

December 2009
Number 91

The Eider



©Jim Dickson

American Golden Plover photographed by Jim Dickson, on Tiree. One of three birds which turned up on the island this autumn.

ABC Indoor Spring Meeting 2010

How and Why the Arctic Tern draws blood

Wintering Blackcaps

Spotlight: Tiree

Cattle Egret: new to Argyll

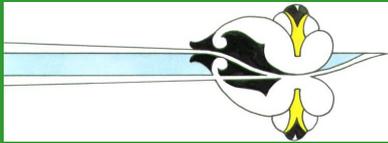
Recent Reports

Glossy Ibis

To receive the electronic version of *The Eider* in colour, ABC members should send their e-mail address to the Editor.
Past issues (since June 2002) can be downloaded from the club's website.

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Acknowledgements

Ross Ahmed, Peter Alfrey, Helen Anderson, John Bowler, Tom Callan, Daphne Campbell, Clive Craik, Paul Daw, Jim Dickson, Bob Furness, Eddie Maguire, Morag Rea, Debbie Thorne, Nicholas Watts

Editorial

It is only a few days until the climate conference in Copenhagen. China have promised to reduce carbon intensity— relative to gross domestic product by 40—45% by 2020. The US have proposed a 17% reduction below 2005 figures by 2020. Not to be outdone, the European Union has pledged a cut in emissions of 24% below 2005 figures by 2020, as long as other major contributors follow suit. Although these figures look encouraging, China’s figures still represent an overall growth in carbon emissions. There is now clearer evidence in scientific circles to suggest that climate change, although occurring naturally over a long period, is now being seriously affected by human activity. In any field of study, evidence gathering always involves a broad timescale, in order to produce accurate trends- but one thing is for sure, some big decisions will have to be made in Copenhagen whether there is total agreement about the scientific evidence or not. Let’s hope our leaders find ways to co-operate in making the decisions required to reduce carbon emissions and contribute towards the well- being and on- going life of our beautiful planet.



A **typical** autumn storm off Port Bàn, Kilberry— will such storms be more common-place in the future? Photo: editor 2009

Announcements



David Lindo
photo©Peter Alfrey

The Isle of Mull Bird Club
proudly present:
David Lindo
“The Urban Birder”
A YEAR IN WORMWOOD SCRUBS – LIFE FOR AN URBAN BIRDER
VENUE: CRAIGNURE VILLAGE HALL
DATE: 13th January 2010
TIME: 7.30pm
ENTRANCE: £1 members/£3 non members



International Bewick's and Whooper Swan Census 2010

This census will take place on the weekend of 16/17 January 2010. Although Bewick's Swans are only rare visitors to Argyll, Whooper Swans are widespread and may occur in small numbers on scattered lochs almost anywhere in the county. Will anyone who is aware of Whooper Swans present anywhere in Argyll water at this time please contact me with the following details:

Site – name and (if possible) Grid Ref.

Date and time

Number of swans

Age – i.e. indicate if any are young from the previous year.

Ringed birds - many Whooper Swans have been fitted with plastic (Darvic) leg rings or neck collars. If

you see such birds please try to record the number (usually in black) – this can normally be read through a telescope or even binoculars at reasonably close range. If not please at least record the colour of the rings/collars. Most birds seen in Argyll have yellow rings but continental birds have blue rings/collars.

Please let me have details by e-mail, post or phone of any birds you see by the end of January 2010.

NB. If you already survey a site for WeBS the details of swans present will be taken from your January count. It is not necessary to submit a separate return.

Many thanks.

Paul Daw – Argyll Bird Recorder

ABC indoor meetings 2010

Argyll Bird Club Indoor Meeting. Community Centre, Easdale, Seil Saturday 6 March 2010

0930	Doors open; coffee and tea
0950-1000	Welcome & introduction Nigel Scriven (Chairman, ABC)
1000-1030	Recent bird sightings Paul Daw (ABC)
1030-1115	What are the beavers up to in Argyll? Jenny Holden, Scottish Wildlife Trust
1115-1145	Coffee/tea
1145-1215	Snowy owls, skuas and storm-petrels on St Kilda Will Miles, University of Glasgow
1215-1245	Eagles and other predators at an Alaskan seabird colony Alex Robbins, SNH Area Officer for Coll, Tiree & Mull
1245-1400	Lunch (available at the venue, with caterer arranged by the Bird Club)
1400-1430	Identification of warblers in Argyll Paul Daw (ABC)
1430-1500	Tracking bird migrations in a changing environment Bob Furness (ABC)
1500-1600	Tea/coffee and raffle
1600	End of meeting

Field Trip Reports Autumn 2009



Angle Shade moth photo©Tom Callan 2009

SKIPNESS & KILBRANNAN SOUND FIELD TRIP SATURDAY 26 SEPTEMBER 2009

Eden aged just 11 joined 8 adults and 2 dogs on a mild damp morning.

We commenced our walk through woodland, which produced numerous singing Robins, Coal Tit, Blue Tit, Great Tit and Grey wagtail. Emerging into an open area, close views of a Buzzard were obtained which delighted Eden and prompted the comment, "I love Buzzards". We saw lots of them on the whole trip. A female Kestrel was observed hovering over the fields and later in the same fields we watched a male Kestrel swoop down on its prey.

On our route to the coast we saw plenty of Starling, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Dunnock, Wren, Meadow Pipit, Hooded and Carrion Crows and singing Robins. Now and again small groups of Swallow flew overhead. A late emerging Large Red Damselfly, female and male Common Hawker and Southern Hawker were seen feeding along the hedge margins and Peacock Butterfly were observed along the footpath.

Along the coastal path Wheatear was scoped and an opportunity was taken to photograph a moth hitching a ride on someone's back. The moth was identified later by Richard Wesley as an Angle Shade Moth-*Phlogophora meticulosa*. The hairy caterpillars of the Fox Moth (*Macrothylacia rubi*) Also presented a photo opportunity.

Near Skipness point, a mixture of Rock and Meadow Pipits provided a good exercise in identification skills. Redshank, Turnstone, Oystercatcher, and Curlew were busy feeding along the shore. Kilbrannan Sound was calm with Eider, Mallard, Red-breasted Merganser, Gannet, Shag, Great Black-backed and Common Gull.

On the way to the excellent seafood cabin Skylark, Stonechat, and plenty of Pied Wagtails were seen in the fields. A few House Martins were still flying around the Big House. After an enjoyable lunch-talking about birds of course, we walked to the first fields crossed to check a distant stubble patch. Puff Ball fungus, 24 Common Gulls, and around 400 Chaffinches flying in and out of the stubble patch with a small flock of Linnets (NR 913579)were observed.

Eating brambles on our way back to the car we disturbed a field mouse.

Departing Skipness, Tom Callan assured us 'You always get Ringed Plover on the beach in front of Skipness Post Office' so we stopped there and set up the scope. Hearing the 'Wows' from Eden as he looked at the Plovers through the scope provided a fitting end to the day- actually Eden was lucky enough along with Libby, Ann and Katie to see Black Grouse on the way home. Hope someone did a Roving Record.

Daphne Campbell



Fox Moth caterpillar

photo©Tom Callan

FIELD TRIP TO TAYINLOAN 31 OCT 2009.



photo©Tom Callan

I'm sure that those intending to head for Tayinloan that Saturday would have been studying the weather forecasts, as I was, during the previous few days hoping for a break in the very mixed weather. In the event we barely got wet- although it did blow a bit.

Shirley and I, along with Daphne Campbell, caught the early ferry from Portavadie (Cowal) to Tarbert (Kintyre) before heading off to join a select band at Katie's house/bird hide/nature reserve at Tayinloan. On the way we had time to stop at Ronachan Point, where there is always something of interest to see. On this occasion, in spite of the rough seas which meant no seabird sightings, we did find a couple of fairly late Northern Wheatears as well as the usual sprinkling of Rock Pipits.

From Katie's, we set off down the coast into the 'bracing' sea breeze picking up a selection of waders and gulls before heading inland finding a fair few passerines and raptors.

On return to Katie's we ate our picnics and enjoyed some delicious soup before setting off, with the breeze at our backs, to head up the shore towards Rhunaharine Point. We found quite a few more species to add to our list before heading back, in the fading light, as skeins of Greenland Whitefront Geese headed off over the hills to roost.

As can be seen from the list we managed 46 species, which is not at all bad considering the weather and the time of year.

I am sure I speak for all when I say "Many thanks to Katie for another very successful Field Trip".

