

# The Eider



The Eider is the Quarterly Newsletter of the Argyll Bird Club: Scottish Charity Number SC008782

## Editorial

Nowadays, many bird clubs have professionally designed websites that hold an enormous amount of information for birders. Glasgow University, through Bob Furness, have until now kindly provided a platform for the Argyll Bird Club's website, but is unable to do so in the future. Members who have looked at the current website soon realise that it's pretty basic, and that it has changed little since it was launched because no one has been willing to take on the task of managing the site.

We now have an opportunity to develop a new site that can be updated frequently. The committee is currently looking at how this can be achieved. Recently, some progress has been made, and it is hoped that a new website will be available from spring 2004, which will gradually be refined during the rest of the year. The address of the new website will be given in the next issue of *The Eider*. I promise it will be far shorter than the current address!

*"and it is hoped that a new website will be available from spring 2004"*

The new website should enhance the profile of the club as well as providing a useful tool for both ABC members and visitors to Argyll. For example, it could attract many new members who are currently unaware of the club's existence. Providing the detailed information for the website will involve far too much work for the committee alone. So, in the next newsletter I will be setting out how members can help, and I hope some of you will join us in this challenge.

With each issue, *The Eider* is growing in both size and the variety of articles published. So, I would like to thank all of you who have written articles during the year – please don't stop! For help and contributions to this issue thanks are due to Paul Daw, Jim Duncan, Bill Jackson, David

Jardine, David Merrie, Sandra MacLean, Katie Pendreigh, Linda Petty, Tristan ap Rheinallt, Juliet Shrimpton, Alan Spellman, Margaret Staley, Ian Teesdale and David Wood.

Finally, I would like wish all our readers a very happy Christmas and prosperous New Year full of many new birding experiences!

## Spring Meeting 2004

Will be held in the Royal Marine Hotel, Hunter's Quay, Dunoon on Saturday 27th March

The programme will appear in the March *Eider*



## Chairman's report on the AGM

It was very good to see so many of you again at Cairnbaan on the 8<sup>th</sup> November. On the next page, Steve Petty has provided a roundup of the varied and excellent talks we enjoyed on the day.

The AGM also covered some diverse issues. Bill Staley showed an analysis of our 158 members by length of membership and areas of residence. The club has a loyal 'ex-pat' following, with some 20% of members living outwith Argyll, including one in America. Our total membership has been approximately static for the past few years, and several members suggested that the club could publicise itself better. The committee agrees, and since the AGM we have agreed to pursue extra avenues, namely a revamped website, awareness-raising through colour leaflets, and hopefully, an increased profile in the local press. Bob Furness commented that the club has always promoted itself effec-

December 2003

## Editor

Steve Petty, Craigielea, Kames

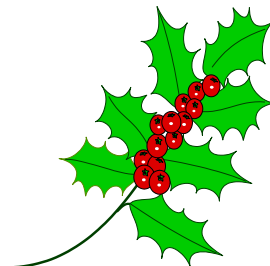
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To receive the electronic version of *The Eider* in colour, member should send their e-mail address to the Editor (contact details above). Past issues (since June 2002) can be downloaded from the club's website (address on back page).

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tively by word of mouth. So, if you like what we do, make it your new year's resolution to recruit a friend! I am happy to mail out a complimentary copy of *The Eider* to prospective members; in the new colour format, it's an excellent advertisement for the club.

I reported on efforts by the club to expand mink control in Argyll so as to protect important seabird and eider colonies on small coastal islands, which are some of the most visible, valued and threatened elements of Argyll's biodiversity. Clive Craik's internationally-recognised work has shown that a clearly focused mink control program can be very effective in this respect. There was a consensus at the AGM that the club should continue to explore options with various partners, and there was a unanimous vote that the club should contribute up to £1000 to such a partnership. I can assure you that this commitment will significantly increase the chances of pulling in extra funding from other sources.

We heard that Paul Daw and Clive Craik have made great progress with the 2001 *Argyll Bird Report*, which is now with the printers and should be with you in early or mid January. This has been a herculean effort, particularly by Paul. Several members have now offered to help with the 2002 report, and I am very grateful to them all. However, we still seek some extra helpers. If you have some basic skills with Word, and just a little time to help, please consider getting involved. Paul or myself would be happy to discuss this with you anytime. We are doing everything we can to ensure you have less time to wait for the 2002 report.

To finish off this summary of the AGM, I want to repeat my thanks to everyone in the club who helped organised field trips during the past year; and of course to the rest of the committee for all their hard work. Best wishes to you all for 2004.

*David Wood, 27 November 2003*

## Autumn meeting

Meetings at Cairnbaan Hotel are always well attended, and so was the autumn meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> November, with the conference room almost at full capacity. If you stayed at home to watch the rugby, you missed some excellent presentations! The Chairman welcomed Bill Gardner from the Scottish Ornithologist's Club.

Ross Lilley (SNH) got the conference off to an excellent start with a first-rate account of **White-tailed Eagles** on Mull. His presentation described the results of

## Argyll Bird Report

Volume 18 (2001) is with the printers. Publication is due around mid January

recent research, conflicts over lamb killing and ways of resolving issues with the farming community. The **White-tailed Eagle** population in western Scotland has slowly increased since they were re-established (see RSPB press release, pages 12-13). Research by the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology has shown that on Mull, the eagles' main prey (2332 items in total) during the breeding season are birds and mammals, with **Fulmars**, **Rabbits** and **lambs** being the most frequently taken prey. Overall, there was much variation between pairs, but eagles on Mull took more lambs than pairs elsewhere in Scotland. Eagles fed both on lambs that had died from natural causes and those they killed (40% of all lambs taken). Interestingly, lamb mortality due to eagle predation was not additive to overall mortality. In other words, some lambs seemed destined to die, if not from eagle predation then from factors such as starvation or disease. This suggested that eagles were mainly killing lambs in poor condition, and this was confirmed by comparing the condition of lambs killed by eagles to those that survived. Nevertheless, in a few eagle home ranges many lambs were killed and this imposed a financial burden on farmers. Ross went on to describe SNH's *Natural Care Programme* for both **White-Tailed** and **Golden Eagles** on Mull. This was based on area payments to farmers to protect and maintain eagles on their land and to improve the management of pregnant ewes and lambs, and to enhance the habitat for eagles by aiding the recovery of natural vegetation and live prey.

After this, Juliet Shrimpton from the Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust (HWDT) gave an excellent account of the educational and scientific work of the trust (more information on page 10). This was followed by a detailed account of species of dolphin and whale that are commonly encountered off the west coast of Scotland. The diversity and abundance of cetaceans in waters around the Hebrides appears to be far greater than anywhere else in the UK, which I'm sure was a surprise to many in the audience.

After lunch, it was a pleasure to welcome Colin Galbraith to talk about the work of nature conservation agencies at home and abroad, including the work of SNH. Older members will recall that Colin was the

main catalyst behind the formation of the Argyll Bird Club in 1985. This was a wide ranging presentation that touched on species management, protected area networks, marine conservation, grazing conflicts, global issues and policy and politics. Colin then spent a little time talking about some recent high profile projects, including the impact of **Hen Harriers** on **Red Grouse**, **Hedgehog** predation on the eggs of **Waders** in the Uists and the proposed re-establishment of **Beavers** in Argyll.

To round off the conference, and at short notice, Bill Gardner explained his role as Development Manager for the SOC. In particular, he described the new Scottish Birdwatching Resource Centre at Aberlady Bay, which will replace what was the SOC's headquarters at Regent Terrace in Edinburgh. Planning approval for the venture was granted on the 2nd October by East Lothian Council. Bill explained that fundraising was an important part of the project and his job. To date he had received promises/pledges in excess of £100,000!

Thanks are due to Nigel Scriven and members of the committee for organising the conference, to the speakers for excellent presentations and to the Cairnbaan Hotel for making us all so comfortable; as always the food was excellent.

*Editor*

## Colonsay weekend

On 12 September a group of 11 Argyll Bird Club members and friends met on the pier at Oban for the first ABC visit to Colonsay. Sailing down the Firth of Lorne in fading light, with a strengthening wind and a poor forecast raised some concerns that it could be an interesting weekend! Despite the poor conditions, or possibly because of them, some good birds were seen from the "Isle of Mull", including **Great Skuas**, **Manx Shearwaters** and at least six **Storm Petrels**.



ABC members enjoying a walk on Colonsay (photo—David Merrie)



A late arrival on Colonsay and thick black clouds meant that the prospect of watching (and listening) at Loch Fada was soon postponed. The island minibus, which had been hired for the weekend, was used to transport our group to the comfortable bunkhouse so they could unpack before resorting to the hotel for some refreshments. It soon started raining, which DJ appreciated, as this indicated the poor weather would be gone by the following morning. And indeed it was!

Saturday broke grey, but dry. At breakfast birding started in earnest, with two **Choughs** flying over the bunk-house being amongst the first birds seen. It was early on Saturday morning that perhaps the most significant observation of the weekend was made—a **House Martin** was seen over the bunkhouse and careful inspection of the eaves by David Merrie revealed two nests—the first confirmed breeding on the islands for around 70 years.

As the weather was slow in declaring its hand, the group first looked at Loch Fada where more (or were they the same?) **Choughs** were found feeding in the same field with some of Colonsay's resident **Canada Geese**. At Port Mor, while some members of the group enjoyed a bit of retail therapy in the island bookshop (situated next to the shore in one of the island's former generator sheds), others added **Lapwing**, **Skylark**, **Eider** and **Oystercatcher** to the growing list.

By late morning, the tiny piece of blue sky seen first after breakfast had started to grow, so the group went to Kiloran Bay for lunch. Here, it was relatively sheltered from the strong wind, which blew all day. The walk to Balnahard Bay at the north end of the island was easy, for the wind was on our backs. A small group of migrant **Ringed Plover** and **Turnstone** were

on the rocks in Kiloran Bay. At Balnahard Farm, **Swallows** and **Stonechats** were sheltering behind the hill.

