

The Eider is the quarterly newsletter of the Argyll Bird Club
Scottish Charity Number SC008782

The Eider

September 2002



Editorial

I hope you've all enjoyed spring in Argyll. It's certainly my favourite time of the year, but this year has been somewhat different! In my 20+ years in Cowal, it stands out as the wettest that I can remember, although it probably isn't!

This has benefited some species, for example blackbirds and song thrushes seem to have produced one brood after another. Tits seem to have had a good season too, judging from the number of juveniles at my bird feeders, but other birds have suffered. The national survey of peregrines took place this spring after being abandoned last year due to foot and mouth disease. Early reports indicate that the bad weather has resulted in a very poor breeding season.

Getting away from birds for a minute. After only a very short period as editor, it strikes me that it would be ideal if I

View Migration Watch results for Spring 2002 at <http://www.bto.org/migwatch/>

could contact members between newsletters with any news that would be history by the time you read the next issue. E-mail provides an opportunity to do this. I realise that many of you do not have access to a suitable computer, but some of you do, and you could help to pass on messages to those that don't.

For an example of how this could help communications, you only have to look at the next page. By the time you're reading the Eider, it will be too late to contribute books to the sale at Lochwinnoch (but not too late to buy!). This could have been avoided if I had sent an e-mail to online members as soon as I received details of the sale from James.

So, if you have access to e-mail facilities, please let me have your address.

This is a pretty big issue of the Eider and I must thank everyone who has provided articles—I hope it spurs the rest of you to put pen to paper!. ***The deadline for the next issue is 28th November.***

Pages 12-17 provide information for the autumn meeting and AGM at the Cairnbaan Hotel. They have purposely been printed at the end, so they can be detached from the rest of the Eider for the meeting. Do please try to attend the AGM. **It is your chance to influence what the club does in the future!**

Field Trip to Loch Awe on 30th June

A very small select band of five joined Peter and Joy Kirk to hopefully see one of our most exotic bird's spectacular fishing technique. We stood on the shore of Loch Awe, in the midge infested misty rain, scanning the sky with waterlogged binoculars. Sure enough after a couple of false alarms by great black-backed gulls the real thing turned up. We were then treated, at a distance of 50-150 m to a spectacular flying display. Over a period of perhaps 3-4 minutes we saw two

aborted stoops followed by success dive with the unforgettable sight of the bird taking off from the surface with a struggling trout in its talons. Had the weather been better, I'm sure some of us would have stayed for more. However, we were easily persuaded to head off to the Kilmartin Hotel for a chat and some very good food and drink. Many thanks to Peter (and the osprey) for making it such an enjoyable trip.

Tom Callan

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Inside this issue:

Second-hand book sale	2
Recent committee meeting	
Recent reports	3-5
Species and subspecies	5-7
Costa Rica	8-10
Pine marten predation	10
Snowy egrets	11
Autumn meeting programme	12
AGM papers	13-17

Autumn Meeting

To be held at the Cairnbaan Hotel, near Lochgilphead on Saturday 2 November

See page 12 for the full programme

Second-hand Natural History Book Sale

Visit the new RSPB reserve websites for:

Lochwinnoch, Renfrewshire

<http://www.lochwinnoch.info/RSPB/>

Baron's Haugh, Motherwell

<http://www.baronshaugh.co.uk>

RSPB Scotland works for a healthy environment rich in birds and other wildlife. We depend on the support and generosity of others to make a difference. If you would like to support our work, please join the Society.

Following the huge success of last year's book sale at the RSPB's Lochwinnoch Nature reserve we have decided to make this an annual event. This year's sale will be during 15-22nd September. There are several ways to get involved.

1. Donate books - all proceeds go to RSPB. Anything on natural history (books/magazines/journals/pamphlets/ even maps, etc) qualify for the sale.

2. Let us have books to sell on your behalf. We will keep a mere 10% for commission. If you have a rare book and you want to get the best price for it, we can put it into the auction. Book prices for non-auction books can be fixed by yourself or by local expert David Clugston (our preferred option).

3. Ask for an auction list.

4. Come to the reserve and buy books!

There will be no selling prior to the event. Afterwards, a list of unsold books will be produced, which can be sent to you on request.

Books need to be with us no later than end of August. For further details, please phone Joan Shaw on 01505 842663 or e-mail her at joan.shaw@rspb.org.uk

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Committee meeting on 3 September, 2002 - a personal view

I have picked out a few items that may be of general interest.

There was some discussion of what the Club is for. As a newish member of the Committee, I was told that this comes up frequently! At present we produce the annual Argyll Bird Report and the quarterly Eider and we arrange two one-day meetings and occasional field trips. There is a worry about the future as there are not many young members. Should we make an effort to attract children and young people? Should we do more in the way of education and training? For our existing members? For younger people? What do

you think about this? With instruction in mind we plan a trip to Gigha in the winter, which will be advertised as a chance to learn about divers, grebes and winter sea ducks.

There was some discussion about the need to restrict the length of the committee meetings. Some members had to leave at 9 p.m. in order to get across the Connel Bridge before it closed at 10. Nevertheless, the rest of us continued until 10.30! We agreed that the meetings should end by 9 - 9.30.

We finalised details of the programme for the meeting on 2 November, and they can be found on another page. The

AGM will take place then, and there will be several vacancies on the Committee. Would you be interested in making a contribution? Can you think of someone else who might be interested?

Progress continues satisfactorily on the first volume of the Birds of Argyll.

We learned about the heavy workload of Paul Daw, the Argyll Bird Recorder. He has an enormous job to process and analyse 14000 records each year. The fruits of his excellent work can be seen in the Bird Report, and we owe him a great debt.

The next committee meeting will be on 19 November.

Jane Mitchell

Request for Information on Adder/Bird interactions

Paul Daw has had a request for information from a student at Liverpool University who is researching the incidence of bird attacks on Adders. Even anecdotal evidence would be useful. Apparently she has tried using plasticine model snakes but

most of them were apparently eaten or destroyed by hedgehogs, foxes, mice, badgers etc! If any of you know of any evidence for birds eating adders or mobbing them, please let Paul know (contact details on Page 17).

Recent Reports from Paul Daw: May–July 2002

The most extraordinary ornithological event of the summer has been the major influx of Rosy Starlings to Scotland (& England). According to the Scottish Birds Records Committee approximately 76 birds were reported in the period 3rd June - 5th August 2002. The previous record year was 2001 (a surprise to me) when 25 birds were reported. Argyll has had its fair share, with at least 6 individuals, more than we have had in the previous 10 years! So far I have heard of the following individuals: Sandaig, Tiree 8th - 12th June *, Connel, Mid-Argyll 16th - 19th June *, Bowmore, Islay 21st June, Castle Sween, Mid-Argyll at least 22nd June - 1st July *, Iona, Mull (various locations) 15th - 20th July and Gigha 16th - 18th July. For those marked * I have received a photograph and/or description but I have had no written or photographic confirmation of the remaining three birds. If any of you can provide such confirmation I should be very grateful. Also if any of you have heard of any further sightings please let me know as soon as possible. The Scottish Birds Records Committee will be writing up a full account of this phenomenon and are anxious for Recorders to let them have written descriptions of all sightings as soon as they can.

