

March 2015
Number 111

The Eider



Great Tit, Cairnbaan, 21 February ©Jim Dickson

Machrihanish Seabird Observatory—2014, p12-16

Black Grouse in Argyll in 2014, p8-10

Patchwork Challenge—Tiree 2014, p17-19

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Spring is just around the corner, and with it we are able to experience one of the great wonders of the bird world—the mass migration of millions of birds from their winter homes to areas where they will rear future generations.

While some migration routes are relatively short, other incredible journeys are only coming to light with advances in the miniaturisation of tracking devices. For example, a study published last year of a Red-necked Phalarope fitted with a geolocator on its breeding ground in Shetland was incredible (Smith et al. Ibis vol. 156(4) pages 870-873). This bird travelled a staggering 22,000km from Scotland to its wintering area in the Pacific Ocean, between the Galapagos Islands and the South American coast, and then back to Scotland. This provided the first example of a European breeding bird wintering in the Pacific Ocean.

Flying high is another strategy employed by some migrating species. This has a number of advantages, such as reducing the risk of predation and less friction in thinner air. However, oxygen levels and temperature decline with altitude, so there must be a limit to just how high birds can fly. The Bar-headed Goose breeds in central Asia, mainly in Mongolia and China, and winters in northern India. They have fascinated biologist for many years because their journey involves crossing the Himalayas. Now a team from Bangor University have used GPS trackers to understand just how the birds achieve this remarkable feat. One bird was recorded flying at 7,100m (24,000ft), but they were physiologically unable to maintain level flight at this altitude, where the oxygen level is less than 10% of that at sea level. Instead they hug the terrain with a 'roller coaster' flight trajectory and use winds off ridges to gain extra altitude. (see <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-30799436>)

Many of our summer migrants do not undertake such extreme journeys, but their movements are nevertheless hazardous and many die en route. So,

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when you see your first Chiffchaff or Sand Martin of the year, marvel at how evolution has shaped the lives of these small birds, enabling them to exploit the food resources of two continents.



Acknowledgements

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Club News

FIELD TRIPS 2015

If there is a chance 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 28 March. Sound of Gigha. Led by Mike Harrison (e-mail jmharrison@iee.org phone 01631 710656). Meet at Ronachan Point Car Park on the A83 (NR741548) at 10.00hrs. Please note the Gigha Hotel will be closed, so bring your own lunch.

Saturday 11 April. Lismore. Led by David Jardine (e-mail dcjardine@btinternet.com phone 01546 510200). Full-day visit with transport arranged on the island. Meeting at the Appin Ferry at 09.30hrs, departing on the 10.00hrs ferry. Numbers are limited, so please book your place with David.

Friday-Sunday 29-31 May. Mull. Led by Mike Harrison. Details have now been finalised. Eleven members have booked places.

Sunday 28 June. Skipness. Led by Katie Pendreigh (e-mail katiependreigh@aol.com phone 01583 441359. Meet in the car park beside the entrance gate to the Castle at 10.00hrs. The Sea Food Cabin will be open for lunch.

INDOOR MEETINGS 2015

Spring meeting. On Saturday 7 March at the Argyll Hotel, Inveraray (programme below).

Autumn meeting. On Saturday 14 November at the Cairnbaan Hotel, near Lochgilphead. Please note change of date since the last *Eider*. Following the meeting there will be a dinner (plus speaker) at the hotel to mark the club's 30th anniversary. Please let Mike Harrison (e-mail jmharrison@iee.org phone 01631 710656) have your name/s if you wish to book for the dinner. Further details about the programme and dinner will appear in the June *Eider*.

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

HAVE YOU CHANGED YOUR HOME ADDRESS?

We expect to be distributing the next *Argyll Bird Report* during March 2015. There may well be members who are due to receive this, but who have not informed Sue Furness of a change of postal address during the last few years. Because many members receive the *Eider* by email, if we have an old home address for members, that may not become evident until the bird report is posted and fails to reach the new address. If you have moved house and not informed us, the membership database may be out of date, so please send us any change of address so we can avoid sending reports to the wrong place. Many thanks. [Sue Furness](mailto:sue.cnoc@gmail.com)
sue.cnoc@gmail.com

ARGYLL BIRD REPORT 25 (2013) UPDATE

Club members will be able to collect their copy at the Indoor Meeting at Inveraray on 7 March. For members not attending, copies will be posted to them (see note above on address update). If anyone would like an additional copy or copies these can be purchased for £8 on the day or at

£8 plus £1.50 p&p. The latter can be obtained from Bob Furness (address on back page).

OLD ISSUES OF THE EIDER

Peter Staley has kindly donated his complete collection of *The Eider* to the club. These are now in the process of being converted to PDF files. Once this is done they will be added to club's website (under Publications > Newsletter). Currently, PDFs of the newsletter only go back to June 2002.

THE ARGYLL BIRD CLUB'S WEBSITE

Headings on the club's website have recently been re-arranged. We found the 'Recent Reports' pages were becoming full, partly due to the increased numbers of excellent photographs submitted by members. We now have separate pages for the 2015 Recent Reports, 2014 Recent Reports and Argyll mainland WeBSs Counts. So, plenty of space for all your records and photographs, which should be sent to Jim Dickson in the first instance (e-mail meg@jdickson5.plus.com phone 01546 603967). Up-to-date arrangements for meeting etc. also appear on the club's website at www.argyllbirdclub.org

Report of the ABC field trip to the Add Estuary and Loch Gilp on 29 Nov 2014

The previous day had been most glorious with bright sunshine and superb visibility. However, the opposite was the case throughout our field trip to Loch Gilp and the Add Estuary. Twelve ABC members met at the Corran car park at 10.00hrs, and Malcolm Chattwood kindly offered to be scribe for the day and list the species seen. Things felt very quiet bird-wise to start with and although overcast the rain was kept at bay until the early afternoon.

While waiting for everyone to arrive at the meeting place a few species were seen; a Cormorant flying overhead and Dunnocks, Robins and Chaffinches moving around. We spoke about how the last trip here at this time of year had tallied Waxwing, Kingfisher and a Grey Wagtail within the first couple of minutes. This year it was unlikely that Waxwings would be seen, as very few has been reported in Scotland. We walked to the front green in Lochgilphead for a view down the loch. We were looking into the light and the tide was out, so most species were quite distant, but a few were closer. Between us we had several telescopes which helped. A small group of Mute Swans were on the mud, Oystercatchers and Redshanks were noted along with the commoner

gulls. Wigeon and a single Goldeneye were more distant and further still were Ringed Plovers, Dunlins and Bar-tailed Godwits that could be seen through scopes. The first good bird of the day came in the pure white form of a Little Egret on the mud beyond the swans and was walking about unperturbed. It seemed likely that this was the same individual that had been a long stayer at West Loch Tarbert recently. After having a good albeit distant look at the egret we then headed back to our cars, sorted out some sharing arrangements, then headed off to Ardrishaig to look out to sea.

Our first stop was at the Ardrishaig car park and our club Chairman promptly spotted a Kingfisher as it flew past and gave a brief view. On the sea in Loch Gilp there was a male Goldeneye and some Eiders. A Purple Sandpiper was viewed through the scope at high power on rocks off Duncuan Island. However, it was ultimately not added to our list as it was only fair that more than one person should see a species for it to count! We then headed a bit further south in order to get views further out into Loch Fyne. From our

vantage point, through the gloom, we could make out several hundred gulls dip feeding out in the loch and picked out a single Kittiwake with them. Several Great Northern Divers were noted, but all quite distant although a single Red-throated Diver was a bit closer. The surprise find here was a female Common Scoter, again quite far out and unusual at this location. Rock Pipits were noted on the beach. We then set off for the Add Estuary.

From the Islanadd Bridge we clocked up a few more species including Greylag and Canada Geese, a male Goosander, a Little Grebe, good Teal numbers and a Stonechat. Driving along the Moine Mhor road a small group of Lesser Redpolls was spotted and at our next stop a flurry of activity saw several Mistle Thrushes, Redwings and a Song Thrush fly out of some bushes with Goldfinches and Reed Buntings nearby. We then drove down to the Crinan Ferry car park and decided to have lunch there, during which time the weather closed in even more and it felt like the lights had been turned well down despite it being just after mid-day. Not to be put off we had a good look at the estuary and spotted a lone Black-tailed Godwit, which is very unusual in winter. Good numbers of Redshank were about as well as lots of Common Gulls and a few Red-breasted Mergansers. Several Great Tits and a Coal Tit were moving around in the woods behind us. After lunch we decided that the original plan to walk along the Crinan Canal to Crinan and loop back round was probably not the ideal thing to do, as it had started to drizzle, the temperature had dropped and the wind was picking up. The decision was made to head back to Loch Gilp and wait for the gulls that would inevitably fly in to roost there and hopefully we would catch sight of a Mediterranean Gull! Once there the drizzle was becoming proper rain, but we soldiered on in

pursuit of some interesting gulls. In the process Tom Callan managed a good Loch Gilp count of 41 Dunlin and very quickly Stu Crutchfield shouted out 'Med Gull!' While trying to get the group focused on this bird, I caught sight of an adult Little Gull. Both were new species for some of the group. While watching the Little Gull flying around, amazingly it was joined by another one, this time a first-winter bird. I almost sensed a bit of excitement from those in the group who normally did not bother too much about gulls. Certainly it was nice that a few members had seen a couple of new species. On this high note we decided to call it a day. Malcolm totted up the days list and concluded some 61 species had been seen in just over four hours which was not too bad considering the poor light and rain.

Species list: Mute Swan, Greylag Goose, Greater Canada Goose, Eurasian Wigeon, Eurasian Teal, Mallard, Common Eider, Common Scoter, Common Goldeneye, Red-breasted Merganser, Goosander, Red-throated Diver, Great Northern Diver, Great Cormorant, Shag, Little Egret, Grey Heron, Little Grebe, Common Buzzard, Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover, Dunlin, Black-tailed Godwit, Bar-tailed Godwit, Eurasian Curlew, Common Redshank, Turnstone, Kittiwake, Black-headed Gull, Little Gull, Mediterranean Gull, Common Gull, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Collared Dove, Common Kingfisher, Western Jackdaw, Rook, Carrion Crow, Hooded Crow, Goldcrest, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Wren, Common Starling, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Redwing, Mistle Thrush, Robin, Common Stonechat, Dunnock, House Sparrow, Pied Wagtail, Meadow Pipit, Rock Pipit, Common Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Lesser Redpoll, Reed Bunting (total of 61 species).

