

**December
2014
Number 110**

The Eider



Little Stint, Loch Crinan ©Jim Dickson

Recent bird sightings, pages 9-16

Barn Owls in Kintyre, page 17

Summaries of talks at the autumn meeting, pages 5-8

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Editorial

Just over 40 members attended a successful autumn meeting at the Cairnbaan Hotel on 22 November. As with the spring meeting, we have included in this issue a summary of the talks for those who couldn't get to the meeting. The speakers need to be congratulated for such excellent presentations, and our thanks go to Nigel Scriven for organising the programme.

The AGM was accomplished in almost record time, but failed to recruit a secretary to replace Katie Pendreigh. Mike Harrison has kindly agreed to serve as acting secretary until a suitable candidate comes forward. If you have any inclinations in this direction, or want to know more about what the job entails, please have a chat with any committee member. It doesn't involve a lot of work, and committee meetings (usually four per year) in Iveraray are very informal, usually preceded by a meal at the George.



Robin ©Steve Petty

Inside this issue

Editorial	Page 2
Club news	Pages 3-4
Swan census	Page 4
Dead bird request	Page 5
Summaries of talks from the Autumn Meeting	Pages 5-8
Recent bird sightings	Pages 9-16
Barn owls in Kintyre	Page 17
Swallow feeding time	Page 18
Field trip report—Islay Ferry	Pages 19-20
Field trip report—Holy Loch	Page 20
Field trip report—Bute	Pages 20-21
BTO House Martin survey	Page 21
Argyll Bird Club information	Page 22

Next year is the club's 30th anniversary, which we are marking with two events—a weekend on Mull in May and a dinner following the autumn meeting at the Cairnbaan Hotel; similar to the 25th anniversary dinner. Details of both events can be found on page 4. The deadline for getting your name on the Mull trip is **13 December**.

Finally, I would like to wish all our readers a very happy Christmas and a wonderful bird-rich New Year. Also, I thank very much all the many folks who have contributed articles and photos for the *Eider* during this year—please keep them coming!

Acknowledgements

Very many thanks to the following for their contributions to this issue—Yvonne Boles, Neil Brown, Malcolm Chattwood, Clive Craik, John Calladine, Stuart Crutchfield, Paul Daw, Jim Dickson, Jim Duncan, Bob Furness (including photocopying & dispatch), Keith Gillon, Mike Harrison, David Jardine, Eddie Maguire, Mary Matthews, David Palmar, Mike Peacock, Linda Petty (proof reading), Nigel Scriven, and Blair Urquhart

Club News

FIELD TRIPS 2014-15

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

Saturday 29 November. Loch Gilp and the Add Estuary. Led by Jim Dickson (contact details: phone 01546 603967; e-mail meg@jdickson5.plus.com). Meet at 10.00hrs in Lochgilphead at the Corran Car Park, opposite the caravan park, on the A83, close to the roundabout (A83/A816) at the western end of the town.

Saturday 31 January. Ormsary. Meet at the estate office car park at 10.00hrs. Bring your own lunch. Led by Stuart Crutchfield (e-mail stu.crutchfield@gmail.com Phone 01880 770267)

Saturday 28 February. Ledaig Point. Meet at the north end of Connel Bridge at 10.00hrs. Park

on the piece of old road accessible from the unclassified road to Bonawe (NM911348). Bring your own lunch. Contact Mike Harrison (E-mail jmhar-rison@iee.org Phone 01631 710656)

Saturday 28 March. Sound of Gigha. Led by Paul Daw. More details will appear in the March *Eider*. For more information contact Paul (E-mail monedula@globalnet.co.uk Phone 01546 886260)

INDOOR MEETINGS 2015

Spring meeting. On Saturday 7 March at the Argyll Hotel, Inveraray <http://www.bespokehotels.com/argyllhotel> (programme below).

Autumn meeting (plus AGM). On Saturday 21 November at the Cairnbaan Hotel, near Lochgilphead.

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

Programme for the ABC's Spring Meeting Saturday 7 March at the Argyll Hotel, Inveraray, Argyll

Time	Session
0930	Doors open, coffee and tea
0950-1000	Welcome and introduction— <i>Mike Harrison</i> , Chairman of the Argyll Bird Club
1000-1030	Recent bird sightings and photographs— <i>Jim Dickson</i> , Argyll Bird Recorder
1030-1100	Changing fortunes of coastal seabirds in the Clyde— <i>Nina O'Hanlon & Ruedi Nager</i>
1100-1130	Coffee/tea
1130-1200	Tracking Golden Eagles— <i>Ewan Weston</i> , Natural Research
1200-1230	Wildlife of Oronsay— <i>Crystal Maw</i> , RSPB
1230-1400	Lunch (available in the hotel, if required)—local birdwatching tips available
1400-1440	Resolving conflict between farming and geese on Islay— <i>Rae McKenzie</i> , SNH
1440-1510	Argyll's Atlantic hazel woods— <i>Gordon Stephens</i> , Native Woods Cooperative
1510-1530	Tea/coffee
1530-1600	Bearded Reedlings in the Tay reedbeds— <i>Iain Malzer & Stewart White</i>
1600-1615	BTO surveys and updates— <i>Nigel Scriven</i>
1615-1630	Raffle and closing remarks

ABC 30th ANNIVERSARY IN 2015

We are celebrating this event in two ways.

1. A weekend on Mull for 29/31 May. The trip will be centred on Tobermory and members should seek accommodation nearby. The provisional programme is:

Friday 29 May: Travel to Mull. Members may wish to share transport to reduce the cost of the weekend. Informal gathering(s) may be expected in the evening.

Saturday 30 May: Drive a circular route round the north of Mull visiting up to eight locations covering a mix of habitats, starting and finishing in Tobermory.

An informal dinner is planned at the Western Isles Hotel, Tobermory, on Saturday evening. An expert speaker may be invited along if a reasonable number of members attend.

Sunday 31 May: The RSPB have agreed that a special Eagle Watch trip can be arranged (these do not normally operate at weekends) if sufficient members attend to justify turning out the volunteers. This would probably be on Sunday morning with members dispersing thereafter, although clearly there is scope to visit other sites on Sunday afternoon depending on members' travel plans.

Costs: All costs of the trip (transport, fares, accommodation, Saturday dinner, Eagle Watch, etc.) will be paid by the individual members attending.

Next steps: In order to firm up the plan with external parties I need to know how many people will be attending by 13 December, so please let me know ASAP if you have not already done so.

Mike Harrison (phone 01631 710656: mobile 07731 197722: email.jmharrison@iee.org).

2. A club dinner. This will follow the Autumn Meeting at the Cairnbaan Hotel on Saturday 21 November. More details will appear in the March *Eider*.

SECRETARY AND COMMITTEE MEMBER WANTED

After many years, Katie Pendreigh stepped down as secretary at the AGM in November, and as no one came forward at the meeting we are looking for someone to replace her. If you are interested please contact the Chairman, Mike Harrison. We also have a vacancy for a committee member. So again, if you are interested, or know of someone who is, please contact Mike Harrison or any other club official.

ARGYLL BIRD REPORT 25 (2013) UPDATE

Work is well under way with the production of ABR 25 although there is a considerable amount of data to process. However, I am happy to announce that three new recruits have been added to the team this year—John Bowler, Neil Brown and Andy Robinson, and we thank Tom Callan and Katie Pendreigh who have both decided to step down. All going well we should be on target to have the report ready for the spring meeting at Inverary on 7 March 2015. If anyone would like to be involved in the production or distribution of the report in future, you would be warmly welcomed to help with this worthwhile and interesting production. Please contact Jim Dickson if you would like to help.

THE ABC'S WEBSITE

Up-to-date arrangements for meetings, recent bird sightings etc. appear on the club's website www.argyllbirdclub.org

International Bewick's and Whooper Swan Census 2015

The international census of Bewick's and Whooper Swans is scheduled for 17/18 January 2015. The organisers (WWT in Britain) are keen to receive counts from as many locations as possible, including Argyll. Bewick's Swans are quite rare in Argyll but Whooper Swans occur widely, sometimes in quite small groups on open fields as well as on wetlands. Please don't assume someone else will have

counted any you see!