The other star rarities of this period were a Greater Yellowlegs reported from Gruinart Flats, Islay and a Great (White) Egret on Tiree. If accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee the Greater Yellowlegs will become only the second record of the species for Argyll. The first was also seen on Islay, in 1985.

Other highlights are listed below with many thanks to those who send in records regularly [including Tristan ap Rheinallt (Islay), Alan Spellman (Mull), Rab Morton/Jim Dickson (Sanda) and John Bowler (Tiree)] and a particular welcome to Sarah Money the new RSPB staff member on Coll who is sending in regular sightings for this otherwise very under-recorded island.

The terrible 'summer' we have had seems to have had a disastrous effect on the breeding performance of at least some species. The 2002 Peregrine survey highlighted the effect on some birds of prey with very few of the monitored sites producing young this year. Black-throated Diver's fortunes in Argyll improved marginally, with one young bird reared as against none in 2001.

However, judging by the large numbers on young tits and finches (not to mention a juv. Great Spotted Woodpecker) coming to my bird table some species may have done rather better. All records of confirmed breeding, even of common species, are welcomed so that we can achieve a fuller picture of how things have gone.

Divers to Wildfowl

The usual concentration of **Great Northern Divers** occurred in our offshore waters in the first half of May. A total of 38 were in Crossapol Bay, Coll on 8th, a group of 7 together in Gigalum Bay, Gigha on 12th were all in

breeding plumage and 50 were still present in the Bruichladdich/Port Charlotte area of Loch Indaal, Islay on 15th May. Single birds in breeding plumage were still present off Coll & Tiree in late May/early June.

Two probable **Great Shearwaters** (description awaited) were seen from the Kennacraig-Islay Ferry on 26th July and large numbers of **Manx Shearwaters** were also passing through in late July with 300+ at Crossapol, Coll and 900 feeding in Hough Bay Tiree on 31st. Being mainly nocturnal **European Storm-Petrels** are seldom seen despite being fairly numerous in the area but single birds were reported from the Islay ferry on 11th July and at Miodar, Tiree on 31st July.

The **Snowy Egret** saga may finally be over with the last reported sighting at Lachlan Bay, Loch Fyne on 13th June. However an example of its very close relative, the **Little Egret**, was at Bowmore, Islay on 8th May and a **Great (White) Egret** in beautiful breeding plumage was present on Tiree from 218th May to 2nd June. An apparent influx of **Grey Herons** took place on Tiree on 1st July when 6 appeared at Loch Bhasapol and 4 at An Airidh.

Whooper Swans were still passing through in early May when 7 were seen over Castle Park, Coll on 2nd. There seem to have been more summering Whooper Swans than usual with both adults and 1st year birds being reported from Caolas, Coll; West Loch Fada, Colonsay; Loch nan Druimean, Mid-Argyll and Gigha in late May/early June.

The feral **Snow Geese** on Coll seem to have had a reasonably good season with 4 broods of young accompanying 26 adults at Port na Luing on 13th June. Two lingering **Barnacle Geese** and a single **Dark-bellied Brent Goose** were at Loch na Gile, Tiree on 2nd June.

Up to 2 male **Gadwall** were at Loch Gruinart, Islay during May and a pr were on the marsh at Balephetrish, Tiree on 1st May but not seen subsequently. A **Green-winged Teal** was on a small pool near Heylipol church, Tiree on 1st/2nd June. It has been a very good year for **Garganey**. Following the pr at St Mary's Loch, Mid-Argyll in April, a drake was at Balephetrish on 15th May, a pr were on Canal Loch, Coll on 16th May, another pr were at Barrapol, Tiree on 27th May and yet another pr were seen intermittently at Loch Gruinart during May - July while a single drake was on The Reef, Tiree on 6th June.

A single drake **Greater Scaup** was seen from Sanda, Kintyre on 8th May, 11 were still present at the head of Loch Indaal, Islay on 11th and another drake was at Loch Riaghain, Tiree on 15th May.

Raptors to Gamebirds

An immature **White-tailed Eagle** was loafing on offshore rocks at West Hynish, Tiree on 16th May and one at Beinn Hough, Tiree on 28th May was presumably the same bird. A

Recent reports (continued)

Northern Goshawk was reported carrying prey at Lochbuie, Mull (description awaited) on 27th July.

Away from the known breeding areas **Ospreys** were reported on Mull on 16th May (Loch Assapol), 6th June (Loch Don) and 8th July (Loch Frisa).

The only report of **Common Quail** so far this year concerned one calling Mulindry, Islay on 10th July and **Spotted Crakes** were heard calling on both Coll and Tiree in June.

Early news on **Corn Crakes** is encouraging with numbers up on both Coll (total of 74 calling birds) and Tiree (new record total of 172 calling birds).

Waders

A flock of 90 **European Golden Plovers** were seen at Arileod, Coll on 2nd May and the largest group of **Sanderling** recorded so far was 270 birds at Sorobaith Bay, Tiree on 20th May. June 18th was an unusual date for a **Little Stint** reported with Dunlin at Ardalanish Bay, Mull and a single **Curlew Sandpiper** was with other waders at Balephetrish Bay, Tiree on 23rd May.

Small numbers (1 - 3) of **Whimbrel** were passing through in early May with records from Taynish NNR, Sanda Island, and Caolas, Coll and later in the month 19 were seen at Hough bay, Tiree on 17th and 18 at Breachacha, Coll on 20th.

Unusually large flocks of **Common Redshank** have been reported from Islay with 270 leaving Loch Gruinart on 8th July and 156 on 10th, while 30 were on the sand spit at Otter Ferry, Cowal on 30th July. A **Common Greenshank** calling at a Loch on the Ederline Estate, Mid-Argyll on 23rd June as if on territory may just have been an early migrant and a **Green Sandpiper** at Garmony Point, Mull on 6th June was presumably a late spring migrant. Unlike Common Redshank, **Ruddy Turnstones** seem to have been less numerous than usual so far but 15 in breeding plumage were at Otter Ferry on 27th July.

The outstanding wader of the period was a **Greater Yellow-legs** (description awaited) at Gruinart Flats, Islay on 14th May.

Skuas to Woodpeckers

All the skuas are scarce in Argyll but there have already been several records involving three species. Two **Pomarine Skuas** flew past Grasspoint, Mull on 26th July and **Arctic Skuas** were sighted from the Oban - Coll/Tiree Ferry (2 on 10th May and total of 6 on 14th May), off Tiree (2 on 17th May), in the Sound of Islay (one on 10th July) and Killunaig, Mull (one on 6th July). **Great Skuas** were seen on Coll (3rd June & 31st July), Mull (18th June & 9th July), from the Islay Ferry (21st and 26th July) and at Frenchman's Rocks, Islay on 28th July.