Species List for Tayinloan Field Trip

Species	No	Details
Greenland White-fronted Goose	100	Approx heading to roost.
Eurasian Wigeon	30	Approx
Mallard	28	Approx
Common Eider	30	In very small numbers offshore.
Red-breasted Merganser	8	
Common Pheasant	6	
Red-throated Diver	4	All wpl. Difficult conditions.
Great Cormorant	16	A few metal ringed on right leg.
Shag	12	
Grey Heron	6	Approx
Reed Bunting	2	
Common Buzzard	3	Living up to french name (Buzzard variable).
Peregrine Falcon	2	
Oystercatcher	30	Incl a few first winter.
Northern Lapwing	76	Or more.
Common Snipe	7	Or more.
Eurasian Curlew	100	Approx
Common Redshank	8	Mainly in pairs
Turnstone	8	Mainly as pairs.
Black-headed Gull	50	
Common Gull	60	Approx
Herring Gull	8	Occasional.
Great Black-backed Gull	8	Mainly as singles.
Kittiwake	6	Occasional.
Collared Dove	6	
Barn Swallow	1	Late bird.
Meadow Pipit	50	Many and widespread
Rock Pipit	20	At least along coast, poss on passage.
Pied Wagtail	40	Poss more along shore.
White Wagtail	15	Poss more along shore.
Wren	20	At least
Dunnock	10	
Robin	12	Approx
Common Stonechat	8	
Blackbird	20	At least - most imm males.
Song Thrush	4	Or more.
Western Jackdaw	30	
Rook	30	Approx
Hooded crow	20	At least
Common Raven	2	
Common Starling	c60	incl one partial albino of upper body. Incl many juvs.
House Sparrow	20	Or more.
Common Chaffinch	20	At least
Greenfinch	4	
Goldfinch	8	
Twite	2	Probably more.

Tom Callan

Field Trip to Gigha. Saturday 28th November



28 November dawned cold and icy with mist hanging low over Argyll lochs as we headed to the Gigha field trip.

The sun shone as seven of us met at the Gigha ferry – Katie Pendreigh, our leader, Richard Allan, Terry Robilliard, Shirley and Tom Callan, John Anderson and me.

During the crossing there we sighted – Eider, Shag, Cormorant, Black Guillemot, Razorbill, Common Guillemot, Red Breasted Merganser, Slavonian Grebe, Heron, Herring Gull, Black-headed Gull, Common Gull, Black-headed Gull, Great Northern Diver, Long-tailed Duck and, on the way back, Black-throated Diver.

On arrival, a small people carrier awaited us at the pier and Tom drove us to the most northerly point of the island. We also walked to the west coast on a muddy track but under clear- blue sunny skies.

In hedgerows, pole tops, tree tops, not to mention flying, we saw Starling, Hooded Crow, Buzzard, Pheasant, Blackbird, Sparrowhawk, Song Thrush, Dunnock, Woodpigeon, Robin, Greylag, Curlew, Meadow Pipit, Pied Wagtail, Grey Wagtail, Rook, Skylark (heard), Raven, Reed Bunting, Goldfinch, Stonechat and Wren.

At Mill Loch we were disappointed not to see Whooper Swans but were pleased to see Goldeneye, Common Gull, Herring Gull and Great Black-backed Gull.

In the Sound of Jura we saw Great Northern Diver, Heron, Shag, Cormorant, Mallard, Shelduck, Redshank, the first highlight of the day being an otter fishing nearby.

We had a convivial lunch in the Isle of Gigha Hotel, the company being exceptionally good.

The second highlight of the day was coffee in Katie's cosy kitchen from where we had a close-up view of a male Blackcap in her garden.

A very pleasant day was had by all in glorious weather and beautiful scenery, the Paps of Jura looking spectacular.

Helen Anderson

Gigha photo©Tom Callan

Field Trip 2010: Information. Saturday, 30 January 2010 Loch Caolisport– meet 10 am at Ormsary fish farm. Mark Williamson will be leading the trip. Contact me41.williamson@btinternet.com

Saturday, 28 February 2010 River Add and Moine Mhor and Crinan Canal. Contact Jim Dickson j.dickson@tiscali.co.uk

Notes and Comment



Fig 1. Clive's head with scars.

photo©Nicholas Watts

HOW AND WHY THE ARCTIC TERN DRAWS BLOOD

Most of us have been dive-bombed by Arctic Terns at one time or another. Just WHY an adult Arctic Tern should strike our heads so painfully as we wander through its colony scarcely needs explanation. It is because we are within a few metres of its large chick, or possibly its brood of two, or even three large young. These are doing their best to be invisible, crouching on the rocks or sand, or, less often, hiding in short vegetation. Large moving intruders are likely to be predators – so the adults attack to distract and deter. Even a single strike is enough to

achieve both these ends and make us move on, while combined attacks by several angry birds have an immediate and unforgettable effect.

Arctic Terns with eggs usually just circle above, giving alarm calls and waiting for us to go. Those with small chicks are mildly aggressive, perhaps swooping at us but rarely striking. The most aggressive birds are those that have spent a full six weeks incubating eggs and feeding chicks, and now have large offspring close to flying. This is a big investment of time and energy. If the adults lose their young now, they are unlikely to be able to breed again in the same year.

Interestingly, adult Arctic Terns are most aggressive when breeding at sites where there are regular human walkers or other large animals, such as farm livestock or deer. They behave very differently on small skerries where humans rarely visit. There, they may swoop low and shriek close to your ear, but they don't often actually hit you.

In my experience, at least, the closely related and very similar Common Tern is generally much less aggressive. Usually the adults just circle above an intruder, giving urgent alarm calls to their young ("Hide!"). It is rare for a Common Tern to strike a person. In 1996, one such aggressive Common Tern was the first to nest on the tern raft (an adapted mussel raft) built at South Shian on Loch Creran. This bird has nested there almost every year since. It is recognisable whenever it is breeding, by its painful Arctic Tern-like attacks. In 2007, for the first time, it was absent from the tern raft. But, that year, a Common Tern that made identical attacks was at a tern colony near Ballachulish – almost certainly the

same bird. In 2008 and 2009 it was back at South Shian. There are no Arctic Terns at either site, so this individual Common Tern was recognisable by its unusually aggressive behaviour.

Details of HOW an Arctic Tern draws blood are perhaps less well known – at least, they were to me until recently. Perhaps this is because I am usually looking down, trying to find and ring the chicks, while avoiding the angry adults. Part of my mind notices the swooping shadows on the ground, but I have never been able to see exactly what happens. Obviously, beak makes contact with head, but why doesn't the bird recoil, bounce off, hurt itself, or just lose control of its flight as it strikes (Newton's Third



Fig 2. Arctic Tern directly above head, pecking vertically downwards.

photo©Nicholas Watts

Law of Motion, etc.)?

Nicholas Watts is a farmer and bird-ringer with a widespread reputation in the field of conservation. He has an MBE for his enormous achievements in encouraging the wildlife, especially breeding birds, on his arable farm in Lincolnshire. His accounts of ringing young Cuckoos in

Reed Warbler nests in his reed-beds are enthralling, as are his many other activities.... But that's another story, one that needs an article to itself. For the last decade or so, Nicholas and his wife Anne have made annual visits to Argyll in July to sample our wildlife. While here, he has often accompanied Rob Lightfoot and me on expeditions to small islands to ring the chicks of terns and other seabirds. In July 2009, Nicholas and I were ringing Arctic Tern chicks near Craignure on Mull. Two adults (probably a pair) were making repeated attacks whenever we approached a large chick that we had just ringed. In the cause of science, I rashly volunteered to be their target,



Fig 3. Arctic Tern with bill pointing obliquely backwards and downwards.

photo©Nicholas Watts

while Nicholas took high-speed photos, at six frames per second, to record the event.

'No pain, no gain' as the saying goes. Although I was wearing a hat, the birds predictably drew blood on several parts of my head (not shown for aesthetic reasons). A photo taken next day shows the points of attack (Fig .1). But Nicholas's other photos made all the pain worthwhile. They show how each tern approximately follows a shallow parabola as it dives down to and then up from its target. As it flies close over your head, its body is more or less horizontal and its tail streamers are bent upwards as the air resists the sudden change of direction. The bird attacks from this position by pecking downwards (Fig. 2). Much of the

force comes from downwardly-directed movement of the head and neck – not, as one might perhaps have thought, from the momentum of the dive alone. While most of the strikes are made with the bill directed downwards, some interesting shots show the bill pointing obliquely backwards (Fig. 3). These were probably when the bill was withdrawing as the bird was moving away from the target.

So please remember – next time you are under attack by terns, whatever their species, just admire their aerobic agility and unerring aim, not to mention their bravery, elegance and parental devotion. It makes the pain SO much easier to bear!

Clive Craik

Wintering Blackcaps.

From time to time, over the years, I have put out apples in my garden at Otter Ferry, Loch Fyne, along with the peanuts, wild bird seed and fat balls. I also, virtually every morning, throw my breakfast apple core onto the bog (should be lawn). It then becomes a bit of a lottery whether a Blackbird or Thrush will carry it off to the bushes before a Red Squirrel consumes it. On balance, I would say the squirrels have it most of the time.