Jim Dickson

Female Goldeneye, Add Estuary, 27 November 2014 ©Jim Dickson



Report of the ABC field trip to Ormsary on 1 February 2015

Given the previous year's Ormsary trip had been cancelled due to storms and abysmal weather, it was with a greater sense of optimism that the 2015 trip began, given the blue skies and sunshine. Even a raw northerly wind wasn't enough to deter the ten hardy souls from a day of winter birding.

After the group coalesced around the estate office and picked up House Sparrows, Starlings and an unlikely Reed Bunting from around the cattle sheds, we moved down towards the shoreline, spotting Blue and Great Tits along the way, and catching passing Buzzards and Ravens. Before reaching the shore, we were treated to a series of close-up views of a confiding Goldcrest among the trees. Robin and Dunnock were also seen at this point.

Once at the shore, the customary search for divers began, and soon enough, Great-Northerns were spotted out in Loch Caolisport, along with a more distant pair of Red-Throated. Rooks were present in the adjacent field, but a group of winter thrushes, which had been spotted en route to the office in the morning, had mysteriously vanished.

The mystery proved to be short-lived, with Mistle Thrush, Redwing and Fieldfare all returning, and then promptly disappearing once again as a Sparrowhawk, presumably the cause of the original vanishing act, flashed along the trees at the back of the field. At this location we also picked up Eider Ducks, Shags and a lone Cormorant.

We then proceeded to the small bay directly behind the fish-farm site, collecting Rock and Meadow Pipits, and a Red-Breasted Merganser along the way. The bay itself is in winter home to no small number of Eider and Goldeneye, and rafts of both were present, along with some Mallard closer to the waters edge.

The fish-farm site is also an excellent spot for gulls of various sorts, with numerous rarities being found here in recent years. The last few weeks had seen the arrival of a number of 'white wingers', so care was taken to pick through the congregation of several hundred gulls. Within a short space of time we had located Iceland and Kumlien's Gull, with a beautifully bleached 1st winter Glaucous Gull having been spotted shortly before. Various ducks and waders were noted, along with the more regular gull species. Just a short walk round the corner we found that precious winter commodity, the sun, and basked in it, adding Black Guillemot and Common Scoter to the list before lunch.

After sandwiches and hot drinks had been liberally consumed, we headed back out to take in a short loop through some mixed woodland behind the estate offices,

A bright winter's day for the field trip
©Trish Russell



which also provides a vantage point onto the open hillside where raptors were anticipated. After another up-close and personal Goldcrest encounter, we were treated to a Kestrel hovering above the lower slopes of the hillside. It looked as though Buzzards would be the only larger raptor until a large silhouette was spotted on the distant skyline. Size alone seemed to guarantee an Eagle, but whether Golden or White-Tailed we could not be sure and being rather less obliging than the day's Goldcrests, the bird drifted ever further away. On our return to the vehicles, there was still time to make out the calls of Crossbills overhead before we arrived back at the estate office, pleased with both the day's birding and the weather.

Species List: Starling, Blackbird, Chaffinch, Wood Pigeon, Blue Tit, House Sparrow, Common Buzzard, Raven, Reed Bunting, Robin, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Dunnock, Goldcrest, Herring Gull, Great Northern Diver, Oystercatcher, Wren, Red-throated Diver, Black-headed Gull, Shag, Cormorant, Mistle Thrush, Redwing, Fieldfare, Rock Pipit, Sparrowhawk, Eider Duck, Meadow Pipit, Red-breasted Merganser, Goldeneye, Mallard, Shelduck, Iceland Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Common Gull, Pied Wagtail, Redshank, Glaucous Gull, Kumlien's Gull, Hooded Crow, Pheasant, Common Scoter, Black Guillemot, Greenfinch, Jay, Kestrel, Common Crossbill, Goldfinch, Song Thrush, Eagle sp.

Stuart Crutchfield

BTO House Martin Survey 2015

The House Martin is now an Amber-listed species in the Birds of Conservation Concern classification. It is not known why it has suffered this decline. The House Martin survey over the next two years will collect more information on the species' population size, breeding ecology and habitat preferences.

The survey is in two parts, the first being in 2015, with a count of randomly pre-selected 1-km squares across the UK. Volunteers are needed to carry out 2-3 visits between late May and mid-July to look for House Martins and their nests. Squares likely to be unsuitable habitat have already been eliminated. The randomly selected squares for Argyll are listed opposite.

The surveyor will need to walk around the square, mapping and recording details about nests found. On the basis of pilot surveys, visits are expected to take around 2-3 hours, depending on the habitats, with urban squares taking longer.

The 2016 survey will look at nest monitoring, timing and breeding success.

For more information and to register contact the BTO (<http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/house-martin-survey>) or your local

BTO region	1km sq	Bird Club database Place Name
ARGS	NM8206	Hill Park, Ardfern, Mid-Argyll
ARGS	NM8414	Loch an Druimnean (N), Mid-Argyll
ARGS	NM9711	Portinnisherrick, Loch Awe, Mid-Argyll
ARGS	NN0908	Inverary, Mid-Argyll
ARGS	NR6421	Machrihanish Links (S), Kintyre
ARGS	NR7022	Drumore, Kintyre
ARGS	NR7028	Gobagrennan, Kintyre
ARGS	NR7210	Kildavie, Kintyre
ARGS	NR7522	Ballymenach, Kintyre
ARGS	NR8290	Daill, Mid-Argyll
ARGS	NR8479	Stronchullin Farm, Knapdale, Mid-Argyll
ARGS	NR9278	Otter House, Kilfinan, Cowal
ISLA	NR2942	Kinnabus, Oa, Islay
ISLA	NR3245	Lower Cragabus, Oa, Islay
ISLA	NR4146	Ardbeg, Islay
ARGN	NL9647	A 'Chrois, Tiree
ARGN	NL9943	Crossapol, Tiree
ARGN	NM3918	Port Uisken, Mull
ARGN	NM6125	Stone Circle, Lochbuie, Mull
ARGN	NM6341	Leiter, Mull



Islay visitors come of age!

To many, the name of Gordon Yates will be as synonymous with Islay as with his native Lancashire. He and his family have been visiting Islay since the 1970s and it came as no surprise when talking with him and his wife, Pauline, yesterday to learn that this is their 101st holiday visit to Islay (which equates to about four years "residence" by my calculations).

I've known Gordon for a long time, in fact since the 1980s and 1990s whilst I was running the RSPB's NW England Region. Our reasons for contact then were linked to the Merlin population in the Pennines for which we'd both a passionate interest and involvement. But he was prominent in another context too. Gordon, who was originally in banking, set all that aside to concentrate on photography, and then making

films, about birds and other wildlife. He consistently produced a new "annual" presentation many of which were associated with Islay. Many of RSPB Members' Groups in NW England Region had annual events at which such new material was presented and much the same happened with other groups across northern England and southern Scotland too.

Islay's birds, particularly raptors, have been served well over the years and the island's reputation must have benefited immensely from his efforts, both from the point of view of people first enthused by his wonderful "self delivered" commentaries, which encouraged them to pay a visit themselves, but also the many children whose horizons were extended via his visits to schools. Several "Islay causes" have also benefited from the proceeds raised at public

Black Grouse in Argyll 2014 survey results



This article summarises progress in Black Grouse monitoring and conservation in Argyll. The spring conditions of 2014 were much improved on the previous year making for a successful, and enjoyable, Black Grouse survey season. Again many dedicated volunteers, contract surveyors and staff from SNH, FCS and RSPB provided results from lek sites in Argyll. The largest leks recorded this year were at Ballimore, Lorne and Glenramskill, Cambeltown each with nine males. Nine leks have been monitored repeatedly between 2012 and 2014 and these sites have shown a decline of 35% since 2012. However these results must be treated with caution due to the small number of repeated counts.

Methods

The methods used were a combination of individual lek surveys and co-ordinated lek searches at larger sites. Lek surveys involved surveyors visiting known lek sites and recording all activity between one hour before and one hour after dawn. Where time allowed, repeat visits were made to each lek, one in the first half of the lekking season and one in the second half. No counts were carried out in poor

weather (e.g. persistent heavy rain, snow, low cloud, fog). Display sites were marked onto 1:25,000 OS maps, and counts recorded together with date, time and six-figure grid reference. The lek search methodology followed that used in the national survey in 2005. All suitable habitat within a defined area was searched by walking transects passing within 500m of suitable habitat. Whilst completing lek searches, previously recorded lek sites were checked and if found to be inactive surveyors approached the site to check for fresh signs of use. Vantage points were also used on the co-ordinated counts. In 2014 resources permitted two co-ordinated counts, one on Cruach Mhor Windfarm and Ardtaraig Estate and in the area surrounding Kilchrenan.

Results

The table opposite shows the number of males and leks recorded in different areas of Argyll. Knapdale has few due to a lack of survey effort. The number of leks surveyed in 2014 was slightly higher than in 2013. In comparison 39 leks were monitored in 2013 and 50 in 2012.

Cowal. Six leks were counted in Cowal. Most males were on the survey around Cruach Mhor Windfarm and Ardtairig Estate which yielded five in total. This is up by a single male on last year's co-ordinated count. Other leks monitored in Cowal were at Ardno and Tom Mor. In agreement with the overall trend, numbers at Ardno have decreased in recent years from five in 2011 to three in 2014.