Stop Press

An adult **Glaucous Gull** was in Campbeltown Loch, Kintyre on 16th August, continuing a run of summer records at this site

A 2nd year **Iceland Gull** reported at Fidden, Mull on 3rd June was a most unusual summer record.

Sandwich Terns were reported off Gigha on 15th May, at Loch Gruinart on 8th July (3) and 11th July (4), at Scarinish and Gott Bay, Tiree on 9th July and in the Sound of Iona on 19th July.

The have been several reports of a **Barn Owl** on Coll recently, well outside the normal range of this species. An adult and juvenile **Long-eared Owl** were reported in the Loch Spelve area of Mull in June. There have been indications that in some areas at least **Short-eared Owls** may have done better than in recent years due to a peak in Short-tailed Vole populations. Please send in details of any sightings you have.

A **European Nightjar** was reported churring at Dervaig, Mull on 7th May, the same location as last year. It was not heard subsequently and was presumably just passing through.

Common Swifts have bee seen on Coll, Islay and Tiree during the summer and records of this sparsely distributed species are always welcome especially from the assumed breeding areas.

A **Common Kingfisher** seen near the Fishnish Ferry terminal on 7th July was a very unusual record for Mull.

Two all white juv. **Barn Swallows** were seen at Bridgend, Islay during July at least one of which survived until mid-August.

Passerines

A good fall of migrants on Sanda on 5th May included 36 **Northern Wheatears**, 3 **Greenland Wheatears**, 7 **Common Whitethroats** and a **Lesser Whitethroat**.

The only **Garden Warblers** reported so far have involved singing birds at Tullochgorm, Mid-Argyll on 15th May, Loch Dochar, N Argyll on 1st June and Loch Creran, N Argyll on 6th June and three migrants on Tiree in late May. **Wood Warblers** were hard to find on Islay this year (only reports so far are from Port Askaig) and any records of the species there are of interest.

Spotted Flycatchers have also apparently been scarcer than usual this year with confirmed breeding from Dalnally and Minard. All records will be welcomed. **Pied Flycatchers** at Balephetrish Bay, Tiree on 21st May and Ardura, Mull on 25th May will have bee migrants but a pr were seen using a nest box at Barnaline, Loch Awe on 5th June.

Recent reports (continued)

A **Eurasian Jay** at Aros park, Mull on 25th July was an unusual sighting as was the **Black-billed Magpie** seen at various locations on Islay during May. A complete census of **Red-billed Choughs** on Islay found 61 prs, a considerable improvement on the 49 prs found in 1998. However productivity has apparently been low, presumably due to weather conditions.

Lesser Redpolls seem to been more numerous and widespread this year, especially on the islands, with several

records, for example, from Coll, Tiree and Sunda Island where the species is normally scarce. Please send in any records you come across of this nationally declining species. Recent **Common Crossbill** records include a pr with 5 immatures at Arichamish, Loch Awe on 4th June, 20 at Loch Frisa, Mull on 10th June, 17 at Corra (Otter Ferry), Cowal on 26th July and several in the Tobermory area of Mull also in July.

Paul Daw (contact details on page 17)

Argyll's Birds—species and subspecies

As part of my work on the Argyll avifauna, I have been looking in some detail at subspecies. Now that Scotland has a definitive list of species and subspecies (see Clugston et al. 2001, *Scottish Birds* 22: 33-49), it seems sensible to follow this example at a local level if possible. At the moment, however, my list of subspecies recorded in Argyll is peppered with question marks. Some potential sources of information, such as the skin collection in the National Museums of Scotland in Edinburgh, remain to be explored. In the meantime, however, I would like to appeal to club members for information.

The list below includes all those species that, in my opinion, are likely to be represented in Argyll by two or more subspecies. The subspecies named in square brackets can be confidently stated to have occurred here, the evidence for their occurrence falling into one (or more) of the following categories:

- 1) Ringing recovery.
- 2) Named specimen in a museum collection.
- 3) Breeding range, as described in the literature, includes Argyll.
- 4) Apparently reliable published sighting (only for those subspecies that are generally agreed to be identifiable in the field).

With some exceptions (e.g. Pied/White Wagtail, Carrion/Hooded Crow), there are significant gaps in our knowledge of the status of one or more subspecies within each species. If you have records, information or views that would help to clarify the situation, I would like to hear from you (see contact details below). Of course, only some of the subspecies in the list below are described in the field guides; much information about the others can be found in *Birds of the Western Palearctic* (BWP).

White-fronted Goose [*flavirostris, albifrons*] Greenland White-fronted Goose is regular in Argyll. European White-fronted Goose (*albifrons*) is a rare visitor; all records are required and should be accompanied by a full description.

Snow Goose [*caerulescens*] Blue-morph individuals recorded

in Argyll are Lesser Snow Geese *caerulescens* (blue-morph Greater Snow Geese *atlanticus* being exceptionally rare). It appears that *atlanticus* occurs infrequently in Scotland as a wild bird, with only two confirmed records (see Andrews and Naylor's list of species and subspecies recorded in Scotland on fewer than 20 occasions, published on the SOC website). However, it is entirely possible that some of the white-morph Snow Geese that have occurred in Argyll in the past were *atlanticus*. Argyll's introduced breeding population includes blue-morph birds, so must be at least partly derived from *caerulescens*.

Canada Goose [*canadensis*] Breeding birds in the UK are assigned to the race *canadensis*. Vagrants are described by BOURC as "race or races unknown" even though many birders are now confidently assigning these birds to several different races, at least three of which (*hutchinsi*, *parvipes* and *taverneri*) have allegedly occurred on Islay.

Brent Goose [*hrota, bernicla, nigricans*] Pale-bellied Brent Geese (*hrota*) are regular in Argyll. Occasional Dark-bellied Brent Geese (*bernicla*) turn up, and there has been one accepted record of Black Brant (*nigricans*); all records of these two races are required. Records of Black Brant need to be accompanied by a description (for assessment by BBRC).

Merlin [*aesalon*] Breeding birds are assigned to the race *aesalon* by BOURC, though it appears that birds nesting in Scotland are intermediate between this race and the larger Icelandic race *subaesalon*, which is likely to occur on passage or in winter. Birds ringed in Iceland have apparently been recovered in various parts of Scotland, but there appear to be no recoveries from Argyll.

Grey Partridge [*perdix*] Native birds apparently belong (or belonged) to the race *perdix*, with intraspecific intergrades arising as a result of introduction. I am not aware of any relevant information from Argyll.

Pheasant [?] The British population is usually said to consist mostly of intergrades between the races *colchicus* and *torquatus*. Clugston et al. (2001) describe *colchicus* as an introduced breeder and *torquatus* as a former introduced breeder in Scotland. I am not aware of any relevant information from Argyll.