Full details of the census can be found at: <http://monitoring.wwt.org.uk/get-involved/isc-2015/> and census forms can be downloaded from <http://monitoring.wwt.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Swan-2015-form.pdf>

The counts don't have to be on the specified dates in January. Counts on any date during the month will be very welcome. Paper census forms are available for those without internet access, please phone Paul Daw at 01546 886260 if you need one.

Paul Daw

Whooper Swans ©Jim Duncan



Dead birds needed—can you help please?

I'm trying to get specimens of the following:

Grey Heron, Northern Gannet, Mute Swan, Little Auk, Puffin, European Storm-Petrel

These are needed for the breastbone only, so it doesn't matter if the body is damaged or decomposed. I need them to fill gaps in a reference collection that will be used for identification of isolated sterna found in the field. I'd be grateful for any I can get, but ideally would like two from each species.

If you happen to find any of these, please place above the high tideline if necessary, and let me know its whereabouts (GPS, Grid Ref., or whatever you can manage please).

Or, if you feel so inclined, please bag and collect it, and I'll pick it up from you.

Many thanks!

Clive Craik clive.craik@sams.ac.uk

Summaries of talks from the ABC's Autumn Meeting

Cairnbaan 22 November 2014

Introduction

The Autumn Meeting was held on 22 November at its usual venue, the Cairnbaan Hotel. After club chairman Mike Harrison had welcomed 41 members and guests for a programme of six talks and the Club's AGM, Argyll Bird Recorder Jim Dickson reported on some of the more unusual birds which have been seen and photographed in Argyll over the past few months.

Big Garden Birdwatch—David Jardine (summary by Blair Urquhart)

David Jardine, Forestry Commission Scotland, gave an intriguing, whistle-stop tour of a previously under-recorded island. No need for your passport however, as the island in question is Lismore, situated in the Firth of Lorne, just south of Oban. The island is 16km long by 1.6km wide and offers a series of excellent walks, cycling routes,

picnic spots and a fine cafe. The island is always green, rarely getting frost, and due to its limestone geology, it is a mecca for botanists. With its strategic position, defending the Firth of Lorne, it is historically interesting too with three defensive castles at Achadun, Coeffin and the Iron Age broch at Tirefour. Lismore is an easily accessible island, being just 11km by car ferry from Oban and 5mins by passenger ferry from

Lismore ©David Jardine



Port Appin. Yet despite this, once off the ferry, you are immediately in a different world where wild flowers bloom and a rich variety of wildlife is waiting to be discovered, with a better than average chance of spotting a White-tailed Eagle or glimpsing an Otter.

Pastoral farming is the main land use on Lismore, with many sheep and cattle; the areas of rougher ground provide habitat for Grasshopper Warbler, Whinchat and a small population of Twite. Buzzards, Peregrines and Kestrels are known to breed and Sparrowhawks are present in summer. The island has several fresh-water lochs, which are highly calcareous, with interesting plants; these provide for Whooper Swans, various ducks and even Coot and Moorhen, both of which are rare in Argyll. Lismore is good for geese—Greylag and Canada breed (along with one feral Barnacle Goose). In winter the island supports over 200 Greenland white-fronted Geese.

On resolving a wildlife conflict—Ross Lilley (summary by Bob Furness)

Ross Lilley, Operations Manager for SNH Argyll and Outer Hebrides, reviewed the conflict between conservation and farming created by White-tailed Eagles. Re-introduction of White-tailed Eagles to Scotland raised the concern that they represent a threat to hill sheep farming. Studies on Mull in 1999-2002 showed that lamb remains could be found at most nests. Forensic analysis of remains shows haemorrhage around talon holes in the skin if the lamb had been taken alive, while lambs that were already dead do not bleed at the talon holes. The research concluded that while many lambs were scavenged, some are killed by sea eagles, and that individual pairs differ in diet with a few pairs taking high numbers of lambs. Evidence from nests on Mull suggested that on average a pair killed about four lambs per year. White-tailed Eagles were slow to re-establish in Scotland, but have increased considerably in numbers in the last few years, from about 20 pairs in 2000 to about 100 pairs this year. They have also spread over much of western Scotland including most of the western islands. Despite management schemes to mitigate impacts on farming, there is a perception among some farmers that they are considered less important than eagles. SNH and the National Farmers Union (Scotland) have agreed an action plan to try to resolve this conflict. SNH acknowledges predation of live and healthy lambs as well as other impacts, has estab-

lished local; stakeholder groups and increased the management scheme budget. SNH and NFUS are establishing a quick reaction service, producing a White-tailed Eagle population viability analysis, and a long term management plan with the aim of minimising the perceived conflict.

Bird diversity and forest management— **John Calladine BTO Scotland** (summary by Steve Petty)

John described a project looking at how different management practices impacted on bird species richness and diversity in Sitka Spruce forests in Britain. He started by showing that in some countries forest cover had increased dramatically. For example, the movement away from clear cutting systems in parts of the USA towards continuous cover methods was linked to a decline in migratory songbirds that bred on clear cuts. In continuous cover forestry, regeneration of trees is encouraged by the thinning and the felling of small groups of trees, resulting in trees of different ages within the same stand. In Britain, John's work compared bird numbers and the number of species in two types of continuous cover plots (those with and those without tree regeneration under the canopy of older trees) and two types of clear cut plots (recently felled areas and older areas where the canopy had closed). Continuous cover plots had more species, but these were all forest birds. Clear cut plots held fewer species, but the more recently felled plots did contain some species associated with open scrubby habitats, such as Willow Warbler, Cuckoo and Tree Pipit, which didn't occur in the continuous cover plots. John concluded that the best options for



A continuous cover stand of Sitka Spruce with ample regeneration ©John Calladine/BTO

forest managers would be to use both continuous cover and clear cutting systems to maximise bird diversity within forests. In the discussions that followed, it was pointed out that forest site characteristics in Argyll, such as strong winds, water-logged soils and high deer numbers, restricted the use of continuous cover systems to a limited number of low elevation sites with better quality and better drained soils.

Working in Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park—Yvonne Boles, RSPB (summary by Mike Harrison)

The Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park covers a large area in west central Scotland and contains many varied and valuable habitats. It includes two RSPB reserves, at Inversnaid and at the mouth of the River Endrick, and the management of both the park and the reserves featured in the talk given by Yvonne Boles, a Conservation Officer with the RSPB. Many different parties have an interest in the management and development of the Park and RSPB staff are directly involved in some of the supervisory and consultative bodies while also responding to consultations regarding specific developments such as hydro power schemes.

Relief from this deskwork can be found in the development of the reserves at Inversnaid and the Endrick mouth. The visitor facilities at Inversnaid are currently being upgraded and a large area of the reserve has recently been enclosed within a protective deer fence to allow some newly planted woodland to become established and hopefully to allow natural regeneration of woodland across more of the reserve. The need to control overgrazing of the reserve's oak woodland by an excessively large feral goat population is likely

to lead to conflict between the RSPB's role as land manager and the public perception of the society as a conservation body. The reserve at the mouth of the River Endrick is a more recent acquisition intended to protect and enhance the wintering site of a flock of Greenland White-fronted Geese which numbered 237 birds earlier this year. Aside from the geese the reserve's wader population has increased and further enhancement of the four main habitats of fen, wetlands, oak woodland and grassland is planned. Yvonne has also worked outside the RSPB's own reserves, such as in a wetland development project in Glen Dochart which has almost doubled the numbers of breeding waders in the selected area of the glen.