Kintyre. In previous years there has been considerable survey effort in Kintyre. In 2012 lek

Black Grouse by area in Argyll in 2014

Area	Number of males	Number of leks
Cowal	10	6
Kintyre	36	11
Knapdale	4	1
Lorne	49	14
Mid Argyll	14	11
TOTAL	113	43

searches followed the national survey methodology covering a 13 (5.0x5.0km) grid mostly across south Kintyre. Seventy-five males were recorded in 2012 at 14 leks. This highlighted Kintyre as a significant area for Black Grouse. In 2014 a number of follow-up searches were completed in a co-ordinated effort between RSPB, Scottish Wildlife Trust, Forestry Commission, SNH and Scottish Power. Unfortunately poor weather conditions prevented some areas being surveyed, but 11 leks were covered. The two leks that had been previously surveyed (Ballybrennan and Glenramskill) have both declined in recent years.

Knapdale. Due to accessibility, Knapdale is often under recorded. Four males were observed lekking at Meall Mhor and bubbling calls were heard in the area that had previously held a lek.

Lorne. Fourteen leks with 49 males were recorded in Lorne. This included one of the largest leks recorded in Argyll in 2014; nine males at the main lek at Balliemore. The area surrounding Kilchrenan was surveyed in a co-ordinated search with seven routes completed. A total of 15 lekking males across three leks were recorded, with calling also heard in other areas. Elsewhere a number of leks showed an increase on previous years, with leks at Gararron and Tullich in Kilmelford increasing from three to five and one to four respectively. Only a single male was recorded at a site at Corrylorn where last year three males were recorded. A lek site at Blackmount remained unchanged with three males being recorded in 2013 and 2014.

Mid Argyll. Eleven leks and 14 males were recorded in Mid Argyll. Three leks had two males (Accurach, Lochan Add and Brenchoille Loch Garbh). All other records were of single males. John Halliday, a dedicated local surveyor, has monitored the Lochan Add area since 1990.

Comparing lek totals 2012-14. A sample of nine leks have been monitored since 2012. The graph opposite shows the change in males at these sites with the percentage change between years above the bars. These data suggest a decline of 35% since

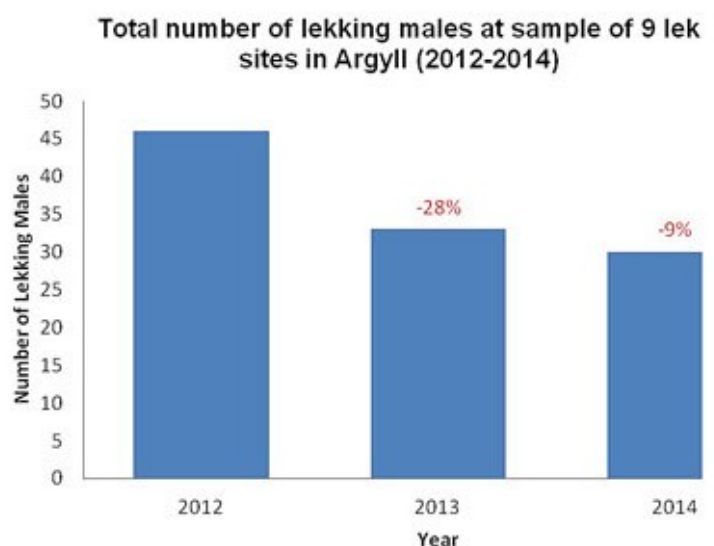
2012. These results should be treated with caution due to the small sample size.

Discussion

Results from 2014 show numbers have declined in recent years, which follows the trends experienced elsewhere in central and southern Scotland. Black Grouse usually show a positive response (increase in lekking males) following a successful breeding season. In 2013, particularly good weather conditions occurred during the breeding and brood rearing season (June) with high productivity (number of chicks per female) recorded in many areas across Britain. Dry and warm weather are important. If heavy rain persists in June, this can lead to an increase in chick mortality, due to exposure and chilling. Chicks may also be more susceptible to predation if key insect foods are scarce close to their natal area, resulting in foraging distances increasing

Mean lek size may not be representative of the whole population, as when survey effort is high the mean lek size decreases. Probably due to a greater chance of picking up single-bird leks. There are a wide range of other interacting factors that may have an influence on population numbers. The nine lek sites monitored over successive years did not show the response expected following a dry breeding season in 2013. The winter rainfall from December 2013 until February 2014 was approximately 400mm above the previous 10yr average. It is known that overwinter survival can be reduced in severe winters with heavy snow. Perhaps excessive winter rainfall may also have a deleterious effect on survival? The data over recent years suggest a decrease in the number of lekking males. Continuing the existing lek counts over more years may help us to better understand population fluctuations in this charismatic species

National Monitoring Scheme. Last year the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT) began a pilot study



for a national Black Grouse monitoring scheme. It aimed to design a robust method that captures national population trends in between the 10yr national survey. This study looked at information being collected by various groups across Scotland in 2013, which totalled 434 leks with 2270 males. This represented excellent coverage and it is hoped to refine this method for use annually.

Survey 2015. In 2015, a repeat of the co-ordinated survey area (of 2014) is proposed. This method efficiently covers a large area with results that are comparable between years. Outwith these areas, standard lek recording will take place with a focus on repeating lek counts covered in past years.

Records. The majority of lek records from surveys have been incorporated in this article. However, if there are any outstanding lek records from 2014, please forward them to the co-ordinator of the Black Grouse monitoring in Argyll (contact details below). Casual records are always gratefully accepted.

Survey Volunteers. If you know of anyone who would be interested in volunteering to survey

Black Grouse in 2015 please pass on their contact details.

Acknowledgements

A huge thank you to staff and volunteers involved in monitoring of Black Grouse in Argyll. Many hours of dedication, early mornings and relentless counting are involved. Also, a big thank you to landowners who allowed access onto their land. I am sure the sight of a Black Grouse is reward enough for your efforts, but rest assured the information collected provides valuable information used to conserve this iconic species. Black Grouse remain a priority for conservation in Argyll, and these data allow targeted conservation to take place, so ensuring the long-term survival of this great bird. Thank you for your continued support and here's to a good survey season in 2015.

Doug Shapley

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Email: douglas.shapley@rspb.org.uk. Tel: 0141 331 0993

New tool in fight against wildlife crime

Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) will prevent the use of general licences to trap or shoot wild birds on land where there is evidence of wildlife crime against birds.

Decisions will be made on the basis of strong evidence provided by Police Scotland, and will be based on a civil standard of proof, rather than the criminal standard of proof.

It comes after Scotland's Minister for the Environment and Climate Change, Paul Wheelhouse, asked SNH to consider how general licences could be restricted, as part of a number of measures aimed at reducing raptor persecution.

General licences allow landowners or land managers to carry out actions which would otherwise be illegal, including controlling certain types of birds for conservation purposes or to protect crops or livestock. These new measures mean that where SNH has evidence indicating that wildlife crime has been committed on an area of land, the use of these licences can be restricted on that area of land. The measures—which have been developed in consultation with Police Scotland and others—will be backdated so

that action will be taken where there is evidence of wrong-doing since January 1, 2014.

The new measure complements other recent actions to reduce wildlife crime, including vicarious liability for offences against wild birds, which was introduced in 2011, and the review of penalties for wildlife crime offences that is currently underway.

Restrictions will prevent people from using general licences on the land in question for three years. This period will increase if more evidence of offences comes to light.

Minister for the Environment and Climate Change Paul Wheelhouse said:

"The illegal persecution of raptors is totally unacceptable and barbaric given typically it is associated with great suffering on the part of the birds when they are illegally killed. It is also, quite rightly, roundly condemned by all responsible land managers and those in the conservation community. I am both angry and very frustrated that a criminal minority continues to kill and persecute these magnificent birds for

their own selfish ends.

It is too often the case that there is clear evidence that a crime has been committed, but the perpetrator is able to hide behind a wall of silence among those who really should be cooperating with the police. That is why I asked SNH to consider how better use can be made of general licenses, which, rather than a 'right' are a privilege that can and should be withdrawn where there is evidence of illegal activity taking place. I am confident these new measures will be a powerful new weapon in our armoury in the fight against those perpetrating raptor persecution in Scotland and hopefully will deter those who might be tempted to commit such a selfish criminal act that stains Scotland's reputation and potentially damage the rural economy."

Ian Ross, SNH's chairman, said:

"We're committed to taking action whenever there is evidence of wildlife crime, and we believe this new measure will make it much tougher for those committing offences. Because of the remote locations where most wildlife crime takes place, it's often difficult to prove. So we need every tool we can to fight against those who persecute raptors in Scotland.

"Nature-based tourism is worth £1.4 billion a year to Scotland's economy. Raptor persecution detracts from that value and diminishes Scotland's appeal as

a major wildlife tourism destination. It can also damage the local economy as many locals and visitors are keen to see these magnificent birds in the wider countryside. And of course it causes an appalling level of natural heritage and wildlife damage.

We're committed to working strongly in partnership with Police Scotland, and other members of the Partnership for Action against Wildlife crime Scotland (PAWS) to stamp out wildlife crime in Scotland."

General Licences. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 protects all wild birds. General licences permit authorised persons to carry out actions that would otherwise be illegal. They cover certain types of activity relating to birds, such as preventing damage to crops or livestock, preserving public health or air safety, and preventing the spread of disease. General licences cover situations which are regarded as relatively commonplace and where there is unlikely to be any great conservation impact. General licences avoid the need for people to apply for individual licences for these specific circumstances. General licences are subject to strict conditions, and abuse of them or failure to comply with the conditions could constitute an offence. For more information, see <http://www.snh.gov.uk/protecting-scotlands-nature/species-licensing/bird-licensing/>

Islay visitors come of age! (continued from page 7)

events held over the years, including the Islay Natural History Trust.

Throughout this time his wife, Pauline, has provided the necessary support that has made all this possible. In the early years the responsibilities of a young family were seamlessly integrated into the visits and filming activities. Compressing everything into a 2-3 week visit given the vagaries of Islay's weather wasn't always the easiest of tasks either! Later, when most people might have considered easing up she commenced to train guide dogs for the blind. So, after transporting Gordon to some far flung corner of Islay, sealing him into a hide, it was then time to exercise the dogs, all of which always seemed so well behaved! This has led, over the years, to a whole succession of dogs being trained before being allocated for duty. A very familiar couple on Islay who still enjoy their regular visits at all times of year. Given the number of years over

which visits have been made the sheer amount of information and recollection they can provide is mind boggling! Following each welcome visit or encounter I invariably end up with various questions I wish I'd asked but had forgotten to raise!