Argyll's Birds—species and subspecies (continued)

Ringed Plover [*hiaticula*, *tundrae*] Breeding birds belong to the race *hiaticula*. Individuals of the race *tundrae*, breeding in Arctic Scandinavia and Russia, are distinguishable in the field and are sometimes reported in late spring but may well be more widespread on passage and in winter.

Knot [?] Both the Greenland (*islandica*) and Siberian (*canutus*) races may occur in Argyll. It seems likely that most of our birds belong to the former race, since the latter apparently follows a migration path well to the east of us. However, it has been suggested that small numbers of *canutus* reach Scotland in conditions that bring falls of Curlew Sandpipers and Little Stints.

Dunlin [*schintzii*] Breeding birds belong to the race *schintzii*, which is also a passage migrant and winter visitor to the UK. Two other races seem certain to occur: *alpina*, which apparently constitutes the bulk of the UK wintering population; and *arctica*, which passes through western Britain in late May and August/September.

Snipe [*gallinago*, *faroeensis*] Breeding birds belong to the race *gallinago*. There is one recovery of a bird of the race *faroeensis*, which breeds mainly in Iceland and apparently winters mainly in Ireland. The more rufous birds seen in Argyll in autumn presumably belong to this race.

Black-tailed Godwit [*islandica*] Most if not all birds seen in Argyll belong (or are very likely to belong) to the Icelandic race (*islandica*). However, the race *limosa*, which is distinguishable in the field during the breeding season, could possibly occur.

Redshank [*totanus*, *robusta*] Breeding birds belong to the race *totanus*. There is one confirmed record of a ringed Icelandic bird belonging to the race *robusta*. This race is probably common on passage and in winter.

Lesser Black-backed Gull [*graellsii*, *intermedius*] Breeding birds belong to the race *graellsii*. There are several sight records of darker-backed birds, some at least of which show the characters of *intermedius*. The status of *fuscus* is obscure and it is believed by some to be only a rare visitor to the UK.

Herring Gull [*argenteus*, *argentatus*, *michahellis*] Breeding birds belong to the race *argenteus*. Birds of the Northern race *argentatus* (some of which are very distinctive because of their dark-backed appearance) occur in winter. There is one accepted record of the race *michahellis*, which is regarded by many as belonging to a separate species, Yellow-legged Gull.

Gullemot [*albionis*, *aalge*] Both brown-backed Southern birds (*albionis*) and black-backed Northern birds (*aalge*) are seen off our coasts. Where breeding is concerned, Argyll apparently sits on the dividing line between these two races. I do not know whether birds at Argyll breeding colonies can be assigned to either race or are intermediate in plumage.

Razorbill [*arctica*] Breeding birds belong to the race *arctica*. There are apparently some Scottish recoveries of the Northern race *torda*, which could potentially occur in Argyll as a winter visitor.

Puffin [*grabae*, *arctica*] Breeding birds belong to the race *grabae*. There is one Argyll recovery of a bird of the Northern race

arctica, ringed in Norway.

Great Spotted Woodpecker [*anglicus*] Breeding birds belong to the race *anglicus*. At least some past records of extralimital birds on the islands seem likely to relate to the Northern race *major*, especially when associated with irruptions of this race into Scotland.

Meadow Pipit [*whistleri*] Birds breeding in Western Scotland and Ireland are assigned to the race *whistleri*. The race *pratensis* seems certain to occur on passage or in winter.

Yellow Wagtail [*flavissima*, *flava*, *thunbergi*] Yellow (*flavissima*) and Blue-headed (*flava*) Wagtails are both scarce visitors to Argyll. There is also one record of Grey-headed (*thunbergi*). All records of this species in Argyll are required, and a description should be submitted for any race other than *flavissima*.

Pied/White Wagtail [*yarrellii*, *alba*] Breeding birds belong to the race *yarrellii* (Pied Wagtail). White Wagtails *alba* are regular spring passage migrants and are probably under-recorded in autumn. A few instances of mixed breeding pairs (Pied x White) have been recorded, e.g. in 2000.

Dipper [*hibernicus*] Most or all breeding birds in Argyll belong to the race *hibernicus*. The race *gularis* is said to occupy Scotland away from the west coast, but I do not know whether or where a dividing line can be or has been drawn. Interestingly, a bird ringed in Kintyre in May 1976 was recovered in Dalry in February 1979.

Wren [*indigenus*] Breeding birds belong to the race *indigenus*. It is theoretically possible (though perhaps unlikely) that two further races could occur in Argyll: *hebridensis* of the Outer Hebrides (apparently sedentary) and the Continental race *troglodytes* (occurs east coast and Northern Isles).

Dunnock [*hebridium*] Birds breeding in the Inner Hebrides belong to the race *hebridium*, while those on the adjacent mainland are apparently intermediate between this race (to which they are sometimes assigned) and *occidentalis*, which occupies the rest of Britain and is said to be largely sedentary. In addition, the Continental race *modularis* occurs as a migrant on the east coast and in the Northern Isles, and could conceivably reach Argyll.

Robin [*melophilus*] Breeding birds belong to the race *melophilus*. There are occasional reports of Continental birds *rubecula* in Argyll, and it has even been said that most birds seen on passage and wintering in the Hebrides belong to this race (BWP). However, there has also been some debate over the extent to which individuals of the two races can be reliably distinguished in the field (e.g. BWP).

Wheatear [*oenanthe*, *leucorhoa*] Breeding birds belong to the race *oenanthe*. Greenland Wheatears *leucorhoa* are regularly reported in spring and autumn.

Argyll's Birds—species and subspecies (continued)

Song Thrush [*clarkei, hebridensis, philomelos*] Breeding birds belong to the race *clarkei*. There are occasional reports in Argyll of the race *hebridensis*, which breeds on the Outer Hebrides and Skye; since part of the population is said to winter in Ireland, then it should occur regularly in our area on migration. However, the possible occurrence of intermediates makes it difficult to judge sight records, although there is a specimen of this race in the National Museums of Scotland labelled simply "Islay, June 1926". Observations suggest that the Continental race *philomelos* occurs on migration in autumn. Elliott (1989, *Birds of Islay*) mentions that a juvenile ringed on Heligoland in autumn (and thus belonging to this race) was later found dead on Islay.

Redwing [*coburni, iliacus*] Both the Icelandic (*coburni*) and Scandinavian (*iliacus*) races occur. The former is apparently more frequent.

Chiffchaff [*collybita*] Breeding birds belong to the race *collybita*. Three other races are on the Scottish list: *abietinus*, *tristis* and *fulvescens*, though the last of these is not recognised by BWP. Birds of one or more of these races occur fairly regularly in Argyll in late autumn and are often identified only as "eastern Chiffchaffs". Detailed descriptions of any such birds, with opinions as to which race they belong to, would be very useful.

