* were monitored and produced a total of 10 young [DA, AF per ARSG]. Pairs also bred successfully at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* (for the first time) and at Tiroran *Mull*.

Other records during the year came from: *Islay* (2 additional sites), *Kintyre* (one site), *Mid-Argyll* (6 sites) and *Mull* (3 sites).

LONG-EARED OWL *Asio otus* Comhachag adharcaiche

0767

Very scarce resident breeding bird and winter visitor: almost certainly under-recorded. All records required.

Breeding. A hunting adult was seen on *Colonsay* but no young were heard [DCJ/JJ]. One site was occupied early in the season in *Cowal*, perhaps by a single bird, and no breeding attempt was located [DA, AF per ARSG].

One was seen at Aros Moss *Kintyre* on 13th Oct.

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SHORT-EARED OWL *Asio flammeus* Comhachag chluassach 0768
Widespread breeder and winter visitor. Numbers fluctuate and distribution varies with abundance of small rodents, especially field voles Microtus agrestis. Some emigration in autumn.

Apr-May. The only records received came from *Mull* where single birds were reported from: *Ishriff* (Glen More) on 17th and 31st May, *Torness* (Glen More) on 28th May, and *Tenga* on 31st May. More than one observer remarked on the paucity of sightings of this species during the year.

Breeding. Not recorded in any of the 15 BBS squares surveyed, (cf one of 16 in 1998). There were no known breeding attempts in *Cowal* [DA, AF]; and in *Kintyre* the only breeding pair reported was at *Aros Moss* where 4 young were reared from a clutch of 6 eggs [RAGA].

In Jun prs were seen at *Tireragan Mull* and *Cruach Choireadail Mull* and single birds at *RSPB L. Gruinart Islay*, near *Lussagiven Jura*, near *Ardnahoe Islay* and in *Glen More Mull*.

Jul-Dec. The only records at this time were of single birds at *Dervaig Mull* on 10th Jul, *Easter Ellister Islay* on 11th Jul, *Torness* (Glen More) *Mull* on 2nd Aug and near *Kinloch Mull* on 14th Oct; and of 4 birds seen from the *Skipness-Kennacraig road Kintyre* in Sep.

SWIFT *Apus apus* Gobhlan mor 0795
Summer visitor, breeding only very locally on the mainland. Wandering birds in summer and passage migrants may occur in all areas.

May-Jun. The first birds were seen at *Loch Awe village Mid-Argyll* on 7th May, followed by singles at *Connel Mid-Argyll* on 8th, *Killiechronan Mull* on 11th and *Dunoon Cowal* on 15th May. Away from known breeding areas, birds were also seen at *Cam Loch* (Knapdale) *Mid-Argyll* (2 on 30th May), *Oronsay Colonsay* (one on 2nd Jun) and *Blairmore* (Loch Long) *Cowal* (one on 2nd Jun).

Breeding. Recorded in one of 15 BBS squares (7%), (cf none of 16 in 1998). In *Campbeltown Kintyre* 8-10 prs were present at the usual breeding sites. Otherwise, birds were reported regularly during the breeding season only at *Dunoon Cowal* (max. 40+ on 6th Jul) and *Lochgilphead Mid-Argyll* (max 8+ on 5th Jul).

Jul-Sep. Away from the known breeding areas, birds were reported in Jul from: *Moine Mhor Mid-Argyll* (occasionally), *Gartnatra Islay* (one on 2nd), *Balemartine Tiree* (2 on 3rd), *Duart Castle Mull* (4 on 4th), *Easter Ellister Islay* (one on 9th), *Blairmore* (Loch Long) *Cowal* (4 on 12th), *Connel Mid-Argyll* (10 on 21st), *Loch Gorm Islay* (one on 28th) and *Coullabus Islay* (2 on 29th). Two singles flying SE over *Mull*, at *Craignure* on 1st Aug and *Salen* on 3rd Aug, were probably migrants. In *Lochgilphead* the last birds seen were 8 on 4th Aug; and in *Dunoon* there were no records after 6 on 13th Aug. Single late migrants were seen on *Islay*, at *Bridgend* on 26th Aug and at *Gartbreck* on 17th Sep.

KINGFISHER *Alcedo atthis* Biorra cruidein 0831
Scarce but regular visitor. Most records are in autumn and winter and may represent dispersing juveniles.

At *Loch Etive*, one of our most regular localities for this species, one was near *Connel Mid-Argyll* on 22nd Jan, and 2 were seen together at *Airds Bay* (Taynuilt) *Mid-Argyll* on 20th Feb. *Holy Loch Cowal* also produced multiple records with singles on 9th Jan, 26th Sep and 17th Oct. However, one near *Islandadd Bridge* (*Moine Mhor*

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NNR) *Mid-Argyll* on 4th Sep was only the third record for the reserve, and what was presumably the same bird was seen there again on 14th Sep.

BEE-EATER *Merops apiaster* 0840
Vagrant. No Argyll records prior to 1958 and only 5 since: 2 near Ballygrant (Islay) in Jun 1981, one at Lochgoilhead (Cowal) in Jun 1986, one at Lochdon (Mull) in Jul 1993, one at Fiddon (Mull) in May 1995 and one at Tynacoille (Islay) in Jun 1998.

1998. An individual found at Glengorm *Mull* on 9th Jun stayed until 11th Jun and was seen by several lucky observers [DW *et al.*]*. It is possible that the bird that appeared at Tynacoille *Islay* on the evening of 11th Jun (ABR 15) was the same individual.

HOOPOE *Upupa epops* 0846
Scarce passage migrant. Recorded in 11 of the 19 years 1980-98 with a total of about 19 records: more often in spring than in autumn.

One seen between Tarbet and Arrochar *Cowal* on 18th May was probably within in our recording area at some time [per J. Brad]. The bird seen at Ardmaddy (Loch Etive) *N Argyll* on 3rd Jun and for the next day or two might have been the same one [T. Healy per RAB].

GREEN WOODPECKER *Picus viridis* Snagardach 0856
Rare but recorded regularly in Cowal in recent years, as well as in Mull and N Argyll. Only one confirmed breeding record, in Kintyre in 1998. All records required.

The only records received concerned calling birds. Birds were heard 'yaffling' beside Loch Eck *Cowal* on 23rd Feb and on several days in May at Blairmore (Loch Long) *Cowal*.

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos major* Snagan daraich 0876

Resident breeder, widespread on the mainland and Mull.

Breeding. Recorded in one of 15 BBS squares (7%), (cf 2 of 16 in 1998). Drumming was heard at Achnamara, Minard Woods and Tainish NNR, all in *Mid-Argyll*; and a pair with fledged young were seen at Tainish NNR on 17th Jun. An adult bird was feeding recently fledged young near Blarghour *Mid-Argyll* on 22nd Jun. On *Mull* adults with young were reported during Jun from Lochdon, Port na Saille and near Calgary.

Other records during the year came from Blairmore *Cowal*, East Kames, Fearnoch, Connel and Crinan Ferry *Mid-Argyll*, and Benderloch *N Argyll*.

SKYLARK *Alauda arvensis* Uiseag 0976
Widespread breeding species, common in some areas. Many emigrate in winter, with remaining birds mainly in coastal and low-lying localities.

Jan-Apr. Flocks of 50 or more birds were reported from: Cornaigbeg *Tiree* (55 on 7th Feb), Kilnave *Islay* (100+ on 23rd Feb), Tayinloan *Kintyre* (85 on 1st Mar) and Garra Eallabus (Loch Gruinart) *Islay* (max. 103 on 14th Apr).

Breeding. Recorded in 7 of 15 BBS squares (47%), (cf 11 of 16 in 1998). Only 1 territory was identified in the coastal CBC plot at Tainish NNR *Mid-Argyll*

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(as in 1998, cf 5 in 1997). Elsewhere, a total of 11 singing birds were holding territory on three of the Treshnish Isles *Mull* in Jun; and 8 pairs were located on Sanda Islands *Kintyre* (cf 6 in 1998). On *Tiree* at least 45 birds were noted singing at The Reef in Apr.

Sep-Dec. On 29th Sep, a huge gathering at West Parkfergus *Kintyre* was estimated to contain 1,300 birds. The only other localities with counts of 50 or more birds were: Heylipol *Tiree* (max. 140 on 18th Oct), Cornaigbeg *Tiree* (92 on 18th Nov) and RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* (max. 119 13th Dec).

SAND MARTIN *Riparia riparia* Gobhlan gainmhiche 0981
Summer visitor and passage migrant. Uncommon and localised breeding species.
All breeding records required.

Apr-May. The first arrivals were reported on 1st Apr, when birds were seen at Kilmichael Glen *Mid-Argyll* and at Killbeg *Mull*. Next day (2nd Apr) the first birds appeared on *Islay* (at Kilchiaran and Machir Bay). By the end of Apr, birds had also been reported from *Colonsay*, *Cowal*, *Kintyre*, *N Argyll* and *Tiree*.

Breeding. Not recorded in any of the 15 BBS squares surveyed, (cf one of 16 in 1998).

Numbers at the two large, regularly monitored colonies were: ca 80 at Kilmichael Glen woodyard *Mid-Argyll* (cf 110 in 1998), and 340 apparently occupied holes (of a total of 392 holes) at North Connel sandpit (cf 314 in 1998 and 245 in 1997). Birds also bred at: Little Eachaig River (nr. Dunoon) *Cowal* (ca 20 prs), Glenmassan *Cowal* (ca 12 prs), Stronchullin *Cowal* (29 AON in total 150 holes), Kilchiaran *Islay* (15 AON), Laggan Bridge *Islay* (26 AON), Islay Airport (Machrie River) *Islay* (18+ AON), Brunerican Bay *Kintyre* (ca 20 AON), Crannich *Mull* (6 AON) and Gorten *Mull* (21 AON). Birds were reported regularly at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* with counts of 25 on 28th Apr and 20 on 23rd Jul.

Aug-Sep. Birds of passage were seen in Glen Lonan *Mid-Argyll* (5+ moving W on 9th Aug), at Drimvore *Mid-Argyll* (40+ on telephone wires on 16th Aug) and at Easter Ellister *Islay* where 2 late birds were present on 13th Sep.

SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica* Gobhlan gaoithe 0992
Widespread and common summer visitor and passage migrant.

Apr-May. The first bird of the year was at Baraskomill (Campbeltown Loch) *Kintyre* on 29th Mar followed by singles on *Islay*, at Coullabus and near Glenastle, on 3rd Apr. The main arrival occurred during the week 9th-16th Apr, when birds were widely reported from sites in *Colonsay*, *Cowal*, *Islay*, *Kintyre*, *Mid-Argyll*, *Mull* and *Tiree*. The first birds back on Oronsay *Colonsay*, however, were not recorded until 24th Apr.

Breeding. Recorded in 3 of 15 BBS squares (20%), (cf 7 of 16 in 1998). Breeding records were received from most areas, and young were on the wing by the last week in Jun. The last reported brood left the nest on 21st Sep.

Jul-Nov. Some birds were already moving south by 23rd Jul, when 800 (mainly juvs.) passed Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* in 3 hrs; and 80 were counted passing through The Reef *Tiree* on 2nd Sep. Most places reported their local birds leaving between 22nd Sep and 3rd Oct. The last migrants seen were singles at Poltalloch *Mid-Argyll* on 21st Oct, Kilnaughton Bay *Islay* on 6th Nov and a juv. at Brynalen (Lismore) *N Argyll* on 11th Nov.

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HOUSE MARTIN *Delichon urbica* Gobhlan taighe 1001
Summer visitor breeding commonly on the mainland. Less numerous on the islands and no recent breeding records from Colonsay, Tiree and Coll.

Apr-May. Two early birds were at Campbeltown Loch Kintyre on 10th Apr but there were no further records until 24th Apr, when one was at Whitehouse Kintyre. Most places saw no birds until the first week in May, and migrant birds were seen on Tiree on 1st (at Balemartine), 7th (2 at Sorobaidh Bay) and 10th May (2 at Heylipol).

Breeding. Recorded in 1 of 15 BBS squares (7%), (cf one of 16 in 1998).

One was seen on Oronsay Colonsay, where the species is seldom recorded, on 3rd Jun.

Aug-Sep. Migrant birds were gathering in mid-Aug and 40 were sunning themselves on a house roof at Drimvore Mid-Argyll on 16th Aug, together with Sand Martins and Swallows. A striking totally albino bird was seen at Moine Mhor Mid-Argyll on 9th Sep and again on 18th Sep. The last birds reported were singles at RSPB L. Gruinart Islay on 21st Sep and Braevallich (Loch Awe) Mid-Argyll on 22nd Sep.

TREE PIPIT *Anthus trivialis* Riabhag 1009
Summer visitor breeding commonly on the mainland. Also widespread on Jura and Mull, but very scarce on Islay.

Apr-May. One at Taynish NNR Mid-Argyll on 15th Apr was the first arrival reported, followed by 2 at Loch Buie Mull on 18th Apr. Birds were more widely reported in Mid-Argyll and Kintyre from 24th Apr and into the first week in May. The first record on Islay was one singing at Kilmeny on 7th May.

Breeding. Recorded in 6 of 15 BBS squares (40%), (cf 6 of 16 in 1998).

At Taynish NNR Mid-Argyll, there was a total of 12 territories in the CBC plots (cf 13 in 1998); and 2 singing birds were found at Claggain Islay on 30th May.

Aug-Sep. The last migrant birds were at The Laggan Kintyre on 10th Sep and Aros Park Mull on 19th Sep; and a late straggler was seen and heard calling at RSPB L. Gruinart Islay on 16th Oct.