Setting aside details of wildlife records and images, I believe Islay owes their efforts a great vote of thanks for informing a countless number of people elsewhere about the island's birds and animals and for providing continuing friendship to a large number of residents who always look forward to visits, me included! Over the years the films must have persuaded many people to pay their own visits to the island, generate their own wildlife experiences and make their own circle of friends in the process. Well done.

Here's recognizing your coming of age and thanks from all concerned to you both.

John S. Armitage, (BTO Regional Representative—Islay, Jura & Colonsay)

Machrihanish Seabird Observatory (MSBO) 2014 report



Introduction

After 21 years I still continue to be surprised at the exceptional birdlife recorded at MSBO. For example, during a WNW gale thousands of southbound seabirds can be seen, along with possible rarities and the associated identification challenges. All contribute towards an immense sensation of excitement. I hope the reader finds this reflected in the following report.

The Machrihanish area has habitats ranging from upland to unspoilt coastline with miles of dune slacks and rocky shores. Nearby there are woodlands, farmlands and freshwater streams that boast a fine list of birds including some scarce resident species, breeding and winter visitors and scarce passage migrants.

While its geographic location is ideal for birdwatching, the appeal of Machrihanish is much broader. There is truly outstanding scenery with Jura, Islay and Northern Ireland to the W and NW, and numerous activities available including golf, surfing and sea/freshwater fishing. The Kintyre Way, popular with hikers, passes through the village. Mammals of interest include Grey and Common Seals, Bottle-nosed Dolphins; but above all, Otters.

MSBO provides information on all notable ornithological/wildlife occurrences within this diverse area, including rare and scarce birds. To report your sightings or to have your photographs appear on our website please e-mail these to msbowarden@yahoo.com. Reports of rare birds are subject to ratification by the appropriate rarity committee. Many thanks to everyone who visited, supported or contributed

to MSBO throughout 2014. We look forward to seeing you and bringing you news of bird movements off this prominent headland during 2015.

MSBO was manned intermittently during Jan-Mar then daily from 1 Apr until 23 Nov. This report includes the main ornithological occurrences of the year and details of funded projects.

UK Twite Study Project 2010-2014

To date, a total of 1,370 Twite have been colour ringed. During Sep/Oct, 221 were ringed. Additional species ringed during the same period include 157 Goldfinches, 14 Chaffinches and two Linnets. Recent sightings of four colour-ringed Twite include two ringed this autumn at MSBO. One was spotted in a flock of 45 birds on 9 Oct at Ballintoy Harbour on the N coast of Co. Antrim (Richard Donaghey pers. com.) and the other was controlled on 10 Sep at Point of Ayre, Isle of Man on 29 Oct (Sean Gray pers. com.). Another was seen at Ramore Head on the N coast of County Antrim on 29 Nov (Colin Guy/George Gordon pers. com.). A colour-ringed bird seen at MSBO from 6 Sep and caught on 24 Sept was ringed at Heysham BO, Lancashire (Pete Marsh pers. com.). For more information about Twite ringing at MSBO see *The Eider*, number 107 (March 2014) pages 21-23.

Rare birds recorded at MSBO during 2014

The Scottish Bird Records Committee accepted a record of a White-billed Diver on 17 May. This

was the second spring record for MSBO. The Argyll Bird Club Records Committee (ABCRC) accepted a record of a Common Rosefinch on 12 Nov 2014, the first record for MSBO. Descriptions of a *littoralis* Rock Pipit (May 2014) and a first-winter Long-tailed Skua (Oct 2014) have been submitted to the ABCRC.

Seawatching Autumn 2014

Much of the autumn was disappointing for seawatching. Sep was dominated by a slow-moving high pressure system, culminating with an easterly airflow. Sky News announced that Sep was the warmest month with the lowest rainfall since records began in 1910! Then, from 21 Oct seawatching improved with WNW winds. A stiff SW force 4 took over on the 24th switching to WSW force 5 on 25th. Some of the seabirds seen flying S during 21-31 Oct included c.60 Great Northern Divers (majority adults), a Leach's Petrel, 13 Pomarine Skuas, five Great Skuas, a juvenile Long-tailed Skua, a first-winter Mediterranean Gull, five first-winter Little Gulls, 2,000+ Black-legged Kittiwakes (during heaviest passage periods 24-25th, 18-33 birds were logged per minute) and a single Puffin, an unusual species here in October. Off MSBO, any southerly wind direction rarely produces any productive seabird movements, especially involving the quality/quantity above. Perhaps this could be a result of the arrival of the tail end of a hurricane on 21st? Disappointingly, only four Leach's Petrels appeared on two dates over the autumn, and it was a blank year for Grey Phalarope and Sabine's Gull.

Noteworthy monthly records

January-March. The first and second MSBO records of Kumlien's Iceland Gull occurred during this period with a first-winter bird present during 26-27 Jan (also the first Kintyre record—see photo above) and a third-winter flying S on 19 Mar (second MSBO record). A Common Sandpiper wintered, being present from at least Dec 2013.

April. An unprecedented flock of Teal (90) was ranging off MSBO on 4th. A massive c.75% decline in the local breeding population of Common Eiders was very obvious and of real



A first-winter Kumlien's Iceland Gull on 26 Jan. The first record for MSBO ©Eddie Maguire

concern. An immature White-tailed Eagle flew N on 2nd (second MSBO record) and the first-winter Kumlien's Gull, present during 26-27 Jan, flew S on 11th.

May. A Great Crested Grebe in breeding plumage flew S on 3rd, a White-billed Diver was photographed flying N on 17th (second MSBO spring record) a probable Scandinavian Rock Pipit was photographed on 18th and an Osprey flew N on 26th.

July. Three female-type Goldeneye (possibly Scottish bred juveniles) flew S on 2nd and an adult Curlew Sandpiper flew past on 22nd.

August. A juvenile Mediterranean Gull was present during 1st-4th (photos below). An early autumn NW gale on 17th brought in a few significant seabirds including the first Leach's Petrels (3) this year and also several Great Skuas, a single Arctic Skua, 2000+ Manx Shearwaters and c.500 Black-legged Kittiwakes.

September. An Osprey flew S on 2nd and an adult



Juvenile Mediterranean Gull at MSBO on 4 Aug ©Eddie Maguire

Mediterranean Gull flew N on 10th.

October. See 'Seawatching Autumn 2014' above.

November. A Little Gull flew S on 2nd and a Little Auk flew S on 10th.

Winter-early spring records from The Laggan farmlands and Campbeltown Loch

The early part of the year produced a number of interesting birds at The Laggan Farmlands and in Campbeltown Loch.

January. The year started surprisingly well with a first for MSBO—a pale first-winter 'white-winged gull' showing features of Kumlien's Gull was found dip-feeding with Black-headed, Common and Herring Gulls near the observatory. The identification was confirmed from photographs. It was present only during 26-27th. This is the first occurrence of this North American race of Iceland Gull in Kintyre although there are around a dozen or so recent records for Argyll (Jim Dickson pers. com.). There were at least 20 Kumlien's Gulls in the UK/Ireland during 22-28 Jan, including two birds in Highland Region (Birdguides).

February. What an astonishing month this was! A first-winter American Herring Gull (*Larus smithsonianus*) was discovered in South Kintyre (photo opposite). The bird was initially found and identified on floodwater by Kilmichael, just 3.2km NW of Campbeltown, on 6-7th and then relocated at Campbeltown Old Quay. It was seen almost daily in and around Campbeltown until 28th. It was particularly obliging when loafing on Campbeltown Harbour. This is the second record for Argyll (a first-winter bird was on Tiree March-May 2007) and the second Scottish mainland occurrence of this species. An adult Yellow-legged Gull was identified near Drumlemble on 21st, but flew off before it could be photographed. However, it was promptly relocated just S of Drumlemble School and photographed. As far as I am aware this record has been accepted by Scottish Birds Records Committee. This will be the first record for Kintyre and the second Argyll occurrence



Upper photo: First-winter American Herring Gull, Campbeltown Harbour, 20 Feb ©Eddie Maguire

Lower photo: Tundra Bean Goose, The Laggan, 27 Feb ©Eddie Maguire

(Jim Dickson/Eddie Maguire). It was seen near Drumlemble the next day (Eddie Maguire/Tim Cowley). Iceland Gull featured well at The Laggan with a first-winter, two regular second-winter birds, and first and third-winter Kumlien's Gull. Other superb finds included four tundra Bean Geese (photo above) and a Todd's Canada Goose at The Laggan (photo next page).

March. The first-winter American Herring Gull appeared regularly at Campbeltown Harbour, The Laggan Farmlands just W of the town and numerous nearby locations. It soon settled into an almost predictable routine. However, it proved exceptionally difficult to locate at times, especially later in the



A Todd's Canada Goose amongst Greenland White-fronted Geese at The Laggan in Feb ©Dan Brown

month. During 7 Feb-27 Mar, 300+ birders from around the UK visited the Campbeltown area searching for this national rarity—not all were successful. However, many birders left the town delighted! At The Laggan, there were at least five Iceland, two Kumlien's and one or more first-winter Glaucous Gulls (scarce this winter). Four Bean Geese just made the logsheet whilst the Todd's Canada Goose was a bit more obliging with several sightings. Floodwater at The Laggan attracted a few locally scarce visitors including three Pintail, three Shoveler and four Tufted Duck.

April. At least two and possibly three first-winter Iceland Gulls were seen at Westport Marsh, Machrihanish Village and near Bellochautuy, and an elusive female Surf Scoter was reported early in the month in Campbeltown Loch.