While sitting on the dunes, the sun came out, and we saw migrant **Red Admiral** and **Painted Lady** fluttering by. Offshore it was busy with passing seabirds – around 300 **Shags**, plenty of auks and **Gannets**, an **Arctic Skua**, 50 **Manx Shearwaters** along with a single **Sooty Shearwater** found through Ron McNab's patience and perseverance. While soaking up the pleasant surroundings, we also enjoyed good views of a **Peregrine** off the point. After

sitting for almost 30 minutes at the edge of the beach, a **Brent Goose** was noticed only 100 m away on the shore. It had probably been there throughout the time but had eluded observation—or had it only just walked out from behind the seaweed-covered rock on which it fed? It appeared to be a youngster and had possibly sought shelter from the strong winds during its migration.

Having reached the end of the island, we turned around and headed back into the strong wind on our way back to the van. On route, we walked through the polices

#### Species list for the Colonsay field trip - 12-14 September 2003

Red-throated Diver	Dunlin	Wren
Little Grebe	Snipe	Dunnock
Fulmar	Curlew	Robin
Sooty Shearwater	Redshank	Stonechat
Manx Shearwater	Greenshank*	Wheatear
Storm Petrel	Turnstone	Blackbird
Gannet	Great Skua	Song Thrush
(Cormorant)	Arctic Skua	Blackcap
Shag	Black-headed Gull	Willow Warbler
Grey Heron	Common Gull	Goldcrest
(Mute Swan)	Lesser Black-backed Gull	Coal Tit
Greylag Goose	Herring Gull	Blue Tit
Canada Goose	Great Black-backed Gull	Great Tit
Brent Goose	Kittiwake	Chough
Teal	Razorbill	Jackdaw
Mallard	Guillemot	Hooded Crow
Eider	Puffin	Raven
Red-breasted Merganser	Rock Dove	Starling
Buzzard	Woodpigeon	House Sparrow
Kestrel	Collared Dove	Chaffinch
Peregrine	Skylark	Greenfinch
Pheasant	Swallow	Goldfinch
Oystercatcher	House Martin	Siskin
Ringed Plover	Meadow Pipit	Linnet
Golden Plover	Rock Pipit	Twite
Lapwing	Grey Wagtail	Redpoll
Knot	Pied & White Wagtail	Reed Bunting*

\* heard only

( ) not seen on Colonsay or in waters around Colonsay

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of Colonsay House. A short stop at East Loch Fada added **Dabchick** and **Teal** to the list while on the way to the Hotel for an enjoyable evening meal.

Sunday dawned with grey skies and mizzly showers, but it was still! Frustratingly, clear skies could be seen to the northwest, but showers dogged the group all day. In the absence of wind, the seemingly empty bushes around Kiloran were found to be full of small birds, including **Blackcap**, **Willow Warbler**, **Goldfinch**, **Siskin** and **Collared Dove**, along with an impressive count (for Colonsay) of 22 **Woodpigeons** being logged by the ever-enthusiastic Angus McNab.

As the tide was still well in, a crossing to Oronsay was not yet possible, so the group went down to Ardskenish and Traigh nam Barc before having lunch at the Strand road-end. Despite the poor viewing conditions around 400 **Ringed Plovers**, 50 **Lapwing** and 12 **Knot** were found feeding as the tide receded and in the dunes two **Peregrines** talon-grappled above.

After lunch, the tide had receded, which allowed us to walk over to Oronsay where

we were met by Mike Peacock, the RSPB's manager on Oronsay and Malcolm Ogilvie, an ABC member who was over on a short visit from Islay. Mike gave an excellent introduction to the island and the work being done by RSPB to encourage **Choughs**, **Corncrakes** and other birds. During the tour he explained how sheep numbers had been reduced, Luing cattle introduced and arable cropping re-established. A testament to the importance of stubbles was the flock of 100 **Skylarks**, 150 **Linnet**s and at least two **Greenfinches** (an unusual bird on the almost treeless Oronsay) that flew up as the group crossed the field. Also in attendance were around 170 **Rock Doves**, keenly watched by **Peregrines** from Ben Oronsay.

Following a short visit to the Priory, thanks were expressed to Mike, and the group returned to Colonsay to pack up. Tea was had in rotation in the Pantry before the "Lord of the Isles" arrived to take the group back up to Oban through a glorious sunset. It was a fitting end to a great weekend—maybe we should do it again?

*David Jardine*

## New ideas for field trips?

While the committee tends to organise most field trips, this should not deter other members from arranging ABC field to suitable birding locations. In fact the committee would welcome such assistance! So, if you have a good idea for a trip, please contact the secretary (John Anderson, address on back page).

## Field trip to the Farne Islands and Holy Island in June

A trip to the Farne Islands, off the Northumberland coast, during the breeding season can be truly wonderful experience. In fact, you will probably never ever again see breeding seabirds so close or so numerous! You literally have scores of incubating birds at your feet – ranging from eider ducks to terns to shags. I would be happy to organise the trip if there was enough interest. It would be for weekend 4-6<sup>th</sup> June 2004. Members would have to provide their own transport, but sharing might be possible. It would involve travelling down to the vicinity of Seahouses on the Northumberland coast on Friday evening, a boat trip to the Farnes on Saturday followed by an excursion onto Holy Island on Sunday - and then home. Accommodation would be either in a small hotel or a B&B establishment. The ferry and accommodation would need to be booked well in advance of the trip, so I would need a firm commitment from participants by 15<sup>th</sup> February.

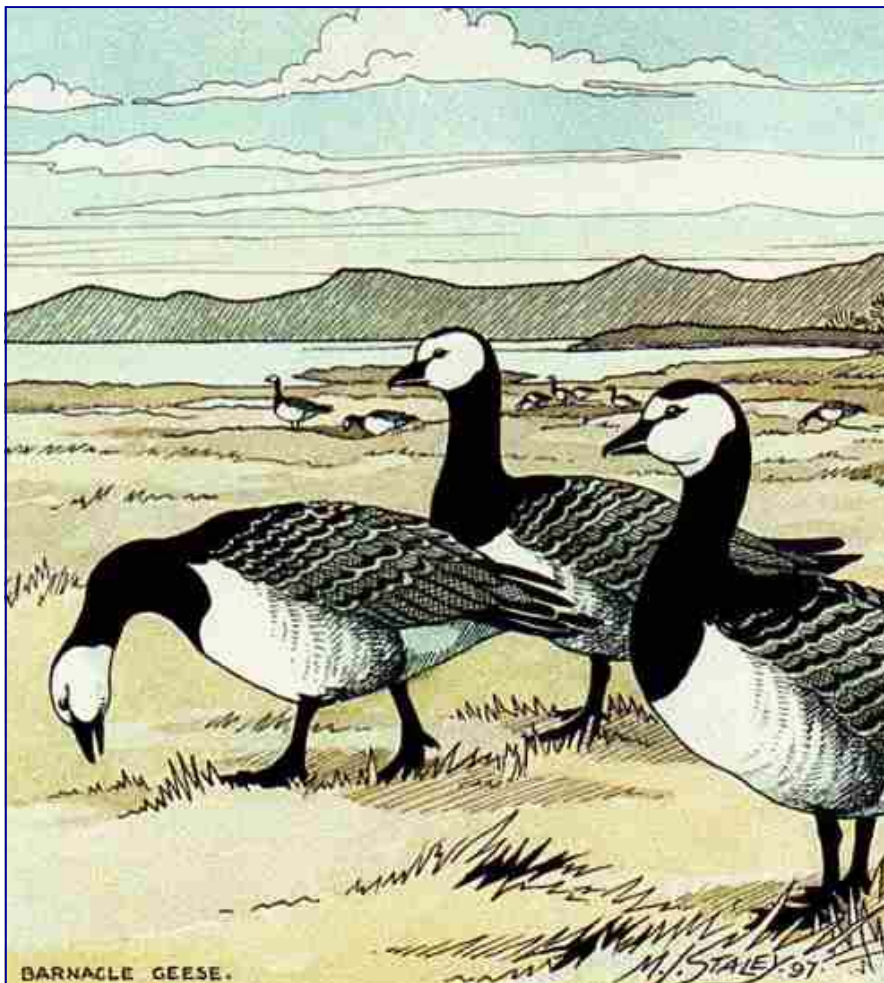
*Steve Petty (contact details on front page)*

## Sound of Gigha field trip in March

In addition to one of the largest winter gatherings of **Slavonian Grebes** in the area, the Sound of Gigha is noted for large numbers of divers (especially **Great Northern** and **Black-throated**), **Long-tailed Ducks**, **Common Scoters** and **Common Goldeneyes**. It is also our most reliable site for the scarce **Velvet Scoter**.

A field trip to look for these birds and others is planned for Saturday March 27<sup>th</sup> 2004. We will also be providing some guidance on how to identify these species. Details of meeting arrangement etc will be published in the March issue of the Eider.

*Paul Daw*



BARNACLE GEESSE.

A super painting of Barnacle Geese by Margaret Staley

## Recent reports (Aug–Oct 2003)

**A**s usual for this time of year, most of the following notes refer to autumn migrants and winter visitors. I find it amazing how bird activity can vary from place to place. For example, Tiree and to some extent Coll had an excellent passage of sea birds while on Islay things were relatively quiet in terms of numbers (but not species).

The great bulk of the reports on which these notes are based come from very few people and I would like to thank John Bowler, Sarah Money, Tristan ap Rheinallt, Alan Spellman and Jim Dickson in particular for their unfailing supply of information on the birds of the areas they watch/report on, also Simon Lawrence for the exciting account of the demise of the Loch Gilp **Greenshank**. Without them there would be a great deal less to tell you. So come on the rest of you; as I am always saying, reports do not always have to be about rare birds. Interesting anecdotes (like the **Jack Snipe** on Tiree almost run over by a wheelbarrow) are well worth reporting.

Highlights of the period under review include; a **Black-necked Grebe** on Islay, an **Osprey** on Coll (their first!), an **American Golden Plover** on Islay, an adult **Rose-coloured Starling** on Tiree, a **Stock Dove** on Islay, a **Barn Owl** on Tiree (first since 1873!), a **European Bee-eater** on Mull and a **Yellow-browed Warbler** on Islay.