Whole apples are a fairly similar story. Normally, I impale them on a suitably sharpened, upward pointing, twig and sit back to see what happens as I have my breakfast. Tits, Finches and occasional Thrush spp. peck away until little is left and



Wintering Blackcap, Otter Ferry, Loch Fyne

photo©Tom Callan

the remains fall to the ground. Sometimes, but not infrequently, an enterprising Red Squirrel will actually remove the whole apple. This should be seen to be believed as it requires considerable effort to raise the apple up the twig to the point at which it can be carried away.

With any size of apple, this is a considerable effort, even for a fully grown squirrel. It can but raise a smile or even a chuckle.

What has this to do with Blackcaps? Not a lot as it happens; my motivation for starting to put out

apples in mid-October was, in fact, the news that Waxwings had started to arrive in Iceland. I have never seen one in my garden so I gave it a go. A few days and a couple of apples later I was sitting at my window and glanced at the apple and with the help of my binoculars saw a female Blackcap. It stayed for a couple of days, munching only apple, allowing a few photographs. That was on 28/29 October. The latest I have previously had them in the garden, was the odd one munching the last raspberries in mid-September.

However, I kept the apples on the go, improving my technique by wiring them, inside second-hand fat-ball nets, as an anti squirrel removal device. This seems to be effective and they can still have their share. I was delighted when the same or another female Blackcap turned up on 10 November and stayed to the 15th. Unlike the first visit, peanuts were included in her diet and by the time of her last visit she was feeding non-stop, alternating with the apple. Was she topping up to move south, or had she found a better location locally- or perhaps the Sparrowhawk got lucky?

In the last four or five years there have been increasing numbers of Blackcap overwintering in Argyll although none, so far as I know, have been recorded in Cowal. Some, if not all, of these are now known to be Eastern European birds which have migrated west rather than south for winter. That however is another story.

Tom Callan



Blackcap photos©Tom Callan

Little Egret sightings this Autumn: Can you help?

This autumn has seen a much higher than average number of Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*) in Argyll with sightings on Coll, Oransay, Islay and several from Mid-Argyll.

As such, it has been a bit tricky working out just how many birds are involved, as it is apparent that some individuals are doing a bit of a tour around these parts!

What we would like is for club members to do two things. Firstly, please report any sightings you have with place and dates to Jim Dickson: j.dickson@tiscali.co.uk or phone 01546 603967. Secondly, if possible, please check out the head of any sea-lochs or estuaries you visit to see if any other birds are tucked away, as they can often be hard to see when feeding up creeks!

Jim Dickson

Species Accounts

CATTLE EGRET (*Bubulcus ibis*) A New Species for Argyll

On 23rd October 2009 Michael Anderson and Elspeth MacArthur were birdwatching on Islay when they spotted a smallish egret in a field west of Ballygrant. After quickly ruling out Little Egret they were able to recognise the bird as a Cattle Egret and, despite having stopped their car on the main road they managed a couple of photographs to back up their claim. They had a little difficulty that day contacting other birdwatchers on the island to share the good news. However, word gradually filtered out and the identification of the bird was indeed confirmed as a Cattle Egret.

Cattle Egret is a species that had been on my Argyll 'radar' of new species likely to turn up sometime soon! Fortunately, Ian Brooke contacted me from Islay to inform me of the bird's presence. I managed to get over to Islay on 27th October and quickly located the bird in a field with some sheep not far from the original sighting. Remarkably, on the previous day, the Cattle Egret was seen and photographed alongside a Little Egret. Apparently, as I was disembarking the ferry at Port Ellen a group of birdwatchers had been watching the Little Egret fly around the ferry and shortly afterwards one turned up in Mid-Argyll.

Cattle Egrets are identified as a stocky all-white heron with short thick neck, sturdy bill and a hunched posture. Non-breeding plumaged birds (like this one) have a yellow bill and greyish-yellow legs, juveniles have a



Cattle Egret near Ballygrant, Islay. photo©Jim Dickson
blackish bill. In flight they could be confused with Little Egret.

Apparently they are more closely related to the genus *Ardea* (herons), like the Great White Egret, than the majority of species termed egrets in the genus *Egretta*. Its genus name *Bubulcus* is Latin for herdsman after its close association with cattle-*ibis*, from Latin and Greek, refers to a white wading bird (Sacred Ibis). The Islay bird was feeding among sheep and cattle in a typical fashion.

Cattle Egrets feed on land rather than near water,



Little Egret at River Add.

photo©Jim Dickson

with eyesight adapted for foraging, as they have lost the ability possessed by their wetland relatives to accurately correct light refraction on water. They feed on a wide range of prey, particularly insects, grasshoppers, flies and earthworms which have been disturbed by livestock.

In Scotland there have been just six previous records, with the first being in 1979. However, most other records have been since 2007, following a large unprecedented influx into southern Britain. That influx led to the first breeding record in England in 2008 and it appears that Cattle Egret may be well on its way to colonising parts of Britain! Cattle Egret is a new species for Islay and Argyll- subject to acceptance by the British Birds Rarities Committee.



Just to what extent records of Cattle Egret will greatly increase in Scotland, as they have done in the south, remains to be seen. This may not necessarily reflect climate change, as Cattle Egrets over the last 100 years have undergone one of the most rapid and wide ranging natural expansions of any bird species. Originally, native to parts of southern Spain and Portugal, tropical and sub-tropical Africa, the species expanded from the late 19th century into southern Africa, crossed the Atlantic, reaching the central Americas by the 1870's and expanded into North America through Florida in the 1950's and was breeding in Canada by the 1960's. In Europe, they spread from the Iberian Peninsula to France in 1958- eventually breeding in England in 2008.

This massive range expansion is due mainly to the species ability to co- exist with cattle. Young birds are known to disperse up to 5000 kilometres and some populations and have been seen flying in flocks in mid-Atlantic.

At the time of writing (early Nov) the Cattle Egret is still present on Islay though, I suspect it will not be too long before more individuals of this species turn up again in Argyll.

Jim Dickson



Glossy Ibis photographed near Tayvallich, the first since 1958 ©Morag Rea

The great autumn 2009 Glossy Ibis invasion.

A report was received of a **Glossy Ibis** seen NNW of Knockvologan near Fionnphort on 16 September. It was seen again on the following day (Alein Shreeve). Unfortunately the bird was not photographed and we have not received a description at the time of writing - but we live in hopes.

As I was driving back from doing the Loch Sween WeBS count on 26 September 2009 I saw a strange bird near Barrahormid Farm (approx. NR715835) at 14:35. First seen standing in the field it was an all dark (blackish) wading bird slightly larger than a Eurasian Curlew. As I stopped to see what on earth it was and the bird flew up and my heart sank. I was extremely fortunate in that it just circled and landed back in the same place so that I was able to snatch a few quick photos through the car window. The plumage appeared dark greyish black with a purplish tinge. It had a similar basic structure to Curlew, although rather larger, with longish neck, a long blackish down curved bill and long blackish legs. It was quite obviously a Glossy Ibis! After a couple of minutes it flew off SW towards 'The Puddle' (Ulva Lagoons). As far as I could see it landed again on the NW shore of the lagoons but when I drove back down there for a quick look I couldn't find it. It may well still have been in the area though as I didn't have time for a more thorough search.

When I phoned club member Morag Rea (who lives at Tayvallich) to tell her about it she told me she had had a phone call the previous day (25 Sep) saying the bird had been seen (by John MacCallum & later Charlie Self) at about 11.30 feeding with Hoodies in

the caravan park at Tayvallich! Sadly by the time Morag and her husband Norman got there the bird had flown. So it was obviously in the area for at least a couple of days.

Following my phone call Morag and Norman drove down towards Keills and found the ibis at about 15:15 in almost exactly the same place where I had seen it. They watched it there for about 20 minutes. At one point it came to within about 30m from them and she managed to get some excellent photos. It was also seen briefly associating with a Hooded Crow. They looked for it again on 27 September but without success and despite visits from assorted 'twitchers' it was never reported in the area again. It could have been the same bird that was reported on Mull (if confirmed) but given the numbers in Britain and Ireland at the time it is at least possible that this was a different individual.

This is the first time Glossy Ibis has been reported in Argyll since 1958, when one was present on Tiree for much of October. The remaining five Argyll records were all prior to 1926.

Reading up on reports from BirdGuides and in *British Birds* it soon became apparent that there was a major influx of Glossy Ibises this autumn in Britain and Ireland, beginning in September in Ireland. One or two places even had flocks of up to a dozen birds! Although they were quite widespread in southern England and a few were seen in Wales and northern England, I am only aware of one other record in Scotland; one present in the Aberdeen area for some time. Some of the birds seen in Ireland were carrying rings which showed that they originated in the Cota Doñana in southern Spain.