The seabird wreck late Feb-early Mar

Following a succession of severe storms during Feb, large numbers of dead seabirds (including Razorbill, Common Guillemot and Puffin) were reported on beaches around Britain and the SW coast of France. In France, the Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux (LPO) did a beach count and found 24,351 auks—21,567 were already dead and 2,784 were taken into care. French fishermen

reported 'carpets' of birds at sea so the final total is likely to have been significantly higher. During 24 Feb-4 Mar, MSBO was alerted by locals and visitors to 70+ dead auks washed up on <16km of beach in SW Kintyre. The majority were Razorbills. Many more birds must have been involved as this was only a small sample of the SW seaboard. Data collected during Feb established that more Razorbills than Guillemots were present off the SW coast of Kintyre (fly-by samples revealed 93% were Razorbills). Low numbers of Guillemots noted in the Feb sample may partly explain why so few appear to have been involved locally in this significant wreck.

Wandering behaviour of a colour-ringed Black Swan.

The colour-ringed Black Swan that arrived in Campbeltown Loch on 4 Aug is now known to be the wandering female of a high profile celebrity pair named 'Barak' and 'Michelle' (photo next page). They were gifted to Sir Gerry and Lady Heather in 2011 for their impressive Oakfield Park Lakes at Raphoe Castle Estate in Co. Donegal. Michelle initially took off from Oakfield Park in summer 2012 and by all accounts settled around Stranraer (Dumfries and Galloway) for a while before heading back west for the bright lights of Belfast in December 2012. She was caught at Belfast Waterworks City Council Park by a BTO ringer and fitted with a bright orange darvic ring bearing three black letters 'NIY' and returned to

Oakfield Park, Donegal the same day (15 Dec 2012). Michelle's recent bid for freedom has brought her back to Scotland. After spending around six weeks in Campbeltown Loch she was last seen there on 19 Sep and a week or so later at Peninver. David Jardine (pers. com.) saw a Black Swan distantly in the Add Estuary, Mid Argyll on 5 Oct. This may have been Michelle. On 16 Oct she suddenly appeared back in Campbeltown Loch (Emma Moffat/Elsie Campbell *et al.* pers. com.). A Black Swan was seen again in Mid-Argyll (Ulva Lagoons) on 24th (Paul Daw). Could this have been Michelle wandering again? All future sightings of 'NIY' from anywhere away from Campbeltown, especially Argyll, would be most welcome.

Wilson's Petrel in Kintyre?

At 10.44hrs on 24 Oct, MSBO warden received a text message—a Wilson's Petrel was apparently in Kintyre! This was reported by Dan Brown at Tayinloan Ferry Jetty, Kintyre. When found the petrel was clamped firmly in a Herring Gull's bill, and was still alive! A Great Black-backed Gull then robbed the HG of its prize and drowned the petrel. Dan emphasised there had been no time to photograph the unfolding drama. However, he did manage to glean some satisfactory plumage details and seemed confident with his identification. This was truly a bizarre encounter—what a pity the evidence was swallowed, aye whole! If a description is submitted to BBRC it could become the second Argyll record of this trans-equatorial migrant that breeds on the Antarctic continent. An historic Argyll record concerns one caught alive on Jura in October 1891 (ap Rheinallt *et al.* 2007; *Birds of Argyll*).

Acknowledgements

MSBO received substantial funding and donations from an anonymous benefactor, the Argyll Bird Club and Alistair Blair, Campbeltown. Funded projects at MSBO included a new wheelchair access ramp and a concrete square with a standing stone feature. This work was undertaken by McFadyens Contractors Ltd, Campbeltown. Much needed optical

equipment was purchased, which produced many images to add to the MSBO photographic archives. Argyll and Bute Council Employability Team replaced all external weatherboard on the NE and SE sections of the original hide, including a new door. In addition, a sturdy roof was built over the viewing platform and includes a hatch that will provide protection from onshore weather conditions. This will be an excellent additional shelter during high winds, particularly when squalls arrive from the WNW and for visitors comfort when MSBO is closed. Several coats of oil-based teak preservative was applied to the entire facility.

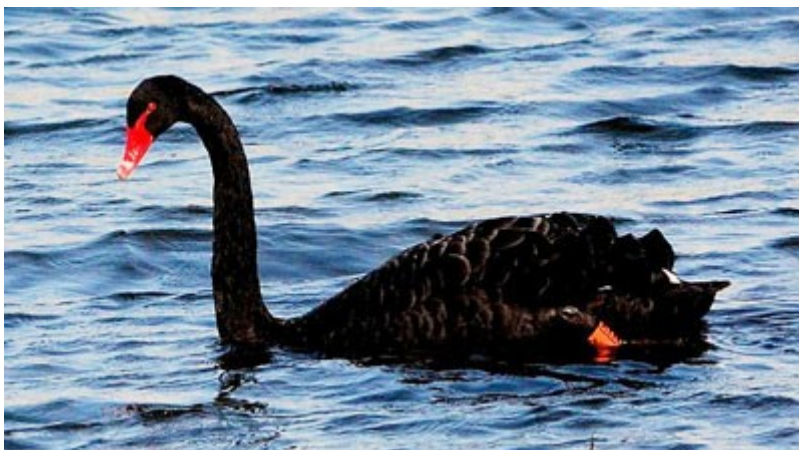
During July, Stirling University upgraded access to Uisaed Point from the main road all the way to the Marine Research Laboratory—a major improvement to a beautiful area of SW Kintyre. The Argyll Bird Club provided financial assistance towards the UK Twite Study Project and paid the ground rent for the observatory to Lossit Estate, Machrihanish. Rab Morton for tracing 'Michelle's' wandering ways and his prompt appearances to ring Twite at MSBO, without which we would certainly have been unable to continue the project, and Jim Dickson (Argyll Bird Recorder) and John Bowler (RSPB Tiree) for help with identification of difficult species. Iomhar McMillan (assistant warden) for his handiwork around MSBO, David Millward (professional photographer) for many years of friendship, sound technical advice and infinite patience with technical problems, and Pip and Carol Ashley and Martin and Leticia Conway for their exceptional friendship and unremitting support for MSBO.

Season's Greetings to all our friends and visitors. The Observatory will reopen to the public on 1 Mar 2015

Eddie Maguire, Warden MSBO

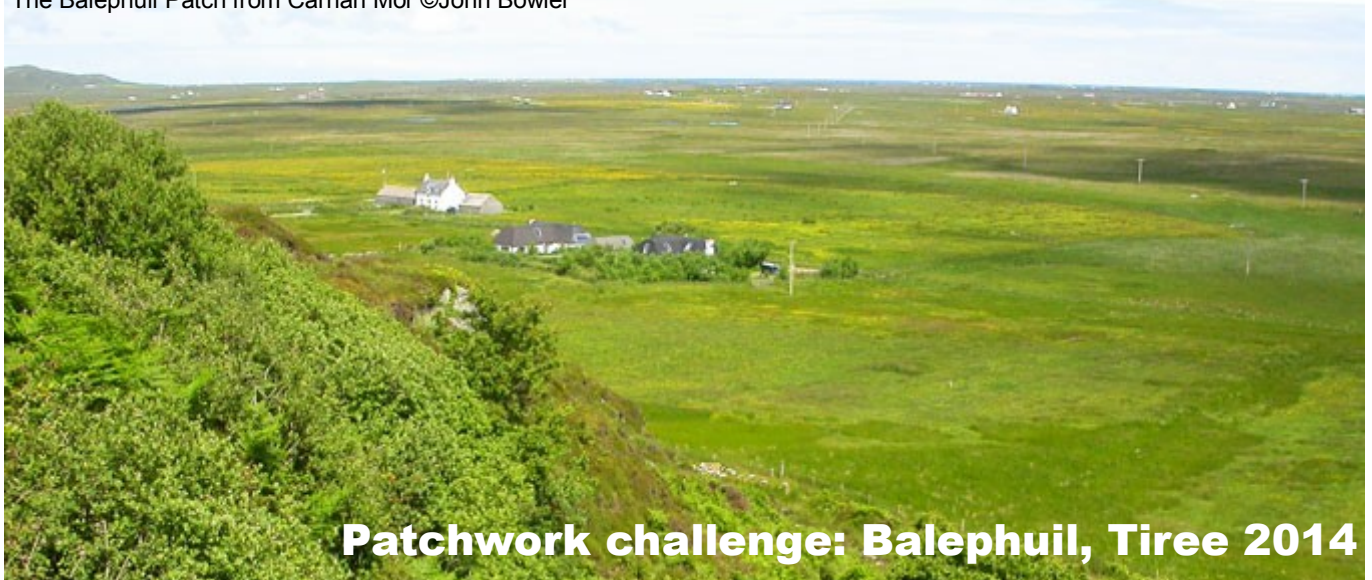
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'Michelle' the wandering Black Swan ©Eddie Maguire

The Balephuill Patch from Carnan Mor ©John Bowler



Patchwork challenge: Balephuill, Tiree 2014

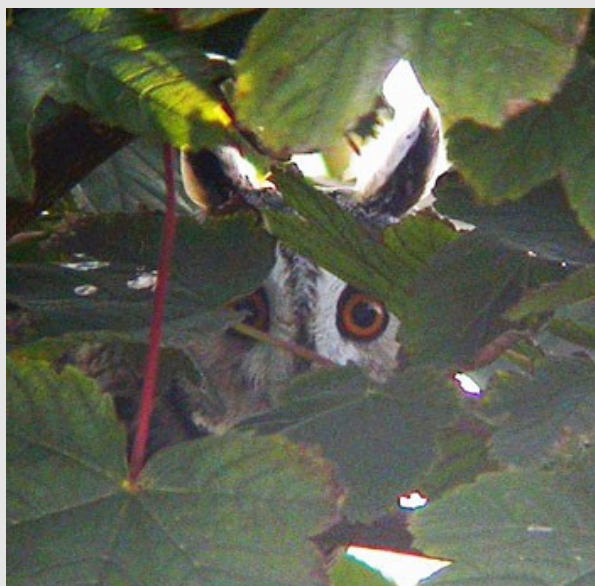
After a great year in 2013, which saw my Balephuill patch in SW Tiree break the 300 points barrier for the first time, including the first Water Pipit for Argyll and my first ever Great-crested Grebe on the island, 2014 got off to a steady start. A long-staying Green-winged Teal at Loch a' Phuill, which had arrived in November 2013 was the first scarcity of the year and being a Scottish coastal site, January brought a batch of two-point birds such as Glaucous Gull, Black Guillemot, Common Scoter and Long-tailed Duck. However, none of these was unexpected and February was slow, with just three new gull species to add to the tally; Black-headed Gull and Lesser Black-backed Gull, which are both summer migrants in these parts, plus the only Iceland Gull of the year. In fact, I spent much of February in the Canaries instead!