Why birds use garden feeders more some days than others—Euan Furness (summary by Malcolm Chattwood)

Euan Furness described a practical project that he had designed and undertaken as an essential component of his Scottish Baccalaureate in Science. Euan was interested to discover how birds feed in different weather conditions and found that little previous work had been undertaken. An initial survey amongst four experts provided no consensus which forced him to derive his own hypotheses and then the methodology to test them. The practical difficulties in ensuring a constant food supply and counting birds using feeders were overcome by adapting feeder design and using the



An example of the wetland habitats RSPB are trying to recreate ©Yvonne Boles/RSPB



Euan setting up one of his bird feeding trials ©Bob Furness

proxy of seed consumption over a period rather than simple counting of birds over time. The survey was undertaken between June and August and as a substitute for naturally available food, four feeders containing nyjer seed and four containing sunflower seed, were sited in a garden setting with Siskins as the target species for the survey. Weather information was provided by a station sited close to the feeders that automatically logged data on a computer.

The results showed that feeders close to cover were favoured by Siskins. Consumption of seed reduced as temperature increased but there was no discernible trend in relation to humidity. Questions from the audience suggested that they had pondered why their garden feeders are busy on one day but not the next and appreciated Euan's effort to shed light on a topic of wide interest. Although the project was only intended to support his wider academic endeavours there was encouragement for his project to continue into the winter months with the possibility of providing an update next year!

Ups and downs of a BBS square, or two—Nigel Scriven (summary by Jim Dickson)

Nigel (our BTO regional organiser for Argyll mainland, Bute and Gigha) gave us a very informative talk on the history and practicalities of the BBS—the British Trust for Ornithology's Breeding Bird Survey. This scheme is now celebrating its 20th year, and Nigel informed us that he has been involved since the start in 1994 and has only missed one season due to the outbreak of foot and mouth disease. The BBS evolved from the previous CBC (Common Bird Census) and the

disadvantages of that scheme were outlined (10 long visits/less sites covered) versus the BBS with the advantage of requiring only three visits to 1-km square during April-June of around 90mins per visit. All results for the UK are now on the BTO website and annual reports can also be downloaded. There are currently 3,500 randomly generated 1-km squares of which 416 are in Scotland and the uptake in Argyll has increased as a result of the recent Bird Atlas 2007-11. However, there are still many squares available and Nigel is keen to encourage new volunteers. Currently, of the 45 squares in Argyll only 20 are allocated.

Nigel then described some of the practicalities of BBS work based on his own experience from Loch Tarsan NS0884. He described how total numbers of birds counted could vary greatly as well as the range of species and also how individual species varied over the 20 years. Some reasons were put forward for the increases and decreases in some species, often related to a change from moorland type habitat to one with more forestry. He also discussed how data from a square could be compared with national trends and how data has to reach a threshold number in order to calculate national trends, for example this was reached for Long-tailed Tit in Scotland in 2012.

In his role of BTO regional organiser, Nigel went on to give us some forthcoming survey information e.g. House Martins in 2015 and informed us about the Bird Atlas MapStore where changes highlighted by the Atlas can be investigated in more detail online.

Conclusion

After drawing the raffle and thanking the donors for the prizes, the speakers for their excellent talks and Nigel Scriven for arranging the programme, Mike Harrison closed the meeting with an invitation to the Spring Meeting at Inveraray on 7 March 2015.

Mike Harrison



Stonechat—one species that declined in Nigel's BBS square as the forest grew ©David Palmar

Recent sightings

August to October 2014

by Jim Dickson
Argyll Bird Recorder

Presented here are a wide range of records of rare and unusual species as well as counts and movements of more common species seen in Argyll during this period. Many thanks to everyone who sent in records and apologies for any errors or omissions. Ideally records should be submitted using the Argyll Bird Recording System (email abcrecorder@outlook.com for details) or the BTO's BirdTrack system. Observers' names are given in brackets for 'rare bird description species'.

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

Swans, ducks, geese & gamebirds

WHOOPEE SWAN. Birds arriving from late Sep. Max counts of 284 at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 23 Oct.

BLACK SWAN. An adult was seen at Campbeltown Loch, Kintyre from 4 Aug to 19 Sep. It was later seen at Peninver, Kintyre and in the Add Estuary, Mid-Argyll on 5 Oct. It was back at Campbeltown Loch on 16 Oct and had wandered north again to Loch Sween, Mid-Argyll on 24 Oct. From the darvic ring 'NIY' it had originated from a Raphoe Castle Estate in Co. Donegal (info. per Eddie Maguire/

Rab Morton).

PINK-FOOTED GOOSE. A flock of 100+ flying NE at Lochbuie, Mull on 18 Sep. At Aros Park, Mull there were 90 on 20 Sep. On Tiree flocks of 50 and 75 flew SE over Scarinish on 20 Sep, 20 flew SE over Balephuill on 23 Sep and one was at Kilmoluaig on 22 Sep.

LESSER CANADA GOOSE. Singles were noted on Islay during Oct.

BARNACLE GOOSE. Max counts of 22,908 on Islay on 17 Oct, 1,065 on Tiree on 13 Oct and 2,396 on Oronsay, Colonsay on 16 Oct.

PALE-BELLIED BRENT GOOSE. Arrivals were noted from 16 Sep. High counts of 150 S of Loch Gruinart, Islay on 24 Sep with 90 there on 4 Oct and 113 on 7 Oct.

MANDARIN. Counts at Loch ' Choire, Ford, Mid-Argyll were of 5 birds on 5 Oct and 18 on 10 Oct.

WIGEON. High counts of 289 at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 13 Oct, 520 Gartmain, Islay on 9 Oct, 151 at Loch Crinan/Add Estuary on 12 Oct and 213 Loch Gilp, Mid-Argyll on 8 Nov.

GADWALL. A male was in the Add Estuary, Mid-Argyll on 18 Aug. High counts of six at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 29 Oct and four at Loch Gruinart, Islay on 31 Oct.

TEAL. High counts of 400 on the floods at RSPB

Pale-bellied Brent Goose, Islay, 1 October
©Jim Dickson



Gruinart, Islay on 2 Oct and 1,274 there on 30 Oct.

GREEN-WINGED TEAL. A drake at RSPB Gruinart, Islay on 28 Oct (David Wood *et al.*).

PINTAIL. High counts included 20 at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 10-11 Aug with 25 there 28-31 Aug. Eighteen were at RSPB Gruinart, Islay on 4 Oct and 68 on 30 Oct. Also a female/imm. at the Add Estuary on 9th and 20 Sep. and eight females/imms. at the Ulva puddle, Loch Sween, Mid-Argyll were unusual mainland records.

SHOVELER. Max counts of 11 at RSPB Gruinart, Islay on 26 Oct and eight at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 13 Oct.

GARGANEY. Two at RSPB Gruinart, Islay on 30 Oct, but with no further supporting information (per Ian Brooke).

POCHARD. One at Ardnave, Islay on 7 Oct and a lone drake at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 8-15 Oct. Two on Loch Skerrols, Islay on 11 Oct and one Loch Gorm, Islay on 20 Oct.

RING-NECKED DUCK. On Tiree a first-winter female was at Loch a' Phuill on 26 Oct, with two first-winter females together there on 28 Oct (John Bowler).

TUFTED DUCK. High counts of 50 at RSPB Gruinart, Islay on 4 Oct, 300 at Loch Gorm, Islay on 5 Oct and 90 at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 25 Oct.

GREATER SCAUP. An imm. female at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 10-25 Oct with two imms. there on 29-30 Oct. Thirty-five on Loch Indaal, Islay on 14th, 45 on 17th and 65 on 21 Oct.

LESSER SCAUP. A juvenile/first-winter female was at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree during 1-30 Oct (Jim Dickson/John Bowler). A female was at Ardnave

Loch, Islay on 23 Oct (Steve Percival).

LONG-TAILED DUCK. Three were on Loch Indaal, Islay on 13 Oct. One seen off Traigh Bhi, Tiree on 14 Oct and one at Balephetrish Bay on 20 Oct.

COMMON SCOTER. Max counts of 62 off Port Charlotte, Islay on 6 Aug, 61 at the Sound of Gigha on 27 Aug and 64 there on 29 Oct.

VELVET SCOTER. One on Loch Indaal on 12 Oct. One off Kennacraig, West Loch Tarbert, Kintyre on 18 Oct, one at Loch Caolisport, Mid-Argyll on 23 Oct and a female in the Sound of Gigha, Kintyre on 28 Oct.