Willow Warbler [*trochilus*] Breeding birds belong to the race *trochilus*. The Northern race (*acredula*) is said to be a scarce passage migrant in the UK, and it has been suggested that some Scottish breeding birds might belong to this race. However, the situation is complicated by the occurrence of atypically drab *trochilus*. I personally have seen "brown and white" Willow Warblers on two occasions on Islay, in May and July.

Coal Tit [*britannicus*] Breeding birds belong to the race *britannicus*. Continental birds (*ater*) have apparently been recorded in Scotland, but seem (like Continental Blue and Great Tits) unlikely to reach the west coast. Nevertheless, Wallace et al. (2001, British Birds 94: 103-120) claim to have seen birds resembling this race in autumn in Co. Donegal. Elliott (1989) states that "Two birds with the pale primrose-yellow cheeks of the Irish race (*P. a. hibernicus*) were shot in 1913" (on Islay). However, it appears that some birds of the race *britannicus* can show some yellow (BWP), and *hibernicus* is not currently on the Scottish list.

Blue Tit [*obscurus*] Breeding birds belong to the race *obscurus*. As with Coal Tit, migrants of the Continental race (in this case *caeruleus*) seem unlikely to reach the west coast. Nevertheless, their occurrence in Co. Donegal was reported by Wallace et al. (2001).

Treecreeper [*britannica*] Breeding birds belong to the race *britannica*. The Northern race (*familiaris*) has been recorded in Scotland on migration but, as with the tit species, would seem unlikely to reach Argyll. However, Wallace et al. (2001) reported sightings of two individuals of *familiaris* in Co. Donegal at the end of September 2000.

Jackdaw [*spermologus*] Breeding birds belong to the race

spermologus. Scandinavian birds (*monedula*) apparently occur in Scotland on passage and in winter, but I know of no claimed records from Argyll. In addition, birds resembling the eastern race (*soemmerringii*), which is not on the Scottish list, have been reported from the north of Ireland, e.g. Wallace et al (2001).

Carrion/Hooded Crow [*corone, cornix*] Both races are found in Argyll and their distributions are fairly well known. However, information on the relative abundance of the two forms and intermediates at particular locations would be of interest, as would data describing possible changes over time.

Starling [*vulgaris*] Breeding birds belong to the race *vulgaris*. A different race, *zetlandicus*, breeds on Shetland and possibly also the Outer Hebrides. However, the racial identity of the Hebridean birds is open to question (BWP). Unlike those from Shetland, their measurements are similar to those of nominate *vulgaris*, and the dark coloration of the juvenile is not a reliable distinguishing feature because some *vulgaris* also show this. I have seen blackish juvenile Starlings on Islay on several occasions.

Chaffinch [*gengleri, coelebs*] Breeding birds belong to the race *gengleri*. Wintering flocks, however, are likely to be composed mainly of Continental birds (*coelebs*). There is one Argyll recovery of a bird of this race, ringed in Norway in August.

Linnet [*autochthona*] Breeding birds in Scotland belong to the race *autochthona*. Birds of the race *cannabina*, breeding elsewhere in the UK and on the Continent, seem likely to occur on passage or in winter.

Common Redpoll [*flammea, rostrata*] The status of two races of this species in Argyll (*flammea* and *rostrata*) was summarised in the 16th Argyll Bird Report. All records of either race are required, with a description for assessment by the Argyll Bird Records Committee. It seems likely that Mealy Redpolls (*flammea*) are under-recorded in Argyll.

Bullfinch [*pileata*] Breeding birds belong to the race *pileata*. The northern race (*pyrrhula*) occurs in Scotland as a scarce or rare migrant, mostly through the Northern Isles. It has been reported from Argyll on several occasions, but it is surprising that most of these sight records come from the mainland rather than the islands.

Snow Bunting [?] Two races occur in Scotland in winter, *insulae* and *nivalis*, with the former apparently being the more abundant of the two.

Tristan ap Rheinallt

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Costa Rica Trip 2nd–17th March 2002 with the Travelling Naturalist

Editor's note: Mike Gear kindly provided a day-to-day diary of his fascinating trip to Costa Rica. Due to space limitations I have only been able to print a selection of his daily accounts below.

Day 2 – Sunday 3rd March a.m. Tapanti Reserve, pm Trogon Lodge, central mountains at 8000ft.

Alarm at 5 am to sort out kit for first day in **Costa Rica**. 6 am, about half the party met Jim Earl and walked to a small town park only two blocks away. In less than an hour saw lots of birds, including a treasure (for me!), a Blue Crowned Motmot! After breakfast all collected into minibus with all our kit and drive to Tapanti Wildlife Reserve, an astonishing place, narrow valleys and steep heavily-wooded hillsides covered in exotic tree ferns etc with a single rough but very well built track cut into the hillside, cut frequently by rushing streams and torrents. We stopped and walked slowly several times, with feasts of wonderful birds. But very difficult bird watching, partly because all the birds are new to me and mostly because of the very dense growth. Some birds, e.g. flycatchers, do come back to the same perch and thus are easier to see and sort out.. Several "gems" – on a rushing river we had wonderful views of two pairs of American Dippers, along with a pair of Torrent Tyrannulets (a type of flycatcher, strangely similar colouring although totally different birds to the Dippers). Then the highlight (one of many) was splendid views of a Green-Fronted Lance-bill, a type of Humming Bird with a huge long bill, as long as its body, resting on a twig by the stream.

We had lunch in a mountain restaurant, and then a long drive back down to the central plateau before climbing slowly up a long winding road over the central divide and into steep hills rising to over 10,000 feet, all heavily split by ravines and rugged forest-clad hills, into the mist at times. The rugged wrinkled terrain is apparently due to the meeting of two tectonic plates millions of years ago! After about 3 hours we turned off onto a rough and steep track, again dramatically cut into impossible-looking crags, slopes and valleys. I admire the skill and ingenuity of the local road engineers. After a brief walk with some good birds, we reached **Trogon Lodge** at 6pm. It is a series of low timber buildings set in a clearing in a steep-sided valley with a tumbling stream, with individual lodges as rooms, reached by little steep stony paths. It is an enchanting place, all the more so after the somewhat scary and long drive into this remote jungle corner. Although in a steep valley, the Lodge is at over 2000m (about 8000 feet). So, breathless on walking uphill, also unbelievably cold at night!

Day 3 – Monday 4th March – Finca Mirador Quetzal and highest moun- tain 12,000ft

Up early for the 6 am walkabout, dramatic birds everywhere, including the famous Resplendent Quetzal, male and female seen close to, in open valley. A fabulous bird, but lots of others. Dozens of brilliant hummingbirds all round the lodge. After breakfast, off at 8 am to grind slowly up the steep narrow twisting road from the lodge back up to the main road, with multiple stops on the way to get out and spot birds. Sun soon warming the cold air. Before a mountain restaurant lunch, we had a three hour slow walk into virgin high mountain cloud forest, with giant tree ferns, bamboos, moss and lichen on everything. Thereafter we drove up to the highest point of the mountain range at 3,500m, just under 12,000ft! Here there were few birds and we missed seeing the Timberline Wren, the speciality of the area. Then slowly back down into the Trogon Lodge valley. The bus dropped us off about 2 miles from base and we walked back slowly down the enchanted gorge with rushing river.