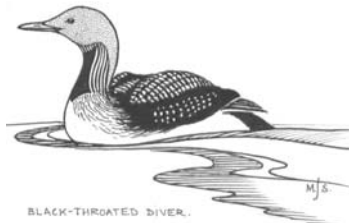
Most of these records are subject to confirmation on receipt of a description.

### Stop Press

A **Common Redpoll** probably a **Mealy**, but possibly of the Icelandic race was seen at Balephuill Tiree on 1<sup>st</sup> Nov.

### Divers to Wildfowl

Six **Red-throated Divers** were found in Hogh Bay, Coll on 26<sup>th</sup> Aug and 49 flew S off Frenchman's Rocks, Islay in 3 hrs on 14<sup>th</sup> Sep. A **Black-necked Grebe** on the floods at Loch Gruinart, Islay from 19<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> Oct was the first Argyll record of this species since 1990 and only the sixth since 1980! Of 7 **Slavonian Grebes** in Loch na Keal on 19<sup>th</sup> Sep one was still in breeding plumage and in Loch Indaal, Islay **Slavonian Grebes** had reached a total of 27 by 11<sup>th</sup> Oct. It was a good autumn for **Sooty Shearwaters** on Tiree. One flew E off Hynish on 21<sup>st</sup> Aug, 2 off Traigh Bhi on 24<sup>th</sup> Aug, 41 were heading W off



Hynish in 75 mins on 5<sup>th</sup> Sep and 18 in an hour off Balevullin on 19<sup>th</sup> Sep, included a flock of 15 together. Also 3 **Sooty Shearwaters** flew past Nevada Point, Coll on 13<sup>th</sup> Sep and two were seen from the Oban-Barra ferry on 30<sup>th</sup> Sep. However, the species was scarce on Islay with a maximum of 16 at Frenchman's Rocks on 14<sup>th</sup> Sep. A very large passage of **Manx Shearwaters** was in evidence at Frenchman's Rocks on 19<sup>th</sup> Aug when an estimated 10,000 birds flew past in 6 hrs and at least 2,000 flew W past Hynish, Tiree in 30 mins on 18<sup>th</sup> Aug. The latter included two **Balearic Shearwaters** only 50m out from the shore. At least 4 flew past Hynish on 5<sup>th</sup> Sep with another on 17<sup>th</sup> Sep. Frenchman's Rocks had 6 **Balearic Shearwater** days during Aug/Sep including 4 on 19<sup>th</sup> Aug and 5 on 22<sup>nd</sup> Aug. Single **European Storm Petrels** were seen off Tiree on 3 dates during Aug including one feeding over a pod of porpoises, 5 were off Hynish during the big movement on 18<sup>th</sup> Aug and 16 were seen there in 80 mins on 13<sup>th</sup> Sep. Frenchman's Rocks had 8 **Storm Petrels** on 19<sup>th</sup> Aug and 4 on 22<sup>nd</sup> Aug. Single **Leach's Storm-Petrels** were seen at two different locations from the Oban/Tiree ferry on 9<sup>th</sup> Sep. One was off Hynish on 13<sup>th</sup> Sep and at Frenchman's Rocks 2 flew by on 9<sup>th</sup> Sep and one on 10<sup>th</sup> Oct. A huge movement of **Northern Gannets** occurred during the first week of Oct with 1,200 an hour passing off Balevullin on 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Seven **Whooper Swans** appeared at Loch Gruinart on 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct. The first on Tiree was on 8<sup>th</sup> Oct and numbers reached 124 by 20<sup>th</sup>, including 25 cygnets. A good showing for **Pink-footed Geese** this autumn, including a flock of 80 over Coll's RSPB reserve on 19<sup>th</sup> September and 55 flying S over the Reef, Tiree on the same day. **Bean Geese** are quite a rarity in Argyll, so 5 nr Port Ellen, Islay was a notable sighting. **Greenland White-fronted** and **Barnacle Geese** both appeared at about the same time including 300+ **White-fronts** at Loch Gruinart on 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct and a total of 175 on Tiree on 8<sup>th</sup> Oct. On 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct, 3,000+ **Barnacles** arrived at Loch Gruinart on a NNW wind and a flock of 95 arrived at Balephetrish, Tiree on 8<sup>th</sup>. On 15<sup>th</sup> Sep, 200 **Light-bellied Brent Geese** massed on the shore at Balephetrish Bay, Tiree, 95 flew SW off Hynish on 17<sup>th</sup> Sep and a flock of 100+ was reported circling over Tobermory, Mull on 25<sup>th</sup> Sep. At least 40 **Snow Geese** seen in a field opposite Gruline Church, Mull on 2<sup>nd</sup>

Sep would presumably have been the birds from Coll. **Canada Geese** have become more numerous in the Add Estuary, Mid-Argyll of late and 125 were counted there on 13<sup>th</sup> Aug. Our old faithful **American Wigeon** appeared in the Add Estuary yet again on 17<sup>th</sup> Sep and has been seen there intermittently since. Two male and two female **Mandarin Ducks** were seen at the southern end of Loch Awe on 21<sup>st</sup> Oct raising the possibility that a breeding population may be established there. Loch a' Phuill, Tiree had a single **Garganey** on 18<sup>th</sup> Aug and 12 **Northern Pintail** on 10<sup>th</sup> Oct, while Loch Gruinart had 26 **Pintails** by 11<sup>th</sup> Oct. A single **Pintail** in the Add estuary on 21<sup>st</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> Oct was unusual for this site. An imm./female **Long-tailed Duck** on Loch an Eilein on 23<sup>rd</sup> Oct was only the second record from a freshwater site on the island. The first **Common Goldeneyes** arrived on Tiree in mid Oct and by 20<sup>th</sup> there were 24 at Loch a' Phuill. The first **Goldeneye** on Islay was at Loch Gorm on 5<sup>th</sup> Oct.

### Raptors to Gamebirds

Three **Red Kites** were reported near Lindhu House, Mull on 19<sup>th</sup> Sep. A single **Red Kite** was seen at Tayinloan Kintyre on 19<sup>th</sup> Oct, another (or possibly the same bird) with wing tags was seen at least twice around Tarbert Golf Course including on 26<sup>th</sup> Oct and one was seen nr Loch Beg, Mull on 21<sup>st</sup> Oct. A **White-tailed Eagle** with orange wing tags seen at Achnacloich (Loch Etive) on 18<sup>th</sup> Oct was from a brood hatched on Mull in 2002. A single **Osprey** attempting to fish at Loch a' Phuill on 24<sup>th</sup> Aug was, perhaps surprisingly, the first record of this species for Tiree. Another **Osprey** fishing at Lochdon Mull on 1<sup>st</sup> August was being harassed by an adult **White-tailed Eagle**. Further **Ospreys** were at Lochdon on 24<sup>th</sup> Aug and at Loch Gruinart 24<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> Aug and a late juv was at Loch Beg, Mull on 6<sup>th</sup> Oct. A **Golden Eagle** was seen at Ben Feall, Coll on 7<sup>th</sup> Aug. Late **Corn Crakes** were seen at Coll RSPB Reserve on 14<sup>th</sup> Sep and at Balemartine, Tiree on 18<sup>th</sup> Sep. A **Common Pheasant** had a brood of 5 large young at Coll RSPB Reserve on 22<sup>nd</sup> September.

### Waders

**European Golden Plover** numbers at Loch a' Phuill had reached 1,300 on 24<sup>th</sup> Aug, by 29<sup>th</sup> Sep 1,875 were counted on the island and an all island survey found 2,882 on 8<sup>th</sup> Oct. An **American Golden Plover** found at Ardnave on 22<sup>nd</sup> Sep, which stayed in the area until 26<sup>th</sup> Oct, was only our 3<sup>rd</sup> ever record of this species. At least 300 **Dunlin** were in Loch Don on 12<sup>th</sup> Aug and a single **Little Stint** was at Loch Gruinart on 31<sup>st</sup> Aug and 1<sup>st</sup> Sep. Two juv. **Curlew Sandpipers** appeared briefly at Loch an Eilein, Tiree on

26<sup>th</sup> Aug, 2 more juvs were at Loch a' Phuill on 6<sup>th</sup> Sep and a further 2 on 13<sup>th</sup>. There were also 2 juv. **Curlew Sandpipers** at Loch Gruinart 30<sup>th</sup> Aug – 2<sup>nd</sup> Sep. If all records are confirmed, **Pectoral Sandpipers** will have had a good autumn at Loch Gruinart. At least one was there from 22<sup>nd</sup> Aug to 2<sup>nd</sup> Sep and there may have been two individuals involved. Another bird reported on 18<sup>th</sup> Oct was still there the following day. Over 30 **Ruffs** passed through Tiree during Aug including 6 at Mannal on 18<sup>th</sup> and 6 at Loch a' Phuill on 24<sup>th</sup>. After 4 at Loch a' Phuill on 6<sup>th</sup> Sep, numbers tailed off until the last single at Ruaig on 29<sup>th</sup> Sep. There were also good numbers at Loch Gruinart, including 4 on 15<sup>th</sup> Aug, 5 on 24<sup>th</sup> Aug and 6 on 7<sup>th</sup> Sep. A single **Ruff** was seen at Coll RSPB Reserve on 1<sup>st</sup> September and one was in the Add Estuary on 29<sup>th</sup> Aug-1<sup>st</sup> Sep. A single **Jack Snipe** at The Reef, Tiree was almost run over by a wheelbarrow! An obvious influx of **Common Snipe** to Tiree during Sep included an estimated 200 grounded in mist on the morning of 16<sup>th</sup>. A flock of 27 **Black-tailed Godwits** appeared at Loch Gruinart on 3<sup>rd</sup> Aug, 24 in the Add Estuary on 5<sup>th</sup> Aug was probably a record for this locality and 39 were briefly at Loch a' Phuill on 12<sup>th</sup> Aug. A colour ringed female **Black-tailed Godwit** seen at Loch Gruinart on 8<sup>th</sup> Aug had been ringed in W. Iceland on 18<sup>th</sup> Apr 2003. A peak count of 78 **Whimbrel** was made at Lochdon on 15<sup>th</sup> Sep. A single **Common Greenshank** was seen briefly in Loch Gilp among 70 **Common Redshank** on 5<sup>th</sup> Oct. It might have remained longer if it had not fallen victim to a predator. One of our members watched as a male **Peregrine Falcon** dive bombed the small huddled groups of **Redshank** on shallow pools as the tide was falling. On each swoop by the Peregrine the **Redshank** tried to dive in 5cm of water and then regrouped fixed to the same pool. Eventually, after 10 mins of repeated swoops the **Peregrine** isolated the **Greenshank** on a pool. After 10-15 swoops where it didn't dare to get wet it finally landed on the bedraggled **Greenshank**, hauled it to the edge and had breakfast! The peak count of **Greenshank** on Tiree during Aug was 6 at Loch a' Phuill on 12<sup>th</sup>, 8 were in the Add Estuary on 31<sup>st</sup> Aug and one was at Totronald Coll on 10<sup>th</sup> August. A **Green Sandpiper** was seen on the Coll RSPB Reserve on 11<sup>th</sup> August and 13 **Common Sandpipers** were counted in the Add Estuary on 8<sup>th</sup> Aug. An excellent autumn for **Grey Phalaropes**. One stopped off to feed briefly off Balevullin, Tiree on 22<sup>nd</sup> Sep and one flew W at the same spot on 4<sup>th</sup> Oct. Four **Grey Phalaropes** in a tight group flew over the Oban/Barra ferry N of Coll on 30<sup>th</sup> Sep and another was at Kilchoman, Islay on 10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> Oct.