MEADOW PIPIT *Anthus pratensis* Snathag 1011
Abundant breeding species. Most leave the higher ground in winter, and significant flocks occur on passage. Those remaining in Argyll occur mainly in coastal and low-lying localities.

Jan-Apr. Winter flocks were recorded at West Hynish Tiree (42 on 10th Jan) and RSPB L. Gruinart Islay (50 on 8th Feb). Passage of birds, presumably returning to higher ground, was apparent in mid-Apr, with 100+ at Paltalloch Mid-Argyll on 10th and 30+ at Minard Mid-Argyll on 18th Apr.

Breeding. Recorded in 13 of 15 BBS squares (87%), (cf 15 of 16 in 1998); making this still, unsurprisingly, the most widespread breeding bird recorded by the BBS in Argyll.

At Taynish NNR Mid-Argyll, there were a record 8 territories in the coastal CBC plot (cf 6 in 1998); and on Sanda Islands Kintyre 20 prs were located (as in 1998). The species was reported as breeding widely on Lunga and Fladda in the Treshnish Isles Mull and at least 2 prs were on territory on Bac Mor (Dutchman's Cap).

Aug-Dec. Birds were noted moving south from early Aug with flocks of 100 or more birds reported from: RSPB L. Gruinart Islay (max. 130 on 5th Aug), Craigens Islay (110 in cut silage field on 11th Aug), Bonawe N Argyll (130 in pastures beside Loch Etive on 25th Aug) and Heylipol Tiree (260 [part of a large movement] on 11th

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Sep). Smaller flocks of 15-20 birds were reported from RSPB L. Gruinart, Tayinloan *Kintyre* and Loch na Cille *Mid-Argyll* in Dec.

ROCK PIPIT *Anthus petrosus* Gabhagan 1014/2
Common resident breeding species on coasts, sea lochs and islands. Scarce passage and winter visitor elsewhere.

Breeding. Recorded in 2 of 15 BBS squares (13%), (cf 3 of 16 in 1998). A total of 24 prs was found on the Sanda Islands *Kintyre* (as in 1998) and 49 adults and 7 young were ringed. Reported as a common breeder along the coasts of Lunga and Fladda (Treshnish Isles) *Mull* and birds were present even on most of the smaller islands. A pair bred on the foreshore at Tainish NNR *Mid-Argyll*; and breeding prs were reported widely around the coasts of *Mull*.

The only counts of 10 or more birds were: 10 at West Parkfergus *Kintyre*, blown inland by gales on 20th Jan, 10 at Ardnave Point *Islay* on 19th Nov, and 19 between Hynish and Sorobaidh Bay *Tiree* on 5th Dec.

YELLOW WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava* Breacan buidhe 1017
Scarce and less-than-annual passage migrant, recorded in 13 of the 19 years 1980-98. Birds of the Blue-headed race *M. f. flava* occur from time to time, and there has been at least one record of the Grey-headed race *M. f. thunbergi* (in 1985).

The only records on the mainland were at Machrihanish *Kintyre*, where one juv. was on Ugadale House lawn on 1st Sep followed by 2 there the following day (2nd Sep).

BLUE-HEADED (YELLOW) WAGTAIL *M. f. flava*

A male of this race was found at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* on 28th Apr. There are only three previous records of this race on *Islay*, all since 1980.

GREY WAGTAIL *Motacilla cinerea* Breacan bain tighearna 1019
Widespread resident breeding species; some emigration in winter.

Breeding. Recorded in one of 15 BBS squares (7%), (cf one of 16 in 1998). Confirmed breeding records included a pr nest-building at Laggan Bridge *Islay*, and adults with recently fledged young at: Bishop's Glen (Dunoon) *Cowal*, Kilchiaran *Islay*, Tayinloan *Kintyre*, Craignure *Mull* and Loch Spelve *Mull*.

Also reported from Colonsay and from many other sites in *Mid-Argyll* and *Mull* during the year.

PIED WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba yarrellii* Breach an t-sil 1020
Widespread and common breeder. Emigration from most areas in winter. Returning birds generally arrive late Feb to early Mar; departure Aug-Oct.

Jan-Apr. Birds were recorded during Jan at Campbeltown Loch and Tayinloan *Kintyre* and at Blairmore (Loch Long) *Cowal*. The first returning bird on *Tiree* was at Sandaig on 26th Feb. A small roost of 15 birds was noted in a reedbed at Balephuill *Tiree* on 17th Apr.

Breeding. Recorded in 5 of 15 BBS squares (33%), (cf 7 of 16 in 1998). Four prs were found on Sanda Islands *Kintyre* (as 1998) and 2 prs with recently fledged young were found on Lunga (Treshnish Isles) *Mull* in Jun. Breeding prs were also reported from Blarghour, Kintallan and Tainish NNR *Mid-Argyll*.

Jul-Dec. Movement was underway in late Jul and on 30th 70+ birds, mostly

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juvs., were counted along the road from Peninver to Campbeltown *Kintyre*. Flocks of 20 or more birds were also noted at Craighens *Islay* (20 on 11th Aug), Iona Abbey *Mull* (20 on 22nd Aug), Oronsay *Colonsay* (51 feeding on insects in grassland on 3rd Sep) and Machrie Hotel *Islay* (30 on 15th Sep). There were 2 records of single birds on Tiree in Nov; and birds were seen regularly at Tayinloan in Nov-Dec.

WHITE WAGTAIL *M. a. alba*

Passage migrant, usually recorded in spring. Extent of autumn passage obscured by identification difficulties.

Apr-May. One was at Loch an Eilein *Tiree* on 3rd Apr and 3 were there on 6th Apr. Birds were then seen there almost daily during Apr, with a peak count of 9 on 26th. Elsewhere on *Tiree*, birds were recorded at Sorobaidh Bay with 7 on 27th Apr and 2 on 9th May. On Oronsay *Colonsay*, one was present on 15th Apr followed by 2 on 8th May, while 3 were at Kiloran Bay *Colonsay* on 9th May. *Islay* had one at Loch Gruinart on 17th Apr with 4 at the RSPB Reserve on both 3rd and 8th May; and one was at Portnahaven on 12th May. The only record from *Mull* was one at Gleann Seilisdeir on 8th May; and, on the mainland, one was at Tayinloan *Kintyre* on 25th Apr and one at Machrihanish *Kintyre* on 24th Apr.

Aug-Sep. Birds were present almost daily at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* from Aug to mid-Sep with a maximum of 11 on 30th Aug. A single male was at Gott Bay *Tiree* on 6th Sep; and, on *Islay*, 2 were at Frenchman's Rocks on 7th Sep and 8 at Kilchoman Dunes on 16th Sep.

WAXWING *Bombus cilla garrulus* Canarach dearg 1048

Irruptive winter visitor in varying numbers; not seen every year.

Jan-Feb. Two were reported from East Kames *Mid-Argyll* on 9th Feb and one from Kilcheran *Mid-Argyll* on 23rd Feb.

Nov-Dec. Despite large numbers being reported on the east coast of Scotland, there were only isolated records in Argyll. Two were at Redhouse (near Kennacraig) *Kintyre* on 20th Nov; and one was seen in Campbeltown *Kintyre* on 18th Dec.

DIPPER *Cinclus cinclus* Gobha uisge 1050

Widespread resident breeder, though scarce on Islay and Colonsay and absent from Tiree and Coll.

Breeding. Recorded in one of 15 BBS squares (7%), (cf 2 of 16 in 1998). Confirmed breeding records came from: Connel and Blarghour *Mid-Argyll* and Lochan a' Ghurabain (near Tobermory) *Mull*.

During the year, birds were also reported from Cowal (2 locations), *Islay* (2 locations), *Mid-Argyll* (7 locations) and *Mull* (6 locations).

WREN *Troglodytes troglodytes* Dreathann donn 1066

Very common resident breeder, although numbers fall following hard winters.

Breeding. Recorded in 11 of 15 BBS squares (73%), (cf 11 of 16 in 1998); making this (together with Willow Warbler) the second most widespread breeding bird recorded by the BBS in Argyll. Numbers of breeding prs at the monitored sites were at high levels. The total of 78 territories in the CBC plots at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* was an all-time record (cf 53 in 1998), an amazing recovery from just 26 territories in 1996. Numbers on the Sanda Islands *Kintyre* were also well up with 18

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pairs found (cf 13 in 1998). On the Treshnish Isles *Mull*, 11 singing males were recorded in the north half of *Lunga* in Jun.

DUNNOCK *Prunella modularis* Gealbhoon nam preas 1084
Widespread and common resident breeder, except on some islands.

Breeding. Recorded in 4 of 15 BBS squares (27%), (cf 6 of 16 in 1998). A record total of 6 territories was identified in the Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* CBC plots (cf 3 in 1998 and one in 1997). One pair was located on Sanda Islands *Kintyre* (as in 1998) and at least one pr bred on *Coll* RSPB Reserve.

There were no records from *Jura*; and a single bird at Salum Dunes on 20th Jan was the only record submitted for *Tiree* during the year.

ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula* Bru dhearg 1099
Widespread and common resident breeder. Immigration in winter and noticeable autumn passage in some years.

Breeding. Recorded in 9 of 15 BBS squares (60%), (cf 10 of 16 in 1998). Numbers at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* were back to normal levels, with a total of 22 territories in the CBC plots (cf 15 in 1998, 22 in 1997). One pr is thought to have bred on the Sanda Islands *Kintyre*.

An autumn influx was noted from mid-Sep onwards on *Tiree*, and during the same period on *Islay* (e.g. 15 at Easter Ellister on 13th Sep).

REDSTART *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* Ceann dearg 1122
Summer visitor, locally common in relatively open woodland. Recorded on Islay, Colonsay, Tiree and Coll only as a scarce passage migrant.

Apr-May. The first bird of the year, at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* on 20th Apr, was followed by one at *Ardura Mull* on 27th. The species was generally distributed by mid-May.

Breeding. Recorded in one of 15 BBS squares (7%), (cf one of 16 in 1998). Near Bonawe *N Argyll* 2 pairs bred in nestboxes. In one, all 7 eggs hatched and 7 young fledged; in the other, 5 large young were predated by Pine Marten *Martes martes*; (3.5 fledged /pair laying). In *Mid-Argyll*, there were 7 territories in the woodland CBC plot at Taynish NNR (cf 6 in 1998); and a family party was seen at Blarghour *Mid-Argyll* in Jun.

There were no records from *Islay* during the year and no reports of autumn migrants.

WHINCHAT *Saxicola rubetra* Gocan 1137
Widespread and common summer visitor.

Apr-May. The first reports of the year concerned single males at *Ardura Mull* and Kilchiaran *Islay* on 27th Apr. Birds were widely reported during the following week and were singing in all sections at Moine Mhor NNR *Mid-Argyll* on 4th May.

Breeding. Recorded in 5 of 15 BBS squares (33%), (cf 4 of 16 in 1998). On *Colonsay*, 8 pairs were located (cf 6 in 1998); and at least 4 family groups were seen between Ardnadrochit and Grasspoint *Mull* on 25th Jun. Territorial pairs, singing males or family parties were also recorded from *Cowal* (2 sites), *Islay* (4 sites), *Mid-Argyll* (14 sites), *Mull* (13 sites) and *Tiree* (3 sites).

Aug-Sep. Five birds were at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* on 11th Aug; and 2 juvs. were moving south at Gairletter Point *Cowal* on 2nd Sep. The last records were single

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birds at RSPB L. Gruinart on 19th Sep and at Machrihanish Airfield Kintyre on 28th Sep.

STONECHAT *Saxicola torquata* Clacharan 1139
Widespread resident breeding species, but population can decline dramatically after severe winters. Some emigration may take place in winter.

Jan-Apr. A minimum of 10 birds were present on Tiree in Jan.

Breeding. Recorded in 3 of 15 BBS squares (20%), (cf 4 of 16 in 1998). On Colonsay a total of 26 prs was located (cf 33 [inc. Oronsay] in 1998). Four prs were located on Sanda Islands Kintyre; at least five prs fledged young between Milton and Balemartine Tiree; and 2+ prs fledged young at Coll RSPB Reserve. At least 3 family groups were seen between Ardnadrochit and Grasspoint Mull on 25th Jun; and a juv. was in the village area on Lunga (Treshnish Isles) Mull on 20th Jun. In addition to the above, birds were reported during the breeding season from Islay (2 sites), Kintyre (one site), Mid-Argyll (7 sites) and Mull (12 sites).

Oct-Dec. At least 10 birds were seen on the road from RSPB L. Gruinart to Ardnave Islay on 5th Oct.

WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oenanthe* Bru gheal 1146
Common summer visitor and passage migrant.

Mar-Apr. A very early migrant was at Beinn Ghuilean (Campbeltown) Kintyre on 7th Mar. There were no more reports until mid-Mar, when one was at Kilchoman Islay on 16th, followed by birds at Otter Ferry Cowal and Corran Ban (Loch Gruinart) Islay on 17th. By the end of Mar birds had been reported from all areas except Jura and N Argyll.

Breeding. Recorded in 4 of 15 BBS squares (27%), (cf 9 of 16 in 1998). On Lunga (Treshnish Isles) Mull an estimated 8 territories were established in late Jun (cf 12 in 1998), and among 25 birds trapped there were 3 retraps. Thirteen prs were located on Sanda Islands Kintyre (cf 15 in 1998) and a minimum of 40 prs were estimated breeding on Tiree. A pr with recently fledged young was found on the foreshore at Tainish NNR Mid-Argyll. There were reports of prs on territory from 15 sites on Mull.

Sep-Oct. On 10th Sep 8 birds were seen together at Port Ramsay (Lismore) N Argyll, and there were still several reports from Mull and Islay during the first week in Oct. The last records concerned singles at Loch Gruinart Islay on 21st Oct and Sorobaidh Bay Tiree on 22nd Oct.