Paul Daw

Spotlight: Tiree

Over the last few years, the Isle of Tiree has built up a reputation as one of the best places in Argyll to look for scarce migrant birds, particularly in the months of September and October. With increasing coverage from visiting birders, the occurrence of birds such as American Golden Plover, Buff-breasted Sandpiper and Yellow-browed Warbler, which were formerly regarded as very rare visitors, has been shown to be virtually annual. Scarce migrants such as Lesser Whitethroat, Barred Warbler and Pectoral Sandpiper similarly are more or less to be expected now each autumn, whilst with new species for the island, and indeed Argyll, occurring virtually annually, visiting birders can also hope to add something new to the list.

As always, it is hard to define exactly when autumn started in 2009, since return migration of failed or non-breeding birds can begin as early as the end of June, although scarcer migrants tend to be thin on the ground until migration really gets going in August. Early wader migration in July brought a fine adult **Spotted Redshank** to Loch a' Phuill (12th), whilst a **Cory's Shearwater** was reported off Scarinish (28th). Passerines included a male **Crossbill** at Gott (9th), which proved to be the start of a minor invasion of this irruptive species, with at least 14 birds observed over the following weeks. Wader migration picked up in August with a **Wood Sandpiper** at Loch a' Phuill (22nd), a **Green Sandpiper** there (26th) and peak flock counts of 165 **Black-tailed Godwits** (24th), 38 **Whimbrel** (13th), 457 **Sanderling** at Gott Bay (24th) and 200 **Snipe** at Sandaig (30th). However, as ever, it took a visit by ace bird-finder Keith Gillon to locate two really special birds: an adult **Pacific Golden Plover** at Loch a' Phuill (30th) and a juvenile **Spotted Sandpiper** feeding along a road at Heylipol (31st). The latter bird was the first for Tiree and just the second record for Argyll following an adult at Loch Indaal, Islay on 5 June 1984, and all credit to Keith for finding this bird whilst cycling around the island on a horribly wet day, which presumably made the road look like a stream to the newly-arrived sandpiper!

September saw a further influx to Tiree of both birders and birds. With up to two additional pairs of eyes scanning the island for most of the month, scarce birds were located in good numbers. The first half of the month saw another **Green Sandpiper**, this time at Baugh (7th) and a juvenile **Curlew Sandpiper** at Vaul (14th). On the latter date, an adult **American Golden Plover** was found in



Bairds Sandpiper photo©Jim Dickson



Pectoral Sandpiper photo©Jim Dickson



American Golden Plover photo©Ross Ahmed



Corncrake

photo©John Bowler



Lesser Whitethroat

photo©John Bowler



Common Rosefinch

photo©Jim Dickson

amongst a large flock of Golden Plovers at Barrapol and this bird remained in West Tiree for the rest of the month. The machairs and pools around Sandaig, Barrapol and Loch a' Phuill proved highly attractive once more to North American waders and in total some 3-4 **Buff-breasted Sandpipers** (9th-29th) and up to 6 **Pectoral Sandpipers** were recorded including a flock of three of the latter observed by Ross Ahmed near Loch a' Phuill (26th). The rarest wader of the month, however, proved to be very elusive. Visiting birder Dan Brown reported a juvenile **Baird's Sandpiper** that he observed flying in to land very briefly at Balephetrish Bay (19th) before it headed off SW across the island. Despite much searching, this bird appeared to have vanished, until Jim Dickson relocated what was presumably the same individual at Gott Bay (26th) having arrived just half an hour earlier off the ferry! The bird was flushed from the bay by windsurfers and despite further searches could not be relocated until late that evening when Ross Ahmed saw the bird briefly in the corner of nearby Vault Bay, but once more it flew before he had a chance to view it closely. Finally, the bird gave itself up two days later at the same spot at Vault Bay and showed well again to Jim, Ross and myself, before disappearing overnight for good. Relatively calm weather for much of September, meant that passerines were relatively easy to observe in the gardens and bush patches. A juvenile **Barred Warbler** showed well at Balephuill (16th), whilst Ross found a **Pied Flycatcher** at Vault (25th-29th), with another at Kilmoluaig (30th), and there were **Lesser Whitethroats** at Whitehouse and Balephuill (29th-30th). Large redpolls have also become another regular feature of Tiree autumns and after a large dark redpoll seen briefly at The Manse (14th), Ross managed to pin down Greenlandic-type NW **Common Redpolls** at Whitehouse (29th) with two more at The Manse (30th). Arctic buntings started appearing at the end of the month, with around 11 **Lapland Buntings** and 3 **Snow Buntings** recorded from 26th. Other good September birds included a **European White-fronted Goose**, which appears to have spent the entire summer on the island, and a juvenile male **Ring-necked Duck** which appeared with Tufted Ducks at Loch a' Phuill (22nd) and then spent the rest of the month commuting between this loch and Loch Bhasapol, often in the company of a juvenile **Scaup**. Other wildfowl started piling through in the last week of the month with some 168 **Pale-bellied Brent Geese** logged flying over the island (from 26th), 130 **Whooper Swans**, 300 **Barnacle Geese** and 120 **Pinkfeet** through (29th-30th) and a moulting adult **Slavonian Grebe** at Salum Bay (30th). The NW winds that brought the geese on 29th also produced 3 **Leach's Petrels**, 3 **Sooty Shearwaters**, 4 **Pomarine Skuas** and a **Grey Phalarope** off the north coast, although the best seabirds of the month were the **Great Shearwaters** reported from

the ferries (1st) with 11 noted to the north of Tiree and three more between Tiree and Mull.

October continued in a similar vein to September and visiting birders had the choice of enjoying watching waders from North America, passerines from Europe, passage geese from the Arctic or passing seabirds offshore. October 1st was a red-letter day, as Ross discovered a second adult **American Golden Plover** feeding alongside the long-staying bird at Sandaig, whilst a third adult bird was located on the machair at Loch a' Phuill! The two **American Golden Plovers** remained together at Sandaig until 14th, whilst the third bird stayed for only a couple of days. On the same day (1st), Ross found a new **Pectoral Sandpiper** at Cornaigmore, whilst Jim found yet another at Sandaig, which then hung around for a week. The only 2 **Siskins** of the autumn were at Balephuill (1st). Single **Lesser Whitethroats** were again present at Balephuill and Whitehouse on 1st, but the following day there were two together at Balephuill and then additional birds at Whitehouse (4th), Balephuill (4th) and Hynish (7th), with an autumn island tally of at least 6 birds! Jim came up trumps once more on 4th, when he found a juvenile **Scarlet Rosefinch** at Hynish, which subsequently flew off up the coast towards Mannaal. Having dipped on this species before at Hynish in September 2007 (a bird also found by Jim), I was not hopeful of relocating it, and after a couple of hours of fruitless searching had almost given up, when I came across two buffy beady-eyed juvenile **Scarlet Rosefinches** together at Mannaal! The birds were elusive but reappeared at Hynish two days later and often fed in the company of a late **Garden Warbler** and a Greenlandic-type **Common Redpoll**. Ross was not to be outdone however, as he pinned down a skulking juvenile **Barred Warbler** at Vaul (5th), the second of the autumn for the island and the fifth since 2006. An immature **Redstart** appeared the next day (6th) at Carnan Mor but things then slowed down a little in the second week of the month. However, Jim managed to pull one out of the hat on his last morning on the island, by finding a splendid **Yellow-browed Warbler** at The Glebe (10th), which shared the bushes with a rare Tiree **Bullfinch**.

October 15th was an odd day. A late morning phone-call relayed via Lloyd Berry from a bird survey vessel off the south-west tip of the island, reported a clearly lost and tired small buff coloured thrush that had been seen and photographed flying around the boat before making landfall near Hynish. The bird apparently best fitted the description of a **Veery** (!), so searches were immediately made of all likely spots near Hynish, but sadly with no luck. Two **Merlins**, two **Sparrowhawks**, a **Peregrine** and

a **Hen Harrier** were seen however, so the exhausted bird may have faced a less than welcome reception when it made landfall. All was not lost that day however, as a late afternoon check of the bushes at Carnan Mor for the mystery thrush revealed instead two very vocal **Yellow-browed Warblers**. These moved on overnight but Lloyd and Andy Dowse found yet another **Yellow-browed Warbler** nearby at Main Road Farm, Balephuill on 18th-19th. October also saw another **Slavonian Grebe** (4th), another **Scaup** at Loch a' Phuill (22nd-28th), 4 **Common Scoters** at Balevullin Bay (16th) and a high count of 252 **Whooper Swans** at Loch a' Phuill (21st), whilst a mobile second calendar-year **Golden Eagle** (17th-26th) was the first confirmed on the island since 1993. Interesting passerines included two more **Lapland Buntings** and 12 **Snow Buntings**, whilst regular bush-checks revealed some 30 **Blackcaps**, 35 **Chiffchaffs**, 6 **Willow Warblers** and no less than 14 **Dunnocks**. A large influx of thrushes (23rd) saw at least 1000 **Fieldfares**, 1500 **Redwings**, 300 **Blackbirds** and 150 **Song Thrushes**, plus a lone male **Ring Ouzel** at Milton. Caught up in this movement was a record number of **Brambling** with at least 10 birds logged (23rd-31st).