### Skuas to Woodpeckers

Two dark-phase **Arctic Skuas** were seen off Gunna Sound, Tiree on 13<sup>th</sup> Aug and an imm. **Pomarine Skua** flew W off Balevullin on 14<sup>th</sup> August. Five imm **Pomarine Skuas** passed close to shore off Balevullin on 19<sup>th</sup> Sep, a light phase adult with full 'spoons' was seen there on 26<sup>th</sup> Sep and there were 2 immatures at the same site on 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Oct. Another adult bird was seen at Frenchman's Rocks on 19<sup>th</sup> Aug. Eight **Arctic Skuas** flew past Frenchman's Rocks on 19<sup>th</sup> Aug and 4 were seen off Balevullin in an hour on



Waxwings photographed at Rhu, Helensburgh by Jim Duncan. Around 40 birds were present in late October for seven days

22<sup>nd</sup> Sep. Two **Great Skuas** flew past Nevada Point, Coll on 13<sup>th</sup> September and one was in Hogh Bay, Coll on 20<sup>th</sup> September. Six headed W off Hynish, Tiree on 5<sup>th</sup> Sep.

A single juv. **Sabine's Gull** was at Frenchman's Rocks on 9<sup>th</sup> Sep and an imm. flew W with **Black-legged Kittiwakes** off Balevullin, Tiree on 7<sup>th</sup> Oct. A 2<sup>nd</sup> winter **Little Gull** was seen well, with **Kittiwakes**, in the Sound of Jura on 17<sup>th</sup> Aug and early 1<sup>st</sup> winter **Glaucous Gulls** were found at Ardnave on 4<sup>th</sup> Oct and at Loch a' Phuill on 5<sup>th</sup> Oct. Three adult **Little Terns** were still feeding young on Tiree on 1<sup>st</sup> Aug. An imm **Arctic Tern** was off Hynish on 25<sup>th</sup> Sep and 2 **Sandwich Terns** were feeding in Sorobaidh Bay, Tiree on 27<sup>th</sup> Sep. Huge numbers of auks were reported flying W past Coll/Tiree in early Oct including 7,000 **Guillemots/Razorbills** an hour on 3<sup>rd</sup>.

A **Turtle Dove** at Sorisdale, Coll on 22<sup>nd</sup> September was the first autumn record for the island. Just as surprising was a **Stock Pigeon (Stock Dove)** at Loch Gruinart on 19<sup>th</sup> Oct. Towards the end of August both **Barn Owl** and **Short-eared Owl** were seen accompanied by juvs. in the Grass-

point area of Mull. An excellent description of a **Barn Owl** was provided for a bird at Balephuill Tiree on 26<sup>th</sup> Oct; the first record for the island since 1873! Late **Common Cuckoos** were seen at Moine Mhor on 22<sup>nd</sup> Jul, at Loch Gruinart on 3<sup>rd</sup> Aug and on Coll on 21<sup>st</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> August. It was an exceptionally good autumn for **Common Kingfishers**, with birds being reported from Kilchurn Castle (Loch Awe) on 17<sup>th</sup> Aug, at Loch a' Chumhainn (Loch Cuin), Mull early on 29<sup>th</sup> August, Moy Castle (Lochbuie), Mull 31<sup>st</sup> Aug – 2<sup>nd</sup> Sep, Knock Bridge, Mull on 3<sup>rd</sup> Sep, Killiechranan Camp Site, Mull on 30<sup>th</sup> Sep/1<sup>st</sup> Oct, several times in Loch Gilp during Sep/Oct and over the sea on the south side of Loch Craignish on 17<sup>th</sup> Oct. A **European Bee-eater** was reported near the Camp Site at Killiechranan, Mull and in a local garden on 30<sup>th</sup> Sep.

### Passerines

The last **Barn Swallow** on Tiree was noted on 8<sup>th</sup> Oct, the last **Northern Wheatears** on Tiree were at Hynish on 6<sup>th</sup> Oct and 3 late **House Martins** were at Grasspoint, Mull on 29<sup>th</sup> Oct. A **White-throated Dipper** of the Scandinavian 'black-bellied' race was reported in Kilmilver Burn, Mid-Argyll on 23<sup>rd</sup> Sep. An influx of **Bohemian Waxwings** has been slow to get going in Argyll. Although there have been reports from Lochbuie, Mull (7 on 26<sup>th</sup> Oct) and Kilmichael Glen, Mid-Argyll on 25<sup>th</sup> Oct and at Loch Frisa and Fishnish, Mull none has been reported elsewhere so far. A male **Ring Ouzel** was seen on the front lawn of a house at Tighnabruaich on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> Oct and an immature male **Ring Ouzel** arrived with winter thrushes at Balephuill, Tiree on 31<sup>st</sup> Oct. The first **Redwing** on Tiree was at Heylpol on 1<sup>st</sup> Oct and it was soon followed by larger number, so that by 20<sup>th</sup> Oct there were around 1,000 birds on the island. Small flocks of **Fieldfares** were reported flying in from the mainland to Mull on the evening of 21<sup>st</sup> Sep. The main arrival was in mid-Oct when 180 were at Moine Mhor and 400 at Grasspoint, Mull on 14<sup>th</sup> and birds had arrived on Tiree by 18<sup>th</sup>. A flock of 30 **Mistle Thrushes** were at Loch Crinan on 21<sup>st</sup> Aug. Adult **Sedge Warblers** were still feeding young at Hynish, Tiree on 18<sup>th</sup> Aug, but a **Common Grasshopper Warbler** at Loch Crinan on 31<sup>st</sup> Aug was possibly a migrant. A **Blackcap** was calling in Campbell Crescent, Oban on 24<sup>th</sup> Sep and one was in a garden at Salen, Mull on 24<sup>th</sup> Oct. A late **Garden Warbler** was skulking in a garden at Hynish, Tiree also on 24<sup>th</sup> Sep and a **Spotted Flycatcher** was at West Hynish on 28<sup>th</sup> Sep. A confiding imm. **Pied Flycatcher** was flycatching in a garden at Heylpol on 18<sup>th</sup> Sep. A **Yellow-browed Warbler** at Loch Gruinart was first seen by the warden as it flew past his kitchen



Fieldfare eating rowan berries (photo Bill Jackson)

window. He thought it looked like something unusual and went to investigate - we should be so lucky! Two **Coal Tits** at Lodge Plantation, Coll on 22<sup>nd</sup> Sep were unusual visitors to the island. An adult **Rose-coloured Starling** seen at Crossapol, Tiree on 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> Sep had, according to the local woman who reported it, been in the area for a couple of weeks! **Eurasian Jays** were turning up in unusual places in Oct, including 2 in a garden near Easdale (Seil Island), Mid-Argyll on 5<sup>th</sup> and 2 at Fishnish, Mull on 28<sup>th</sup>. On 20<sup>th</sup> Oct 3 **Jays** were seen together in a cherry tree near Loch Glashan, Mid-Argyll eating cherries! A single **Brambling** at Lochdon on 20<sup>th</sup> Oct was the only one reported so far. A flock of 72 **Twite** were at Totronald, Coll on 25<sup>th</sup> August and 210 were counted at Coll RSPB Reserve on 10<sup>th</sup> September. A **Common Crossbill** at Ballygrant on 18<sup>th</sup> Oct was the only recent report of this species. **Lapland Longspurs (Lapland Buntings)** were on the move in late Sep, with one at Loch Grunart on 27<sup>th</sup> and calling birds over Loch a' Phuill on 29<sup>th</sup> and The Reef, Tiree on 30<sup>th</sup>. Another, very vocal, individual was at Loch Bhasapol, Tiree on 20<sup>th</sup> Oct. The first **Snow Bunting** of autumn was at Balephetrish Bay on 18<sup>th</sup> Sep and was followed by 4 at Ardnave, Islay on 13<sup>th</sup> Oct.

#### Non-birds.

As well as the **Grey Phalarope** found at Kilchoman on 10<sup>th</sup> Oct there was a rather small **Loggerhead Turtle**. It was thought at first to be dead but turned out to be alive and was later released into Loch Indaal.

**Paul Daw** (Tel: 01546 886260. E-mail: monedula@globalnet.co.uk)

## Committee Meeting Notes

As usual, the meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> November proved to be a very convivial affair, with most members gathering beforehand to enjoy an evening meal at the hotel. At the meeting proper the usual offices of welcome, approval of the minutes of the previous meeting, and matters arising were expedited. Bob Furness and Nigel Scriven were thanked for organising the varied and enjoyable autumn meeting at Cairnbaan.