GREENLAND WHEATEAR *O. o. leucorhoa*
Apparently rare passage migrant, but probably under-recorded.

'Several' birds of this race were present on Tiree during the first 10 days of May; and a large bright individual seen at Kilnaughton Bay Islay on 24th Nov was probably a 'Greenland' bird.

RING OUZEL *Turdus torquatus* Dubh chreige 1186
Summer visitor breeding very locally in upland areas. More widespread, though still very scarce, on migration. All records required.

Jan-Apr. The bird seen at Cruachan Reservoir N Argyll in Dec 1998 was still present on 5th Jan. A male on Oronsay Colonsay on 24th Apr was the only spring passage migrant recorded.

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Breeding. Recorded in one of 15 BBS squares (27%), (cf none of 16 in 1998). In *N Argyll* a singing bird was heard near Glen Ure on 8th May and a singing male was seen at Beinn Fhionnlaidh on 6th Jun. On *Mull* a male was singing near Creachan Mor on 8th May and a pr were seen on the hill above Loch an Eilein on 17th May.

Sep-Oct. A single bird was reported at Kilchoman *Islay* on 27th Oct.

BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula* Lon dubh 1187
Widespread and common resident breeding species. Immigration in winter and noticeable autumn passage in some years.

Breeding. Recorded in 4 of 15 BBS squares (27%), (cf 6 of 16 in 1998). A total of 8 territories was recorded in the CBC plots at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* (cf 5 in 1997), including a record 7 territories in the coastal plot.

Sep-Dec. A noticeable influx occurred from late Sep onwards. A flock of 15 was at Easter Ellister *Islay* on 27th Sep, and migrants on *Tiree* boosted the total there to a minimum of 55 birds on 18th Nov. Numbers at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* reached a reported peak of 21 on 15th Dec, and at least 25 were counted at the south end of Loch Sween *Mid-Argyll* on 28th Dec.

FIELDFARE *Turdus pilaris* Liath thruisg 1198
Passage migrant and winter visitor. Abundant in autumn but relatively few winter and spring.

Jan-May. In Jan the maximum count for *Tiree* was 18 at Beinn Hough on 10th; and 40 were at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* on 19th. Elsewhere, 4 flew south at Tullochgorm *Mid-Argyll* on 16th; and a single bird was in Dunoon *Cowal* on 21st Jan. There were flocks of 80 at Dunmore (West Loch Tarbert) *Mid-Argyll* on 4th Feb and 120 at Slockavullin *Mid-Argyll* on 12th Feb; but there were only one or two birds in *Colonsay*, *Cowal* and *Tiree* during the month. There were no records in Mar and the last birds of spring were 4 flying north at Minard *Mid-Argyll* on 3rd Apr, 2 at Loch an Eilein *Tiree* on 25th Apr and one very late bird at Tighnabruaich *Cowal* on 19th May.

Sep-Dec. The first birds of autumn were 20+ at Kilmartin gravel pit *Mid-Argyll* on 14th Sep. There were no further records until early Oct when single birds were reported in *Islay* and *Mid-Argyll*. The first large flock of autumn was 150 birds at Craighfad *Islay* on 15th Oct, and a sizeable influx occurred during the following few days. In Oct flocks included 50 on Oronsay *Colonsay* on 15th, 250 with Redwings at Southend *Kintyre* on 16th, 100+ at Loch Buie *Mull* on 17th, 300 at Easter Ellister *Islay* on 17th, 130 at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* on 19th, 500+ at Dunadd *Mid-Argyll* on 24th and 380 at Heylipol *Tiree*, also on 24th. Numbers fell after this and the only flocks of 100 or more reported in Nov were 300 at Loch na Cadhan *Islay* and 145 at RSPB L. Gruinart on 12th, and 110 at Moss *Tiree* on 17th. Smaller flocks were reported in Dec from *Islay*, *Kintyre*, *Mid-Argyll* and *Tiree*.

SONG THRUSH *Turdus philomelos* Smeorach 1200
Widespread and common resident breeding species. Some immigration in winter.

Breeding. Recorded in 7 of 15 BBS squares (47%), (cf 9 of 16 in 1998). At Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* there was a total of 7 territories in the CBC plots (cf 6 in 1998, 11 in 1997). *Tiree* had an estimated minimum of 15 prs around the island; 2+ pairs were found on Sanda Islands *Kintyre* where recently fledged young were seen in Jun; breeding prs with fledged young were recorded at Coll RSPB Reserve; and the species was noted as 'particularly widespread and common' on *Gigha* in Jun with

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fledged broods in all areas'. A visitor to *Mull* counted 59 singing males in various habitats during casual observations throughout the island between 30th May and 4th Jun.

Sep-Dec. Birds of this species were involved with the influx of thrushes from late Sep onwards, with 25 counted at Easter Ellister *Islay* on 27th Sep; while 43 on *Tiree* on 24th Oct increased to 75+ on 18th Nov (*cf* 7 resident birds noted on 12th Aug).

REDWING *Turdus iliacus* Sgiath dhearg 1201
Passage migrant and winter visitor. Abundant in autumn but relatively few winter. Occasional individuals recorded in late spring. Bred on Mull in 1991.

Jan-May. The only Jan reports were of singles at Minard *Mid-Argyll* on 9th and at Dunoon *Cowal* on 21st and, on *Tiree*, of a flock of 16 on 31st, together with small numbers elsewhere on the island. A light passage took place in late Feb-Mar with flocks reported at: Ballygrant Woods *Islay* (20 on 24th Feb), Bridgend Woods *Islay* (45 on 7th Mar), Connel *Mid-Argyll* (25 on 10th Mar), Minard *Mid-Argyll* (10+ on 14th Mar) and Scarinish *Tiree* (13 on 29th Mar). Birds were singing at 2 locations on *Tiree* in Apr; and the last records of spring were 4 at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* on 16th Apr, one at Oronsay *Colonsay* on 22nd Apr, and 2 at Scarinish and one at Cornaigmore *Tiree* on 1st May.

Sep-Dec. Small numbers began arriving in late Sep, with 6 at Blarghour *Mid-Argyll* on 21st and singles at RSPB L. Gruinart on 22nd, Easter Ellister *Islay* on 26th and Scammadale *Mid-Argyll* on 29th. There were small flocks in early Oct but numbers really built up from 16th, when 30 were flying westwards over Minard, 100 were at Craignure *Mull* and 100 were at Easter Ellister. Flocks then became larger still, with 750 at Kilmichael Glen and 550 at Slockavullin, both *Mid-Argyll*, on 21st Oct, 650 in the west of *Tiree* on 4th Nov, and 500 at Easter Ellister on 5th Nov. On 17th Nov a total of ca 835 was found on *Tiree*. The only large flocks in Dec were 100 at Craigfad *Islay* on 11th, 85 at Balinoe *Tiree* on 13th, and 40 around Scarinish *Tiree* on 14th. Elsewhere numbers were only in single figures.

MISTLE THRUSH *Turdus viscivorus* Smeorach mhor 1202
Widespread but thinly distributed resident breeding species. Flocks sometimes seen on passage.

Jan-Apr. Five birds were flying south over Minard *Mid-Argyll* on 9th Jan and, in Feb, there were flocks of 15 at Dunmore (West Loch Tarbert) *Mid-Argyll* on 4th and 30 near Loch Scammadale *Mid-Argyll* on 19th.

Breeding. Recorded in 2 of 15 BBS squares (27%), (*cf* 3 of 16 in 1998). There were 2 territories in the woodland CBC plot at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* (*cf* one in 1998) and 3 prs were noted on *Colonsay*. Birds were also reported during the breeding season in *Cowal* and on *Mull*.

In Oct-Nov small numbers were seen with other migrant thrushes, but the only count of more than 10 birds was 11 at Borichill Mor *Islay* on 5th Oct.

GRASSHOPPER WARBLER *Locustella naevia* Ceileiriche leumnach 1236
Summer visitor breeding locally in all areas; good densities may occur in young conifer plantations. Numbers fluctuate from year to year.

Apr-May. The first reeling bird was heard at Rubha Garbh (Appin) *N Argyll* on 25th Apr and was followed by birds at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* on 27th, Rockside *Islay* also on 27th, Fernoch (Lochgilphead) *Mid-Argyll* on 28th, and Loch Tarsan *Cowal*

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on 30th Apr. The species was well distributed by mid-May.

Breeding. Recorded in one of 15 BBS squares (27%), (cf 2 of 16 in 1998). There were no territories in the CBC plots at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* (cf 4 in 1998) and only one singing male was found on *Colonsay*. There were also reports of singing males in the breeding season from *Islay* (3 sites), *Jura* (one site), *Mid-Argyll* (5 sites), *Mull* (4 sites) and *N Argyll* (one site).

All the indications are that this was a poor year for this species, with numbers well down on 1998.

A late reeling bird was heard at Easter Ellister *Islay* on 9th Aug.

SEDGE WARBLER *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* Glas eun 1243
Summer visitor and locally common breeding species.

Apr-May. The first singing birds were at Lochan Luing *Kintyre* on 24th Apr, Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* on 27th and Loch Bhasapol *Tiree* on 28th Apr. Most areas had reported birds by mid-May.

Breeding. Recorded in 4 of 15 BBS squares (27%), (cf 4 of 16 in 1998). At Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* there were 13 territories in the CBC plots, equalling last year's record total; and a survey on *Colonsay* produced an impressive total of 47 singing males (cf 29 in 1998). Two pairs were again found on Sanda Islands *Kintyre*, and one singing bird was on Lunga (Treshnish Isles) *Mull* in late Jun. The species was widespread on *Tiree* with an estimated minimum of 35-45 singing birds on the whole island. Elsewhere, singing males or recently fledged young were reported from *Mid-Argyll* (5 sites), *Mull* (10 sites) and one site on *Islay* (although the species is much commoner there than this suggests). In contrast to Grasshopper Warbler, this appeared to be an excellent year for Sedge Warblers, with record counts in places.

Aug-Sep. A pr at Sligneach (Iona) *Mull* were still feeding 2 juvs. on 23rd Aug. The last birds reported were two at Cornaigmore *Tiree* on 6th Sep.

WHITETHROAT *Sylvia communis* Gealan coille 1275
Summer visitor, breeding widely but patchily. Numbers appear to fluctuate from year to year.

Apr-May. One was at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* on 22nd Apr; and one at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* on 27th was the earliest ever recorded there. On 29th Apr, one was singing at Fernoch (Lochgilphead) *Mid-Argyll* and 2 were at RSPB L. Gruinart. There were a few records in early May but birds were not widespread until 15th-17th May.

Breeding. Recorded in 5 of 15 BBS squares (33%), (cf 6 of 16 in 1998). In the CBC plots at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll*, numbers of territories were back to 7 after a low of 4 in 1998; and singing males on *Colonsay* also recovered to 17 from 10 in 1998. At least 2 prs were again found on Sanda Islands *Kintyre*. In addition to these, singing males or family groups were reported from *Mull* (11 sites), *Mid-Argyll* (11 sites) and from single sites in *Cowal*, *Islay* and *Kintyre*. Most of the evidence indicated a good year for this species in Argyll.

Aug-Sep. One was present Gometra *Mull* on 11th Aug; and one at Easter Ellister *Islay* on 2nd Sep was the last bird recorded.

GARDEN WARBLER *Sylvia borin* Ceileiriche garaidh 1276
Summer visitor and scarce breeding species.

May. The first record was not until 13th May, when one was at Easter Ellister

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Islay. The only other May records were at Achnatra *Mid-Argyll* on 15th and Tullochgorm (Minard) *Mid-Argyll* on 19th.

Breeding. Not recorded in any of the 15 BBS squares surveyed (as in 1998). Despite the paucity of records generally, it was considered an excellent year for this species at Tainish NNR where there was a total of 5 territories in the CBC plots (cf 3 in 1998). The only other reports of singing birds were at Castle Lachlan *Cowal* on 6th Jun and near Eredine (Loch Awe) *Mid-Argyll* on 8th Jun.

One found at Balemartine *Tiree* on 6th Jun was possibly a late migrant.

There were no autumn records.

BLACKCAP *Sylvia atricapilla* Ceann dubh 1277
Scarce summer visitor and regular passage migrant, especially in autumn.
Increasingly numerous in winter.

Jan-May. One singing in Dunoon *Cowal* during the last week of Mar was probably an over-wintering bird. Other than this, the first reports of the year were on 4th May when birds were singing in Minard Woods *Mid-Argyll* and Ballygrant Woods *Islay*. In the following week, singing males were also reported from Colonsay House *Colonsay* and from 4 sites on *Mull*.

Breeding. Not recorded in any of the 15 BBS squares surveyed (cf 2 of 16 in 1998) and there were no territories in the CBC plots at Tainish NNR *Mid-Argyll* (cf 3 in 1998). Elsewhere, from mid-May to Jul singing males were heard at one site on *Colonsay*, one on *Islay*, 2 in *Kintyre*, 4 in *Mid-Argyll*, 4 on *Mull* and one in *N Argyll*.

Sep-Nov. Single birds at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* on 19th Sep and Bridgend Woods *Islay* on 5th Oct, as well as 2 at Easter Ellister on 27th Sep, were all typical migrants. However, from mid-Oct a remarkable influx took place. Starting on 17th Oct, with males at Kilmichael Glen *Mid-Argyll* and RSPB L. Gruinart, a continuous sequence of records occurred which comprised birds on *Islay* at Easter Ellister, Kilchoman, Loch an t-Sailein and Port Ellen, in *Mid-Argyll* at Blarghour, Fearnoch and Tullochgorm, at Ballochgar *Kintyre*, 6 birds on *Tiree* on 24th Oct and one at Lochdon *Mull* on 12th Nov. At least 23 individuals were involved but, curiously, after the bird seen at Kilchoman on 15th Nov, there were no further records. This suggests that the birds did not over-winter in Argyll.

YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER *Phylloscopus inornatus* 1300
Vagrant. Only three accepted previous records for Argyll: on Skerryvore in 1906, on Islay in Oct 1988 and on Tiree in Oct 1998.

One found in a sycamore tree at Gleannagaidh *Islay* on 13th Oct was still there next day but was not seen subsequently [AJW/TapR]*. All 3 recent accepted records have now been in Oct.

WOOD WARBLER *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* Ceileiriche cille 1308
Summer visitor, common in suitable woodlands.

Apr-May. One at Tainish NNR *Mid-Argyll* on 26th Apr was the first record, and birds were reported as widespread in *Mid-Argyll* by 28th Apr. Elsewhere, the first bird reported on *Mull* was at Loch Ba on 1st May, and the first on *Islay* was at Ballygrant Woods on 4th May.

Breeding. Not recorded in any of the 15 BBS squares surveyed (cf 2 of 16 in 1998). There were 7 territories in the woodland CBC plot at Tainish NNR *Mid-Argyll* (cf a record 11 in 1998). Further breeding season records came from *Mid-*

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Argyll (7 sites), Mull (11 sites) and from single locations in Islay, Kintyre, N Argyll and Tiree.

There were no records after late Jun.

CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus collybita* Cailean 1311
Summer visitor and uncommon breeding species, scarce on the islands. More frequent on passage on some islands. Occasional records in winter.

Mar-May. The first reports of the year were on 30th Mar, when birds were singing at South Shian N Argyll and Dunoon Cowal. These were followed by singles at Connel Mid-Argyll on 2nd Apr and Balemartine Tiree on 6th Apr, and 2 at RSPB L. Gruinart Islay on 9th Apr. By mid-Apr the species had been widely reported from both mainland and islands. One was seen 'cliff-hopping' at Ceann a' Mhara Tiree on 26th Apr and there were further records of single birds on the island, at Cornaigmore on 12th May and at Balemartine on 14th May.

Breeding. Recorded in 2 of 15 BBS squares (13%), (cf 2 of 16 in 1998). Three territories were identified at RSPB L. Gruinart Islay. Breeding season records were also received from Colonsay (2 sites), Cowal (one site), Islay (3 sites), Kintyre (one site), Mid-Argyll (6 sites) and Mull (3 sites).

Sep-Oct. Single birds were at Union Bay (Minard) Mid-Argyll on 17th Sep, Easter Ellister Islay on 27th Sep, RSPB L. Gruinart on 29th Sep and Dunoon Cowal on 9th Oct; and the last was at Easter Ellister on 17th Oct.

WILLOW WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochilus* Crionag ghiuthais 1312
Widespread and abundant summer visitor.

Apr-May. The first bird of spring was once again at Coullabus Islay, on 2nd Apr, followed by singing birds at Islandadd Bridge (Moine Mhor) Mid-Argyll on 4th, Kiel Crofts N Argyll and RSPB L. Gruinart Islay on 5th, and Balemartine Tiree on 6th Apr. The main arrival took place during 13th-18th Apr, when birds were very widely reported.

Breeding. Recorded in 11 of 15 BBS squares (73%), (cf 13 of 16 in 1998); making this (together with Wren) the second most widespread breeding species recorded by the BBS in Argyll. There were 97 territories in the CBC plots at Taynish NNR Mid-Argyll (cf 89 in 1998) and 8-10 prs were located on Sanda Islands Kintyre (cf 8 in 1998). The species is only a localised breeder on Tiree and a maximum of 5 prs were found in an area of gorse at Moss.

Aug-Oct. Most were on the move by mid-Aug. In Sep, there were singles on Tiree on 6th and 11th, at Tayinloan Kintyre on 7th, and at Easter Ellister Islay on 29th. The last bird was at Easter Ellister on 26th Oct.

GOLDCREST *Regulus regulus* Crionag bhuidhe 1314
Common breeding species and passage migrant. Scarce on Coll and Tiree.

Jan-Apr. Two were seen at Middleton Tiree on 19th Mar, followed by a sprinkling of single birds elsewhere on the island and 5 around the Milton area on 4th Apr. These were presumably passage migrants.

Breeding. Recorded in 6 of 15 BBS squares (40%), (cf 6 of 16 in 1998). Three territories were identified in the CBC plots at Taynish NNR Mid-Argyll.

Sep-Dec. The only count of 10 or more birds was at Easter Ellister Islay (10 on 13th Oct).

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FIRECREST *Regulus ignicapillus* 1315
Rare visitor. The only previous Argyll records were from south Kintyre in 1980, 1981 and 1982.

One was found in alders near Laganbuidhe Farm (Dalmally) *N Argyll* on 30th Dec [A. Gray]*. This is the first confirmed record for Argyll for 17 years, although the species now occurs annually in Scotland in small numbers, most often in late autumn and winter.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa striata* Breacan glas sgiobalta 1335
Summer visitor breeding widely but sparsely.

May. An early migrant was at Scarinish *Tiree* on 8th May, followed by one at Knock Mull on 10th and, on 12th, by one at Cornaigmore *Tiree* and a pr at Easter Ellister *Islay*. The first arrival at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* was on 13th May (as in 1998). The species had been reported from most areas by 20th May.

Breeding. Not recorded in any of the 15 BBS squares surveyed (as in 1998). At Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll*, there were just 3 territories in the CBC plots (*cf* 7 in 1998, 3 in 1997). Confirmed breeding records came from Blarghour, Fearnoch, Kintallan (Tayvallich) and Minard *Mid-Argyll* and Easter Ellister *Islay*, where a pr raised a second brood in Aug. Additional breeding season records came from: *Colonsay* (2 sites), *Cowal* (one site), *Islay* (2 sites), *Kintyre* (2 sites), *Mid-Argyll* (4 sites) and *Mull* (6 sites).

Aug-Sep. The last birds recorded were two at Skipness *Kintyre* on 22nd Aug and singles at Kintallan *Mid-Argyll* and at Easter Ellister on 5th Sep.

PIED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula hypoleuca* Breacan glas 1349
Summer visitor and passage migrant, breeding very locally in oak woods. Increase in breeding population in recent years is attributable to the Argyll Bird Club nest-box scheme.

There were no records of birds on passage in spring or autumn.

Breeding. Near Bonawe *N Argyll* 5 pairs bred in boxes; clutches were counted in four (c/5, 6, 6, 7). Two containing *ca* 4 and 5 large young were predated by Pine Marten. The other 3 pairs fledged 1, 2 & 6 young; in the former two of these, 5 and 4 large young died, apparently from starvation. In total 5 prs fledged only 9 young (1.8 young/pair laying); a poor year. At Ardenavan (near Inveraray) *Mid-Argyll*, 3 clutches were laid in boxes. Only one clutch was successful, producing 2 young from a late nesting attempt. Two adults were trapped, one of which had been ringed at this site in 1997.

LONG-TAILED TIT *Aegithalos caudatus* Ciochan 1437
Widespread and common resident breeding bird on mainland; local on some islands and rare on Colonsay, Tiree and Coll.

Breeding. The species was not recorded in any BBS square (as in 1998). A single territory was found in the woodland CBC plot at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* and a fledged brood was seen on 7th Jun. Family parties were seen near Lochdon Mull and at Easter Ellister *Islay*.

Jul-Dec. Flocks of 10 or more birds were reported from Strone Glen *Kintyre* (30 on 26th Jul), Easter Ellister (16 on 28th Sep) and Furnace *Mid-Argyll* (10+ on 28th Oct).

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COAL TIT *Parus ater* Smutag 1461
Widespread and very common resident breeding bird, except on Tiree and Coll.
Some dispersal noted in autumn.

Breeding. Recorded in 5 of 15 BBS squares (33%), (cf 6 of 16 in 1998). There was a total of 7 territories in the CBC plots at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* (cf 8 in 1998).

Up to 30 birds were present in a garden in Dunoon Cowal during Oct. There were no records from *Coll* or *Tiree*.

BLUE TIT *Parus caeruleus* Cailleachag ceann ghorm 1462
Widespread and very common resident breeder, but rare on Tiree and Coll.

Jan-Mar. The maximum count at a garden in Kintallan (Tayvallich) *Mid-Argyll* was 25 birds on 15th Mar.

Breeding. Recorded in 5 of 15 BBS squares (33%), (cf 5 of 16 in 1998). There were 24 territories in the CBC plots at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* (as in 1998, cf 33 in 1997). Eggs of this species were laid in 11 of the boxes provided for Pied Flycatchers at Ardenavan *Mid-Argyll*.

Oct-Dec. Single birds at Crossapol on 3rd Nov and at Kenovay on 10th Nov were the only records for *Tiree* during the year.

GREAT TIT *Parus major* Currac bhain tighearna 1464
Widespread and very common resident breeder, but absent from Tiree and Coll.

Breeding. Recorded in 5 of 15 BBS squares (33%), (cf 6 of 16 in 1998). The number of territories in CBC plots at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* was well up on the previous few years with a total of 16 (cf 9 in 1998, 11 in 1997). Eggs of this species were laid in 8 of the boxes provided for Pied Flycatchers at Ardenavan *Mid-Argyll*.

Oct-Dec. A female at Crossapol on 5th Dec was the only record for *Tiree* during the year.

NUTHATCH *Sitta europaea* 1479
Vagrant to Argyll with only two accepted records: at Dalmally (N Argyll) in Jun 1975 and at Lochgilphead (Mid-Argyll) in winter 1975-76.

One was seen feeding on peanuts in a garden in Glenbranter Cowal on 6th Apr [D. Anderson]*. This is our first confirmed record for 23 years. There are reports of Nuthatches in Argyll quite often, although usually at second-hand. Observers are reminded that, although this species is common in most of England and is extending its range northwards, it is still very rare in Argyll. All records require a full supporting description.

TREECREEPER *Certhia familiaris* Snaigear 1486
Widespread and common resident breeder, except on Tiree and Coll.

Breeding. Not recorded in any of the 15 BBS squares surveyed (cf one of 16 in 1998). At Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll*, there was a total of 4 territories in the CBC plots (cf 5 in 1998).

There were records from all areas of Argyll apart from *Coll* and *Tiree*.

JAY *Garrulus glandarius* Sgraicheag 1539
Locally distributed breeder, on the mainland only. Some immigration in autumn.
All records required.

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Jan-Apr. Birds were seen regularly at Blairmore (Loch Long) *Cowal* and at Barcaldine *N Argyll*. There were also records from Dalchenna (Inveraray), East Kames, Kenmore and Minard Woods *Mid-Argyll*, and from Dunoon *Cowal*.

Breeding. Birds were seen during May-Jun in Dunoon and, in *Mid-Argyll*, at Barnluasgan (Bellanoch), Blarghour (Loch Awe) and Braevallich (Loch Awe).

Sep-Dec. There was a noticeable influx into *Mid-Argyll* from early Oct onwards. Up to 4 birds were recorded at 10 sites in *Mid-Argyll* from 5th Oct to 6th Nov. Elsewhere, there were records from Appin, Barcaldine and Bonawe *N Argyll*, and Dunoon and Whistlefield (Loch Eck) *Cowal* in Oct-Nov. Birds were still present in Dec at Dunoon and Minard Woods and at Loch Ederline *Mid-Argyll*.

MAGPIE *Pica pica* Cadhag

1549

Local resident breeder in Cowal, rare elsewhere. All records required.

Birds were seen throughout the year at Dunoon and at Blairmore (Loch Long) *Cowal*; and 10 were seen in a single tree at Dalriada Grove (Innellan) *Cowal* in Jun.

There were more records than usual away from *Cowal*. Single birds were at Kintallan (Tayvallich) *Mid-Argyll* and Connel *Mid-Argyll*, both (curiously) on 26th Mar; and in *Kintyre* birds were at Campbeltown on 29th Mar and at Largiemore (The Laggan) on 19th Apr. Later in the year, there were reports from Ardrishaig *Mid-Argyll* in Aug and from Lochgilphead *Mid-Argyll*, twice, in early Sep. Single birds were seen at Achnacree more (North Connel) *N Argyll* on 3rd May and 17th Oct; and one was in Lochawe Village *Mid-Argyll* on 22nd Nov.

CHOUGH *Pyrhcorax pyrrhcorax* Cathag dhearg chasach

1559

Islay is the Scottish stronghold, with smaller numbers on Jura and Colonsay and a so far unsuccessful pair on Mull. All records away from Islay required.

Breeding. A survey on *Islay* found 44 breeding prs whose average productivity was 1.98 young per pr. On *Colonsay* 10-14 prs were present of which 2 prs failed, 6 produced young and for 2 prs the outcome was unknown; 2 further prs were prospecting new nesting sites and the status of the other 2 prs is unknown. The pr on *Mull* laid eggs but was again unsuccessful. There was no information from *Jura*.

The largest concentration of birds on *Islay* was on the dunes at Kilchoman where the peak count early in the year was 52 in Jan. Later, numbers peaked at 85 on 4th Jul and there were still 54 birds there on 1st Nov. Significant counts elsewhere on *Islay* included 26 at Cladville on 15th Mar, 32 at Smaull on 29th Sep, 15 at Corran Ban on 14th Nov and 15 at Ballinaby on 5th Dec. The highest counts on *Colonsay* were 19 on Oronsay on 2nd and 16th Feb, and 18 at Kiloran Bay on 22nd Sep. On *Mull* a third bird was seen in Sep, close to the breeding site; it had been colour-ringed as a chick on *Colonsay* earlier in 1999. It was presumably one of 3 birds seen together on *Mull* on 17th Nov.