March saw a fly-by Kumlien's Gull along the beach at Traigh Bhi and a few new late winter migrants such as Jack Snipe and Fieldfare, as well as the first migrant passerines in the form of Goldcrest, Chiffchaff and Linnet. Far more unexpected however, was a Chough, which flew calling over our garden on 30 March. This was the first Tiree record since 1987 and was sadly found dead nearby in early April, having been ringed on Islay in 2012. April brought the expected rush of new summer migrants including Corncrake, Grasshopper Warbler, White-tailed Eagle and Great Skua, but with westerlies predominating, it also brought a clutch of Nearctic scarcities including a drake American Widgeon (photo opposite), a first-winter Ring-billed Gull and an intermediate morph Snow Goose.

May is a critical month for the Balephuill patch list. Poor ones with mostly northerly winds bring just the odd scarcity but good ones in which southerly or easterly winds predominate can bring unexpected drift migrants over to the west coast. May 2014 was to prove the best ever on Tiree. With light easterly winds and frequent misty spells for much of the month, migrants were regularly grounded and there was an exciting daily turn-over of new birds. Species such as Little Egret, Turtle Dove, Wood Warbler and Lesser Whitethroat, which are less than annual here, all appeared amongst the more expected, but still scarce, Redstarts, Whinchats, Garden Warblers and Spotted Flycatchers. However, much rarer was a Red-rumped Swallow in a migrant hirundine flock on 20 May. This was the first record for Tiree and was followed the next day by an immature male Rustic Bunting in our garden, which I blundered into whilst feeding our garden birds in the drizzle. A splendid male Red-backed Shrike on the hillside of Carnan Mor above our house on 26th was the first ever spring record for Tiree

Drake American Widgeon ©John Bowler





Left photo: Long-eared Owl amongst Sycamore leaves

Right photo: Juvenile Rose-coloured Starling

Both photos ©John Bowler

and was followed in quick succession by a Common Rosefinch in our garden and a Marsh Warbler at Manna—outrageous stuff for the Inner Hebrides! Bird of the month, and indeed year, was a dapper male Collared Flycatcher in the bushes at Carnan Mor on the evening of 27 May. The first record for SW Scotland, I bumped into it whilst trying to relocate the Red-backed Shrike after work and spellbound, I watched it all evening, but it was gone the following morning.

June carried on where May left off. An unfamiliar song emanating from a skulking bird in our willows on 2nd eventually proved to be a resplendent adult male Rustic Bunting, whilst the "Collared Fly" bushes at Carnan Mor produced a female Red-breasted Flycatcher together with a Pied Flycatcher on 6th, creating a total of four species of flycatcher in the same bushes in just ten days! Loch a' Phuill produced the only Little Gull and Curlew Sandpipers of the year, whilst an elusive but smart male Red-breasted Flycatcher in our garden on 19th rounded things off nicely.

Return passage kicked off in July with a second-calendar year (2CY) Mediterranean Gull and a Green Sandpiper at Loch a' Phuill, whilst sea-watching off West Hynish produced the first Puffins and Storm Petrels, followed by both Sooty Shearwater and Balearic Shearwater in August in amongst thousands of Manx Shearwaters from nearby colonies on Rum and the Treshnish Isles. After a blistering spring, I needed a good autumn to maintain the pace. Westerlies in early September are vital for

bringing Nearctic shorebirds across the Atlantic and a brief spell at the start of the month produced a 2CY American Golden Plover (see next page), two Buff-breasted Sandpipers and up to three Pectoral Sandpipers in the Loch a' Phuill area. The westerly window quickly closed, so thoughts of past glories of Northern Parulas and Cedar Waxwings, or even of Baird's and Semipalmated Sandpipers, remained just that and the only White-rumped Sandpiper of the autumn was found off-patch by Keith Gillon at Gott Bay. Rubbing salt into the wound, the best bird of the autumn, Tiree's first Melodious Warbler was found off-patch at Scarinish by Jim Dickson, where it remained for a month. Clear skies for much of September meant grounded migrants were few and far between, although a record total of four Barred Warblers, including three on the patch, were some consolation, as was another non-point scoring Common Rosefinch in our garden. More modest patch points came from passage raptors in the form of Marsh Harrier and Osprey, an unexpected Long-eared Owl attempting to hide in our lone Sycamore sapling (photo above) and more expected Snow Buntings, Lapland Buntings and Crossbills.

With the 2013 total already surpassed, it was all to play for in October. Sea-watching produced Leach's Petrel and Pomarine Skua but the continuing lack of westerlies until late in the month meant that neither Sabine's Gull nor Grey Phalarope appeared on the patch this year.

Easterlies brought a couple of Yellow-browed Warblers and the first Siberian Chiffchaff of the autumn to our garden, plus further, now sadly point-less, Red-breasted Flycatchers and Common Rosefinches (totals of four of each in 2014!), so new single points came instead from Bullfinch, Grey Wagtail, Yellow Wagtail and Great Tit—the latter being my first on the island in 13 years! There was also a record influx of Bramblings with some 80 birds roosting in our garden and a surprise juvenile Rose-coloured Starling (photo, previous page) hanging around cattle feeders at Meningie at the end of the month. Relentless checking of the diving ducks by Jim Dickson and myself on Loch a' Phuill played dividends with a first-winter Lesser Scaup and two first-winter female Ring-necked Ducks along with two Scaup, a drake Pochard and three Coot—the latter all

grilled unsuccessfully for their American cousins. A *sinensis* Cormorant at Loch a' Phuill on 13th was potentially the first of this form for Argyll, whilst other non-scoring races included a *blythi* Lesser Whitethroat and a monster *rostrata* Greenland Redpoll, which dwarfed an attendant NW Redpoll.

The early winter period can often bring the odd late surprise and this year it included a Slavonian Grebe, which took up residence at Loch a' Phuill, a brief Little Grebe there and an influx of Jackdaws, which brought with them the year's only Rooks. A first-winter male Ring-necked Duck was new (although point-less) at Loch a' Phuill in November and a late Sabine's Gull was off-patch in Gunna Sound. The only other points gained were from the addition of species seen earlier in the year, which, in my haste, I had forgotten to include on the PC spreadsheet. In total, the patch scored a record 377 points from 186 species with a very pleasing "points per bird" score of 2.027! 2014 saw a bumper number of firsts on the patch and a record-breaking spring passage, so it may perhaps be hard to beat in future years—only time and some subtle patch boundary changes in 2015 will tell.

John Bowler



Left Photo: American Golden Plover behind a Golden Plover

Bottom photo: Loch a' Phuill from Carnan Mor with the southern Outer Hebrides in the background

Both photos ©John Bowler



Redshank, Loch Gilp, 20 Feb 2015 ©Jim Dickson

Recent sightings

November 2014 to January 2015

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 abc recorder@outlook.com](mailto:abc recorder@outlook.com) for details) or the BTO's BirdTrack system. The 'recent reports' section on the club's website is updated almost daily and interesting reports for that should be e-mailed to Jim Dickson (meq@jdickson5.plus.com). 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, SBRC = Scottish Bird Records Committee and WeBS = Wetland Bird Survey.)

Swans, ducks, geese & gamebirds

MUTE SWAN. High counts: 25 were at Loch Gilp, Mid-Argyll on 8 Nov, 18 were at Seil Island, Mid-Argyll on 9 Nov, 33 were at Loch Sween, Mid-Argyll on 10 Nov and 34 were at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 8 Dec.

WHOOPEE SWAN. One hundred and thirty-four were counted on the Tiree WeBS counts on 17-18 Nov.

BLACK SWAN. A single bird from earlier in the autumn was seen again at the Ulva' puddle', Mid-Argyll during Nov.

BEAN GOOSE. One, possibly a 'taiga' race was at Lyrabus, Islay on 19 Nov (Mary Redman, Louise Muir).

WHITE- FRONTED GOOSE. High counts: 357 were at West Parkfergus, Kintyre on 10 Nov; 5,172 were on Islay on 18-19 Nov with 4,772 there on 16 Dec and 4,239 on 14 Jan. On Tiree there were 641 on 17-18 Nov with 521 there on 15-16 Dec and 639 on 13-14 Jan.

LESSER CANADA GOOSE. Singles were noted at RSPB Gruinart, Islay on 3, 5 and 18 Nov and at Bridgend Merse, Islay on 17 Jan.

BARNACLE GOOSE. High counts: 23,970 were on Islay on 5 Nov with 36,252 there on 18-19 Nov, 39,185 on 16 Dec and 38,604 on 14 Jan. On Tiree, a total of 4,124 birds were there on 15-16 Dec and 4,173 birds on 13-14 Jan. On Oronsay, Colonsay there were 3,134 on 9 Nov and 501 were at Toberonochy, Luing, Mid-Argyll on 27 Dec.

PALE-BELLIED BRENT GOOSE. Most reports came from Islay with the highest count of 34 at Bruichladdich on 1 Jan.

MANDARIN. A male was at Loch A' Choire, Ford, Mid-Argyll on 4 Jan.

WIGEON. High counts: 570 were at RSPB Gruinart, Islay on 13 Dec and 213 were at Loch Gilp, Mid-Argyll on 8 Nov.

GADWALL. A pair was at Sandaig, Tiree on 14 and 19 Jan, and two were at Knock, Mull on 24 Jan.

TEAL. High counts: 1,720 were at RSPB Gruinart, Islay on 2 Nov, 220 were near Machir Bay, Islay on 7 Nov, 248 were at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 12 Nov, 360 were at East Chiscan, Laggan, Kintyre on 17 Nov, 380 were between Bowmore and Garbreck, Islay on 13 Dec and 800 were at Loch Tallant, Islay on 12 Dec.