Day 5 – Wednesday 6th March – Selva Verde. La Selva Biological sta- tion.

Fabulous birds before and after breakfast, in lowland rainforest. Hot and humid and difficult to keep up with fluid loss, sweating all the time, even in the shade, but birds of every description. So many varieties, it is quite breath-taking, almost overwhelming. In the afternoon, in La Selva biological reserve, I saw the first of an incredible bird spectacle. This is the migration from South America up the narrow isthmus that is Panama and Costa Rica, of literally thousands and thousands of closely packed vultures and hawks. They all circle in thermals to gain height, and then, as if at an air display, they all suddenly head off northwards in a stream, which seemed endless. The extraordinary thing is not only the vast numbers, but the mixed nature, including turkey vultures, broad-winged and Swainson's hawks, and others not identified. An unforgettable, once-in-a-lifetime experience. The only comparable spectacle that I have witnessed is the 60,000 geese on Islay getting ready to migrate.

Day 7 – Friday 8th March – Drive to Volcano Arenal. Stay in La Fortuna on slopes of mountain.

Leave Selva Verde and visit and walk in more mountain forest. Fewer birds, but some spectacular; 6 swallow-tailed kites wheeling and doing acrobatics just above our heads. Stopped at a small mountain restaurant, dozens of hummingbird species visiting the feeders, lots of other birds too. First rather classic encounter with a group of 6 Americans, gross hippopotami, the whole lot extraordinary! Then a very long drive up a terribly pot-holed road to **Volcano Arenal** (active) to stay in cabined hotel in **La Fortuna**. Smart looking and nice rooms, but totally cha-

Costa Rica Trip (continued)

otic restaurant!! Mad!! Eventually got beers and food. Cabins very comfortable, but I got caught out neatly and hilariously by yet another design fault. The doors are self-locking with no obvious mechanism for maintaining the latch in the open position. I awoke at 5 am to the noise of Howler monkeys and thought I would see if the volcano was visible (obscured by cloud last night). Wandered onto the veranda, 'CLICK', behind me, LOCKED OUT before dawn and not a soul about. Eventually managed to hobble barefoot over spiky gravel tracks and find reception locked and lights out, but bang on the door and *praise be*, there was a night watchman who eventually accepted that a pyjama-clad elderly Brit speaking no Spanish was not about to rob him, and let me back in! The rest of the team will roar when they hear a suitably exaggerated version. At least I wasn't naked!

Day 9 – Sunday 10th March – La Ensenada. Boat trip, tractor trip.

Stunning views over the Gulf to the West. Up early for a pre-breakfast walk (much Howler monkey roaring in the night – quite like lions!). Costa Rican food is good, but basic, rice and beans with all three meals, then fish or meat, and salad, fruit juice and lovely fresh melon, followed by a simple pudding and excellent Costa Rican coffee. After, breakfast off in a small fibreglass boat with about 12 seats and a canvas cover for shade as the sun is fiercely hot. Motored up the Gulf, nosing close to sandbars and up mangrove-lined creeks and rivers, full of a new lot of birds, including Roseate Spoonbills and Skimmers (last seen in Africa). Great fun and variety. Juan Carlos met us with the bus at a ferry stop about 15 miles up and brought us back for lunch and much needed siesta. Bakingly hot day. After lunch managed to get through to Susie (lovely to make contact), but limited by proximity of others and I am getting a bit short of dollars; nowhere seems to change travellers cheques. At 3-30 pm, off on a trailer behind a tractor to tour the large estate on which the lodge is situated. Sounds a bit 'grockle'-like, but again we stopped and got out at all the good places; salt pans and little estuaries. Variety again. Finished the day on a little hill above the lodge where we were met with a glass of chilled wine and little eats to watch the sun go down over a lovely panorama.

Day 11 – Tuesday 12th March – Drive south to Tarcoles Bridge, on to Villa Lapas lodge in Carara reserve. Central southern pacific lowland rain forest.

Did our own pre-breakfast walk. Very good to see whether all the birds we have been shown are becoming a bit familiar. It is still difficult because of the vast range of species and is complicated by the curious naming system, but nevertheless some definite advances and successes, as

well as some more dismal failures! Then, having packed up, drove for 2-3 hours to lunch in a shaded restaurant only yards from the Pacific. Azure blue sea lapping on the beach framed by palm trees. While lunching I noticed a big deep-sea trawler with two large booms rigged either side, coming in. On closer inspection, every inch of rigging and wheelhouse roof was decked out with birds; brown pelicans, terns, gulls and as a special prize, two brown boobies (a type of gannet) normally only seen far out to sea or in the Galapagos. Then came on to our next 3 day stop, the Villa Lapas Hotel in the Carara reserve, famed for its scarlet macaws, which we duly saw as we did a forest walk along the river. Temperature and humidity the hottest ever. The hotel again with cabins, but more up-market and there is air-conditioning; noisy but welcome.

Day 13 – Thursday 14th March – Carara Reserve and estuary of Tarcoles, plus night drive.

More mostly forest walks in real tropical heat and humidity. The best time is undoubtedly the pre-breakfast walk. We now meet at 5-30 am for a quick coffee just as dawn is breaking and then walk the forest trails slowly in the relatively cool air until about 9 am. The birds are at their most vigorous and often, as before, there are so many species in one big tree and it is difficult to know where to start. Many of the trees are enormous, 150-200 ft high and 10-12 ft or more in trunk diameter, with huge buttress roots. The trees are hung with vines and creepers, and ferns and bromeliads grow on the branches. Many trees are in flower and some in fruit, so the food supply, in insects, seeds and fruit for birds and animals, is rich. Often the undergrowth is so thick you can only see a few yards, but there are clearer areas and every now and then a gully or watercourse to vary the scene and habitat. Today one of the bird highlights was a 'lek' or communal display area for a group of 6 or 8 orange-collared manakins. These are very bright orange-necked dumpy little birds, who not only call at each other in competition, but also (I think uniquely) 'crack' or 'snap' their wings together so sharply it sounds like a whip-crack or snapped twig. As a result, while watching you can make similar noises at them, which gets them highly irritated at the idea of further competitors! JosÉ comes equipped with a tiny red laser pointer so he can highlight a bird's location in the darker forest corners.

Day 14 – Friday 15th March – a.m. High mountain road behind Villa Lapas, p.m. village square Orotino, back to Hotel Torremolinos, San José.