JACKDAW *Corvus monedula* Cathag

1560

Resident breeding bird, common throughout much of Argyll, but scarce on Mull and does not breed on Tiree or Coll.

Jan-Apr. A single bird at Balemartine on 31st Jan was the only record for *Tiree* during the year. The maximum count at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* was 42 on 22nd Apr.

Breeding. Recorded in one of 15 BBS squares (7%), (cf 3 of 16 in 1998). Breeding records for *Mull* came from Ross of Mull and Iona.

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Aug-Dec. Numbers at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve built up from 230 on 23rd Aug to a peak of 600 on 26th Sep, with 124 on 15th Dec the highest count thereafter. There were no significant counts from elsewhere.

ROOK *Corvus frugilegus* Rocas 1563
Resident breeding bird, common throughout much of Argyll, but scarce on Mull and does not breed on Colonsay, Tiree or Coll. Post-breeding influx of juveniles to some islands, e.g. Mull and Tiree.

Jan-Apr. The highest count at RSPB L. Gruinart Islay at this time was 250 on 25th Feb. No other sites reported counts of more than 100 birds. On Tiree, 5 birds were at Caolas on 9th Jan and a single was at Miodar on 16th Apr. One was seen on Oronsay Colonsay (where the species is a rare visitor) on 21st Mar.

Breeding. Recorded in one of 15 BBS squares (7%), (as in 1998). A full survey of the 10 active rookeries on Islay gave a total of 326 nests (*cf* revised figures of 353 nests in 1998 and 340 in 1997) [MAO]. Nineteen birds were present at the rookery at Iona Abbey Mull on 31st May with at least 12 active nests; and 7 nests were counted in the small rookery at Connel Mid-Argyll.

Aug-Dec. Flocks of 100 birds or more were reported from: Port Charlotte Islay (126 on 3rd Aug), RSPB L. Gruinart (max. 400 on 26th Sep), Craighers Islay (220 on 17th Nov) and Ballure Kintyre (200+ on 19th Dec).

Three were seen at Heylipol Tiree on 20th Oct; and a group which appeared on the island in Dec peaked at 26 on 19th.

HOODED CROW *Corvus corone cornix* Feannag 1567
Widespread and very common resident breeding species.

Jan-Apr. The usual gathering at the rubbish tip at Beinn Gott Tiree numbered 52 birds on 9th Jan.

Breeding. Recorded in 7 of 15 BBS squares (47%), (*cf* 9 of 16 in 1998). Five prs with broods were found on Colonsay (*cf* 5 in 1998); and one pr fledged young on Sanda Islands Kintyre while 2 or 3 other prs there were unsuccessful. A single pr bred successfully at Taynish NNR Mid-Argyll; and a family party with fledged young was seen on Lunga (Treshnish Isles) Mull.

Aug-Dec. The only counts of 20 or more birds were at Moine Mhor Mid-Argyll (35 on 22nd Sep), Heylipol Tiree (35 on 17th Oct), Portnahaven Islay (max. 30 on 13th Nov) and Beinn Gott rubbish tip (max. 42 on 19th Nov).

CARRION CROW *C. c. corone*
Most crows in Cowal are this form and it is spreading into Kintyre and Mid-Argyll.

Breeding. Recorded in one of 15 BBS squares (7%), (*cf* 3 of 16 in 1998).

Away from the main breeding areas, birds showing 95% *corone* characteristics were at Ceann a' Mhara Tiree on 6th Feb and Crossapol Tiree on 26th Apr. A single pure *corone* type was at Kiloran Farm Colonsay on 15th Jun.

RAVEN *Corvus corax* Fitheach 1572
Common resident breeding bird.

Jan-Mar. Counts of 20 or more birds came from: Beinn Gott rubbish tip Tiree (20 on 9th Jan) and Ballyhaugh Hill Coll (20+ on 24th Mar).

Breeding. Recorded in 4 of 15 BBS squares (27%), (*cf* 7 of 16 in 1998). At least 7 territories were occupied on Colonsay and 15 young were fledged from the 6

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that were successful [DCJ, JJ]. On *Cowal* 38 territories were checked and a minimum of 61 young fledged from the 27 that were successful [DA, AF]. In *SW Mull* 15+ territories were occupied and a total of 29 young fledged from 10 of the sites known to be successful [PHA]. Five territories monitored elsewhere produced 11 young, giving a total of 65 occupied territories in Argyll that produced at least 116 fledged young [ARSG]. On *Tiree* 7 occupied territories were found, at least 5 of which produced clutches [AJL]. Pairs were present on both Lunga and Fladda (Treshnish Isles) *Mull* but there was no evidence of breeding [TIARG]; and a pr in Kilmichael Glen *Mid-Argyll* fledged 3 young.

Jul-Dec. At Beinn Gott rubbish tip, 42 flushed on 24th Jul was the highest count later in the year. No other site had a count of 20 or more.

STARLING *Sturnus vulgaris* Druid

1582

Common resident breeding bird except on Mull, where a localised post-breeding influx of juveniles occurs. Numbers boosted by winter visitors.

Jan-Apr. Among the more notable counts on *Tiree* were: 600 at Loch an Eilein on 9th Jan, 980 between Sorobaidh Bay and Mannal on 21st Jan, 950 at Balephuill on 4th Apr, and 620 at Loch Bhasapol on 9th Apr. At RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* the peak count was 520 on 18th Feb. Other counts of 100 or more birds came from: Tayinloan *Kintyre* (200+ on 21st Jan), Oronsay *Colonsay* (190 on 9th Feb) and Killinallan Dunes *Islay* (120 on 11th Feb).

Breeding. Recorded in 3 of 15 BBS squares (20%), (cf 3 of 16 in 1998). Two territories were found in the CBC plots at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* (cf one in 1998); and there was no evidence of breeding on Sanda Islands *Kintyre*.

Jul-Dec. In Jul, 685 were at Kenovay on 14th but the highest count on *Tiree* was at Heylipol with an estimated 1,100 in newly harvested barley fields on 30th Oct. On *Islay*, an estimated 1,000 birds were at RSPB L. Gruinart on 13th Sep, 350 were roosting at Kintra on 1st Nov, and 500 were at Craigens on 17th Nov. A flock of 120 was at Tayinloan on 11th Nov; and 450 at Sorobaidh Bay *Tiree* on 21st Dec was the last large flock of the year.

HOUSE SPARROW *Passer domesticus* Gealbhoon

1591

Resident breeding bird, commonly associated with human habitation, so distribution rather localised in sparsely inhabited areas.

Jan-Apr. In Jan, a flock of 80 was at Tayinloan *Kintyre* on 3rd; and 90 took up residence in a cattle shed at Heylipol *Tiree* on 20th.

Breeding. Recorded in one of 15 BBS squares surveyed (7%), (as in 1998). A pr was nesting under the eaves of a house at Kintallan (Tayvallich) *Mid-Argyll* on 23rd Feb.

Jul-Dec. On 18th Jul, 20 or more birds, mostly juvs., were found trapped in lobster pots left closed on the foreshore at Minard *Mid-Argyll*. They had presumably entered the pots in search of insects. One or two had died but most were released unharmed. Other flocks of 20 or more were reported from: Oronsay *Colonsay* (max. 52 on 2nd Aug), Sligneach (Iona) *Mull* (58 on 2nd Aug), Ard More *Tiree* (max. 40 during Sep), The Laggan *Kintyre* (ca 100 at Chiscan Farm on 11th Oct), RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* (max. 48 on 17th Nov), Cornaigbeg *Tiree* (34 on 9th Dec), and Heylipol *Tiree* (max. 68 on 18th Dec).

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CHAFFINCH *Fringilla coelebs* Breacan beithe 1636
Abundant resident breeder, except on Tiree and Coll. Foraging flocks gather outwith the breeding season, their numbers augmented by winter visitors.

Jan-Apr. The only count of 100 or more birds was at Slockavullin *Mid-Argyll* where a flock of ca 150 was seen on 22nd Jan. On *Tiree*, a single bird was at Balemartine on various dates during Jan-Mar.

Breeding. Recorded in 9 of 15 BBS squares (60%), (cf 10 of 16 in 1998). Numbers in the CBC plots at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* were similar to 1998 with a total of 27 territories (cf 28 in 1998, 32 in 1997).

Sep-Dec. Some very large gatherings occurred at this time. At The Laggan *Kintyre* a total of 2,000 birds was found at 3 sites on 30th Sep; ca 1,000 were at Tayinloan *Kintyre* on 11th Nov; and 600 were at Mulindry *Islay* on 29th Dec. Elsewhere, counts of 100 or more were made at: Ballimeanoch *Mid-Argyll* (200+ on 21st Sep), Poltalloch *Mid-Argyll* (300 on 21st Oct), Slockavullin (350 on 24th Oct), Ballygrant Village *Islay* (300 on 9th Nov), Lossit Farm *Islay* (100 on 25th Nov), and RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* (max. 105 on 7th Dec).

Lone birds were on *Tiree*, at Gott Bay on 17th Oct and at West Hynish on 18th Nov.

BRAMBLING *Fringilla montifringilla* Bricein caorainn 1638
Uncommon winter visitor in varying numbers. Occasional summer records.

Jan-May. In Jan, 6 were at Nerabus *Islay* on 8th; 6 were seen with a Chaffinch flock at Slockavullin *Mid-Argyll* on 22nd; and 6 were on Beinn Mhor *Cowal* on 26th. One was at Connel *Mid-Argyll* on 14th Apr. Two males singing in a plantation near Carsaig Mull on 15th May were probably late migrants.

Summering birds. A male in breeding plumage was near Brackley Farm (Lochgilphead) *Mid-Argyll* on 28th Jun but was not seen subsequently.

Oct-Dec. The only records were on *Islay*, where one was at Kildalton Woods on 20th Dec and 2 were at RSPB L. Gruinart on 29th Dec.

GREENFINCH *Carduelis chloris* Glaisean daraich 1649
Locally common resident breeding species. Scarce on some islands.

Jan-Apr. Counts of 10 or more birds were reported as follows: 15+ in a garden at Imeraval *Islay* during Jan, max. 14 at Cornaigmore *Tiree* on 5th Feb, and 12 at Kenovay *Tiree* on 29th Mar.

Breeding. Recorded in 3 of 15 BBS squares (20%), (cf 2 of 16 in 1998). Two males were singing at Colonsay House *Colonsay* on 5th Apr; and a pr with recently fledged young were at An Airidh *Tiree* in Jun.

Jul-Dec. The highest counts at this time were 40 in and around Sunderland Farm *Islay* on 2nd Oct and 30 at Ballinaby *Islay* on 5th Dec.

GOLDFINCH *Carduelis carduelis* Lasair choille 1653
Localised resident breeder. Absent as a breeding species from Colonsay, Tiree and Coll. Some emigration in autumn.

Jan-Jun. One or two birds were recorded at various locations on *Tiree* from 10th Jan-16th Feb and 6th-9th May. There were no records from *Colonsay*.

Breeding. Recorded in one of 15 BBS squares (7%), (cf none of 16 in 1998). There were 2 territories in CBC plots at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* (cf 4 in 1998). A pr with recently fledged young were seen at Kintallan (Tayvallich) *Mid-Argyll*. Other

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breeding season records came from: *Cowal* (one site), *Islay* (2 sites), *Mid-Argyll* (8 sites), *Mull* (4 sites) and *N Argyll* (one site).

Jul-Dec. The only counts of 10 or more during the latter part of the year were: 23 at Port Ramsay (Lismore) *N Argyll* on 10th Sep, 10 at Ardnave Loch *Islay* on 5th Oct, and 28 at Loch na Cille *Mid-Argyll* on 10th Oct.

On *Tiree*, there were 4 birds at Balemartine on 20th Oct, 3 at West Hynish on 20th Nov, and one at Balinoe on 13th Dec. Three birds were at Oronsay Farm *Colonsay* on 18th Dec.

SISKIN *Carduelis spinus* Gealag bhuidhe 1654
Resident and locally common breeding species but absent from Tiree and Coll. Numbers fluctuate from year to year.

Jan-Apr. Birds returned to garden bird feeders early, with regular reports from early Jan onwards. The only reports of flocks of 10 or more were: 16 at Crarae Gardens *Mid-Argyll* on 10th Feb and 15 in a garden in Dunoon *Cowal* on 15th Mar.

Breeding. Recorded in 3 of 15 BBS squares (20%), (cf 5 of 16 in 1998). There were no territories in the woodland CBC plot at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* (cf 3 in 1998). There were widespread records of birds during the breeding season, including reports of singing males and family groups from sites in *Cowal*, *Islay*, *Kintyre*, *Mid-Argyll* and *Mull*.

Jul-Dec. The only reports of flocks of 10 or more were 20 at Balevulin (Gleann Seilisdair) *Mull* on 15th Jul and 10 in Bridgend Woods *Islay* on 9th Nov.

LINNET *Carduelis cannabina* Gealan lin 1660
Localised resident breeder. Flocking in autumn and winter.

Jan-May. The only flock of 20 or more reported was 24 at Balephetrish *Tiree* on 5th May.

Breeding. Recorded in 3 of 15 BBS squares (20%), (cf 4 of 16 in 1998). There were 3 territories in the coastal CBC plot at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* (as in 1998); 2 prs bred on *Coll* RSPB Reserve; and as many as 10 prs bred, some seen with fledged young, on Sanda Islands *Kintyre* (cf 4 prs in 1998).