GOLDENEYE. Four at Gartmain, Islay on 11 Oct and three at Loch Gilp, Mid-Argyll on the same day. First one back at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree was on 14 Oct and at the Add Estuary on 26 Oct.

GOOSANDER. High counts of 124 at Loch Riddon, Cowal on 27 Aug and 93 there on 24 Sep.

PTARMIGAN. Three on Stob a' Choire Odhair, North Argyll on 7 Sep.

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

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER. There was a count of 238 at the Sound of Gigha, Kintyre on 28 Oct.

SOOTY SHEARWATER. One flew NW off West Hynish, Tiree on 3 Aug and one flew W past Aird, Tiree on 13 Aug with six there on 15 Aug. Two were off Easdale Island, Mid-Argyll on 29 Aug.

MANX SHEARWATER. Off Aird, Tiree 16,250 were counted on 14 Aug. At Machrihanish SBO, Kintyre the largest southerly movement was of 2000+ during a NW gale on 17 Aug.

BALEARIC SHEARWATER. One headed W off Aird, Tiree on 11 Aug (John Bowler) and eight were there on 15 Aug (Gerard Troost).

STORM PETREL. Six were seen between Coll and Mull on 6 Aug. Nine were off Aird, Tiree on 15 Aug. One was off Hynish, Tiree on 2 Oct. Two were off Glengorm, Mull on 19 Oct.

LEACH'S PETREL. Ten were seen off Aird, Tiree on 15 Aug. Three singles flew S at Machrihanish SBO, Kintyre during a NW gale on 17 Aug and one was there during a storm on 21 Oct. One flew SW off Hynish, Tiree on 2 Oct, three flew SW off Hynish on 5 Oct and one flew W off Aird on 21 Oct.

WILSON'S STORM PETREL. One observed at Tay-inloan Ferry Jetty on 24 Oct had been caught by a



Two superb photos of raptors taken by Eddie Maguire at Machrihanish SBO this autumn. A first-winter Merlin (16 October) on the left and a first-winter Sparrowhawk (26 September) on the right ©Eddie Maguire

Herring Gull. It was soon taken by a Great Black-backed Gull then drowned before being swallowed whole (Dan Brown).

CORMORANT. One showing the characteristics of the Continental race '*sinensis*' was at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 13 Oct (John Bowler).

LITTLE EGRET. One was at West Loch Tarbert, Kintyre on 10 Aug and relocated at Kenacraig on 11 Aug with further sightings there during Sep/Oct (Allen Duckworth/Jim Dickson *et al.*). One was apparently at Ardbeg, Islay on 31 Aug, but no further details have been given.

GREY HERON. A record count of 41 birds at the Add Estuary, Mid-Argyll on 12 Sep may be indicative of good breeding success.

SLAVONIAN GREBE. Two were off Rhuna-haorine Point, Kintyre on 27 Aug. Two were in Loch Scridain, Mull on 23 Sep. One was seen east of Soa, Tiree on 3 Oct and at Gott Bay on 7 Oct. One was on Loch Kinnabus, Islay on 11 Oct. Nine were on Loch Indaal, Islay on 14 Oct. One was at the head of Loch Na Keal, Mull on 21 Oct. Six were in Loch Spelve, Mull on 28 Oct and 58 at the Sound of Gigha, Kintyre on 28 Oct.

Raptors to rails

HONEY BUZZARD. One reported from Isle of Luing, Mid-Argyll on 12 Sep (Stuart Crutchfield).

OSPREY. The last report was of one at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 26 Sep.

MARSH HARRIER. A juv. headed S along the west coast from Beinn Hough to Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 15 Sep (John Bowler). Another juv. headed SW off the coast of Mannal/Hynish, Tiree on 4 Oct and was being mobbed by Kittiwakes (John Bowler/Jim Dickson).

GOSHAWK. A sighting of one at Aros Park, Mull on 2 Oct. Apparently it was causing havoc amongst Wood-pigeons and crows. Unfortunately no photo or description was provided.

HOBBY. One was seen flying S at Scalasaig, Colonsay on 14 Sep (David Jardine).

GYR FALCON. There was a report of a white-phase bird at Rockside, Islay on 3 Oct (Jim Pratt). There are no details for this record and I appeal to the observer to please submit this record.

COOT. A first-winter bird was at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 19 Oct. Another was at Ardnave Loch, Islay on 22 Oct.

Waders

AMERICAN GOLDEN PLOVER. A first-summer/2nd calendar year bird was seen at various sites on the

west side of Tiree from 3 Sep until 19 Oct, but could be elusive. (Keith Gillon *et al.*).

GOLDEN PLOVER. Max. counts for Tiree included 592 around West Tiree on 1 Sep, 600 at Middleton/Sandaig on 3 Sep, 650 at Sandaig on 13 and 20 Sep, 950 there on 28 Sep and a peak of 2,790 around the island on 13-14 Oct. The max. count from Islay was of 1,410 at Loch Gruinart on 30 Oct.

GREY PLOVER. Singles were on Tiree at Traigh Bhagh on 26 Aug and Loch a' Phuill also on 26 Aug, at Clachan on 30 Aug and at Miodar on 1 Oct. Two were at Loch Gruinart, Islay on 14 Oct and three were there on 18 Oct.

LAPWING. High counts on Tiree in Sep included 200 at The Reef on 1st, 260 at Ruaig on 1st, 290 at Vaul on 1st, 310 at Crossapol on 4th, 350 at Baugh on 10th, 320 at Kirkapol on 10th and 750 at Kilmoluaig on 15th. An all-island count on 13-14 Oct found a total of 2,325 birds.

RED KNOT. There were generally low numbers on passage. Max. of 10 juvs. at Gott Bay, Tiree on 22 Aug, 14 on 15 Sep, 20 at Loch a' Phuill on 20 Sep. Max of 8 flying S at Machrihanish SBO, Kintyre on 29 Aug. At Loch Gruinart, Islay there were 69 on 2 Sep. At the Add Estuary/Loch Crinan, Mid-Argyll there were 21 on 5 Sep.

SANDERLING. Passage on Tiree included 413 on four main beaches on 3 Aug and 409 on 29 Sep.

PURPLE SANDPIPER. The first one back at Dunoon, Cowal was on 27 Sep, with seven there on 23 Oct and 12 on 29 Oct. One at Traigh nan Gilean, Tiree on 30 Oct was later than usual. A single bird was at Machrihanish SBO, Kintyre on 2 Oct with other singles on 21 and 26 Oct, and 10 regular on the point from 27 Oct.

LITTLE STINT. One was at Killiechronan, Mull on 28 Aug. One was at Laggan Bay, Islay on 29 Aug. One was at Traigh nam Barc, Colonsay on 13 Sep. One juv. was at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 14-16 Sep and another there 21-27 Sep. One juv. was at Loch Crinan, Mid-Argyll on 14 Sep with two there 19-20 Sep. A juv. was at Otter Ferry spit, Cowal on 20 Sep.

SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER. One reported at Breachacha Bay, Coll on 25 Aug (Alex Mackintosh).

PECTORAL SANDPIPER. One juv. was at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 4 and 6 Sep (Keith Gillon) with another/same there on 10-11 and 14 Sep (John Bowler) followed by another on 20-27 Sep (John Bowler/Jim Dickson). Two juvs. were at RSPB Gruinart, Islay on 20 and 24 Oct (per Ian Brooke).

CURLEW SANDPIPER. One juv. was at Gott Bay, Tiree on 1 Sep, one juv. was at Clachan on 1-3 Sep and three were there on 5 Sep. One was at Loch Gruinart, Islay on 2 Sep with two there on 23 Sep. One juv. was at Traigh nam Barc, Colonsay on 15 Sep. A juv. was at Loch Crinan, Mid-Argyll on 19 Sep.

BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER. One juv. was at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 4 Sep (Keith Gillon) with another there on 8 Sep (John Bowler).

WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER. An adult bird was at Gott Bay, Tiree on 31 Aug to 1 Sep (Keith Gillon/John Bowler) (photo below).

RUFF. On Tiree in Aug there were many days with one to three birds, however there were six juvs. at Loch a' Phuill on 31 Aug. Max. of 10 were at Middleton on 2 Sep with the last two birds on Tiree at Meningie on 6 Oct. One was at RSPB Loch Gruinart on 21 Aug and 2 Sep. Two juvs. were at Loch Crinan, Mid-Argyll on 14-19 Sep, and a juv. was at Loch Gilp, Mid-Argyll on 19 Sep.

JACK SNIBE. One was at The Reef, Tiree on 22 Sep and another was at Gartbreck, Islay on 14 Oct.

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT. Poor passage noted on Tiree with max. of eight adults at The Reef on 12 Aug and 12 juvs. at Kilmoluaig on 31 Aug. In Sep there was a max of 27 at Loch a' Phuill on 29 Sep.

WHIMBREL. On Tiree there was a max. of 36 at Clachan on 3 Sep.



White-rumped Sandpiper, Gott Bay, Tiree, 1 September ©Keith Gillon

GREEN SANDPIPER. One was reported flying past Orsay lighthouse, Portnahaven, Islay on 7 Aug. One was on a field pool at Vault, Tiree on 25 Aug.

GREENSHANK. On Tiree there was a max. of 13 at Loch a' Phuill on 2 Aug with the last five on 12 Sep. Five were at Loch Gruinart, Islay on 17 Sep. Four were at Loch Don, Mull on 17 Oct and six were at Loch Gruinart, Islay on 21 Oct.

GREY PHALAROPE. One was feeding in the Machir Burn, Islay on 20 Aug. One was seen off Gunna Sound, Tiree from the ferry on 6 Sep and two were on the sea at the entrance to Gott Bay, Tiree on 18 Oct.

Skuas, Gulls, Terns & Auks

POMARINE SKUA. There were good numbers in Oct with max. counts of six (three adults) flying SW off Hynish, Tiree on 5 Oct, three off Aird, Tiree on 19 Oct and 11 there on 21 Oct. Ten flew past Machrihanish SBO, Kintyre on 24 Oct.

ARCTIC SKUA. Max. counts of five between Mull and Tiree on 5 Sep, at Croig, Mull 13 flew E down the Sound of Mull on 17 Sep. Six flew W off Aird, Tiree on 21 Oct and nine were off Hough Bay, Tiree on 28 Oct.

LONG-TAILED SKUA. A juv. was seen from the Islay ferry on 24 Aug (Mark Lewis). One was off Caliach Point, Mull on 21 Oct (Ewan Miles). A juvenile/first-winter bird flew past Machrihanish SBO, Kintyre on 25 Oct (Eddie Maguire).

GREAT SKUA. Max counts—at Machrihanish SBO, Kintyre a total of four during a NW gale on 17 Aug. At Croig, Mull 26 flying down sound of Mull on 17 Sep. Three were off Coll on 27 Sep. Three flew SW off Hynish, Tiree on 5 Oct. Three were seen between Mull and Coll on 19 Oct, three flew west off Aird, Tiree on 19 Oct, 10 flew west off Aird on 21 Oct with five more there on 22 Oct and 15 flew S off Hough on 28 Oct. Six flying off Caliach Point, Mull on 21 Oct.

SABINE'S GULL. One was seen from the Oban to Barra ferry on 14 Sep (per Birdguides). I would like the observer(s) to provide more details please.

KITTIWAKE. At least 500 flew past Machrihanish SBO, Kintyre on 17 Aug. A total of 800 were seen off Jura (from Islay ferry) on 29 Aug, 825 flew past Aird, Tiree on 21 Oct and 1,100 flew past Machrihanish SBO, Kintyre on 25 Oct.

LITTLE GULL. A first-summer bird at Heylipol, Tiree on 10 Aug. A second-year bird at the Sound of Mull on 19 Aug. Three juvs. flew past Aird, Tiree on 6 Sep. One was at Gartmain, Islay on 11 Oct. Single first-winter birds at Machrihanish SBO, Kintyre on 24 and 25 Oct then at least three first-winters foraging offshore on 31 Oct. An adult was at Loch Gilp, Mid-Argyll on 27 Oct into Nov.

MEDITERRANEAN GULL. Two juvs. were at Loch Gilp and another was at the Add Estuary, Mid-Argyll on 12 Aug to end off the month. A second-year bird was at Ormsary, Mid-Argyll on 13 Aug and a juv./first-winter bird was there on 2 Sep. A first-summer bird was at Heylipol, Tiree on 10 Aug and a first-winter bird was at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 10 Oct. A juv. was present at Machrihanish SBO, Kintyre on 2-5 Aug, an adult on 10 Sep and a first-winter bird there on 28 Oct. A first-winter bird flew past Grogport, Kintyre on 27 Aug. An adult was seen off Craignure, Mull on 9 Oct.

GLAUCOUS GULL. One (age not given) at Loch Gorm, Islay on 5 Oct.

COMMON TERN. High count of 70 around Lady's Rock off the SW tip of Lismore, North Argyll on 19 Aug.

PUFFIN. Forty-eight were headed SW in 1hr off Hynish, Tiree on 5 Aug. One flew past Machrihanish SBO, Kintyre on 24 Oct.

Doves, Cuckoos, Owls, Swift, Kingfisher & Woodpeckers

TURTLE DOVE. One was at Arinagour, Coll on 24 Sep (Ben Jones) and another was at Oronsay House, Oronsay, Colonsay on 29 Sep (Mike Pea-

Turtle Dove, Oronsay, 29 October, ©Mike Peacock





Left photo. Two Yellow-browed Warblers mist-netted in Lussa Forest, Kintyre on 10 October ©Neil Brown.

Right photo. Melodious Warbler at The Glebe, Tiree on 4 October ©Jim Dickson



cock) (photo on previous page).

CUCKOO. The last record was of one at the Add Estuary, Mid-Argyll on 19 Sep.

LONG-EARED OWL. One was roosting in a Sycamore at Balephuill, Tiree on 14 Sep.

NIGHTJAR. One was reported to be 'churring' in Craighouse, Jura on 17 Sep (Louise Muir).

COMMON SWIFT. Pre-dusk counts over Campbeltown, Kintyre gave a max. of 18 on 2 Aug and 25 on 5 Aug with the last four there on 29 Aug. Max counts of 36 at Oban, Mid-Argyll on 3 Aug and five at Lochgilphead, Mid-Argyll on 4 Aug.

KINGFISHER. One was at Salen, Mull on 12 Aug, one at Coney Glen Water, Southend, Kintyre on 2 Sep, one seen at Loch Cuin, Dervaig, Mull on 2-9 Sep, one at Campbeltown Loch, Kintyre on 17 Sep and one flew past the fish farm towards Loch Ba, Mull on 17 Sep. One at Carsaig Bay, Mid-Argyll on 17 Sep, one at Strathlachlan River, Loch Fyne on 19 Sep and one at Loch Gilp, Mid-Argyll on 21 Sep. One at Killiechronan, Mull on 26 Sep and one at Aros Park, Mull on 2 Oct. One at Ardrishaig, Mid-Argyll on 8 Oct, one at Inveraray, Mid-Argyll on 11 Oct., one at Loch Gilp on 11 Oct, one at Bellanoch, Mid-Argyll on 12 Oct, one at Loch Etive, Mid-Argyll on 12 Oct and one on the River Sorn, Islay on 16 Oct.

GREEN WOODPECKER. One at Glen Aros, Mull on 5 Aug (per BirdTrack).

Passerines (Larks to Buntings)

JACKDAW. Unusually large gatherings during Oct with a record 300 birds over Loch an Eilein, Tiree on 13 Oct. A count of 470 (accurate from a photo) flying from Treshnish Point towards Frachadil,

Mull on 13 Oct. At Crinan Ferry, Mid-Argyll 73 birds were seen flying out towards Jura and later 350 were counted nearby at Barloisnoch on 13 Oct. On Oronsay 67 birds were counted on 13 Oct.