GREEN-WINGED TEAL. A drake was at RSPB Loch Gruinart, Islay on 2 Nov.

PINTAIL. High counts: 71 were at RSPB Gruinart, Islay on 2 Nov and 12 Nov, and 73 were there on 23 Dec. Two were at Loch Crearan, North Argyll on 19 Jan—a good record for the mainland.

SHOVELER. High counts: 31 were at RSPB Gruinart, Islay on 11 Nov, 12 were at Loch Riaghain, Tiree on 28 Nov and 19 were there on 19 Jan.

POCHARD. A drake was at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 8 to 22 Dec and 6 Jan.

RING-NECKED DUCK. A first-winter male was at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 3 Nov and remained there until at least 19 Jan, by which time it was acquiring more of an adult-type plumage (John Bowler).

TUFTED DUCK. High counts: 113 were at Loch Gorm, Islay on 3 Nov and 133 were counted on the Tiree WeBS on 12 Nov.

GREATER SCAUP. High counts: 81 were on Loch Indaal, Islay on 7 Nov with 66 there on 17 Jan. Two immature females were on Loch a' Phuill, Tiree during 1-11 Nov.

LONG-TAILED DUCK: High counts: 13 were on Loch Indaal, Islay on 5 Nov, seven were off the Tayinloan Jetty on 28 Nov, 11 were at Hough Bay, Tiree on 15 and 30 Nov and 15 were between Tayinloan and Rhunahaorine Point, Kintyre on 26 Dec.

VELVET SCOTER: Three were at the Sound of Gigha, Kintyre on 13 Dec, four were off the Claonaig Ferry terminal, Kintyre on 28 Dec and one was off Ormsary, Mid-Argyll on 29 Dec.

GOLDENEYE: High counts: 72 were at Eilean Traighe, Ormsary, Mid-Argyll on 26 Dec and 68 were counted on the Tiree WeBS on 19 Jan.



RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE. Seven were at Killinallan, Islay on 6 Nov.

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

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER. High counts: 64 were on Loch Indaal, Islay on 5 Nov, 20 were off Balemartine to Hynish on 16 Nov, 60 were on Loch na Keal, Mull on 21 Jan, 27 were at the Sound of Mull, Mull on 22 Jan, 24 were at Port Langamull, Mull on 21 Jan, 45 were on Loch Tuath, Mull on 24 Jan and 50 were on Loch Scridain, Mull on 22 Jan.

BLACK-THROATED DIVER. High count: 23 were at Loch Caolisport, Mid-Argyll on 28 Dec.

RED-THROATED DIVER. High count: 51 were on Loch Indaal, Islay on 5 Nov.

LITTLE EGRET. One was at the Add Estuary, Mid-Argyll on 7 Nov and possibly the same bird at West Loch Tarbert, Kintyre from 12 Nov to 25 Nov. One was at the Strand, Colonsay on several dates between 8 Nov and 9 Jan. One was at Loch Gilp, Mid-Argyll on 29 Nov and 9 Dec. One was at Loch Gruinart, Islay on 5 Dec and possibly the same bird at the Bridgend Merse on 22 Dec and one was at Colintraive, Cowal on 26-27 Dec.

GREAT CRESTED GREBE. One was at Loch Gorm, Islay on 3 Nov. One was on Loch Indaal, Islay on 5 Nov with two there on 10 Nov. One was off Dunoon (Holy Loch) on 19 Jan and two were at Loch Long, Cowal on 26 Jan.

RED-NECKED GREBE. One was at Rhunahaorine Point, Kintyre on 26 Dec (Jonathon Platt).

SLAVONIAN GREBE. Higher counts: 49 were on Loch Indaal, Islay on 5 Nov and 51 were on Loch na Keal, Mull on 21 Jan.

LITTLE GREBE. High counts: 28 were on Loch Etive, Mid-Argyll on 9 Nov with 26 there on 8 Dec and 22 were on Loch Sween, Mid-Argyll on 10 Nov.



Left photo: Jack Snipe, Whitehouse, Tiree, 22 Nov 2014 ©John Bowler
Right photo: Partial albino Oyster Catcher, Ormsary, 19 Dec ©Jim Dickson

GREY HERON. High counts: 28 were at Loch Etive, Mid-Argyll on 9 Nov and 24 were on Oronsay, Colonsay on 28 Jan.

Raptors to rails

RED KITE. Two were at Fearnoch Forest (nr. Taynuilt), Mid-Argyll on 18 Nov (Rory MacLean per David Jardine).

WHITE-TAILED EAGLE. High count: five juveniles were seen together on the Isle of Danna, Mid-Argyll on 6 Jan.

ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD. One was seen at Glen Mor, Port Charlotte, Islay on 11 and 18 Nov (Bob Davison, Stu Crutchfield).

COOT. One was at Loch Gorm, Islay on 3 Nov. Two first-winter birds were at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 22 to 28 Nov, with three there on 30 Nov and two there on 8 to 22 Dec and 6 Jan.

Waders

GOLDEN PLOVER. High counts: 1,750 were at Loch Gruinart, Islay on 2 Nov, 400 were at West Parkfergus, Kintyre on 18 Nov, 3,470 were on Tiree on 17-18 Nov and 4,090 there on 15 to 16 Dec.

GREY PLOVER. Several reports of singles, however three were at Loch Indaal, Islay on 10 Nov, two were at Salum, Tiree on 20 Nov and six were at Ardnave Point, Islay on 9 Jan.

LAPWING. High counts: 479 were at Loch Gruinart, Islay on 12 Nov, 600+ were at West Parkfergus, Kintyre on 14 Nov and 4,540 were counted on the Tiree WeBS counts on 17-18 Nov.

RED KNOT. Thirteen were at Loch Gruinart, Islay on 3 Nov.

TURNSTONES. High counts: 77 were at Dunoon 'crazy golf', Cowal on 23 Nov. On Tiree, 130 were at Balephetrish Bay on 8 Jan and 160 were at Ruaig on 13 Jan.

PURPLE SANDPIPER. Higher counts: 20 were at Milton, Tiree on 8 Nov and 61 were at Hough Bay, Tiree on 28 Dec. A peak of 32 was counted at Dunoon 'crazy golf', Cowal on 6 Jan.

COMMON SANDPIPER. A very late bird (or wintering bird?) was at Ronachan Point, Kintyre on 28 Dec.

JACK SNIPE. One was photographed on the salt-marsh at Whitehouse, Tiree on 22 Nov (photo above). On Islay, one was at Gleneagledale and one also at Briabruaich on 16 Nov and one at Loch Indaal shore on 25 Dec. One was on Oronsay, Colonsay on 9 Jan and one was at Balemartine, Tiree on 24 Jan.

COMMON SNIPE. Ten were flushed from a salt-marsh near Taynuilt, Mid-Argyll on 22 Jan.

WOODCOCK. High counts: four were at Milton, Tiree on 9 Nov, nine were along roadside verges of Loch Awe, Mid-Argyll on 19 Nov and six were at Bunessan, Mull on 27 Nov.

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT. One was at RSPB Gruinart, Islay on 2 Nov with three there on 17 Nov. Three late birds were at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 3 to 11 Nov. A late bird was at the Add Estuary, Mid-Argyll on 28 and 29 Nov.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT. Highest count: 144 were at Loch Gruinart, Islay on 3 Nov.



Left photo: Glaucous Gull, Bellochantuy, Kintyre, 13 Jan ©Chris Bradshaw

Right photo: Caspian Gull, Loch Gilp, 17 Jan ©Jim Dickson

GREENSHANK. Several reports of one or two birds. Three were at Torloisk, Mull on 20 Nov, three were at Linne Mhuirich, near Tayvallich, Mid-Argyll on 26 Nov, four were at Loch Cuin, Mull on 19 Jan and three were at Loch Gruinart, Islay on 22 Jan.

Skuas, gulls, terns & auks

POMARINE SKUA. One was off Ardnave Point, Islay on 3 Nov. A juv. (juvenile) was between Mull and Coll on 11 Nov, and from Tiree two juvs. were off Gunna Sound on 11 Nov, a juv. was off Hough Bay on 15 Nov and a juv. was off West Hynish on 11 Jan.

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

KITTIWAKE. High counts: 760 flew S past Machrihanish SBO, Kintyre on 2 Nov and 900 flew S past there on 15 Nov. Off Hough Bay, Tiree, 1400 were feeding on 15 Nov.

LITTLE GULL. A first-winter bird was at Machrihanish SBO, Kintyre on 2 Nov, an adult was at Loch Gilp, Mid-Argyll from 3 Nov and an adult and first-winter there on 29 Nov, three adults were there on 16 Dec and 2 adults and a first-winter were there on several dates in Jan, with two first-winter birds seen into Feb (at least five different birds in total were at Loch Gilp).

BLACK-HEADED GULL. High counts: 1,950 were at Loch Gilp, Mid-Argyll on 23 Dec with 2,100 there on 31 Dec.

BONAPARTE'S GULL. An adult was at Loch Gilp, Mid-Argyll on 1, 30 and 31 Dec (Jim Dickson *et al.*).

MEDITERRANEAN GULL. Counts of more than one at Loch Gilp, Mid-Argyll: three adults were there on 11 Nov, with four adults on 13 Nov, four adults and a first-winter bird (1w) on 21 Nov, five on 1 Dec (3 adults, 2 x2w), 3 adults on 23 Dec, five (3 adults, a 2w and a 1w) on 26 Dec and 4 adults on 30 Dec. A colour-ringed adult was there on 18 Jan and had been ringed as a chick in Poland on 6 June 2004. An adult and a 2w were there on 19 Jan (both un-ringed) and two adults were there on 21 Jan. Elsewhere a 1w was seen from the Islay ferry off Port Ellen on 17 Nov and an adult was at Ormsary, Mid-Argyll on 30 Nov.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL. One was at Loch Long, Cowal on 10 Nov, two were at Machrihanish SBO, Kintyre on 11 Nov, 25 were at Loch Gruinart, Islay on 11 Nov with one there on 8 Dec and an adult was at Ormsary, Mid-Argyll on 29 Dec until early Jan.