Jul-Dec. Flocks of 50 or more were reported from: RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* (max. 105 on 2nd Aug), Oronsay *Colonsay* (55 feeding in stubble weeds on 2nd Sep), Tayinloan *Kintyre* (100+ on 23rd Sep), Bruichladdich *Islay* (max. 90 on 10th Nov), and Lossit Farm *Islay* (60 on 12th Nov).

TWITE *Carduelis flavirostris* Gealan beinne 1662
Localised resident breeding species, found especially on the islands. Flocking in low-lying arable and coastal areas, Aug onwards. Some evidence to suggest emigration from Argyll in autumn, although there may also be an influx of wintering birds to some areas.

Jan-Apr. Flocks of 50 or more birds were reported chiefly from *Tiree* with max. 126 at Heylipol (on 21st Jan) and 130 at Balemartine on 31st Jan. On *Islay* the only count in this category was 50 at Craigens (Loch Gruinart) on 26th Mar. There were still 26 at Heylipol on 25th Apr. Smaller numbers were recorded at Port na Luig *Coll*, Oronsay *Colonsay* and Tayinloan *Kintyre*.

Breeding. Recorded in 2 of 15 BBS squares (13%), (cf 2 of 16 in 1998). A survey on *Colonsay* (without Oronsay) produced a total of 37 prs (cf 32 prs in 1998), while a (possibly incomplete) count on Oronsay found 13 prs. On Treshnish Isles

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Mull, in late Jun, at least 4-5 prs were found on Lunga (+ 2 juvs.), 2 prs were on Fladda, and 6 birds present on Bac Mor (Dutchman's Cap) on 24th Jun included a pr with 2 juvs. There were 8-10 prs on Sanda Islands *Kintyre* with good numbers of fledged young seen; 2 prs bred and fledged young on *Coll* RSPB Reserve; and 3 prs were seen at Clachan (Lismore) *N Argyll* where ca 13 juvs were counted in low blackthorn on 22nd May. This is a widespread breeding species on *Tiree* and 28 were counted in a single 1-km square on 23rd Jun. Birds were also reported in the breeding season from: *Iona Mull* (several prs), *Kintyre* (8 sites inc. 3 sites on Gigha), *Scarba Mid-Argyll*, and *Mull mainland* (5 sites).

Aug-Dec. Migrant flocks appeared from early Aug onwards and, on 2nd, 54 were seen on Oronsay and 31 adults and juvs were feeding on meadow grasses at Ruanaich (*Iona Mull*). Elsewhere, max 20 were at Ledaig Point *N Argyll* on 16th Aug; 50+ were in SE Kerrera *Mid-Argyll* on 21st; 40+ were at Connel Airfield *N Argyll* (in a mixed flock with Linnets) on 25th; and 130+ were at the north end of *Iona Mull* on 30th Aug. Later in the year, flocks of 50 or more birds were recorded at several localities on *Islay* including: Claddach (max. 70 on 14th Sep), Machir Bay (62 on 2nd Oct), Killinallan (70 on 7th Oct), Cluanach (50 on 19th Oct), Craighs (max. 70 on 20th Oct), Kilchoman (70 on 23rd Oct), Ballymeanach (100 on 28th Oct), Ballinaby (50 on 3rd Nov), Knocklearoch (50 on 6th Nov) and Gartbreck (50 on 8th Nov). Numbers declined somewhat thereafter, with 14 at RSPB L. Gruinart on 7th the highest count in Dec. On *Tiree*, numbers at The Reef peaked at 212 on 17th Oct, falling to 201 on 2nd Nov and 85 on 2nd Dec. The only other large flock reported was 50+ on the saltmarsh at Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* on 10th Oct.

REDPOLL *Carduelis flammea* Dearcan seilich

1663

Localised resident breeder. Numbers fluctuate from year to year. Flocking occurs in autumn and winter.

Jan-Apr. The only flock reported was of 50+ birds in the NW wood at Moine Mhor *Mid-Argyll* on 15th Feb.

Breeding. Recorded in one of 15 BBS squares (7%), (cf 4 of 16 in 1998). At Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll*, there were a record 7 territories in the coastal CBC plot and one in the woodland plot (cf total of 5 in 1998); and 5-10 prs were located on *Colonsay*. In the course of survey work on inland gull colonies (for Seabird 2000), high concentrations of Redpolls were found in young conifer plantations in Knapdale and *N Kintyre*. On the Ormsary estate *Mid-Argyll*, 4+ calling birds were seen on 15th May; at least 10 calling birds were recorded in Loch Romain area *Kintyre* on 18th May; and 12+ were in the Cam Loch area south of the Crinan Canal *Mid-Argyll* on 30th May. Other breeding season records came from *Islay* (3 sites), *Mid-Argyll* (4 sites) and *Mull* (7 sites). Apparently a very good breeding season for this species in *Argyll*, although this picture may be influenced by records from rarely visited sites.

Jul-Dec. The only locations reporting flocks at this time were: Easter Ellister *Islay* (max. 30 on 7th Aug), Keills *Islay* (70 on 26th Aug), Cairnbaan *Mid-Argyll* (several groups of up to 10 birds in early Oct) and Dalmally *N Argyll* (17 on 17th Nov and 18th Dec).

NB. As from Jan 2001, Redpoll will be treated as two separate species viz. Lesser Redpoll *Carduelis cabaret* and Common Redpoll *C. flammea* (latter includes 'Mealy', 'Iceland' and 'Greenland' or Greater Redpolls). All records submitted should distinguish between these two new species.

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COMMON CROSSBILL *Loxia curvirostra* Cam ghob 1666
Numbers, distribution and breeding season vary depending on abundance of conifer cone crops. Highly irruptive species with large flocks sometimes moving to locate a new seed area, usually in summer.

Jan-Jul. Recorded in 2 of 15 BBS squares (13%), (*cf* none of 16 in 1998). The first report of the year was of a single bird at Blairmore *Cowal* on 10th Jan. In Feb there was some evidence of an influx into *Mid-Argyll*. Eight birds were seen in a garden at Fearnoch (Kilmichael Glen) on 7th; 2 males and 3 females were near the shore at East Kames (Loch Fyne) on 9th; a pr were calling loudly at Tullochgorm (Minard) on 14th; a bright red-plumaged male, accompanied by 2 females, was singing near Brainport Bay (Loch Fyne) on 20th; and 2 adult males, one female and 2 juvs. moulting into adult plumage were at Tullochgorm on 25th.

There were no further records until Apr, when a flock of 40+ were feeding at Glenbranter *Cowal* on 3rd; 3 were in Glen Aros *Mull* on 30th; and *ca* 20, including many fledged juvs., were feeding in the tops of oak trees coming into leaf at Dalavich *Mid-Argyll*, also on 30th. Then singles were recorded at Quinish *Mull* on 26th May and Lochdon *Mull* on 11th Jun, followed by 9 flying south at Kilchoman *Islay* on 5th Jul and one at Doire Darach *N Argyll* on 21st Jul.

Aug-Dec. The only record from the latter part of the year involved 2 or more at Doire Darach on 20th Nov.

COMMON ROSEFINCH *Carpodacus erythrinus* 1679
Very rare visitor, chiefly in summer. Six previous records: on Iona in Jun 1989 & Jun-Jul 1990, Colonsay in Jun 1994, Tiree in Sep 1996, Oronsay in Nov 1996 and Tiree in Jun 1998.

There were two accepted records, both in Jun. An adult male was seen singing from the top of a conifer at Arduaine Gardens *Mid-Argyll* on 10th Jun [H. & D. Wood]*. On 23rd Jun a first-summer male, also in song, was found at Seafeld Farm (near Bowmore) *Islay* and it was reported singing there again on 25th Jun [AJW/TapR]*. (No supporting description has been received for a third individual reported, also in Jun, in Kintyre.)

BULLFINCH *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* Corcan-coille 1710
Locally common resident breeder. Absent from Tiree, Coll and Colonsay, and irregular on Gigha.

Jan-Apr. The only counts of 10 or more were made at Falls of Cruachan *N Argyll* (20 in woods above Loch Awe on 9th Jan) and Crarae Gardens *Mid-Argyll* (11 on 10th Feb).

Breeding. Recorded in 3 of 15 BBS squares (20%), (*cf* 2 of 16 in 1998). Only a single territory in the woodland CBC plot at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* (*cf* total of 2 in 1998).

The only other confirmed breeding record was at Kintallan (Tayvallich) *Mid-Argyll*, where adults were seen with recently fledged young. However, family parties were reported from Bridgend Woods and Easter Ellister *Islay* and from Birdfield (Minard) *Mid-Argyll*; and there were breeding season reports from *Kintyre* and *Mull*.

Jul-Dec. No post-breeding flocks of 10 or more birds were reported, but 5 were feeding in heather on Beinn Ruadh *Cowal* on 18th Nov.

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LAPLAND BUNTING *Calcarius lapponicus* 1847
Less-than-annual passage migrant. Most frequent in autumn, less so in spring, and very rarely recorded in winter.

A good year for this species with three records, all in Sep. One was at The Reef Tíree on 16th Sep; one was at Ardnave Islay on 21st and 22nd; and two were around the golf course on Colonsay on 23rd Sep.

SNOW BUNTING *Plectrophenax nivalis* Gealag an t-sneachda 1850
Varying numbers on passage and in winter. Has bred N Argyll in the past.

Jan-Apr. The flocks from the previous Dec remained into the new year. Tayinloan Kintyre had ca 50 birds on 3rd Jan, and on 20th Jan there were estimated to be 70 or more between Tayinloan and A' Chleit. Flocks on Islay included: 7 at Machir Bay on 6th Jan, 30 at Ardnave on 9th, and 28 at Ardnave on 16th Jan. Then up to 3 birds were seen at Ardnave, Machir Bay and Craigens until the end of Mar. The only other flocks were at Blairmore Hill Cowal (23 on 18th Feb) and at Tayinloan, where 40 were still present on 1st Mar. Otherwise, single birds were at Gortan Mull on 4th Mar, Oronsay Colonsay on 15th Mar, and Uig Coll on 24th Mar; while 2 were at Glen Forsa Mull on 21st Mar and 2 females were at Breachacha Coll on 24th Mar. The last was a single at Ruaig Tíree on 15th Apr.

Breeding. There was no evidence of breeding in Argyll.

Sep-Dec. The first returning bird was at Frenchman's Rocks Islay on 30th Sep. This was followed by single birds at Balemartine Tíree on 2nd Oct and on Oronsay Colonsay on 3rd Oct. The first flock of winter was at Ardnave Islay, where 20+ birds flew over on 5th Oct. Then single birds and small groups were present at various locations on Islay until the year end, the most notable flocks being 20 at Ronnachmore on 6th Nov, 18 at Ballinaby on 11th Nov, 16 at Ardlarach on 13th Nov, 17 at Ardnave on 1st Dec and 23 at Ballinaby on 22nd Dec. On Tíree, 4 were at Sorobaidh Bay on 23rd Oct and 14 at Balephetrish Bay on 1st Nov; and ca 30 were in marram grass at Balinoe on 10th Dec. Elsewhere, 12 flew south at Machrihanish SBO Kintyre on 11th Oct and 6 were on Oronsay on 18th Dec.

YELLOWHAMMER *Emberiza citrinella* Buidheag bhealaidh 1857
Localised resident breeding species. Birds forage in cut hay and silage fields outwith breeding season. Population seems to be in decline and all records are welcome.

Jan-Apr. The only sites regularly reporting birds were gardens where bird tables were visited. At Benderloch N Argyll the maximum count was 6 birds in Jan but up to 4 were present until early Apr. A garden at Connel Mid-Argyll had up to 5 in Feb-Mar; and one or two were regular visitors at Kintallan (Tayvallich) Mid-Argyll. The only others reports were of single birds at 3 sites on Islay.

Breeding. Recorded in one of 15 BBS squares (7%), (cf 2 of 16 in 1998). Other breeding season records came from: Islay (14 birds at 12 coastal sites between Gortantaoid Point and Rubha Bholsa on 16th May), Jura (singing male near Corpach Bay and singles at 5 SW coastal sites), Mid-Argyll (birds at 3 locations on Scarba, at Gallanach {Loch Crinan} and a pr at Upper Gylen {Kerrera}) and Mull (3+ prs in Lochbuie area and singles at Pottie, Loch Assapol, Knockvologen, Croig and Kinlochspelve).

Aug-Dec. Reports were received from the following locations on Islay: Bridgend Merse, Camduncan, Coullabus Wood, Foreland House, Keills, Kilnaughton

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Bay (9 on 31st Dec), Loch Skerrols, RSPB L. Gruinart (max. 3 on 12th Nov), Mulindry and Sunderland Farm. In *Mid-Argyll* records came from: Barraholm (Loch Sween), Connel, Moine Mhor NNR and Poltalloch (9 on 21st Oct). Benderloch was the only other locality reporting birds (max 4 on 2nd Nov).

REED BUNTING *Emberiza schoeniclus* Gealag loin 1877
Locally common resident breeding species. Small flocks sometimes gather outwith the breeding season.

Jan-Apr. The only counts of 10 or more birds at this time were 11 at Kiloran Colonsay on 14th Jan and 15 at Ardnave Loch Islay on 10th Feb.

Breeding. Recorded in 2 of 15 BBS squares (13%), (*cf* 4 of 16 in 1998). On Colonsay (inc. Oronsay), 8 prs were located (*cf* 11 in 1998). At Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* a total of 3 territories was located in the CBC plots (*cf* 2 in 1998); but only 2 prs were found on Sanda Islands *Kintyre* (*cf* 5 prs in 1998). On *Tiree* a minimum of 10 males were on territory in Apr at various locations; and 2 prs bred and fledged young on Coll RSPB Reserve. Elsewhere, birds were found during the breeding season at 7 sites in *Mid-Argyll*, 2 on *Mull* and one in *Kintyre*.