Again early rise, this time to drive up past the Villa Lapas

Costa Rica Trip (continued)

where we are staying. About 1500 feet up to the top of the mountain behind, and then walk the road for a mile or so slowly. Masses of birds including two new species. The total for the group is now a staggering 400+, and my own: 335 species, but more important than the numbers is the clear fact that we are all now beginning to recognise some of the commoner species and even picking correctly for the more unusual ones. My own prize observation (when I was lagging behind the group a bit) was to find through a gap in the trees a lovely view of a Laughing Falcon, a beautiful creamy-white coloured hawk with a black 'mask'; a real treasure! After breakfast, a brief further forest walk before packing up and loading the minibus for the drive back to San José. Up and up and over the central ridge and down again to the central valley where it is much cooler. Back to the Hotel Torremolinos, then we were taken out to a super restaurant for an excellent final meal together, with some light hearted speeches and much cheerful chatter. Tomorrow a long flight home.

Mike Gear (guides were Jim Earl & José Calvo)

Editor's note: After reading this you're probably itching to book a holiday to Costa Rica! I'm sure Mike would be very happy to provide details.

Pine Martens and Pied Flycatchers at Bonawe

*F*or the last 15 years I have been operating nestboxes at Bonawe. Most years it is normal for Pine Martens to prey heavily on the eggs, chicks and incubating adults. Usually the level of predation has been tolerable, with perhaps half of the broods or clutches being lost to martens. But in 2002 it became so bad that something will have to be done!

Only twice have I actually seen a Pine Marten in the nestbox area, but their scats (faeces) show that they are always around. Very occasionally there may be scats at the base of the tree where the box was attacked. More usually the Pine Marten leaves a unique set of "fingerprints" at the scene as it tries to scoop the nest contents out of the entry hole with its paw. This knocks most of the eggs out of its reach so that you find them at the very bottom of the box, under the disrupted nest and often in a corner. (If the eggs are at the front, they come tumbling out when you open the box!) Very few eggs are broken in these attacks. Adult tail and contour feathers suggest that the incubating bird is a main target. Martens find it easier to remove adults and large young from the box than eggs or small young. Bloodstains, and down or half-grown feathers stuck to the entry hole and on top of the box, show where the predator stands as it works its paw back and forth inside. It almost always

misses a few large young, which you find dead, wrapped up in the nest remains, often with severe wounds to back and legs. Pine Marten hairs, scratches around the entry hole (often numerous), scuff marks up the tree, and bits of bark and moss knocked to the ground during the climb to the box, are extra clues. Only if the nest is trodden flat can you assume that a box escaped predation and that the young flew. A disrupted nest, an absence of the usual clouds of feather dust when you remove the nest, or a tit nest with no lining (see below) almost certainly mean that all the young died. If the young are large enough when attacked, a few may survive by flying.

Like other mustelids such as mink and otter, once a Pine Marten has found a new food source, it exploits it on a grand scale. In 2002, 27 of 38 Blue Tit nests in my patch at Bonawe were attacked (71%), mostly during incubation, and many of these were in a single area and almost in a straight, unbroken line. They were found on my first round of the boxes (25 May), so the predator was not following a scent, but must have been finding the boxes by sight and sound. A sequence of 13 tit nests predated as above, each with many eggs under a disrupted nest, was followed by four in which the lining and all the eggs were missing. (Tit nests are made of moss with an inner lining of sheep's wool or feathers.) It looked as if the marten, after thrashing ineffectually around and failing to get most of the eggs in the 13 boxes, eventually learned how to fold the lining over and remove it with all the eggs inside! Sometimes one finds the lining lying at the base of the tree and only the empty moss nest left in the box.

The Blue Tits' overall productivity was about 72 young fledged from 38 boxes (1.9 young/pr). Great Tits fared better, mainly because most were in a less affected area. Of 17 boxes, 8 were attacked by Pine Marten (47%) and overall about 71 young fledged (4.2 young/pr).

Unfortunately, Redstarts and Pied Flycatchers, the species for which the boxes are maintained, were the most affected. Of seven boxes with Redstarts, six were attacked at the egg or chick stage, while one pair laid eight eggs and fledged all eight (1.1 young/pr overall). Of five boxes with Pied Flycatchers, three were attacked as eggs or young, one may have fledged seven young (attacked when large enough to leave the box), and one fledged five young (1.0 to 2.4 young/pr overall). One or two of the affected boxes seemed to have been attacked by both woodpecker (via the drain holes) and Pine Marten (via the entry hole).

Predation at this level is almost certainly higher than natural, but since there are no data from this area on Pine Marten predation of natural nest sites, we cannot be sure. The main aim of the work is to increase the numbers of Pied Flycatchers and Redstarts. This might well have been achieved by now if so many young had not been lost each year to Pine Martens. Ideally I would like to replace all the boxes with more secure ones that are available in sufficient numbers. I need to be sure that the new ones really are marten-proof before the expense and labour of replacing all 160-odd boxes. Can anyone advise? Or should I just admit defeat and remove all the boxes?

Clive Craik, Grendon, Barcaldine, Oban PA37 1SG

I have Snowy Egrets for breakfast. In October every year, I migrate to the Mecca of eastern North American bird watching, the southern end of the state of New Jersey. Cape May and the fall [autumn] migration is the magnet. From the living room of my apartment I overlook an extensive tidal marsh, where Osprey, Cormorant, several species of duck, large flocks of migrating shorebirds [waders], Grey and Black-crowned Night Heron, Forster's and Caspian Terns, several species of gulls, and two species of Egret, the Great Egret and the Snowy Egret regularly feed.

Every morning in October I expect to see Snowy Egrets fishing in the channels of the tidal marsh. The species breeds along the East coast of the United States, in the West Indies, and in Central and South America. My Field Guide to the Rare Birds of Britain and Europe [Collins 1991] states that the Snowy Egret is 'recently reported from Azores and Iceland'.

Today, [17 May 2002] I was watching a Snowy Egret after lunch, at Ettrick Bay. The bird is a slender, all white, long-legged heron-like bird, 22-26 inches long, wingspread about 38 inches, with bright yellow feet. Golden Slippers is a local name in America. It is the New World counterpart of the Little Egret. The Little Egret is almost identical. The Snowy Egret has more prominent yellow lores [the face behind the bill]. Its legs are dark in front, yellow at the back. When the bird walks away from you, the bird appears to have yellow legs. The Little Egret has dark legs.

This particular Snowy - a name that resonates Dick Barton, Special Agent, for people of my generation - has a fondness for Argyll and the Clyde coast. It has been in the area since November. It has been recorded in Oban, in Dunoon, on Aran-Brodick Golf Course was preferred- Ardrossan and Loch Fyne. Now it has graced the Isle of Bute.

This bird was probably driven across the Atlantic in an autumn storm,

perhaps via Iceland. A one off event, a unique occurrence-it IS the first record for the British Isles. The Little Egret is a Mediterranean species presently expanding northwards, probably as a result of global warming. Once a vagrant to this country, then a regular visitor, now it is breeding along the South Coast. As the resident breeding population expands, the possibility of the Little Egret appearing on Bute increases. Just remember to look carefully at the legs of the next Golden Slippers you see.