RED-BILLED CHOUGH. Max. count of 68 at Ardnave, Islay on 28 Oct.

GOLDCREST. Max counts of 25 at Colonsay House Gardens, Colonsay on 14 Sep and 30 in Cairnbaan Forest, Mid-Argyll on 17 Oct.

GREAT TIT. A wandering bird at Mannal, Tiree was the first record there for 13yrs.

SHORT-TOED LARK. One reported from Oronsay, Colonsay on 23 Oct (Morgan Vaughan).

SAND MARTIN. Max count of up to 125 at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 20 Aug.

HOUSE MARTIN. Late record of one at Craighens, Islay on 16 Oct.

SWALLOW. Flocks of 110 at The Reef, Tiree on 11 Aug with 170 there on 12 Aug. Late birds include one at Ballinaby, Islay on 23 Oct and two flying past Machrihanish SBO, Kintyre on 28 Oct.

YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER. One at Balephuill, Tiree 6-7 Oct with 2 together there on 8th and then one at Main Road Farm Balephuill on 9 Oct (John Bowler/Jim Dickson). Two birds were trapped and ringed at Lussa Forest, Kintyre on 10 Oct (Neil Brown). (photo above)

CHIFFCHAFF. A moderate autumn with *collybita* birds on Tiree throughout Oct with max of six on 4 Oct. An *abietinus* type bird at Balephuill on 7-8 Oct and a classic *tristis* bird at Balephuill on

21 Oct.

MELODIOUS WARBLER. An immature was found at The Glebe, Tiree on 18 Sep and remained until the last sighting on 4 Oct (Jim Dickson/Bill Allan/John Bowler) (photo on previous page). This will be the first record for Tiree and only second for Argyll if accepted by the SBRC.

GARDEN WARBLER. Migrants on Tiree include one at Hynish on 6 Sep and one at Balephuill on 22 Sep, 30 Sep and 9 Oct.

BARRED WARBLER. A record for Argyll with four different juv./imm. birds on Tiree—one at Vaul on 6-7 Sep, one at Balephuill on 8-12 Sep, a scruffier bird there on 12 Sep and a different fresh-plumaged bird at Meningie on 21 Sep (Keith Gillon/John Bowler).

COMMON WHITETHROAT. A late bird was at Bolsay Moor, Islay on 11 Oct.

LESSER WHITETHROAT. Six birds on Tiree with singles at Balephuill on 3 Sep, Balinoe on 5 Sep, Balevullin on 6 Sep, Ruaig on 8 Sep and Cornaigbeg on 16 Sep. A late pale sandy-coloured bird with white outer tail feathers was presumably a Siberian bird (*blythii*) at Balephuill, Tiree from 19-25 Oct and if confirmed will be first of this race in Argyll.

REED WARBLER. A juvenile was trapped, ringed and photographed at Aros Moss, Kintyre on 9 Aug (Neil Brown) (photo on this page).

ROSE-COLOURED STARLING. A confiding juv. was at Meningie, Balephuill, Tiree on 25-27 Oct; perhaps the same as very pale starling seen only in flight at Balephetrish, Tiree on 20 Oct (John Bowler).

BLACKBIRD. High count of 120 birds counted at Gatehouse, Jura on 9 Oct.

FIELDFARE. Fewer records than usual with two at Balephuill, Tiree on 15 Oct, five there on 16 Oct. One at The Lodge Plantation, Coll on 8 Oct, one at Rockside, Islay on 15 Oct and six at Lakefield Farm, Mid-Argyll on 19 Oct.

REDWING. First arrivals include two at Sunderland, Islay on 4 Oct. Two at Balephuill, Tiree on 7 Oct with 80 on 8 Oct rising to max. on Tiree of 650 birds on west side on 28 Oct. A flock of about 50 Redwings flew over Lochdon, Mull on 16 Oct. A flock of 600 was at Kildalton, Islay on 16 Oct. About 350 birds were seen on

Juvenile Reed Warbler mist-netted at Aros Moss, Kintyre on 9 August ©Neil Brown



the Oa, Islay on 21 Oct. About 30 were at Connel, Mid-Argyll on 15 Oct, 250 were near Kilmore, Mid-Argyll on 16 Oct and 200 were at Dalvore, Mid-Argyll on 19 Oct.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER. Last migrants include one at Balephuill, Tiree on 1 Sep and another there 22-24 Sep, and one at Milton, Tiree on 22 Sep.

RED-BREASTED FLYCATCHER. A first-winter bird was at Greenhill, Tiree on 30 Sep (Jim Dickson/John Bowler) and another first-winter bird was on Tiree at Carnan Mor/Balephuill on 8-9 Oct (John Bowler/Jim Dickson).

PIED FLYCATCHER. A first-winter bird was at The Glebe, Tiree on 22 Sep.

WHINCHAT. Last report of a female-type was at Machrihanish Holiday Park, Kintyre on 22 Oct.

WHEATEAR. There was a count of 60 on Tiree on 15 Sep. Last reports include one at Heylipol, Tiree on 26 Oct, one at Machrihanish SBO, Kintyre on 19 with 2 on 25 Oct and one at Tayinloan, Kintyre on 30 Oct.

YELLOW WAGTAIL. A first-winter bird was at Barrapol, Tiree on 4 Oct (John Bowler/Jim Dickson). At this age it is difficult to assign to a specific race.

GREY WAGTAIL. First record of the year on Tiree was of one at Balevullin on 30 Sep followed by one at Balephuill on 7 Oct. There were many sightings of 1-2 birds throughout Argyll.

Stop Press

LITTLE EGRET. One at the Add Estuary, Mid-Argyll on 7 Nov and possibly the same bird at West Loch Tarbert, Kintyre from 12 Nov. One at the Strand, Colonsay on 8 and 19 Nov.

COMMON ROSEFINCH. A first-winter bird was at the feeding station at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, Kintyre on 12 Nov.

SABINE'S GULL. A juv. was at Gunna Sound, off Tiree on 11 Nov.

ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD. One was seen at Glen Mor, Port Charlotte, Islay on 11 and 18 Nov.

SNOW BUNTING. Widespread reports of

small numbers at Oronsay, Tayinloan, Islay and the Add Estuary.

RED KITE. Two birds seen in Fearnoch Forest, near Taynuilt, Mid-Argyll on 18 Nov.

MEDITERRANEAN GULL. An Argyll record of five birds (four ads. and a first-winter) at Loch Gilp, Mid-Argyll on 21 November.

BARN SWALLOW. A late bird at Ormsary, Mid-Argyll on 12 November.

BEAN GOOSE. One at Lyrabus, Islay and possibly the same at Keills on 19 November.



Common Rosefinch at Machrihanish SBO on 12 November ©Eddie Maguire



Little Egret In the Add estuary on 7 November ©Jim Dickson

BRAMBLING. An unprecedented influx on Tiree in Oct with 16 at Balephuill on 7th rising to a max. count of 80 on 12-13 Oct. Much smaller numbers were noted across Argyll during Oct.

GOLDFINCH. Max. counts of 24 at Machrihanish SBO, Kintyre on 27 Aug, up to 200 feeding on Knapweed in Tobermory, Mull on 13 Aug, about 200 on the Glen Road, Port Charlotte, Islay on 22 Aug and 65 at the Add Estuary, Mid-Argyll on 5 Sep.

LINNET. Highest counts noted were of 160 at Balevullin, Tiree on 30 Aug and a flock of c.500 at Killiegruar, Glenbarr, Kintyre on 16 -20 Sep.

TWITE. Highest counts noted were of 150 birds near the American Monument, The Oa, Islay on 24 Sep, 150 at Ballinaby, Islay on 24 Oct, 350 at The Oa on 28 Oct and a flock of 220 at The Reef, Tiree on 13 Oct.