Jul-Dec. Numbers at RSPB L. Gruinart *Islay* built up to 14 on 7th Nov with a peak count of 37 on 7th Dec. The only other flocks reported were at Tayinloan *Kintyre* (max. 45 on 19th Dec) and Kilchoman *Islay* (50 in reedbed on 22nd Dec).

BLACK-HEADED BUNTING *Emberiza melanocephala* 1881
Vagrant. Four previous Argyll records, all of single males May – Jul.

A single male bird was present at Kirkapoll *Tiree* from at least 3rd to 8th Jun [F. Sweeney/A. J. Leitch]*. Our first record since one was at Bruichladdich *Islay* Jun-Jul 1993. The 1999 record was confirmed in rather unusual circumstances. The bird was only seen by a resident on the island who managed to obtain video footage of it. The video was in a non-standard format but was fortunately shown to Alan Leitch who had no doubt as to the species it depicted. The cassette was sent with the record details to BBRC, but no-one had the appropriate equipment to view it. However, the committee agreed to accept the record on the basis of Alan Leitch's description of what he had seen on the video.

CORN BUNTING *Miliaria calandra* Gealag bhuathair 1882
Resident species, almost extinct in Argyll. Recent records on Tiree only.

Once again, a lone bird appears to be surviving on *Tiree*. A single male was heard singing at the Ruaig/Salum crossroads on 15th Jun and was reported there again on 20th Jun. There were no subsequent sightings there or records from elsewhere.

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ESCAPES AND INTRODUCTIONS

This section includes species which are not on the British list or whose occurrence in the UK is **EXCLUSIVELY** within Categories B, D or E (see definitions of categories on p.19). Other species, whose occurrence in Argyll arises partly or wholly from introduced birds which may not or do not form self-sustaining breeding populations, include White-fronted Goose, Snow Goose, Barnacle Goose, Mandarin, Red Kite, White-tailed Eagle, Red-legged Partridge, Grey Partridge and Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon). These are dealt with in the main systematic list.

BAR-HEADED GOOSE *Anser indicus*

Category E*.

Three were recorded at Loch Finlaggan Islay on 23rd Jun. This is the first reported sighting on Islay of this frequent escape from wildfowl collections.

EMPEROR GOOSE *Anser canagicus*

Category E*.

One seen at Rubha nam Frangach (Loch Fyne) Mid-Argyll on 16th Apr had presumably wandered from the Argyll Wildfowl Park at Inveraray.

LIST OF REJECTED RECORDS, PENDING RECORDS AND RECORDS FOR WHICH DETAILS ARE STILL AWAITED

Please note that the records below are listed for information purposes only, and do not form part of the data set for the years in question.

The following records of species on the ABRC, SBRC or BBRC lists have been rejected since the publication of ABR 15.

Goshawk	<i>Mull</i>	09/07/99	ABRC
Crag Martin	<i>Mid Argyll</i>	20/06/99	ABRC
Yellow Warbler	<i>Mull</i>	10-24/08/99	ABRC
Nuthatch	<i>Kintyre</i>	May 99	ABRC/SBRC

Most records are rejected, not because the committee in question is convinced that a mistake has been made, but because the evidence provided is insufficient to establish the identification.

There are no 1999 records currently in circulation around the various rarity committees.

Details of the following claimed 1999 records of species on the BBRC, SBRC and ABRC lists have not been received.

Goshawk	Loch Sween	<i>Mid-Argyll</i>	28/12/99
Red-rumped Swallow	Conaigmore	<i>Tiree</i>	27/09/99
Red-backed Shrike	near Arrochar	<i>Cowal</i>	02/05/99
Common Rosefinch	?	<i>Kintyre</i>	Jun 1999

Anyone who saw any of these birds is encouraged to send in details. The records will not be referred to again in future reports unless details have by then been forwarded to ABRC, BBRC or SBRC.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

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NB: The Islay Bird and Natural History Report for 1999 is available from: Islay Natural History Trust, Port Charlotte, Isle of Islay, PA48 7TX; price £2.00 including p&p.

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Argyll Bird Checklist – 2000 Update

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Abstract

This short paper updates the checklist of birds of Argyll compiled by ap Rheinallt (1999). First records of Black Kite, White-winged Black Tern and Semipalmated Sandpiper have recently been accepted. In addition, Teal and Redpoll will each be "split" into two species in the near future, with both members of the species pairs having occurred in Argyll. Arctic Redpoll has been removed from the list because the sole Argyll record has been shown to be a fraud. These changes bring the total number of species recorded in Argyll to 318.

INTRODUCTION

The first published checklist of bird species for the current Argyll recording area was compiled by ap Rheinallt (1999). Since then there have been several changes to the list, and others are imminent. It therefore seems appropriate to publish an update at this point. Anybody who would like a copy of the full updated list is invited to contact the first-named author above.

ADDITIONS

The following species should be added to Category A of the Argyll list as a result of recent decisions by the *British Birds* Rarities Committee (BBRC):

Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	Tiree, 1997
White-winged Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>	Tiree, 1999
Semipalmated Sandpiper	<i>Calidris pusilla</i>	Tiree, 1999; Islay, 1999

These records are described in more detail in the systematic list section of this report.

In addition, the following taxonomic changes proposed by the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee (BOURC) are relevant to the Argyll list. These changes will take effect from January 2001 or shortly afterwards (<http://www.bou.org.uk/recnews.html>).

Teal *Anas crecca* will become two species, **Eurasian Teal** *A. crecca* and **Green-winged Teal** *A. carolinensis*. As the name suggests, the former is the species that breeds and regularly winters in Argyll. Green-winged Teal is a transatlantic visitor that has been recorded on several occasions in recent years, especially on Islay and Tiree, although it seems likely that returning individuals account for a large proportion of the reports. Green-winged Teal is already on the list of Scottish rarities published

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by the *Scottish Birds Records Committee* (SBRC), and full details of every record are required.

Redpoll *Carduelis flammea* will also become two species, Lesser Redpoll *C. cabaret* and Common Redpoll *C. flammea* (which includes Mealy Redpoll *C. f. flammea*, Greater Redpoll *C. f. rostrata* and Icelandic Redpoll *C. f. islandica*). Lesser Redpoll is the form that breeds in Argyll and in the UK generally, while both Mealy and Greater Redpolls have apparently occurred as visitors to Argyll.

Mealy Redpolls are mainly winter visitors to the UK from Scandinavia, with large numbers arriving on the east coast in so-called invasion years, though few may reach the west coast (Riddington *et al.*, 2000). Most Scottish records come from the Northern Isles. This form appears to be a rare – though possibly under-recorded – visitor to Argyll. According to Baxter and Rintoul (1953), birds were reported from Mull during the large invasion of 1910. The following records are known to us:

- One Mull, 21 October 1910 (*Annals of Scottish Natural History* 1911: 114).
- Recorded Craignish (Mid-Argyll), 22 November 1910 (*Annals of Scottish Natural History* 1911: 209).
- Recorded Skerryvore, December 1910 (*Annals of Scottish Natural History* 1911: 209).
- One Oronsay (Colonsay), October/November 1933 (Jardine *et al.*, 1986).
- Five Bridgend (Islay), 9 October 1976 (*Scottish Birds* 10: 114).
- Six Connel (Mid-Argyll), 17 February 1986 (*Argyll Bird Report* 4: 38; *Scottish Birds* 14: 253).
- One Gruinart (Islay), 13 February 1987 (*Argyll Bird Report* 5: 12; *Scottish Bird Report* 1987: 45).

In addition, a single bird was seen intermittently in a large flock of Bramblings at Killdalloig (Kintyre) between December 1992 and March 1993 (E. J. Maguire, *pers. comm.*)

Greater Redpolls (more commonly known as Greenland Redpolls) are scarce visitors to parts of northern and western Britain, chiefly the Northern Isles (Riddington and Votier, 1997). Baxter and Rintoul (1953) state that this race has occurred in Tiree, Mull and mainland Argyll. The following records are known to us:

- Male procured Tiree, 12 September 1913 (*Scottish Naturalist* 1915: 44).
- Female procured Tiree, 27 September 1913 (*Scottish Naturalist* 1915: 44).
- Singles at Roundhouse (Coll) on 8 October and 18 December 1992 (*Argyll Bird Report* 9: 54; *Scottish Bird Report* 1992: 66).

In addition, a possible was reported from Balemartine (Tiree) on 21 September 1997 (*Argyll Bird Report* 14: 87).

ADDITIONAL RECORDS OF RARITIES

For 65 species that had been recorded in Argyll on three or fewer occasions, ap Rheinallt (1999) gave the year and location of each individual record. The following additional records of these rarities have been accepted recently:

White-billed Diver	<i>Gavia adamsii</i>	Islay, 1999	(4 th record)
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White-billed Diver	<i>Gavia adamsii</i>	Mull, 2000	(5 th record)
Great White Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	Islay, 1998	(3 rd record)
Great White Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	Tiree, 2000	(4 th record)
Ruddy Duck	<i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i>	Islay, 1999	(4 th record)
Baird's Sandpiper	<i>Calidris bairdii</i>	Islay, 1999	(2 nd record)
Laughing Gull	<i>Larus atricilla</i>	Islay, 1999	(3 rd record)
Ivory Gull	<i>Pagophila eburnea</i>	Islay, 2000	(4 th record)
Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	Glenbranter (Cowal), 1999	(3 rd record)

With the exception of the recent White-billed Diver, Great White Egret and Ivory Gull records, all these records are described in more detail in the systematic list section of this report.

DELETIONS

A record of an Arctic Redpoll of the Greenland and North American race *hornemanni*, shot on Mull on 10 October 1920 by Meinertzhagen, was quoted by Baxter and Rintoul (1953) and included in the list compiled by ap Rheinallt (1999). However, Knox (1993) showed clearly that this record was the result of deliberate fraud, with the specimen in question probably having been collected in Greenland in 1936. Arctic Redpoll should therefore be deleted from the Argyll list.

CATEGORY D SPECIES

Category D of the British list, which does not form part of the main list, consists of species that would otherwise appear in Category A or Category B (see p. 19 of this report) except that there is reasonable doubt that they have ever occurred in the wild state. According to ap Rheinallt (1999), there are no accepted Argyll records of any of these species in Argyll. This statement is incorrect. The only Category D species for which records are not assessed by BBRC, namely Red-headed Bunting *Emberiza bruniceps*, has occurred several times in Argyll, most recently on Coll in 1994 (Argyll Bird Report 11: 89).

DISCUSSION

The acceptance of records of the three new species listed above, coupled with the deletion of Arctic Redpoll, brings the total number of species recorded in Argyll to 316. As from January 2001, this total will increase to 318 as a result of two taxonomic "splits".

The same changes, together with the removal of White-billed Diver, Ruddy Duck and Ivory Gull (now four records each), mean that the number of species recorded in Argyll on three or fewer occasions falls to 64.

Several potential further additions to the Argyll list have been reported recently. Those for which descriptive details have already been submitted, or are likely to be submitted in the near future, include Black Stork, Semipalmated Plover, Pacific Golden Plover and White-rumped Sandpiper.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to David Jardine and Eddie Maguire for providing feedback on the checklist published in last year's report.

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Breeding of Red-throated Divers *Gavia stellata* on Islay 1992-1998

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Abstract

During the years 1992-98, all the freshwater lochs on Islay that could be recognised from maps and field investigations were surveyed for breeding Red-throated Divers. A total of 224 different lochs were visited as follows: 104 in 1992, 70 (including 32 new) in 1993, 45 (10 new) in 1994, 29(19) in 1995, 115 (37) in 1996, 73 (21) in 1997, and 16 (1) in 1998. The total number of nesting pairs seen each year was 6,7,6,1,4,4 and 0; thus, overall, 28 nesting attempts were detected. There was never more than one pair on a loch. During the whole survey, 15 lochs were used for nesting. [Although these 15 were not all visited every year, 7 lochs were found to have held nesting divers in only one year, 5 in two, 2 in three and 1 in five of the seven years (Table 3).] During 1994 breeding success of six nesting pairs was monitored; only one young was known to have fledged, but one other pair may also have been successful. Egg length and breadth were measured in 22 eggs from 12 clutches. The following data were recorded for all lochs visited: grid reference, general description and photograph, height above sea level, area, length of shoreline, pH, water temperature.

Introduction

In the summer of 1975 Rodney Dawson of Easter Ellister, Islay, and AC made a series of walks on Islay to visit as many lochs as they could looking for breeding divers. They visited 46 lochs and found definite evidence of breeding Red-throated Divers on five. Sadly, Dawson died soon afterwards at the early age of 34. Had he lived, he would undoubtedly have contributed greatly to the study of natural history on the island.

Malcolm Ogilvie (Islay Natural History Trust) kindly provided us with all previous records of breeding divers on Islay. Among these was a dataset from the former Nature Conservancy Council, who informed MO that, in surveys during the summers of 1986 and 1987, breeding had been confirmed on 8 lochs although divers were seen on a total of 19 different lochs. The kilometre squares were given but no individual lochs were identified.

To amplify these records, during 1992-1998 we undertook a more detailed survey of the breeding of Red-throated Divers ("divers" hereafter) on the freshwater lochs of Islay.

Methods

Work in each of the summers was concentrated on the first two weeks in June. Definite evidence of breeding was accepted only if we found a nest with eggs or if young were seen. We often suspected breeding if we found a pair of divers closely attached to a loch and, if possible, these lochs were visited again, sometimes more than once, to

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confirm nesting. Some pairs for which breeding was not confirmed may have been nesting on nearby lochs. Nest sites, and sometimes adults, were photographed. Egg length and width were measured by electronic caliper. Disturbance was kept to a minimum and, after 1994, we stopped measuring or touching eggs. The following data were recorded for each loch visited: grid reference, general description and photograph, height above sea level, area, length of shoreline, water pH and temperature.