Things quietened down in November as wild and wet weather set in but a calm day (4th) produced a **Mealy Redpoll** at Balephuill, whilst 4 **Chiffchaffs** included a classic *tristis* bird with its sad piping call feeding on the dunes at Traigh nan Gilean (8th), whilst at least 4 **Blackcaps** included odd birds to 19th at least. All in all then it was a busy and exciting autumn on Tiree with good numbers of Argyll scarcities, although it seems that always elusive American passerine will have to wait until next year.....

John Bowler



Yellow Browed Warbler photo©Jim Dickson

Recent Reports

August - October 2009

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The latest news on bird sightings in Argyll is available on the Argyll Bird Club website at www.argyllbirdclub.org See 'Click here for latest bird reports' on the home page.



Birds seen at the Machrihanish Bird Observatory this autumn included: Leach's Storm Petrel and Roseate Tern photos©Eddie Maguire

Despite a generally wet and often windy autumn there was plenty of excitement for birders, including a new species for the Argyll list and two species that had not been seen in the county for many years. The number and variety of warbler migrants have also been notable including Lesser Whitethroats, which have been more numerous than usual in Argyll. And Tiree has produced its usual autumn crop of rare transatlantic waders.

NEW SPECIES FOR ARGYLL.

A **Cattle Egret**, the first seen in Argyll, was found at Lyrabus, Islay on 24 October. It was quite mobile and seen at several other locations so that at one time two birds were suspected. At one time it was seen in the same field as a Little Egret, one of several seen in Argyll during October/November. It was well photographed ([see account from Jim Dickson](#)) and will very probably be accepted as the 336th species for the Argyll list.

RARE AND UNUSUAL SPECIES.

A juvenile **Spotted Sandpiper** was found on the road between Heylipol and Heylipol Church the morning of 31 August. It was photographed and if confirmed will be only our second Spotted Sandpiper since one was found at Loch Indaal on 5 June 1984 (Keith Gillon per John Bowler).

At least one and possibly two **Glossy Ibises** were found in Argyll during Sep

tember, the first in the county for more than 50 years! ([see account from Paul Daw](#))

GARDEN BIRDS.

Instead of dashing off to distant locations for your birding it's worth looking closely at what turns up in your garden. In April this year we received several reports of **Lesser Redpolls** appearing at garden bird feeders. As mentioned in the June 2009 *Eider*, Danielle & Graham Clark started looking more closely at the Redpolls in their garden and Danielle took a series of photographs of one unusual, paler individual with prominent white wing bars. The photographs and accompanying description were circulated to the Argyll Bird Records Committee and the bird has just been accepted as a **Common Redpoll**. The whole question of Redpoll identification is quite complex but this shows that some of the Redpolls in Argyll that we cheerfully identify as 'Lesser' can in fact be 'Common' (or Mealy as they are sometimes called).

STOP PRESS. Latest **Swallow** records received so far: one Nerabus, Islay 8 November (Stuart Graham) and an immature at Baileouchdarach, Lismore on 22 November

(David Jardine). Also, a **Sand Martin** flying along King Street (Portnahaven), Islay on 5 November (Stuart Graham) is the latest ever Argyll record – by one day! **Please let me know if you have any late sightings of hirundines or any other summer visitors.**

Wildfowl (and Gamebirds):

A considerable movement of wildfowl on Tiree on 29 September included 49 **Whoopers Swans** in a single flock flying S over Aird, 10 (including 2 cygnets) at Loch a' Phuill (Jim Dickson) and 22 at Loch Riaghain (John Bowler). The first **Whooper Swans** (9) were seen at The Laggan near Machrihanish the same day (Simon Lawrence per Eddie Maguire). Fifteen **Whooper Swans** at Ulva Lagoons, Loch Sween on 17 October included 4 juveniles. A noticeable arrival of **Whoopers Swans** on Tiree on 19 October included: 80 at Loch a' Phuill and 42 at Loch an Eilein and a flock of at least 30 **Whooper Swans** were seen flying S past Treshnish Point, Mull the following day (20 Oct) (Anand Prasad). By 22 October, an impressive 252 **Whoopers Swans** at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree included 41 cygnets (John Bowler). A flock of 16 adult **Whooper Swans** flew S at Machri-

hanish Seabird Observatory on 22 October and 54 **Whooper Swans** (including 6 juvenile/first-winters) were counted in the Chiscan/Strath area of The Laggan, where 16 **Greenland White-fronted Geese**, and 30 **Greylag Geese** were also seen (Eddie Maguire). Wildfowl at Ulva Lagoons, Loch Sween on 30 October included 30 **Mute Swans** (2 juvs.), 23 **Whooper Swans** (all adult) and 40 **Greenland White-fronted Geese** (Tom Callan).

Geese on Tiree on 29 September included a minimum of 106 **Pink-footed Geese** flying SSE in 3 flocks during the morning, 72 **Barnacle Geese** flying SSE in 7 flocks plus 4 more on the ground with Greylags at Balephetrish and 4 **Pale-bellied Brent Geese** at Salum (John Bowler) A total of 39 **Pale-bellied Brent Geese** flew S past the observatory during the same day (Eddie Maguire).

An adult **European White-fronted Goose** was found at Heylipol, Tiree with Greylag Geese on 14 September (John Bowler). On 15 September, 9 **Pale-bellied Brent Geese** flying S at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory in the morning (the first this autumn) were accompanied by a **Pintail** and followed by a pack of *ca* 50 **Pink-footed Geese** at midday (Eddie Maguire). A group of 29 **Pink-footed Geese** were seen flying over Cairnbaan (nr Lochgilphead) on the afternoon of 20 September (Jim Dickson). A flock of 16 **Pale-bellied Brent Geese** resting off-passage at Machrihanish Seabird Ob-

servatory on 24 September included a colour-ringed bird. Eddie Maguire photographed it and when details were reported to Graham McElwaine of the Irish Brent Goose Research Group it transpired that the bird was ringed in Iceland on 18 May 2008 and spent last winter (2008/2009) at Wexford Harbour in Ireland. A flock of 150 **Pale-bellied Brent Geese** flew south over Tiree on 28 September (Ross Ahmed).

Geese at Loch Gruinart, Islay on 2 October included 18 **Greenland White-fronts**, 7,320 **Barnacle Geese**, 172 **Pale-bellied Brent Geese**, a single **Pink-footed Goose** and one **Canada Goose** (probably *hutchinsii*). By 5 October **Barnacle Geese** there numbered 14,365 (James How). Five **Gadwalls** (incl. one male) were among wildfowl at N edge of the Laggan (Langa/Westport Marsh - near Campbeltown) on 16 October (Eddie Maguire). A juvenile male **Ring-necked Duck** was newly arrived at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 22 September and was also seen during the month at Loch Bhasapol (John Bowler). A count at the Sound of Gigha from the usual mainland viewpoints between Rhunaharine Point & Ronachan on 15 October produced: 28 **Greater Scaup**, 16 **Long-tailed Ducks** (including 3 adult drakes), 80 **Common Scoters** (largest group 55), 8 **Velvet Scoters** (including 3 adult drakes), 11 **Common Goldeneyes** and 39 **Red-breasted Mergansers** (Eddie Maguire). A moult flock of 137 **Red-breasted Mergansers** were present in Loch Caolisport on the morning of 22 August (Jim Dickson).

A **Black Grouse** was seen near Craigendive at the head of Loch Striven, on 21 September (Daphne Campbell) and two **Black Grouse**



Greenland White-fronted Geese. Islay. Photo©editor



Great Crested Grebe photo©Eddie Maguire

were seen along the road between Kennacraig and Claonaig during the ABC outing to Skipness on 26 September (Katie Pendreigh). Four **Red-legged Partridges** were seen at Craighuadh (nr Tayinloan), Kintyre on 10 October (Tom Callan).

Seabirds – divers, grebes, shearwaters, herons etc (and other seawatch species):

Two groups of **Black-throated Divers** totaling 17 birds were off 'West Coast Salmon', Kintyre on 10 October (Tom Callan).