Items on the agenda included the forging of closer links with the *Scottish Ornithologists' Club*, as well as the *British Trust for Ornithology* and the *RSPB*, and the benefits of such links to the *Argyll Bird Club* and its membership.

Distribution of the immense workload involved in the production of the *Argyll Bird Report* amongst club and committee members had been agreed previously, and names of helpers for data inputting were put forward - **further offers would be welcomed**. Paul Daw agreed to send an introductory pack outlining what is involved to anyone interested. It was agreed that other (cheaper) printing options should be explored for future reports without compromising on quality.

Committee members suggested speakers for our spring 2004 meeting in Dunoon. These will be followed up and arranged in time to provide a programme of interesting and informative talks - with the emphasis being on Argyll. It seemed a long way off, but preparations were also made to organise the autumn 2004 meeting. A new *Argyll Bird Club* website will be set up by early next year. Ideas for it from club members would be gratefully received by Steve Petty, who has kindly undertaken to coordinate the work.

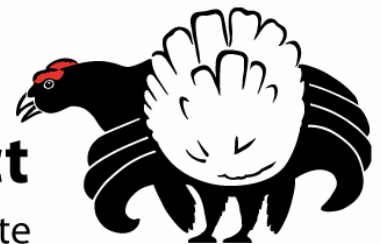
Suggestions for field trips in 2004 were put forward, such as a trip in February/March to the Sound of Gigha (Paul Daw), in June to the Farnes and Holy Islands (Steve Petty) and possibly to the River Add Estuary (David Wood). At the last club meeting at Cairnbaan, about 18 people registered an interest in an autumn 2004 trip to Tiree. Further suggestions included northeastern Scotland, Scarba, South Uist and Handa - organisers needed.

The Committee are meeting again on 3rd February and 23rd March, 2004 and would welcome any suggestions, ideas or offers of help.

*Katie Pendreigh*

## Black Grouse Recovery Project

Argyll & Bute



Two years of survey work co-ordinated by the project in Argyll and Bute has highlighted what big trouble black grouse are in locally, but it has also been successful in attracting urgently needed funding to key areas for habitat management.

Survey work in 2003 was extended from Kintyre, Knapdale and Mid Argyll into Cowal, the Roseneath peninsula and Helensburgh north to Glen Douglas. A total of 118 displaying males were recorded during survey work in 2003. As in 2002, the largest lek held 7 males whilst the average lek size remained below 2 males. Information from leks surveyed in both years indicated a 15% decline in numbers between years. Re-surveying of most of the leks found in 2002 was made possible by a co-ordinated effort, which included volunteer surveyors, Forest Enterprise and National Park Rangers and members of the Project's steering and working groups.

Many Argyll Bird Club members responded following the request for survey workers by the Project Officer at the autumn meeting at the Cairnbaan Hotel in 2002, with many new volunteers, particularly in the Cowal area. Special thanks go to those of you who organised co-ordinated counts. The Project Officer's survey target area for 2003 was Cowal, south of Strachur. Results from this area indicated a 73% decline in displaying males from Sue Haysom's work in 1998.

From the two years' survey work, the Project has devised a **Core Black Grouse Area** in Argyll and Bute based on the key 700 ha around our most important leks. This provides a focus for conservation action and encourages the targeting of higher rates of funding to the most important black grouse areas. The **Core Area** includes 57% of the estimated population of displaying males in Argyll and Bute (using 2003 data where available and

2002 where not). Each part of the **Core Area** has been assigned a level of priority. Parts of the **Core Area**, which hold the largest leks are ranked Priority 1. Those which hold smaller leks in close proximity to each other are ranked Priority 2. Parts of the **Core Area** ranked Priority 3 have been selected because they hold leks that can help stop the largest populations becoming isolated from one another.

The great news is that there are now two new sources of funding available for black grouse management in Argyll within the **Core Area**:

- Forestry Commission Scotland has agreed to fund black grouse management through the *Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme* (SFGS) at 90% of standard costs for **Core Area** Priority 1 and 2 on a trial basis. The results of this trial will feed into the review of the SFGS in 2004.
- The *Forestry and Rural Development Scheme* has a specific pot of money available to Argyll and Strathpey for management within existing forests. This Scheme can top up SFGS funding of standard costs to 100% within the **Core Area** where eligible operations will help develop forest-based tourism for black grouse. Other sub-themes (with larger budgets) within the Scheme could be used to improve black grouse habitat. For example, improving the design of forests within tourist corridors.

All **Core Area** Priority 1 and 2 sites will be visited over the next few months by the Project Officer to gain an initial assessment of the potential for habitat management and the likely level of uptake of the available funding by landowners. From this framework a timetable of work for the next phase of the Project will be constructed.

All the Project's work hinges on getting good reliable survey data on the numbers and location of black grouse leks in Argyll and Bute. Two years worth of data puts us in a strong position to lobby successfully for increased funding in key areas. However, the survey work isn't over, with parts of north Cowal, north Mid Argyll, Lorne and Jura still to be covered. However, it is not anticipated that any large numbers of black grouse will be discovered in these areas. In 2004, we hope to be able to cover most of the leks surveyed in 2002 and 2003 through another co-ordinated effort. Another year's survey data will make any trend evident in black grouse numbers more robust. If you would like to get involved please contact the me.

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## Another swift's tale

In common with Michael Thomas (*The Eider*, June 2003), I am fascinated by swifts. Although Islay, unlike Bute, has no breeding **Common Swifts** and sightings are rather few and far between, I have enjoyed watching various species of swift in different parts of the world over the years. Until recently, I would have said that the **White-throated Needletail** was my favourite species. My first encounter with these boldly patterned birds, scything through the humid air above a densely forested Queensland hillside, was one of the highlights of an extended visit to Australia. However, there are large, strikingly plumaged swifts in other parts of the world as well, and in this article I shall describe an unexpected encounter with one of them.

On the afternoon of June 9<sup>th</sup> last year I arrived in Toronto from the UK at the start of a week-long birding trip. It was my first visit to Canada since 1987 and my first to North America since 1993. Although I knew that spring migration would be more or less over, there were several species of breeding warbler that I hoped to see. My first destination was Rondeau Provincial Park on the shores of Lake Erie, my target species there being the **Prothonotary Warbler**. I spent the evening of June 9<sup>th</sup> searching for it and at the same time renewing my acquaintance with lots of birds I used to know very well, having lived in Quebec for three years in the 1980s. I was pleased to discover that many field characters, and quite a few calls and songs, were still stored in my memory.

On June 10<sup>th</sup> I was up well before dawn and I set off along Rondeau's Marsh Trail at around 5 a.m., when it was still almost dark. The sky was clear and there was very little breeze. Once the sun rose, it soon warmed up and became a bright, though somewhat hazy, morning. I spent three very pleasant hours pottering along the first part of the trail, enjoying the sight of old friends such as **Indigo Bunting**, **Rose-breasted Grosbeak**, **Northern Cardinal** and **Orchard Oriole**. I was enjoying myself immensely.

At around 8 a.m., as I stood listening to the birdsong and debating whether or not to attempt a photograph of a **Red-winged Blackbird** perched on a nearby branch, I noticed what appeared to be a swift flying directly towards me from the direction of the lake. As I thought "swift", I simultaneously thought "impossible" because this was clearly a very large bird. I was well aware that the only common swift species in eastern North America is the **Chimney Swift**, although I had not yet seen any on my trip.

Various other unlikely possibilities flashed through my mind, including **Black Tern** and **Hobby**. But despite these stray thoughts I knew that it was a swift, even in an almost head-on view, and its appearance as it came closer confirmed my initial instinctive identification. It also clearly was *not* a **Chimney Swift**. With the sun more or less behind me and the bird approaching from the west, the light conditions were excellent. It flew straight towards me and passed directly overhead at a height of perhaps 10 metres, before continuing inland. For a swift, it seemed huge. Although I wasn't able to compare it directly with anything else, it was clearly much larger than a **Common Swift** and was noticeably bulky with broad-based wings. Its plumage was very striking, being entirely black or blackish with a narrow gleaming white band or collar across the upper breast. I had an excellent view of the underparts but I didn't see the upperparts at all.

My first reaction was to reach for my copy of Sibley's *North American Bird Guide*, the only field guide I had with me. I remembered that there was a species of swift in the West that had white as well as black in the plumage. Although I could not remember its name or its exact appearance, I imagined that it might turn up as a vagrant in the East from time to time. However, when I opened the book and looked at the paintings of this species, the **White-throated Swift**, I realised that it did not match the appearance of my bird at all; nor did anything else on the page.

At this point I tried to convince myself that I was imagining things. But I knew that, however brief the view, I had seen this bird very well indeed. It seemed that I had finally succumbed to the "it isn't in the book" syndrome. What could I do? I contented myself with drawing a quick sketch in my field notebook and adding some notes as I returned to the car. By this time I had unearthed a vague memory of a swift I saw in Venezuela in 1999. I even thought I could remember its name – **White-collared Swift** – but I had no reason to suppose that it ever occurred in North America. As I walked back towards my car, I had plenty of opportunity to study **Chimney Swifts**, several of which appeared very soon after the large swift and may well have arrived with it. Also present were **Purple Martins**, **Tree Swallows**, **Barn Swallows** and **Bank Swallows**. None of them bore any resemblance to the bird I had seen.

The experience left me feeling unsettled. Although in the normal course of events I am a keen rarity-hunter, I knew that having been in the country for less than 24 hours, I was out of my element. Had I had the opportunity to study the bird for a



lengthy period, I might have felt driven to report it to someone. As it was, I knew that although I had clearly seen something very unusual, no local birder would be impressed by an unknown observer reporting something he couldn't identify, seen for only about a minute. Nevertheless, I did stop at the park visitor centre, only to find that it was closed for the day. At this point I decided that I would try to forget the whole event.