Results

During 1992-93 we made 197 visits to 136 different lochs and found 6 and 7 pairs of divers respectively, nesting on 10 lochs. We included the 5 lochs where we confirmed breeding in 1975 and found divers on only two, never on the other three despite several visits to each over the years of the study (Table 3).

Fewer lochs were visited in 1994, which was largely devoted to assessing breeding success (see below).

In 1995 we were unexpectedly unable to be on Islay during June and July, but at other times during the year we were able to survey a small number of lochs new to us. In May 1995 we saw a pair of divers on loch 105, clearly visible from the road. These were our most regular breeders and we later heard from MO that they had been successful.

During 1996-98 we concentrated on visiting all the remaining lochs on Islay, including even the smallest patches of water that we could identify on large scale maps (1:10000 O.S.). 220 visits were made to 204 lochs, 59 previously unvisited. We found breeding divers on 8 lochs, including 3 where they had not been reported before.

These findings are summarised in Table 1. 224 lochs were visited at least once. Repeat visits were made either the same year or subsequent years if we thought divers might be present. Some visits were made outside of the breeding months to take photographs and collect basic loch data.

Table 1. Loch visits 1992 - 98

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	
Total visits	114	83	67	30	124	80	16	514
Lochs visited	104	70	45	29	115	73	16	452
Revisits in same year	10	13	22	1	9	7	0	
New lochs seen	104	32	10	19	37	21	1	224
Revisits of 92		38	23	10	53	37	4	
Revisits of 93			28	2	42	24	8	
Revisits of 94				2	27	13	8	
Revisits of 95					6	4	2	
Revisits of 96						10	7	
Revisits of 97							3	

Nesting confirmed 6 7 6 1 4 4 0

Divers present but
no nest found 2 2 1 0 4 2 1

We did not visit every loch each year. The number of years each loch was visited is given in Table 2. Fuller details are held in a series of tables in the full report lodged in the Natural History Centre, Port Charlotte, Islay (Colling, 1999).

Table 2. Number of years each loch was visited

Number of years visited	Number of lochs
1	82
2	84
3	35
4	21
5	0
6	1
7	1
	224

Lochs with breeding birds

In total, definite breeding was found on 15 lochs (Table 3). There were 28 definite breeding attempts (eggs in all cases). There was never more than one pair to a loch. Although we were unable to check every loch each year, we can state that one loch was known to have been used in 5 of the years 1992-98, two in 3 of the years, 5 in 2 of the years and 7 in 1 year. In 1975 RD and AC found nests on a further 3 lochs that were not used by breeding divers during 1992-1998. Thus there was a total of 18 nesting' Lochs for which precise information is known. Many of the lochs on Islay look unsuitable for nesting divers, although frequented from time to time. Of all the lochs on Islay that were not used for nesting, forty-six nevertheless showed favourable features. They had a length of level grass with some reed cover on a clean, moderately raised edge (0-2 feet high) which would allow a diver to nest very close to the water's edge and to drop quickly into water deep enough for it to submerge immediately and move unobserved around the loch. (Unfavourable features for nesting are high peat edges, steep banks going straight into the water without a level edge, rocky or stony shores, and shallow water especially near the edge.) Thus there is a total of $18 + 46 = 64$ lochs which have held breeding divers or which we consider are suitable. Fifteen of the 64 (23.4%) were used during 1992-1998. In any one year, however, this is figure is much lower, around 10%. In a comprehensive survey in Shetland, Gomersall *et al.* (1983) visited each loch at 10-day intervals during the breeding season and located 607 breeding pairs on 576 lochs. They saw 'activity' on 873 lochs and concluded that 66% were utilised.

Table 3. Numbers of visits to known breeding sites 1992 – 98

LOCH	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	No. of years occupied/ No. of years checked
21	1	1				1		1 of 3
57	1	1			2	2		2 of 4
60	1	3	4		1			3 of 4
63	1	1	1		2			2 of 4
65	1	1	1		2			1 of 4
67	1	3	1		1			1 of 4
69	1	2	1		1			2 of 4
* 73	1	1	1		1			0 of 4
* 74	1	1	1		1			0 of 4
77	1	1	2		1	-		1 of 4
85	1	3	6		1	1	1	3 of 6
105	1	4	7	1	3	1	1	5 of 7
106		1	(2)					1 of 2
*108	1	1				1		0 of 3
113		1	2		1		1	1 of 4
115		2	4		1			2 of 3
137			3		2			2 of 2
217						2		1 of 1
Breeding pairs	6	7	6	1	4	4	0	
Nests seen for first time	6	4	2	0	1	2	0	

*Nested 1975: seen by RD & AC

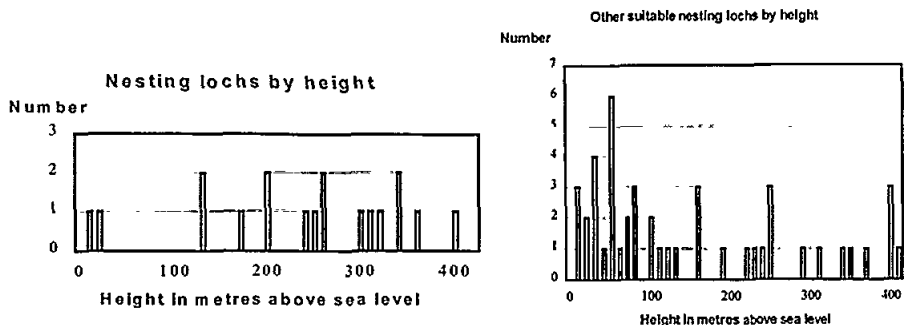
Bold, italic = one pair present with eggs

() = Red-throated Diver(s) present but no eggs found

The larger number of visits during 1994 was due to our special interest that year in breeding success.

Height and Area of 'Nesting' Lochs and 'Other suitable' Lochs

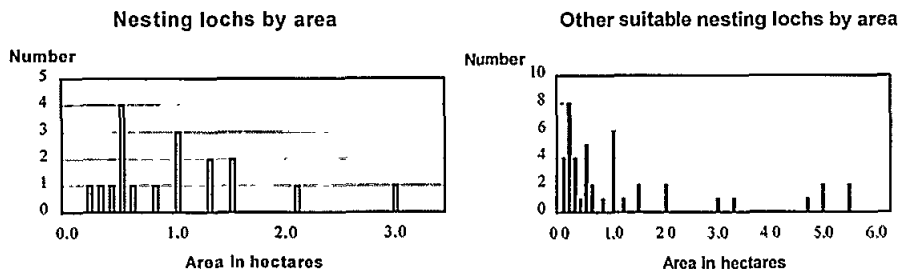
The heights above sea level of nesting lochs ranged from 10 - 20 metres to 390 - 400 metres, the latter approaching the highest point on the island (491 m). Comparison with other lochs considered suitable showed no distinct difference (Figures 1a and 1b).



Figs 1a and 1b. Comparison of heights above sea level of lochs used by nesting divers with lochs not used but considered suitable (on basis of edge characteristics: see text)

The area of the largest of the nesting lochs was just over 3 hectares, but most were much smaller (0.2 – 1.5 hectares). 'Other suitable' lochs (never used by nesting divers during this survey) show a broadly similar range of size, although six of these were much larger (lying in the range 4.5 – 65 ha)(Figures 2a and 2b).

Our findings are similar to those of Bundy (1978) who found that, in Shetland, divers preferred smaller lochs and that height and distance from the sea did not seem important.



Figs 2a and 2b. Comparison of areas of lochs used by nesting divers with lochs not used by nesting divers but considered suitable (on basis of edge characteristics: see text). Three large lochs with suitable edges for nesting divers have been omitted from Fig. 2b as they were very large (18.5, 21.0 and 64.6 hectares).

Breeding success

In 1994 we investigated the breeding success of 6 pairs with eggs early in the breeding cycle (late May and early June). Further visits were made to these during June and July to estimate success (4, 6, 7, 2, 4 and 3 visits respectively). We had to make rather more visits than intended because three pairs failed at their first attempt. They all re-

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pair and there followed an extraordinary display of formation swimming and diving, which we had never seen before, 30 yards in front of us. At the end of an hour we had to leave; our departure did not trouble them at all and the spectacle continued as we climbed out of sight. On our return some hours later, no divers were present and we could not find a nest site.

Acknowledgements

The survey was made possible by a licence granted each year by Scottish Natural Heritage. We would like to thank the landowners, farmers, gamekeepers and others we met on our walks for their help and interest. We are especially grateful to Malcolm Ogilvie, who researched early breeding records for us, for his continued help and advice and for the loan of reference books and large-scale maps which were invaluable. Finally, our thanks to Clive Craik who painstakingly looked over a draft and made very helpful suggestions.

The Islay Natural History Trust

In 1984 Jane Dawson, of Easter Ellister, established The Islay Natural History Trust in memory of her husband. This has gradually grown and is now housed in a fine building with library, laboratory and lecture facilities. Files were opened on a wide range of subjects to which contributions are being gradually added. In 1992, we suggested repeating the walks of 1975 and extending our observations to as many other lochs as we could. Dr Malcolm Ogilvie very kindly listed all previous records held by the Trust that consisted of individual reports of sightings or of nests found.

At the beginning of these surveys we had discussed the possibility of simultaneously recording observations on the lochs themselves since The Islay Natural History Trust had no file on 'Fresh Water Lochs'. It appeared to be a relatively easy task to record and describe the various lochs we were visiting, but collecting even basic information on 220 lochs took longer than expected. Many are far distant in the high hills, the weather was often unkind, equipment failed, sometimes we forgot an item of equipment or batteries ran out. Some photographs were poor and had to be repeated. On one occasion the GPS (global position system) satellite navigator was lost in the heather. Surprisingly, it was found the following day after a night of rain, and it continued to function.

The descriptive information on the lochs has been brought together in *Fresh Water Lochs of Islay, Colling 1999(3 vols.)* A small map shows the position of each loch and access is described. The descriptive and numerical information is also held on computer. Each loch has its own file and they are listed by name, height, length of shoreline, area, pH, grid and map references. Reports have been prepared which are suitable for computer analysis. A copy of this work is available for reference in the library of the National History Trust of Islay, Port Charlotte. The aim is for others to use this as a basis for study and with the hope that they will add to it. At present (December 2000) the computer discs are held by the authors (aubrey@colling.freereserve.co.uk) for updating until such time as the Field Centre has compatible facilities.

Fresh Water Lochs of Islay also contains a summary of all information held on the Red-throated Diver.

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laid on new nest sites nearby on the same loch. From 13 eggs from these 6 pairs we saw only one definite survivor, a well-fledged juvenile, on 14th July. A pair with 2 eggs remained closely attached to their loch when revisited several weeks later on 16th July; we saw movements in the reeds and we think it likely that there were young there. This low survival rate is similar to that reported by Bundy (1978) who, in a follow-up of 132 eggs in Shetland, found 20.4% fledged. Lehtonen (1970), in a survey of Black-throated Divers in Finland, found that 34 young fledged from 159 eggs (21%). In a further report, Bundy (1976) chose to report success on the basis of breeding pairs rather than eggs: 68/224 breeding pairs were successful in rearing one or two chicks to flying stage (30.4%). On this basis our success rate would be 1/6 (16.6%) definitely, and 2 or 3/6 (33% - 50%) possibly if there had been one or two more young in the reeds as described above.

Egg size

We measured egg length and width in a sample of 22 eggs (13 eggs, 6 clutches of 2 and 1 of 1, in 1993; and 9 eggs, 4 clutches of 2 and 1 of 1, in 1994). Thus mean size of the 12 clutches was $22/12 = 1.83$. Mean \pm SD of egg length (mm) were 74.66 ± 4.13 (range 66.6 - 81.5). For egg width, these were 45.17 ± 2.08 (37.8 - 48.5).

Discussion

Islay lies at the southern limit of the breeding range of the Red-throated Diver. Changes in breeding patterns might therefore be expected if climatic conditions were to alter. In this work we found that Red-throated Divers were still breeding on Islay in small numbers and that little change had occurred between 1975 and 1994. Five pairs were found in 1975, 8 pairs in a two-year survey by NCC in 1986-87 and, in our study, 6, 7, and 6 pairs in 1992, 1993 and 1994. Our survey of unlikely and previously-unreported breeding lochs during 1995-1998 yielded only three new sites; this suggests that our figures represent only a small underestimate of the true number. Gomersall *et al.* (1983) calculated 'survey efficiency' in their Shetland study of a breeding population of divers. Using a formula, they found the number of breeding pairs should be increased from the 607 they observed to an estimate of 702.

Our observations suggest that there is little human disturbance of nesting sites. Many of the sites are remote. One regular nest site, often used successfully, is adjacent to a road and other species breed there. It is a popular place for bird watchers to sit in their cars and view a wide variety of species. Another breeding loch is just over 100 metres from a main road but somewhat higher than the road and hence concealed; a pair nested there three years running. We suspect that the biggest threats are natural flooding and predators. Not infrequently, we came upon unguarded nests containing eggs, sometimes within easy reach of Herring Gull and Black-backed Gull breeding sites. We always took great care when approaching lochs to search with binoculars or telescope for some time from a distance, so we do not think these nests were unguarded because of our presence. If birds were present they were usually obvious, as they often took up a central position on the loch until we left.

On one occasion (2 June 1998) our route took us past a large loch, not one we knew as a nesting loch, where we found a pair of swimming divers. We decided to lunch at the opposite end of the loch as we did not think they were nesting. Very soon the divers swam very close to us to 'human watch'. They were quickly joined by a second

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