A count at the Sound of Gigha from the usual mainland viewpoints between Rhunahaorine Point & Ronachan on 15 October produced: 7 single **Red-throated Divers**, 23 **Black-throated Divers** (largest group 12), 67 **Great Northern Divers** and 63 **Slavonian Grebes** (including loose groups of 5, 5, 7, 9 & 12). Some of the latter were still showing signs of breeding plumage (Eddie Maguire). This clearly demonstrates the importance of this stretch of sea for divers and grebes at certain times of the year.

During 7hrs seawatching at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory in WNW force

6 winds with frequent squalls on 29 September a good variety of scarce seabird species were found including a total of 10 **Leach's Storm-petrels**, 58 **Red-throated Divers**

and a dark morph adult **Pomarine Skua** (with tail 'spoons') (Eddie Maguire).

Three **Great Shearwaters** were reported as seen from the Oban-Tiree ferry (approaching Coll) on 01 September (David Kent).

The first significant in-shore movement of

Manx Shearwaters at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory occurred on 12 August. The total for 3hrs was 1,700 >S and among them was the first **Balearic Shearwater** of the autumn. A notable 4 **Balearic Shearwaters** were recorded during a large movement of **Manx Shearwaters** (2, 400 >S in 5 hrs from 07:00) there on 16 August (Eddie Maguire) and a single **Sooty Shearwater** headed SW at Hynish, Tiree on the same day (John Bowler).

During a southerly gale on 23 August, an exceptional movement of **Manx Shearwaters** was noted in Loch Gilp (Ardrihaig to Inverneill) with a minimum of 3,000 in 1 hour (15:00-16:00), 15+ **Gannets** and 3 **Fulmars** were also seen (Jim Dickson).

Two **Leach's Storm-petrels** were seen from the ferry between Coll and Tiree on 29 August (David Bryant).

In force 5-6 easterly winds and heavy rain on 24 October a **Great Crested Grebe** (first-winter) was found sheltering by the old lifeboat station at Machrihanish. It remained for the following three days (Eddie Maguire).

A **Slavonian Grebe** was on Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 4 October (Jim Dickson/Ross Ahmed).

Good numbers of **Grey Herons** were reported including 20 at Holy Loch, Cowal on 1 October (Nigel Scriven) and 16 roosting at the NATO Jetty in Campbeltown Loch on 07 October (Neil Brown). A **Cattle Egret**, the first in Argyll, was found at Lyrabus, Islay on 24 October (see separate item on this event).

An Egret first reported on Coll on 8 October was seen well on the estuarine part of Loch Eatharna just west of Arinagour on 10 October and identified as a **Little Egret** – the first record for Coll (Simon Wellock). It was seen again several times in the following days. This turned out to be the first of several **Little Egrets** reported in Argyll: One was seen on the north shore of Loch Creran near North Shian, North Argyll on 16 October. It was apparently chased away by local Grey Herons! (Les Silkowski per Mike Gear). One was seen with the Cattle Egret on Islay on 25 October and on 29 October a **Little Egret** was found at Loch na Cille, Loch Sween during the afternoon with another (or possibly the same?) bird in the Add Estuary as darkness fell (Tom Callan). One was still in the Add Estuary on 30



Glossy Ibis photo©Morag Rea



Black Tailed Godwit

photo©Eddie Maguire

October (Jim Dickson). It is impossible to say exactly how many different individuals were involved in these sightings, but it must be significant that two **Little Egrets** were seen together in the Add Estuary on 13 November. Following the rapid colonisation of England and Ireland we are starting to wonder if it might be worth checking heronries (where the first colonists usually breed) in Argyll next spring!

A report was received (we are currently awaiting a description) of a **Glossy Ibis** seen NNW of Knockvologan near Fionnphort on 16 September (Alein Shreeve) and a **Glossy Ibis** was seen and photographed in a field near Barrahornmid Farm (Tayvallich), Loch Sween on 26 September (see separate item on Glossy Ibises).

Raptors, rails etc.:

Two **Red Kites** were reported this autumn; one over Ulva Lagoons, Loch Sween flying steadily towards the Sound of Jura on 17 October (Paul Daw) and one seen over Glenbranter, Cowal twice on the morning of 19 October (Peter Woods).*

An adult **White-tailed Eagle** was seen soaring just N of Tibertich

Neither had wing tags. What were presumably the same two birds had been reported near Carsaig (Tayvallich) the day before (John Aitchison). On 17 October an adult **White-tailed Eagle** was seen soaring over the Sound of Jura from the coast N of Carsaig and a **Peregrine Falcon** gave a marvellous hunting display, chasing **Redshanks** in Carsaig Bay. John was surprised to see it dive at birds in the water; though it was unsuccessful and was later chased away by three crows (John McNally). On 18 October Terry Robilliard photographed two adult **White-tailed Eagles** (a pair) flying over Raera Forest, near Kilninver, Oban. Some of these records may refer to the same individuals but there have been a large number of reports of White-tailed Eagles in the Mid-Argyll area this year and we are beginning to hope a pair might eventually stay to breed.

A 2nd calendar year **Golden Eagle** was found at Milton, Tiree on 17 October. Golden Eagles are rare birds on Tiree (Andy Dowse / Lloyd Berry/John Bowler).

An **Osprey** (sometimes two) have

(near Ford, Mid-Argyll) on the morning of 25 August (Karl Pipes). Two **White-tailed Eagles**, an adult and a juvenile together, were at Keills point, Loch Sween on the morning of 11 October.

been seen fishing at Loch na Cille, Loch Sween on several occasions in the period up to 2 September. (John Aitchison) and an **Osprey** seen at Loch Gruinart, Islay on 5 September had been in the area all week (Jim Dickson). These were (so far) the last reports of Ospreys this year.

A female **Marsh Harrier** was seen during the morning of 21 October hunting at Tayinloan (Katie Pendreigh). As she was watching it Katie phoned me and described the bird in great detail, leaving its identity in no doubt!

A Report has been received of a young **Water Rail** at Benderloch, North Argyll on the 9th August. It was calling to a parent and getting replies and Robin Harvey managed to get a photo of a fuzzy black blob (his description!). Confirmed breeding records of Water Rail are very rare in Argyll although they are probably considerably more widespread than reports would suggest.

A female **Corn Crake** was seen with a late brood of 3 mid-sized chicks at Balephuill on 26 August (John Bowler)..

Waders:

A flock of 118 **Black-tailed Godwits** at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 1 August included an Icelandic leg-ringed bird: also present were a **Red Knot** in breeding plumage, 8 **Greenshanks**, 50 **Dunlins** and 10 **Sanderlings** (John Bowler).

An unprecedented flock of 133 **Black-tailed Godwits** at Machrihanish SBO at 07:45hrs on the morning of 4 August included a leg-flagged bird (Eddie Maguire). Eddie obtained an excellent photo and asked me if I could trace the origins of this bird. After a good deal of detective work (and some assistance from John Bowler) I

finally contacted the ringer, José Alves. He had marked the bird as an adult (male) on the Tagus Estuary, Setúbal, West Portugal on 20 February 2007 and kindly supplied me with a complete log of the many subsequent sightings. It was at Árnessýsla, S. Iceland on 24 April 2007, at Funton, on the Medway Estuary, Kent on 5 October 2007, back at the Tagus estuary from October 2007 to early March 2008, at Aersoltweerde, River IJssel, Overijssel, Netherlands in early April 2008, back in Iceland on 24 April and spent the winter of 2008/2009 on the Tagus estuary once more. It was presumably on its way back there from Iceland when Eddie spotted it.

Numbers of other waders at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 4 August included 170 **Oystercatchers**, 40 **Red Knots**, 58 **Sanderlings**, 85 **Dunlins**, 5 **Whimbrels**, 80 **Common Redshanks**, 3 **Green-shanks** and 37 **Turnstones** were also noted (Eddie Maguire).

An excellent variety of waders at Loch Gruinart, Islay on 16 August included: 170 **Ringed Plovers**, 2 **Red Knots**, 66 **Sanderlings**, 4 **Curlew Sandpipers**, 1,740 **Dunlin**, 24 **Bar-tailed Godwits** and 14 **Black-tailed Godwits** (James How), a nice selection at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 22 August included: 260 **Northern Lapwings**, 2 **Ruffs**, 148 **Black-tailed Godwits**, 2 **Whimbrel**, 25 **Common Redshanks**, 7 **Greenshanks** and a



Ruff. Machrihanish ©Eddie Maguire

juv **Wood Sandpiper** (John Bowler) and waders around Loch Crinan on 23 August included: 12 **Ringed Plovers**, 7 juvenile **Red Knots**, 4 juvenile **Sanderlings**, 14 **Dunlins**, 30 **Common Redshanks**, 2 **Common Sandpipers** and a **Turnstone** (Jim Dickson).

From 24 August onwards many waders were passing through Argyll and on 26 August a single **Green Sandpiper** was observed with 5 **Red Knots**, 4 **Whimbrels** and 125 **Black-tailed Godwits** at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree in the late afternoon (John Bowler).