CASPIAN GULL. A 1w bird was found at Loch Gilp, Mid-Argyll on 17 Jan (photo above, Jim Dickson *et al.*) and was there until 19 Jan, it then appearing again from 13 Feb onwards. This will be a new species for Argyll if accepted by the SBRC.

AMERICAN HERRING GULL. A putative 1w was at Ormsary, Mid-Argyll from 29 Dec until 3 Jan and again on 22 Jan (Jim Dickson, Stu Crutchfield, David Jardine *et al.*). Another 'candidate' 1w was at Sorobaidh Bay, Tiree on 21 Jan (John Bowler).



Dipper, Barnlongart, 8 Feb ©Errol Crutchfield

KUMLIEN'S GULL. A juv. was at Ormsary, Mid-Argyll from 28 Dec until Feb 15 at least.

ICELAND GULL. A juv. was off West Hynish, Tiree on 30 Jan. One was at Loch na Keal, Mull on 15 Dec and 27 Jan, one was at Knock, Mull on 24 Jan; one was at Loch Spelve, Mull on 26 Jan. A juv. was at Ormsary, Mid-Argyll on 22 Jan with two juvs. there on 31 Jan. Another juv. was at Tayinloan, Kintyre on 21 Jan.

GLAUCOUS GULL. Good numbers were reported. On Tiree a juv. was at The Reef on 26 Nov, a juv. was at Hynish on 7 Dec, a juv. was at Baugh on 26 Dec, a juv. was at The Reef on 12 Jan, a juv. was at Traigh Bhagh on 19 Jan, four juvs. were at West Hynish on 17 Jan, a juv. was at Gott Bay on 19 Jan, two juvs. were at Traigh Bhagh/the Reef from 21 Jan, a juv. was at Sorobaidh Bay on 22 Jan, a juv. was at Traigh Bhi on 24 Jan, a juv. was at Baugh on 29 Jan, a total of 7 juvs. were between Hough and West Hynish on 30 Jan, 2w birds were at Traigh Bhagh on 19 Jan and The Reef from 28 Jan. A total of 10 were seen on Tiree on 30 Jan. On Islay a juv. was at Blackrocks on 13 Jan with this or another found dead there on 24 Jan. Nearby one was at Uiskentuie on 26 and 27 Jan. In Kintyre a juv. was at Bellochantuy (photo previous page) and another juv. was at Campbeltown on 13 Jan, a juv. was at Rhunahaorine Point on 14 Jan and two juvs were at Tayinloan from 20 Jan. In Mid-Argyll a juv. was at Ormsary from 31 Jan. On Mull a juv. was at Fidden on 30 Dec.

LITTLE AUK. One flew past Machrihanish SBO, Kintyre on 10 Nov. Two headed west off Aird, Tiree on 5 Dec with four past there on 8 Dec.

Doves, cuckoos, owls, swift, kingfisher & woodpeckers

BARN OWL. One was hunting along the roadside at Kirkapol, Tiree at 22.15hrs on 16 Nov.

KINGFISHER. One was at Loch Gilp, Mid-Argyll on 11, 27 Nov and 1, 16 Dec. Possibly the same bird was at Ardrishaig on 29 Nov. One was at Loch Etive, Mid-Argyll on 13 Nov. One was at Loch Cuin, Mull on 19 Nov and 17 Dec. One was at the Bridgend Merse, Islay on 17 Nov and possibly the same bird at Loch Skerrols on 20 Nov. One was seen at Carrick Castle, Cowal on 27 Nov and one was at Aros Park, Mull on 2 Jan.

Passerines (larks to buntings)

SKYLARK. High counts: 120 were at Ardnave, Islay on 18 Jan and 80 were at Mulindy, Islay on 15 Jan.

SWALLOW. A late bird was at Ormsary, Mid-Argyll on 12 Nov.

CHIFFCHAFF. On Tiree: classic *tristis* (Siberian) birds were at Balephuill on 3-6 Nov, Whitehouse on 22 Nov and Balephuill on 30 Nov; *collybita/abietinus* birds were at The Glebe on 3 Nov, Milton on 8 Nov, Balephuill on 11-14 Nov and Loch a' Phuill on 30 Nov. One was at Kames, Cowal on 1 Dec.

BLACKCAP. Several reports came from Tiree in Nov. One was at Port Charlotte, Islay on 1 Dec; one was at Lochdon, Mull on 3 Dec and two were at Tobermory, Mull on 2 Jan.

NUTHATCH. One or more were present at Ardkinglas Woodland Garden, Cowal on 15 Jan.

STARLING. High counts: 1500 were at Loch an Eilein barn, Tiree on 27 Nov.

BLACKBIRD. Sixty were foraging in leaf-litter in the Grammar School grounds, Campbeltown, Kintyre on 8 Nov.

FIELDFARE. High counts: 180 were at the Laggan, Kintyre on 7 Nov, 470 were at Crosshouses, Islay on 7 Nov, with at least 2,400 counted on the island that day, 300 were at Milton, Tiree on 8 Nov, 461 were at Oronsay, Colonsay on 8 Nov and 320 were at RSPB Gruinart, Islay on 12 Dec.

REDWING. High counts: 140 were at Lossit, Islay on 4 Nov. Some 1,500 were around Tiree in flocks

Common Rosefinch, MSBO, Kintyre, 12 Nov ©Eddie Maguire



Snow Bunting, Oronsay, 14 Nov ©Morgan Vaughan

of up to 120 on 17-18 Nov and a total of 600 were around Tiree on 13 to 14 Jan.

BLACK REDSTART. One was near the Tayinloan Jetty, Kintyre on 28 Nov (Katie Pendreigh).

BRAMBLING. One was at Lochdon, Mull on 3 Nov, one was at Cairnbaan, Mid-Argyll on 4 Nov, one was on Oronsay, Colonsay on 9 Nov, one was at Bunahabhain, Islay on 17 Nov, one was in Dunoon, Cowal on 27 Dec and 31 Jan, and one was at Kilchoman, Islay on 25 Jan.

LINNET. High count: 95 were near Machir Bay, Islay on 7 Nov.

TWITE. High count: 540 were at The Oa, Islay during a farmland bird survey on 10 Nov.

COMMON REDPOLL. On Tiree, a late "NW" bird was at Balephuill on 1 Nov and a large Greenland bird with a NW bird was at Balephuill on 3 to 6 Nov. A large brown *rostrata* bird was at Hynish, Tiree on 14 Jan with House Sparrows.

COMMON ROSEFINCH. A juv. was at the feeding station at MSBO, Kintyre on 12 Nov (Eddie Maguire). A late juv. was at Bunessan, Mull on 30 Nov (George Newall).

BULLFINCH. Higher counts: five brightly coloured and large males, thought to be 'northern types', were at Garmony, Mull on 3 Nov (Laura Percy). Six were at Cluanach, Islay on 4 Nov, 10 were at Bolsay Moor, Islay on 26 Nov and six were at Ardmere Bay, Mull on 15 Jan.

REED BUNTING. High count: 19 were on Oronsay, Colonsay on 9 Jan.

SNOW BUNTING. A much better showing this winter with one at Feolin, Jura on 6 Nov, one at Killinallan, Islay on 6 Nov, 20 at Ardnave Point, Islay on 9 Nov, eight at the Add Estuary, Mid-Argyll on 9 Nov, one at Loch Gorm, Islay on 13 Nov, with five there on 19 Dec. One was on Oronsay,

Colonsay on 14 Nov and 31 Jan, one at Hynish, Tiree on 18 Nov, four at Tayinloan, Kintyre on 18-19 Nov, one at Traigh nan Gilean, Tiree on 14 Dec, one at Uiskentuie, Islay on 23 Dec with 11 nearby on 3 Jan. One was near Claonaig, Kintyre on 28 Dec, one at Drumore (nr Bellochantuy), Kintyre and one at Tayinloan Ferry, Kintyre on 17 Jan;. One was on Creag Buireinich (above Fernoch, Kilmichael Glen), Mid-Argyll on 17 Jan, four were near Portsonachan (Loch Awe), Mid-Argyll on 18 Jan, three up near the Alt Dearg wind turbines, Mid-Argyll on 19 Jan, 24 at Corran Sands, Jura on 19 Jan, two at The Reef, Tiree on 21 Jan, one at Gribun, Mull on 17 Jan and three at Loch Buie, Mull on 22 Jan.

LAPLAND BUNTING. One was on machair at Hough, Tiree on 18 Nov and another was at Gott Tip, Tiree on 15 Dec.

Jim Dickson

Argyll Bird Recorder (contact details on back page)

Stop Press

ICELAND GULL. A small influx of birds in Feb, with peaks of four at Ormsary, Mid-Argyll, two at Campbeltown Harbour, Kintyre and two on Islay.

GLAUCOUS GULL. During Feb, several birds on Tiree and singles on Islay, Ormsary, Colonsay, the Add Estuary, Mid-Argyll and Tayinloan, Kintyre.

MAGPIE. Singles reported at Butterbridge, Cowal. Also one bird, perhaps more in Kilmichael Glen, at Cairnbaan and in Lochgilphead, Mid-Argyll.

NUTHATCH. One at Glencruiten, Oban on 1 and 6 Feb.

Articles for the June issue of the *Eider* should
with the Editor before the
20th May 2015

Officials and Committee of the Argyll Bird Club (2014/2015)

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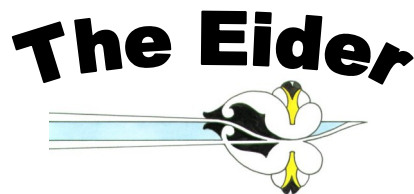
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The *Eider* is the quarterly newsletter of the **Argyll Bird Club**. The editor welcomes articles about birds, wildlife conservation and ecology in Argyll, including articles of a wider natural history interest, notices of forthcoming events, book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