COMMON REDPOLL. Up to ten birds noted regularly at Balephuill, Tiree during Aug-Sep. A NW bird at Balephuill, Tiree on 21 Sep with three there 22-30 Sep. One was at Treshnish, Mull on

2 Sep.

COMMON ROSEFINCH. A first-winter bird was at Balephuill, Tiree on 12 Sep (John Bowler) and another first-winter was seen at Balemartine, Tiree on 4 Oct (John Bowler/Jim Dickson).

BULLFINCH. One calling in flight over Carnan Mor, Tiree on 8 Oct was an unusual record for the island.

REED BUNTING. High counts of over 100 at Bolasay Moor, Islay on 11 Oct and 28 birds at Crinan Ferry, Mid-Argyll on 12 Oct.

YELLOWHAMMER. Max. count of 15 birds at Persabus, Islay on 24 Oct.

SNOW BUNTING. One was seen at Ardnave, Islay on 5 Oct and three were there on 19 Oct. Two at Hynish, Tiree on 6 Oct then scattered singles on the island during Oct.

LAPLAND BUNTING. One calling over Carnan Mor, Tiree on 20 Sep.

Jim Dickson, Argyll Bird Recorder

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2014—a Barn Owl bonanza in Kintyre

With 2013 being touted nationally as being 'the worst year since records began' it was hoped that 2014 would see an improvement in the fortunes of the UK's Barn Owls. The Barn Owl population being monitored in Kintyre loosely reflected this national trend, although 2012 fared slightly worse with just 20 chicks ringed compared to 25 in 2013, a good year would see between 30 and 40 birds ringed from various sites across the peninsula.

The signs of a good year for Barn Owls came early with a mild winter followed by high numbers of Field Voles recorded by myself and through casual observations from local shepherds and forestry workers. The voles provide a plentiful food source for breeding owls. This was shown to be the case during my early visits to breeding sites with healthy 'larders' of prey items, provided by the male, cached in the nest chambers. One 'brick like' pile at a site in south Kintyre contained seventy-two items made up almost entirely of Field Voles. This good food source also prompted an early start to the breeding season with high nest occupancy and many females down on eggs by the end of March. Conversely, there were five new boxes I had positioned in April 2014, at a point in time that I considered too late for use, yet all were occupied, with three of them successfully fledging chicks.

As the weeks progressed it became obvious that Barn Owls were having what can only be described as an exceptional breeding season, both in Kintyre and throughout the UK. Clutches of six eggs were commonplace and high fledging success was recorded. At a new site in the west of Kintyre, a box put up two years previously had a clutch of nine eggs and successfully fledged seven chicks, a record since regular monitoring began. Another record was the number of second broods recorded in 2014. These occur rarely in Kintyre, with only one previously in 2011. However, this year produced four second broods, all of which fledged successfully. In addition, I discovered a site late in the season that I suspect may have contained a second brood too.



A clutch of eight Barn Owl eggs (above) and a brood of six chicks below—both photos from Kintyre in 2014 ©Neil Brown



In summary, the numbers speak for themselves. The 36 Barn Owl sites monitored resulted in 81 chicks ringed, roughly double that of a normal 'good year'. This does not take into account four sites that I revisited too late, but which showed signs of successfully fledging young. Also, two new sites appeared to have been successful that I was unaware of until after the season.

The end of the year is being marked by placing another seven good-quality boxes in new sites, with the hope that a boost to Kintyre's Barn Owl population from this year's bonanza will see these new sites occupied sooner rather than later.

Neil Brown

Rough and tumble of Swallow feeding time!

The pictures were taken of two Swallow chicks being fed on a barbed wire fence at Skipness on 21 August. The sequence lasted two seconds, and show that feeding can be a rough event.

In the first picture the adult has his left foot pushed against the chick on the left, and appears to have pushed it over in the second picture. The second parent appears in picture 3, and "lands" against the chick, and quite clearly balances

against the chick in the next picture before assuming a kinder feeding position in picture 5. Perhaps, as well as making feeding easier for the adults, such rough landings teach the chicks to cling tightly to perches? I shamefully anthropomorphised each picture to send to friends for fun.

Mary Matthews

Photo 1. Careful mum, you're pushing my sister off the perch!



Photos 2. Hang on sis.



Photos 3. So absorbed, I can't even open my bill for dad.



Photos 4. Eyes left, hungry after all.



Photo 5. Dad doesn't push babies off the perch.



Photos 6. Hope I get dad next time.



Report of the ABC field trip on the Islay Ferry on 30 August

Perhaps the forecast of force five or six northwesterly winds deterred some people from attending but six hardy members met at the Kennacraig Ferry Terminal at noon on 30 August.

The low tide had exposed the mud-flats and a group of six Redshank were feeding in the sunshine near the shore. Two Curlews were eventually spotted amongst the piles of seaweed and a couple of Oystercatchers flew along the shore. The squeaking of Bullfinches from the birch woodland around the car park was eventually traced to some juvenile birds feeding on young shoots. Robin, Wren and Siskin completed the woodland list as we set off towards the ferry where a couple of Swallows were flying around the terminal building. Gannets were fishing the sheltered water near the further shore of West Loch Tarbert.

The wind was fresh but not too cold and the clouds large but not particularly threatening as MV Finlaggan left the pier. There were few other birds in the loch; two Cormorants flew past, a Shag perched on a navigation beacon, a few Grey Herons were spotted on the shore and a Herring Gull was added to the Common and Black-headed Gulls seen at Kennacraig. Most of the local Shag population seemed to have assembled on one of the skerries at the mouth of the loch; about 50 were there, along with about 20 Eiders, with the rest of the skerry occupied by seals and a solitary Lesser Black-backed Gull.

Once clear of the loch the strength of the wind was a bit of a nuisance. Although we were sheltered on the boat the wind had whipped up whitecaps everywhere making it very difficult to spot birds on the sea surface. However, six pairs of eyes eventually started to see pairs and small groups



Club members birding from the Islay Ferry ©Mike Harrison

of auks on the water, mainly Common Guillemots we thought. There were few birds in the air for most of the open water crossing towards Jura; only three Manx Shearwaters were seen, maybe a dozen Kittiwakes and a lone Fulmar. The first contender for 'Bird of the Day' was spotted as we approached Jura. A Great Skua approached from the north east, turned into the wind parallel to the track of the ferry and then rose up effortlessly and crossed over Finlaggan's bridge before disappearing from our view. Four more Manx Shearwaters and another Fulmar were added to the list before we reached the more sheltered water south of Jura where a dozen Gannets were fishing. A flock of Kittiwake, maybe a hundred strong, was well in towards the island and seven Mute Swans were feeding close to the shore. The rock at the entrance to the Sound of Islay had its usual complement of Shags but another rock nearby had about 50 Kittiwakes alongside its 20 Shags. Close scrutiny of the Jura coastline was rewarded by sight of a Buzzard hanging in the wind over the cliff edge. As we approached Port Askaig all eyes turned to the Islay side of the sound and the woodland between the lighthouse and the harbour. Not only was there, as anticipated, a White-tailed Eagle perched in a pine tree, there were two, perched side-by-side, facing the boat, their white tails conspicuous against the dark foliage behind. Who was entertaining whom, I wondered.

Mackerel were pursuing small fish just beyond the ferry pier at Port Askaig and were, in turn, being pursued by a youth with a fishing rod who seemed to be successful with almost every cast. Some adult gulls, including a Great Black-back, lazed on the rocks in the next bay while the juveniles flew about, apparently practising in the strong eddies below the cliffs. Two Swallows were zipping about over the harbour as the ferry was unloaded and reloaded and several groups of Gannets, probably four or five groups of six or seven birds, flew south over the sound while we were in port.

Departure from Port Askaig takes the ferry much further out

from the Islay shore than when approaching the pier. However, the eagle tree could still be seen, as could the eagle perched on it, but only one this time. Was that to demonstrate that they were not plastic models? A diver flew past as we sailed south but too distant to be identified. Some excitement was generated by a dark bird with a light collar flying towards us from Jura. "Possible Arctic Skua" was the call; Hooded Crow was the identification, but at least that was a new species for the day.