On 30 August an adult **Pacific Golden Plover** was found by Keith Gillon at Loch a' Phuill: it was later relocated at Sandaig/Middleton (John Bowler).

A juvenile **Spotted Sandpiper** was found on the road between Heylipol and Heylipol Church on the morning of 31 August (Keith Gillon per John Bowler).

A quick count around Loch Gruinart, Islay on 02 September produced: 179 **Oystercatchers**, 74 **Red Knots**, 326 **Sanderlings**, a single **Curlew Sandpiper** (John Armitage), 965 **Dunlins**, 122 **Bar-tailed Godwits**, a juvenile **Spotted Redshank**, 55 **Common Redshanks** and 6 **Greenshanks** (James How). A **Pectoral Sandpiper** was reported at Balephetrish Bay, Tiree on the same day (David Kent).

No less than 7 **Ruffs** were at Loch a' Phuill on 05 September, together with 64 **Black-tailed Godwits** (incl. 1 leg-flagged bird) (John Bowler). Four **Greenshanks** and a **Ruff** were seen at Loch Gruinart, Islay that day (Jim Dickson).



American Golden Plover photo©Ross Ahmed

Two further **Green Sandpipers** (always a scarce migrant in the county) were recorded: one flushed at Baugh, Tiree on 7 September (John Bowler) and one seen at Arinagour, Coll on 11 September (Simon Wellock).

On 14 September an adult **American Golden Plover** was found at Barrapol, Tiree and a juvenile **Curlew Sandpiper** was at Vaul Bay (John Bowler).

A probable **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** was seen on Colonsay, on the golf course, near the airstrip on 17 September (Alan Davis) and the following day (18 Sep) two elusive **Buff-breasted Sandpipers** were at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree in the evening (John Bowler).

26 September was a good day for rare waders on Tiree. A juvenile **Baird's Sandpiper** was found at Gott Bay and a juvenile **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** was at Sandaig (perhaps the same bird at this site on 9th or one of the two at Loch a' Phuill on 18th?) (Jim Dickson). The adult **American Golden Plover** was seen again at Sandaig (Jim Dickson/Ross Ahmed) and a group of 3 **Pectoral Sandpipers** were together at Barrapol/Loch a' Phuill with another **Pectoral Sandpiper** at Sandaig

(Ross Ahmed).

No less than three adult **American Golden Plovers** were found on Tiree on the morning of 1 October: Ross Ahmed found a new adult which had joined up with the long-staying bird at Sandaig, whilst a less well plumaged bird was at Loch a' Phuill (John Bowler/Ross Ahmed/Jim Dickson). All were photographed. This species was only added to the Argyll list in 2001 but is now reported more or less annually, mainly on Tiree. This may well be to do with improving observer identification skills. On the same day a juvenile **Pectoral Sandpiper** was found at Sandaig, while another **Pectoral Sandpiper** was at Cornaigmore (Ross Ahmed/Jim Dickson).

Waders found during the WeBS count at Holy Loch, Cowal on 12 October, included 616 **Oystercatchers**, 19 **Ringed Plovers**, 152 **Eurasian Curlews**, 30 **Common Redshanks** and 8 **Turnstones** (George Newall).

An unexpected gathering of 93 **Common Snipe** were found at the N end of Loch Lussa, Kintyre on 21 October, when the water level was low (Eddie Maguire).

On 16 October, waders at N edge of the Laggan (Langa/Westport Marsh - near Campbeltown) included *ca* 1,200 **European Golden Plovers**, 78 **Northern Lapwings** and 165 **Eurasian Curlews** (Eddie Maguire).

A flock of 24 **Northern Lapwings** were at Kildavaig farm (near Ardlaumont Point), Kintyre on 18 October (David Warden).

A **Purple Sandpiper** with Oystercatchers, Ringed Plovers and Eurasian Curlews on 19 October was an unusual record for Calgary Bay, Mull (Anand Prasad).

Waders in Otter Ferry, Cowal area on 27 October, included *ca* 50 **Ringed Plovers**, 3 **Northern Lap-**

wings (unusual here), a **Red Knot**, 3 **Dunlin**, 6 **Common Redshanks** and at least 100 **Turnstones** (Tom Callan).

On 03 October, two **Grey Phalaropes** flew W off Aird, Tiree during a sea-watch in the afternoon; one landed briefly on the sea (Jim Dickson) and a **Grey Phalarope** was also seen at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory (Eddie Maguire).

Skuas (see also 'Seabirds'), gulls, terns and auks:

A juvenile **Long-tailed Skua**, which came in off the sea at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 06 August drifted off slowly eastwards, inland, over The Laggan towards Clyde waters. An adult **Pomarine Skua** flew S past the observatory on 12 August and two **Great Skuas** were seen flying S there on 15 August (Eddie Maguire).

A second winter **Little Gull** (the first this year) and a **Great Skua** flew S at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory early on the morning of 29 August and around 360 **Kittiwakes** and 900 **Manx Shearwaters** also flew S in 3 hours (Eddie Maguire).

A second-winter **Mediterranean Gull** was found and photographed at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 20 August. This constitutes the 11th record at the observatory. A 1st winter **Mediterranean Gull** was photographed there on 27 August (Eddie Maguire).

An adult **Roseate Tern** was photographed close to Big Scone Island, Machrihanish, Kintyre on the afternoon of 19 August. Other tern species there included 26 **Arctic** (6 juveniles), 14 **Common** (4 juveniles) & 4 **Sandwich** (all adults) (Eddie Maguire).

A juvenile **Black Tern** flew up to the head of Loch Gruinart, Islay at high tide on 6 September, and then inland in the direction of Lyrabus/

Loch Indaal (Jim Dickson).

A 30 minute sea-watch from Urvaig, Tiree, just as the rain stopped at 10:15 on 29 September revealed: 4 adult **Pomarine Skuas**, a **Great Skua**, 79 **Kittiwakes** and 8 **Arctic Terns** (John Bowler).

On 3 October, sea-watching at Aird, Tiree produced an **Arctic Skua** and 8 **Great Skuas** (Jim Dickson). An adult **Iceland Gull** and 5 **Arctic Terns** were at Ardnave, Islay the same day (James How).

A late **Sandwich Tern** (2nd calendar year) was at Gott Bay on 05 October. (John Bowler).

On a very wet and windy day (9 October) on Tiree, an adult **Long-tailed Skua** and 262 **Kittiwakes** were among the birds seen off Hynish (John Bowler).

A constant stream of **Kittiwakes** (756 in 1 hour) flew past Aird, Tiree on 11 October with 4 **Great Skuas**, an **Arctic Skua**, and 2 **Arctic Terns** (John Bowler). Two **Puffins** were with 20 or more **Kittiwakes** near Treshnish Point, Mull the same day (Anand Prasad).

On 25 October, two late juvenile **Arctic Terns** flew S at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory and a (relatively low) total of 421 **Kittiwakes** flew south in 8 hours. Interestingly only 68 (16%) of the latter were first-winter birds (Eddie Maguire).

Doves, owls, woodpeckers etc.:

The total of 60 **Common Swifts** over Burnside Square, Campbeltown on 09 August was the highest count in Argyll this summer (Derrick Goode).

Two **Short-eared Owls** were in the Add Estuary on 22 August, a pale bird and a normal type (Jim Dickson).

On 2 October, a **Rose-ringed Parakeet** was photographed in a gar-

den in George Street, Hunters Quay, Dunoon (Callum Satchel). Although the species is well established in parts of southern England, and indeed is now viewed as a pest, this is the first record of a free flying bird in Argyll.

A **Hoopoe** was seen in a garden in North Connel on the morning of 7 October (Daniel Baker). Sadly, as is often the case with this species, it did not stay around for other observers to see. Perhaps surprisingly, at least one Hoopoe appears in Argyll in spring or autumn almost every year: this was (so far) the only record for 2009.

Passerines:

A **Lesser Whitethroat** was seen in a garden on the outskirts of Campbeltown on the morning of 12 August (Neil Brown). This was the first of an unprecedented set of records for the species this autumn. They do seem to be appearing here more frequently: there have been more Argyll Lesser Whitethroat records in the past two years than in the previous ten. Other records included one seen in Lower Soroba Road, Oban on the afternoon of 27 August (Bill Allan/Anne-Lise Dickie), a series of records on Tiree from 29 September to 16 October involving at least 7 individuals, and one photographed in a garden in Lochgilphead on 31 October (Mike Gregory).

The Ardkinglas **Nuthatch** was back again on 13 August: seen and photographed on and around the nut feeder at the Nursery within the Estate for about an hour and a half (Glyn Toplis).

Two late **Barn Swallows** were at Tayinloan on 22 October (Katie Pendreigh).