Later that afternoon, having arrived at Point Pelee, Canada's migration Mecca, I visited the Pelee Wings bookshop. On impulse I picked up a copy of the National Geographic field guide and found the swifts' page. Staring out at me was the bird I had seen. It was indeed a **White-collared Swift** and an extreme rarity in North America. I decided that I had to report the sighting in case it might still be around. I therefore approached the people who ran the shop. They put me in touch with a well-known Point Pelee birder, Alan Wormington, who encouraged me to submit the record to the Ontario Bird Records Committee. I duly did so and, despite the brevity of the sighting, it has been accepted as the first for Ontario and Canada, and published as such in the latest issue of *Birds Ontario*.

Although I knew almost nothing about this species before my unexpected encounter, I now feel that I am something of an expert. I know, for example, that it breeds across a wide area from Mexico and the Caribbean south to Argentina. It is partly migratory, with differing kinds of dispersal in different populations, but it does not (under normal circumstances) appear to be a long-distance migrant. Thus although it breeds within some 500 km of the Texas border, there were only eight accepted records from the USA prior to my sighting. Not surprisingly, six of these come from Florida and Texas, but single birds were also seen in extreme northwestern California in May 1982 and in Michigan, only 250 km away from Rondeau, in May 1996. The Michigan bird, like my own, was briefly seen from a peninsula projecting into one of the Great Lakes. The concentration of these extralimital sightings in late May and early June suggests some kind of pattern to the species' northward dispersal, but its cause is unknown.

Needless to say, the **White-collared Swift** became in retrospect the highlight of my brief stay in Ontario. At the time, though, I felt uncomfortable and even vaguely resentful of the way it had disturbed my peace of mind. I was perfectly happy with "common" birds such as **American Robin**, **Bonaparte's Gull** and **Eastern Bluebird**. Still, the encounter served as a reminder that swifts are the long-distance

flyers *par excellence* of the bird world. Breeding **Common Swifts** from southern England, for example, may forage as far afield as Germany even when they have young in the nest. The extreme mobility of swifts may explain why their distribution is nearly cosmopolitan. Chantler (in the *Handbook of the Birds of the World*) stated that vagrancy is the most obvious manifestation of their dispersive power. Indeed, he saw vagrancy as "perhaps our only means of observing fluctuating distributions, and changing migratory pathways, in the geological instant that is our lifetime." What better context for my own observation?

*Tristan ap Rheinallt*

## An island view

Living on an island, such as Mull, is indeed a great privilege. On our doorstep we have a wide diversity of habitats from moorland to mountains, sea lochs to sandy beaches, forestry plantations of all ages and beautifully mature oak woodlands; such habitats are suitable for so many different bird species.

I suppose our most popular bird is the **White-tailed Eagle**. Indeed, it is what most visitors most want to see and for many it's a lifetime tick, along with **Golden Eagle** and **Otter**. There are several breeding pairs of magnificent **White-tailed Eagles** on Mull and this year (2003) has been the most successful since they were re-established, with seven chicks fledging. Many locals, including *Isle of Mull Bird Club* members, played an important role in this success by being involved in "operation Easter eagle watch". Soon we will be getting ready for the next season of watching. It can be a cold and long watch the night shift, but sometimes it's very rewarding with the chance to see **Barn Owls** hunting as you sip on a cup of



White-tailed eagle coming into land  
(photo Alan Spellman)

warming coffee or perhaps something a little stronger!

The autumn migration of waders brings in large flocks of **Whimbrel**, **Ringed Plover**, **Dunlin** and **Golden Plover** with lesser numbers of **Redshank** and **Green-shank** as they stop off to re-fuel before continuing their long journey south. Winter bird watching on Mull provides an opportunity to see all three species of diver, often in the same scope view. There are **Great Northern Divers** in the Sound of Mull and on most of the sea lochs, with many still showing signs of summer plumage. When in winter and eclipse plumage your identification skills can be truly tested.

Loch na Keal holds a small population of up to 30 **Slavonian Grebes** throughout winter. This small dainty grebe can often be difficult to spot amongst the "white horses". On the loch shores there is always the chance of picking up a white-winged gull, both **Glaucous** and **Iceland Gulls** are sometimes found by careful scanning gull flocks. On all of Mull's sea lochs are large flocks of wintering **Teal** and **Widgeon** with a scattering of **Goldeneye** and **Shelduck**, plus resident **Red-breasted Mergansers**, **Eiders** and **Mallard** and occasional **Goosander** and **Greater Scaup**.

Fidden, along the Ross of Mull is the place to go following strong westerly winds or storms; it's often surprising what can be blown across the Atlantic Ocean. So, it is always worth scanning with the scope for stray migrants. **Greylags** and **Greater White-fronted Geese** can be found here too.

Mull is a very under recorded island, it has a 300 mile long coast line and vast uninhabited areas. So lots of birds are probably missed; especially after the tourists have gone home! This year the island has had visits from **Bee-eater** (twice), **Kingfisher** (4), **Hoopoe**, **Turtle Dove**, **Rose-coloured Starling** (Iona), **Purple Sandpiper**, **White-billed Diver**, **Moorhen**, **Red Kite**, **Green Woodpecker**, **Little Stint**, **Long-tailed Duck**, **Shoveler** and **Pomarine Skua**. For a few years, an **Osprey** has spent the summer months at Loch Frisa. Hopefully, it is only a matter of time before this magnificent raptor becomes a breeding species.

If any members of the *Argyll Bird Club* plan to visit Mull during winter, or at anytime, I would be pleased to be of assistance. However, first check out the latest reports in our website at:

<http://www.mullbirds.com>

*Alan Spellman*

## Cetaceans in Argyll

The coastal waters of the Argyll islands are one of the most important marine habitats for cetaceans (collective name for **Whales, Dolphins and Porpoises**) in Europe, with up to 24 species recorded. Many species of cetaceans, and also **Basking Sharks, Seals and Turtles** are regularly recorded in Argyll waters. However, much is unknown about the distribution of these species or the location of their main habitats.

The *Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust* (HWDT) runs a project called the *Community Sealife Sightings Programme*, which aims to encourage members of island and coastal communities to report sightings of marine life around the west coast of Scotland. The information gathered allows the identification of key habitats, which is the first step towards the development of conservation management strategies. The data are also shared with the *Seawatch Foundation*, national coordinators for cetacean sightings in the UK. These data help to build up a UK-wide picture of cetacean activity.

In 2003, over 1400 sightings of cetaceans and **Basking Sharks** have been collected so far. Hopefully, this number will increase as we are still in the process of collecting data from local boat operators. The most commonly reported species is the coastal **Harbour Porpoise**, with 765 sightings. The **Harbour Porpoise** is the smallest cetacean found in UK waters and also the most widely distributed species. The first sightings of **Minke Whales** occurred during the first week of April on the east coast of Coll. **Minke Whales** were spotted around Islay later that week by our monitoring team on board *Silurian*. Since then, **Minke Whale** reports increased steadily throughout the summer. In July and August, **Minkes** were often seen feeding in association with seabirds such as **Gannets, Kittiwakes, Guillemots** and **Manx Shearwaters**.



Harbour Porpoise (photo HWDT)

Another common species in Hebridean waters is the **Bottlenose Dolphin**. This coastal species has been studied by our team on Islay through the *Hebridean Bot-*

*tlenose Dolphin Project* which is led by Phil Johnston. They have identified 41 individuals so far, which indicates that a population of bottlenose dolphins inhabits these waters.

Many other species have also been seen this year. These include **Killer Whales, Common Dolphins, Risso's Dolphins, Atlantic White-sided Dolphins** and **Basking Sharks**, all making up part of the beautiful Hebridean seascape.

We are always keen to recruit new contributors to our *Community Sightings Scheme* and would welcome any reports of cetaceans. If you are keen to be involved, please contact Tom Gaillard, our Sightings Officer, and we will send you a sightings pack, including ID sheets and recording forms. Contact details are:

E-mail: [sightings@hwdt.sol.co.uk](mailto:sightings@hwdt.sol.co.uk)

Website: <http://www.hwdt.org>

Tel: 01688302859

Postal Address: HWDT, 28 Main Street, Tobermory, Isle of Mull, Argyll PA75 6NU

*Juliet Shrimpton*

## A week in southern India

For six unforgettable days at the end of September this year I lived in a children's home in Tamil Nadu, in the extreme south of India – to be exact, about 30 miles north of Kanyakumari, the Indian equivalent of Land's End at the very tip of the sub-continent. Rural south India, at least in the area I was in, is very far from being tourist terrain. Most of it consists of a seemingly unending, dead flat sandy plain, sparsely vegetated with thorny scrub and occasional trees, with villages dotted about and intermittent areas of cultivation. The whole area is impoverished, and currently drought-stricken; and seeing one of the ancient-looking bullock carts leading a herd of water buffalo slowly across the landscape, one has the feeling that for those who live here, life can have changed little for several thousand years. It was, unsurprisingly, very hot!

I had taken binoculars with me, but not, unfortunately, a bird book, expecting that my visit would be of little interest from a bird-watcher's point of view. However, that was an expectation I quickly had to revise.

The home was on the outskirts of a small village. It was a compound about an acre in extent, with 7-8 buildings mingling with trees and bushes around the perimeter. **House Crows** (*Corvus splendens*) and **House Sparrows** (*Passer domesticus*)

were present and conspicuous around the home at all times. Present also, but less conspicuous were small parties of thrush-sized brownish birds with pale heads and yellowish bills, which I decided must be babblers of some sort. I had lived in Malaya in the 1960s and was familiar with lowland birds out there. I later concluded that they were probably **White-headed Jungle Babblers** (*Turdoides striatus*). Inevitably, there were doves around both the home and the village; their soft, ventriloquistic cooing awakened memories of our garden in Malaya, which they regarded as more theirs than ours. These were **Spotted-necked Doves** (*Streptopelia chinensis*). I also once saw and heard a **Collared Dove** (*Streptopelia decaocto*), but that was away from the village.