Not only did we have a following wind on the return passage, which allowed us a great view ahead of the vessel from the observation deck below the bridge, but the wind had eased a little and the whitecap problem was much reduced. Even so, after passing a distant group of about 20 auks while still close to Jura, we were into the second half of the crossing before seeing many birds; perhaps 20 Manx Shearwaters flying in groups of two to four, maybe 40 Razorbills on the water in groups of four to six, probably four or five times that number of Common Guillemots in similar sized groups, and three Tysties as we approached the

skerries at the entrance to West Loch Tarbert.

About 80 Common Gulls were dip-feeding in the loch, strung out along the southern shore in a loose flock. A sudden explosion of gulls and waders from one of the islands prompted a search for the trigger and an Osprey was soon spotted gliding innocuously away. A group of about a dozen red-headed Goosanders were feeding in the bay to the south of the pier as Finlaggan slowly approached her berth at the end of an interesting and enjoyable afternoon.

Species List: Mute Swan, Common Eider, Goosander, Diver sp., Fulmar, Manx Shearwater, Northern Gannet, Great Cormorant, European Shag, Grey Heron, White-tailed Eagle, Common Buzzard, Osprey, Eurasian Oystercatcher, Eurasian Curlew, Common Redshank, Great Skua, Black-headed Gull, Common Gull, Herring Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Black-legged Kittiwake, Common Guillemot, Razorbill, Black Guillemot, Barn Swallow, Wren, Robin, Hooded Crow, Siskin and Bullfinch.

Mike Harrison

Report of the ABC field trip to Holy Loch on 27 September

There were four hardy souls convening at the Sandbank bird hide on 29th September for the monthly meeting, all from Cowal. September is a time of change with the leaves turning and the winter wildfowl arriving. However, one is never able to predict precisely what is going to be on view. Will it be the usual stuff, or something beyond the ordinary. This could be a count of birds rather than a species, but it can still make the day a bit special. The count of birdwatchers was not high, and the species were local, so not too remarkable there, although we all appreciated our company! What about the birds then? My notebook records a mere 19 species, so not a great day in that respect. So how about numbers? One hundred and ninety-three Curlews was pretty good for here, but with only 55 Oystercatchers visible I think the rest must have been hiding. Thirty-two Eiders was reassuring, as

numbers in the greater Firth of Clyde area have been declining alarmingly. Of Teal we could see only ten, although they were good views of them right in front of the hide. It's remarkable how on different days the birds can do different things. I know there were Wigeon there (seen on previous days) but could we see any? Sadly no. There was still a Lesser Black-back Gull hanging around, rather than migrating to Portugal. Many of its Clyde con-specifics have gone, as shown by the individual colour rings fitted by Clyde Ringing Group, and have been spotted and photographed by birders in Spain and Portugal. For me the highlight was the 13 Red-breasted Mergansers, which seem to have been less evident in recent years.

Nigel Scriven

Report of the ABC field trip to Bute on 25 October

The weather forecast for the day was not the best, with showers and high winds predicted, so intimations of cowardice were received prior to meeting up for the Colintrave Ferry. Three of us boarded the 10am boat, using the oppor-

tunity to catch up with club member Graham Clarke on the bridge deck.

Ian Hopkins welcomed us ashore on Bute, and the

four of us redistributed ourselves between the two vehicles. The list started during the ferry crossing, which was very sheltered from the SW wind. Heading down a calm East Kyle, the tally soon reached double figures. The assemblage of Red-breasted Merganser was an impressive 42. We stopped where the road first leaves the shore to scour the fields for small passerines feeding around the silage bales and fodder racks. We added 12 Lapwing and a Pied Wagtail to the tally, which gave us a score. A Hen Harrier was 'scoped over Cowal, but not seen by all. As the tide was still on the way up, and still had a bit to go, we headed for Ettrick Bay. It was windier here, as expected, so not too good for spotting birds further out. A couple of Goosander at the burn mouth at the north end of the bay was a useful sighting. We forwent a visit to the café as two coaches arrived and disgorged just ahead of us, and instead went round to the hide at the south end of the bay. This was already occupied by two cyclists, with bikes (in the hide), sheltering from the keen wind and showers. Six Barwits were the only birds of note here. Driving along the west coast we stopped several times to scan the fields

for geese, finding both Greylags and Canadas. It was pretty cold and very breezy, so we hurried on to get soup and warmth in the Kingarth Hotel. After lunch we perused Kilchattan Bay, but the tide was well in by then, so nothing new was picked up there, despite being on the sheltered side of the island. From there it was up the east side and through Rothesay to the Kirk Dam hide. Ian was saying that the growth of vegetation on the shore in front of the hide had reduced the visibility of open water from the hide. Not much new to see there apart from two Little Grebe. That was until a Hen Harrier flew over the hill from the east, down over the fields and right in front of the hide, making it worthwhile after all. From there we went to the new hide on Greenan Loch, only open for a few months, and from which we added Little Grebe and Sparrowhawk. The puzzle was—no winter thrushes. The final stop at Skeoch Wood in Rothesay failed to add a Brambling, so we finished with a tally of 49 species. Not too bad a day considering the weather, and the company was good.

Nigel Scriven

BTO House Martin survey

Why now?

We need to discover more about House Martins to help us identify why they are declining and provide scientific evidence to help inform policy decisions that could reverse the declines. The House Martin survey over the next two years will collect more information on population size, breeding ecology and habitat preferences, so we can begin to tackle some key questions about this eagerly awaited summer visitor.

A survey in two parts

In 2015 the nationwide random square survey will involve volunteers visiting 2,000–3,000 'random' (i.e. pre-selected) 1-km squares throughout the UK. By surveying random squares, we will be able to assume that our results are representative across a wider area, and produce a robust population estimate against which changes in the future can be measured. We need volunteers who are willing to carry out two or three visits to a 1-km square between late May and mid-July, to look for House Martins and their nests.

The survey will involve walking around the square looking for House Martins and their nests and mapping and recording a few details about any nests that you find. Each visit will normally take around two to three hours—however, the visit length depends on the habitats within the square and visits to urban squares may take longer.

In 2016 the Nest Monitoring Study will involve volunteers

making regular observations at individual nests to collect information about nesting activity. This study will be ideal for observers who have nests on their home or place of work including those who contributed to the 2009-13 survey.

We need volunteers who are able to observe one or more nests regularly during the breeding season. You do not need to be able to climb ladders to look inside the nests. Your observations made from ground level will enable us to compare factors such as egg laying dates and breeding success at different sites across the UK.

Ideally, you need to be able to observe the nests for just a few minutes every three or four days to record any activity seen. If you are able to watch the nest every day or every other day, this will provide us with even more powerful information as we will be able to make more accurate estimates of the egg laying dates and the length of time before the young birds fledge.

To take part you need to register your interest by signing via the website address below. The BTO will contact volunteers in early 2015 and early 2016 to give you more information about the parts of the survey you are interested in, so that you can choose whether or not to take part. We will also provide the contact details of your local Regional Representative to get in touch with if you do decide to participate.

<http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/house-martin-survey>

Articles for the December issue of the *Eider* should with the Editor before the 24th February 2015

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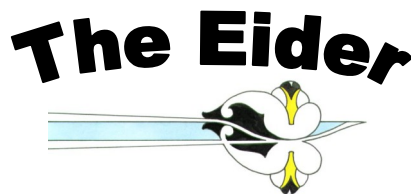
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The *Eider* is the quarterly newsletter of the **Argyll Bird Club**. The editor welcomes articles about birds, wildlife conservation and ecology in Argyll, including articles of a wider natural history interest, notices of forthcoming events, book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

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

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

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

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

More about the Argyll Bird Club

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

The club endeavours to provide a friendly and sociable forum for members of all ages, to meet and enjoy their common interest. This in itself provides a challenge as the human population of Argyll is relatively small and widely dispersed. The club hosts two one-day meetings each year, in spring and autumn. The venue of the spring meeting is rotated between different towns, including Dunoon, Oban and 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 *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).