A fall of at least 20 **Dunnock** in Arinagour, Coll on 12 October confirmed once again their status as an autumn migrant in Argyll (Simon

Wellock) and a late **Whinchat** was at Balephuill, Tiree (Lloyd Berry).

A **Bluethroat** was reported flying between the rose hedges on the approach to the Craignure station of the light railway at Craignure, Mull at about 16:00 on 11 September (Pete Bate per Alan Spellman). We hope to get a good description of what is still a rare bird in Argyll, despite two (accepted) records this spring.

A late male **Whinchat** was found on the road to Lussa Loch, Kintyre on 21 October and 5 **Common Stonechats** were also recorded along the road (Eddie Maguire).

Scattered groups of up to 50 **Redwings** on Tiree on 10 October totalled several hundred for the island as a whole (John Bowler). A **Ring Ouzel** was with Redwings and Mistle Thrushes at Beach, Ross of Mull on 10 October (Bryan Rains). Plenty of **Redwings** were seen flying over Connel on the morning of 12 October. Between 10:00 and 10:30hrs approx. 1500 were counted in groups of 50-150 flying east up Loch Etive. Interestingly, they were coming from the west, quite high, and didn't look as if they were just moving between feeds (Mike Harrison). Many **Redwings** were seen flying over Lochgilphead the same day (Lynsey Gibson). Large numbers of migrant thrushes in Cowal on 17 October included 350 (mainly **Fieldfares**) near Strachur, 350 mixed thrushes in Glendaruel and 100 (mainly **Redwings**) at Lephinmore (Tom Callan).

A male **Ring Ouzel** was with 310 **Fieldfares** and 110 **Redwings** at Milton. Tiree on 23 October. John Bowler estimates some 1,000 **Fieldfares** and 1,500 **Redwings** were around the island that day together with perhaps 200 **Blackbirds** and 150 **Song Thrushes**. A quick look at the Mull of Kintyre lighthouse area

the same day produced a few migrants, including 270 **Fieldfares**, 125 **Redwings**, 8 **Common Starlings**, 130 **Common Chaffinches** and 80 **Goldfinches** (Eddie Maguire) and a late juv. **Northern Wheatear** was seen at Tayinloan (Katie Pendreigh).

A **Garden Warbler** that had been in John Bowler's garden at Balephuill, Tiree the previous day was replaced by a juvenile **Barred Warbler** on the morning of 16 September! Another juvenile **Barred Warbler** was found at Vaul, Tiree on 5 October (Ross Ahmed).

A female **Blackcap** was feeding on apples in the garden at Otter Ferry on 23 October (Tom Callan).

Two **Yellow-browed Warblers** were together in sycamores at The Lodge, Arinagour, Coll on the morning of 6 October (Simon Wellock) and a late juvenile **Common Redstart** was at Carnan Mor, Tiree that day (John Bowler). A newly arrived **Yellow-browed Warbler** was found at The Glebe, Tiree on 10 October (Jim Dickson). Two **Yellow-browed Warblers** arrived at Carnan Mor, Tiree late on the afternoon of 15 October (John Bowler) and a 'new' **Yellow-browed Warbler** was found at Main Road Farm, Balephuill on 18 October, along with 6 **Common Chiffchaffs**, a male & female **Blackcap** and 15 **Redwings** (Andy Dowse/Lloyd Berry). A remarkable series of **Yellow-browed Warbler** records considering there were only five ever up to the end of 2006!

A **Pied Flycatcher** at Vaul, Tiree on 27 September (John Bowler) was first found there by Ross Ahmed on 25 September. It was still there on 28 September. A **Pied Flycatcher** at Kilmoluaig on 30 September was a new bird (John

Bowler)

A **Magpie** seen along the road to Tayvallich (before Arichonan), Mid-Argyll on 12 October could have been the bird seen in the Lochgilphead area in June/July (Lynsey Gibson).

On 23 October, 2 **Bramblings** and a **Goldfinch** were with 380 **Fieldfares** and 200 **Redwings** at Hynish, and a male **Brambling** was at The Manse. Three **Bramblings** were at West Hynish on 28 October (John Bowler). More surprisingly, a flock of approx. 30 **Bramblings** was seen with Common Chaffinches at the caravan park at Castle Sween, Mid-Argyll on 29 October (Alistair Sinclair per Tom Callan). A single **Brambling** was feeding underneath a garden rowan containing approx. 20 **Fieldfares** at Eredine, Loch Awe on 30 October (Karl Pipes).

A few **Twite** (4 or more) were in with a flock of 150 **Linnets** at Tayinloan, Kintyre on 13 September (Katie Pendreigh).

A **Greenland (Common) Redpoll** was photographed feeding with House Sparrows at Mannal, Tiree on 4 October and a **Garden Warbler** was also present (John Bowler).

A juvenile **Common Rosefinch** was found at Hynish, Tiree on 4 October (Jim Dickson). Later two juvenile **Common Rosefinches** were seen together at Mannal (presumably including the Hynish bird) (John Bowler). They were both seen again at Hynish on 6 October (Jim Dickson).

A **Lapland Bunting** observed on the machair at the Green, Tiree on 26 September (John Bowler) was the first of several this autumn. One was with 12 Snow Buntings at Ardnave, Islay on 3 October (James How), three flew over Balephetrish Hill, Tiree on 29 September, one was seen flying over Crossapol, Coll on 4 October (Simon Wellock), one was with a single Snow Bunting near An Airidh, Tiree on 5 October (Ross Ahmed) and one was with Twite at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 28 October.

On 8 October, a flock of 8 **Snow Buntings** were at Soa, Tiree with another single at Balephuill (Jim Dickson) and **Twite** numbers at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory were up slightly, to 160, and included one colour-ringed bird (Eddie Maguire).

At least 80 **Snow Buntings** were in a mixed flock with 200+ **Twite** and 80+ **Sky Larks** on the foreshore at Cliad, Coll on 12 October (Simon Wellock).

Six **Yellowhammers** (incl. 4 males) were seen near Ardchattan Priory, North Argyll on 7 October with 100+ **Common Chaffinches** (Bill Allan).

Other sightings:

During a walk from Ardlamont Point northwards

along the Kyles of Bute shore on 15 August Steve Petty experienced the best day for butterflies in Argyll that he could remember. In the herb-rich areas along the shore 12 species were seen, even though it was mainly cloudy. These included **Green-veined Whites** and **Painted Ladies** (the most abundant with more than 100 of each), **Peacocks** (30+), **Small Tortoiseshells** (10+), **Small Coppers** (10+), **Meadow Browns** (six), **Red Admirals** (five), **Scotch Argus** (three), **Grayling** (three), **Speckled Wood** (one), **Common Blue** (one, very worn) and one male **Large White** amongst all the Green-veined Whites! As well as Painted Ladies, it seems to have been an exceptional year for Green-veined Whites.

A dead 2.0m long **Leatherback Turtle** was found at West Hynish, Tiree on 21 August (John Bowler).

On 19 September around a dozen **Bottle-nosed Dolphins** were reported in Machrihanish Bay by surfers. They included a female with a small calf by her side (James McCallum per Eddie Maguire).

A **Hummingbird Hawkmoth** was seen at Cairnbaan Hotel near Lochgilphead on 04 October (David Warden).

Paul Daw

* Sadly The Red Kite was the last record received from club member Peter Woods who died a few days later following a heart attack. He was a lifelong birder who regularly contributed records and had also been helping out with the BTO Atlas tetrads in Cowal. We send our sympathy and commiserations to his widow Helen.



Greenland (Common) Redpoll. photo©Ross Ahmed

Articles for the March issue of the *Eider* should with the Editor before the 24th February 2010

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The *Eider* is the quarterly newsletter of the **Argyll Bird Club**. The editor welcomes articles about birds, wildlife conservation and ecology in Argyll, including articles of a wider natural history interest, notices of forthcoming events, book reviews, press releases and letters. Whenever possible, contributions should be submitted to the editor as e-mail attachments in Microsoft Word or rtf format. But, this should not deter potential contributors, as hand-written scripts are also acceptable. If in doubt about whether an article is suitable, please contact the editor for advice.

Suitable illustrations greatly enhance the attractiveness of the *Eider*, and artists and photographers are encouraged to submit artwork and digital photographs (jpeg files preferred) of birds and their habitats to the editor. Digital photographs of Schedule 1 species taken at or near the nest will not be accepted for publication unless the photographer was covered by an appropriate SNH licence.

The *Eider* is published during the first week of March, June, September and December. Articles for each issue must be with the editor before the 24th day of the month prior to publication. However, it greatly helps if material can be submitted well before these deadline dates. Contributions are accepted in the order they are received, which may result in some late submissions being held over until the next issue.

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

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

More about the Argyll Bird Club

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

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

Ordinary	£10
Junior (under 17)	£3
Family	£15
Corporate	£25

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