We often heard excited, high-pitched calls overhead as parties of **Rose-ringed Parakeets** (*Psittacula krameri*) flew past – noisy, cheerful, extrovert birds, easy to identify and enjoyable to watch. They seemed very much a part of the home, and once settled in a flock on the ground in the middle of the boy's cricket area! Less often seen, but for me a particular pleasure, were **Little Green Bee Eaters** (*Merops orientalis*) more plentiful in the open country, but occasionally perching and hawking insects around the home. One evening when a group of us from the home had climbed a rocky outcrop 2 miles distant, the bee eaters wheeling and cavorting all around us were as plentiful and as acrobatic as the swifts and swiftlets.

In the open country near the home there were many other species, some of which I knew and many I could only guess at: a solitary **Hoopoe** (*Upupa epops*), the first I'd ever seen, walked unconcernedly about on the ground as a group of us passed by; **Common Crow-pheasant** (*Centropus sinensis*), a rather shy bird usually seen on the ground; **Fork-tailed Drongo** (*Dicrurus adsimilis*), plentiful and common; **Indian Jungle Myna** (*Acridotheres fuscus*), conspicuous and abundant and probably one of the most familiar Asian birds: one of the bulbuls, almost certainly **Red-whiskered** (*Pycnonotus jocosus*), a familiar friend from Malayan days; a sun-bird, probably **Purple Sunbird** (*Nectarinia asiatica*); at least two species of shrike; and a malcoha, probably **Blue-faced** (*Phaenicophaeus viridirostris*). But it was two other species that I spent most time watching, and that interested me most: **Black Ibis** (*Pseudibis papillosa*) and **Indian Roller** (*Coracias benghalensis*).

I saw the ibis on my first morning at the home. It was flying high overhead. I had never seen an ibis of any species before, but knew at once what it must be. Later that day I saw several settle on the ground

nearby. By the last day, they had become familiar features of the local scene with up to a dozen or so flying around or walking about, mostly in a scattered group, apparently picking up food from the ground. To my knowledge there was no water, nor indeed any moist ground, for many miles around. I was surprised to see them in this arid landscape. They were easily recognised by the white on the wing (only visible in flight) and red crown.

However, my most prized memory is of rollers, a pair of which was present in the open country close to the home throughout my visit. They would perch mostly on low bushes or stumps, fly to the ground to catch some insects or other food objects and return to their perch. At rest they were not conspicuous, but in flight they were amongst the most spectacular of any birds I have seen; the wings broad and rounded, deep purplish-blue with a vivid azure blue bar or patch in the middle, so they seemed almost to flash and shine in the brilliant light. I could have watched them all day!

To those of you who know anything of the Asian avifauna, what I have written may stir some memories, otherwise it may not be of particular interest. But if it does nothing else, it may emphasise the fact that even the most seemingly unpromising situations can give rise to bird watching opportunities that greatly enrich one's life.

*Ian Teesdale*

## Mull of Kintyre again 15 September 1963

A fine clear day until we reached the Mull, which had its own little cloud cap. However visibility was good and the day warm. There were hundreds of **Gannets** in small parties moving back and forth over the sea below.

We walked down to the rocks above the siren point and it was here that we saw our first three **Choughs**, which flew to the sea cliffs at the end of the eagle cliff. We approached a bit closer to these cliffs and saw towards the top, and sheltered behind a huge outcrop, another eyrie (the third). It seemed to be an impregnable position, visible from one direction only, protected from the sun, but open to the west wind.

We walked under the eagle cliff - finding a hare's foot and the remains of an adult **Gannet**. We presumed the latter had 'crashed'; as it seemed a rather large target for a **Golden Eagle**.

About half a mile further on we heard more **Choughs** and there were three playing about a rock and a waterfall. We watched them in perfect light as they

dived and swung in the air. As we were watching them a large hawk flew over close by. We saw only the underside well, but this was very pale buff, almost white, and covered with small oval spots - very finely spotted under the wings and more heavily spotted on the breast and belly. The spots died out at the belly, leaving a clear patch before the dark tail. The tail had a medium brown background with four very dark bands, the terminal one being much thicker than the other three. The face appeared whitish. When the bird turned it was at an awkward angle to the sun, and no more could be seen of the back than that it was a fairly uniform brown. The shape was similar to a **Sparrowhawk**, but the tail was shorter in comparison to the wings, which appeared longer in proportion to their width than in a **Sparrowhawk**. The silhouette however was definitely accipitrine, as was the flight - flap, flap glide and circle. It eventually circled and soared a little and drifted away to the south. It was considerably larger a **Chough**. In my estimation, the wingspan was about 1½ times that of a **Chough**. It can only have been an immature **Goshawk**.

After this three more **Choughs** came from the south calling strongly and joined the three by the waterfall. A little later, one more came up and flew straight on past the eagle cliff. A **Kestrel** shot out and flew round it. Thus, we saw seven **Choughs** at one time and there were possibly 3 more, making a total of 10.



COMMON SNIPE.

We went on to the Dun, but saw no more **Choughs** and no **Golden Eagles** either, and returned across the back of the hills to the car for lunch—putting up a **Snipe** on the way.

After lunch we went back along the Kin-

tyre road to Rhunahaorine Point opposite Gigha, leaving the car at the little park on the north side. At first we saw very little, but gradually things began to appear. First we saw a male **Common Scoter**, then a party of about 20 **Turnstone** followed by a **Red-breasted Merganser** and farther out some **Eiders**. About halfway along we saw three **Black Guillemots**, one very close in. Further on was a party of about 20 **Mergansers**, in front of which was a large bird that turned out to be a **Black-throated Diver** in full winter plumage - probably an immature. It had a steely blue bill with a black tip. From this point we saw our first **Slavonian Grebe**. Further on we saw more, until we reached a total of 7, with two that were swimming with a flock of about 45 **Common Scoter** off the Point.

We had an excellent view at moderate range of a male **Velvet Scoter**. Further out we saw another diver flying, but could not identify it. Flying across the Point was a **Golden Plover**, and round the Point many little waders, 20 **Dunlin**, 70 **Turnstone** and 35 **Ringed Plover**.

We went on down to the bend of the southern shore where we put up a flock of 85 **Mallard**, four **Teal** and a **Heron**.

*David Merrie*

## Colour-ringed Great Black-backed Gulls

A number of **Great Black-backed Gull** colour-ringing projects have been started in the north of Scotland in the past couple of seasons. Many hundreds of birds have been marked and birdwatchers are asked to keep an eye out for them. The colour rings fitted bear a three character inscription and can be read through a telescope up to at least 100m, possibly further under favourable conditions. Details of any sightings should be sent to myself in the first instance, including when and where the bird was seen, ring colour and inscription and leg to which attached (however just a note of the ring colour will be sufficient to indicate where and when the bird was marked). We particularly welcome repeat sightings. All records received will be acknowledged.

*Mark Oksien, 32 Struan Drive, Inveithing, Fife KY11 1AR*

*Phone: 01383-419503*

*Email: mark.oksien@ukgateway.net*

## Two interesting ringing recoveries

Here are two interesting recoveries of birds ringed in Argyll.

### Common Sandpiper (David Jardine)

NV86218. Age 1 (nestling): Ringed on 17 June 1999 at Port More, Colonsay (46°4'N 6°14'W - NR3694)

Retrapped on 14 April 2002 at Salobar de Campos, Campos del Puerto, Mallorca, Spain (39°26'N 3°1'E)

Duration between capture and recapture 1032 days (a movement of 1970 km in direction 160°)

### Tawny Owl (Steve Petty)

GJ69828. Age 1 (nestling): Ringed on 4 May 1984 at Glenbranter, Cowal (NS1098)

Recovered dead on 26 December 2002 at Glendaruel, Cowal (NR9984)

Duration between capture and recapture 6810 days (a movement of 19 km in direction 215°).

At eighteen-years of age, this is the oldest recorded tawny owl from long-term studies in Argyll (Cowal) and Northumberland.



**Note: If ringers in Argyll would be willing to let me have details of interesting recoveries (a photocopy of each recovery form would be ideal) I could make this a regular section in *The Eider* -**

**Editor**

## Record year for Corncrakes

Earlier in the year, the RSPB asked for the public's help in recording calling corncrakes. The results were remarkably encouraging.

Across the UK, 820 calling corncrakes

have been recorded, a massive increase of more than 140 birds compared with 2002. This includes two in England, down from 11 recorded during the last full survey in 1998. This is the highest overall number of corncrakes since detailed surveys began in 1977. The corncrake census is a partnership between leading environmental organisations including RSPB, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Environment and Heritage Service Northern Ireland.

RSPB Scotland Director Stuart Housden said, "This is great news for a globally threatened species. In years gone by, the corncrake's range reduced drastically in the UK, their numbers were in freefall, and they became red listed as a bird of high conservation concern. Conservationists working alongside farmers and crofters have now reversed this decline. We believe that support from the Scottish Executive's agri-environment schemes as well as the RSPB, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Scottish Crofting Foundation corncrake initiative has been a key part to this success. It's a major achievement for all concerned".

Helen Riley, ornithologist with Scottish Natural Heritage said, "We are delighted to hear of this year's large increase in the corncrake population. Over the last decade, a huge amount of effort has gone into the conservation of this rare and fascinating bird, particularly in the Western and Northern Isles of Scotland. The response of the corncrake population demonstrates the value of cooperation between nature conservation bodies and the farmers and crofters who participate in corncrake schemes. There is, however, no room for complacency, as the corncrake remains a species with the potential to decline quickly in the absence of sympathetic management. Continued investment in agri-environment schemes in core areas of the corncrake range is essential to ensure the survival of this species and the potential for re-colonisation of other parts of its former range".

**"Farmers and crofters have an important role to play"**

John Ramsay of the Scottish Biodiversity Forum Secretariat said, "This is also excellent news for biodiversity in Scotland. It clearly demonstrates that where farmers and crofters, government and conservation interests work together in partnership and with a common purpose, we can successfully reverse many years of decline in one of our most important national assets - our natural heritage".



Numbers have increased because farmers and crofters have created ideal conditions for the bird in the way they manage land. Actions such as ensuring vegetation cover when the birds arrive in spring, delaying mowing or grazing until early August, and mowing using corncrake friendly methods that allow the birds to escape mower blades have all contributed to the recovery. However, it's not all good news for the species. The increase in overall population has been achieved within existing core areas. There is, as yet, no evidence that birds are returning to formerly occupied areas on mainland Scotland.

Some of the most notable changes in corncrake numbers this year have been on the Inner and Outer Hebrides on islands such as Iona, where the numbers have doubled from 12 recorded corncrakes last year to 24 this year. The National Trust for Scotland is a large landowner and has worked hard to help return this species to a healthier population.

**Source: RSPB Scotland Press Office**

## Most successful year on record for White-tailed Eagles

The breeding success of Scotland's majestic white-tailed (sea) eagles has doubled this year with the highest number of chicks to fledge since the species was re-introduced in 1975.

The previous record for the young eagles fledging in a year was 13. This year, that record was smashed with 26 chicks successfully flying the nest. There are now more than 30 territorial pairs in Scotland.

The RSPBs Dr Alison MacLennan is thrilled with the news, To double the number of young produced in one year is a huge success and very rewarding. Each year the number of territorial pairs has gradually increased, but for the last five years, the number of young fledged annually has remained between 11 and 13 birds.

Their success this year may in part be due to the adult birds being in particularly

good condition for breeding after the unusually settled weather in the west of Scotland last winter. Stronger adults produce young that have a better chance of surviving. Their most vulnerable stages are during incubation and just after hatching.

“One of the spin-offs from this success is that people will have an increased chance of seeing our largest bird of prey in future”

Alison explains further: A number of young territorial pairs have now come of an age to breed for the first time and boosted the productive population. One of the spin-offs from this success is that people will have an increased chance of seeing our largest bird of prey in future. That leads to huge eco-tourism benefits, particularly in Mull and Skye, where opportunities for seeing the birds are greatest.

White-tailed eagles are still senselessly poisoned, threatening their success. They are a red list species, which means they are of high conservation concern. Despite this, two white-tailed eagles were poisoned last year, doubling the number of poisoning cases against the species since 1975.

The RSPB is working as part of the UK Sea Eagle Project Team, which also includes Scottish Natural Heritage and other independent experts.

The RSPB is always keen to hear of any sighting of the birds and we are asking people to report any white-tailed eagle sightings to our Inverness office on 01463 715000.

Source: RSPB Scotland Press Office

## Reporting rare birds in Argyll

Following my appeal for some assistance with the workload involved in being Argyll Bird Recorder I am delighted to announce that Jim Dickson has kindly agreed to take over the work of dealing with rare bird reports.

Jim has a very wide experience of rare birds following his time on Fair Isle and has also travelled abroad extensively (see for example his piece on the birds of Lesbos in the September 2003 issue of *The Eider*).

**He will be taking over from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2004** and from this date all reports of rare birds should go to Jim in the first instance

## List of SBRC and ABRC species and subspecies, 2003

Black-necked Grebe*	EUROPEAN BEE-EATER (BEE-EATER)*
CORY'S SHEARWATER*	Eurasian Wryneck (Wryneck)*
GREAT SHEARWATER*	LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER
BALEARIC SHEARWATER*	GREATER SHORT-TOED LARK (SHORT-TOED LARK)
Great Bittern (Bittern)*	WOOD LARK (Woodlark)
BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON (NIGHT HERON)*	Horned Lark (Shore Lark)*
LITTLE EGRET*	RICHARD'S PIPIT*
PURPLE HERON	TAWNY PIPIT
WHITE STORK*	WATER PIPIT
Eurasian Spoonbill (Spoonbill)*	COMMON NIGHTINGALE (NIGHTINGALE)*
Bean Goose*	Bluethroat*
European White-fronted Goose (race <i>albifrons</i> )*	CETTI'S WARBLER
AMERICAN WIGEON*	AQUATIC WARBLER
GREEN-WINGED TEAL*	MARSH WARBLER
Red-crested Pochard*	Eurasian Reed Warbler (Reed Warbler)*
RING-NECKED DUCK*	ICTERINE WARBLER*
SURF SCOTER (except adult males)*	MELODIOUS WARBLER
Smew*	DARTFORD WARBLER
Ruddy Duck*	BARRED WARBLER*
EUROPEAN HONEY-BUZZARD (HONEY BUZZARD)*	Lesser Whitethroat*
MONTAGU'S HARRIER	PALLAS'S LEAF WARBLER (PALLAS'S WARBLER)
Goshawk*	Yellow-browed Warbler*
ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD*	FIRECREST*
EURASIAN HOBBY (HOBBY)*	RED-BREASTED FLYCATCHER*
COMMON CRANE (CRANE)*	Bearded Tit
Avocet*	Marsh Tit
STONE-CURLEW*	Willow Tit*
LITTLE PLOVER (LITTLE RINGED PLOVER)*	Crested Tit*
KENTISH PLOVER	Wood Nuthatch (Nuthatch)*
Temminck's Stint*	Red-backed Shrike*
PECTORAL SANDPIPER*	WOODCHAT SHRIKE*
BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER*	ROSY STARLING (ROSE-COLOURED STARLING)*
Red-necked Phalarope* (away from traditional breeding areas)	EUROPEAN SERIN (SERIN)
Long-tailed Skua (except adult)*	Common/Mealy Redpoll (formerly race of Redpoll)*
Mediterranean Gull*	Scottish Crossbill
SABINE'S GULL*	COMMON ROSEFINCH (SCARLET ROSEFINCH)*
RING-BILLED GULL*	Hawfinch*
HERRING GULL (yellow legged races <i>michahellis</i> and <i>cachinnans</i> )*	CIRL BUNTING*
Roseate Tern*	ORTOLAN BUNTING
Black Tern*	LITTLE BUNTING*
Little Owl	

(contact details on next page). All descriptions of rare birds seen in the Argyll recording area that are on the ABRC\* and SBRC\* lists as well as descriptions of extreme rarities that have to be reported to BBRC should also be sent to him.

The species that are currently to be considered in this way are listed above.

The list details rare species whose occurrence in Argyll needs to be fully documented. It is made up of the ABRC list of Argyll rarities (in lower case) and the

*Continued on back page*

**Articles for the next issue of  
The Eider should with the  
Editor before 1st March 2004**

SBRC list of Scottish rarities (in capitals – NB this includes the species shown in both upper *and* lower case in the SBRC official list), but excludes the large number of UK rarities assessed by BBRC. Asterisked species have occurred in Argyll.

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

**No record of any of the species and plumage phases listed below will be published unless adequate supporting details (including a description) are available.** In addition, brief details may be requested for occurrences of scarce species not on the list where the circumstances appear to warrant this.

Jim's contact details are as follows:

Jim Dickson, 13 Creag Ghlas, Cairnbaan, Lochgilphead, Argyll PA31 8UE.

Tel. 01546 603967

e-mail: JamesmilneDickson@btopenworld.com

*Paul Daw*

**Officials and Committee of the Argyll  
Bird Club (2003/2004)**

**Chairman:** David Wood, Drover's House, Bellanoch, Lochgilphead PA31 8SN

**Vice Chairman:** Nigel Scriven, 2 Allt na Blathaich, Loch Eck, Dunoon PA23 8SG

**Secretary:** John Anderson, Ard Beag, Connel, Oban PA37 1PT

**Treasurer:** Bob Furness, The Cnoc, Tarbet, Loch Lomond G83 7DG

**Membership Secretary:** Bill Staley, 16 Glengilp, Ardrishaig PA30 8HT

**Committee:** Roger Broad (Killearn), Tom Callan (Otter Ferry), Paul Daw (Minard), Michael Gear (Appin), David Merrie (Blairgowrie), Katie Pendreigh (Tayinloan) and Steve Petty (Tighnabrauaich)

**Editor of the *Argyll Bird Report*:** Clive Craik, Grendon, Barcaldine, Oban PA37 1EC

**Editor of *The Eider*:** Steve Petty (contact details on front page)

**Argyll Bird Recorder:** Paul Daw, Tigh-na-Tulloch, Tullochgorm, Minard PA32 8YQ (Phone 01546 886260; e-mail monedula@globalnet.co.uk)

**Argyll Bird Club Website (under development):**

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/Acad/IBLS/DEEB/rwf/abc/>

# The Eider



**T**he *Eider* is the quarterly newsletter of the **Argyll Bird Club**. The club was established in 1985. Its main purpose is to play an active role in the promotion and conservation of birds in Argyll. It is recognised by the Inland Revenues as a charity.

The club holds two one-day meetings each year, in spring and autumn. The venue of the spring meeting is rotated between different towns, including Dunoon, Oban and Lochgilphead. The autumn meeting/AGM is held in a convenient central location, usually near Lochgilphead or Inveraray. The club organises field trips for members. It publishes the annual *Argyll Bird Report*. Your annual subscription entitles you to one copy of this, four issues of *The Eider* and free admission to the two annual meetings. The membership categories and rates are:

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

Subscriptions are due on 1<sup>st</sup> January and can be paid by cheque or standing order. Those joining after 1<sup>st</sup> October are covered until the end of the following year. Further information can be obtained from the Membership Secretary and additional or past copies of the *Argyll Bird Report* can be obtained from Bob Furness (see box on this page).

The Editor (contact details on front page) welcomes articles for inclusion in *The Eider*. Most of each issue is devoted to articles about some aspect of ornithology, wildlife conservation or general ecology in Argyll, but some articles of a wider natural history interest, notices of forthcoming events and press releases are also published. Whenever possible, these should be submitted as e-mail attachments in Microsoft Word or rft format. However, 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.

Artists are encouraged to submit illustrations of birds and habitats for inclusion in *The Eider*. Some digital images, including high-quality colour photographs (jpeg files preferred) are also suitable for publication.

The four issues of *The Eider* are published annually around the 15<sup>th</sup> day of March, June, September and December. For articles to be included, they must be with the editor before the 1<sup>st</sup> day of each publication month.