Michael Thomas (with thanks to Ian Hopkins for alerting me to the bird's presence)

Subscription Reminder

Please send any outstanding subscriptions for 2002 to Pam Staley (address on page 17)

Individual £10

Family £15

Please makes cheques payable to "Argyll Bird Club"

Contributors

I would like to thank the following for contributed articles for this issue: John Anderson, John Bowler, Tom Callan, Clive Craik, Paul Daw, Bob Furness, Mike, Gear, Jane Mitchell, Tristan ap Rheinallt, Peter Staley, Michael Thomas and James Towill.

Steve Petty

Please send articles for the next Eider to the editor before 28th November

Thank you!

Request for ring sightings of native Greylag Geese

Since 1998 a total of 1,002 birds from the currently expanding population of native Greylag Geese on Tiree and Coll have been individually colour-ringed as part of a long-term study set up by SNH with input from RSPB and WWT, including a further 258 geese caught and newly ringed in July 2002. Re-sightings of these birds have shown that there is regular interchange between the islands of Coll and Tiree, but to date there have been only two confirmed records of birds elsewhere - a re-sighting on Rum and a dead bird on South Uist. The birds have been fitted with grey neck-collars bearing a vertical letter in black and two horizontal numbers (adults), and yellow plastic leg rings bearing a three-letter code (goslings). Observers are asked to look out for colour-ringed Greylags in Argyll and adjacent areas, and to send all records of birds bearing rings matching the descriptions given above, including ring code, date and location to the address below. Many thanks.

*John Bowler, Shepherd's Cottage, Heylipol, Isle of Tiree PA77 6TY
(john.bowler@rspb.org.uk)*

AUTUMN MEETING—SATURDAY 2ND NOVEMBER 2002

THE CAIRNBAAN HOTEL, BY LOCHGILPHEAD

PROGRAMME



09.30-10.20	Doors open, coffee and tea 
10.20-10.40	Welcome & introduction, and round up of recent bird sightings <i>Nigel Scriven (Chairman of the Argyll Bird Club)</i>
10.40-11.15	Improving the status of Black Grouse in Argyll <i>Sandra Maclean (Project Officer, Scottish Power, FC, RSPB, SNH)</i>
11.15-11.30	Preliminary results from the Peregrine survey and the Chough survey in Argyll <i>Roger Broad (RSPB)</i>
11.30-11.50	Coffee 
11.50-12.30	The proposed trial re-introduction of beaver to Knapdale, Argyll <i>Martin Gaywood (SNH)</i>
12.40-14.00	Lunch (available in the hotel conservatory and bar) 
14.00-14.30	Annual General Meeting
14.30-15.10	Willow tits: here today ... <i>Jimmy Maxwell</i>
15.10-15.45	Why do Blackcaps now winter in Argyll, and where are they from? <i>Stuart Bearhop (University of Glasgow)</i>
15.45-15.59	Some spectacular results from 'Seabird 2000' <i>Bob Furness (University of Glasgow)</i>
16.00-16.30	Raffle, tea and coffee 
Admission to non-members £5.00 (or free if you join the club)	

Annual General Meeting

September 2002

The 17th Annual General Meeting will be held at 1400 hours on Saturday 2 November 2002 in Cairnbaan Hotel near Lochgilphead.

AGENDA

1. Minutes of the 2001 Annual General Meeting
2. Matters arising
3. Chairman's Report
4. Secretary's Report
5. Membership Report
6. Treasurer's Report (see below)
7. Future field trips
8. Custodian of the stock of Argyll Bird Reports
9. Appointment of Membership Secretary
10. Election of Office Bearers and Committee Members (a maximum of 12 can be elected - nominations invited)

11. AOCB (please notify the Chairman before the meeting)

CURRENT OFFICIALS

<i>Chairman</i>	Nigel Scriven
<i>Vice Chairman</i>	David Wood
<i>Secretary</i>	John Anderson
<i>Treasurer</i>	Bob Furness
<i>Committee</i>	Roger Broad, Clive Craik*, Arthur French, Peter Kirk*, Jane Mitchell, John Simpson and Bill Staley*

* indicating members that wish to stand down at the AGM

<i>Co-opted</i>	Mike Gear
<i>Ex-officio</i>	Paul Daw (Argyll Bird Recorder)

John Anderson, Secretary (4 September 2002)

The Treasurer's Report for Financial Year 2001-2002

The accounts show that the Argyll Bird Club had a surplus of £1499.22 in financial year 2001-02. Our assets at the end of the year stood at £7209.19, the highest in the history of the club (see table on next page). This represents our bank balance only, and excludes from consideration any non-cash assets of the club such as unsold copies of Bird Reports and sales items. However, the cash value of this stock is small, and to an extent hypothetical (for example, most remaining back numbers of Bird Reports are of a few particular issues that are now most unlikely ever to be sold). However, the surplus and balance are misleading. These figures do not take account of the cost of the 2000 Bird Report, which should have been published during 2001-02 but was delayed. The cost of that report exceeds £1500 and so the balance for the year would be a slight deficit if the Report had been produced on schedule.

Income in 2000-01 was slightly down on that in the previous year, due largely to a small fall in membership. Expenditure on public meetings continued to increase as it has over the past several years. Variations in other expenditures are mostly due to costs happening to fall within one rather than another financial year, and show no clear trend.

In view of the healthy state of the club's bank balance I would not recommend any increase to the subscription rate, but since the balance of income and expenditure has now

moved into a small deficit (as predicted) there would be no sense in considering any reduction to subscription rates. Since the club will probably be publishing a book in the near future, we are likely to see a substantial part of our bank balance required at least initially to fund that development. In the longer term, sales of the book may recover our expenditure on book production, but there is a considerable element of uncertainty regarding the net income or expenditure that may go into the book project. I would suggest that the club should plan to make use of most of its funds to support the book, regardless of whether this turns out in the long term to be a financially profitable enterprise.

The club has now altered the management of our current account to require two signatures from any of three committee members. This has brought us into line with recommended practice for charities.

Since the start of financial year 2002-03 our income and expenditure appear to be following the normal pattern, suggesting that the current financial year will see accounts continuing to be similar to those of the last few years.

Bob Furness (1 September 2002)

17th Year Accounts: 15 April 2001–15 April 2002



The accounts were prepared by Bob Furness (Treasurer) and have been checked independently, and signed by Bernie Zonfrillo. A signed copy will be filed

Income	2001/2002	2000/2001
Subscriptions	1600.32	1878.82
Bird Report Sales	403.85	281.75
Bank Interest	122.83	167.86
Sales	29.50	100.00
Other	93.00	26.00
Total	2249.50	2454.43
Expenditure		
Bird Report	0.00	1490.00
Newsletter production	0.00	0.00
Postage	248.35	131.35
Committee expenses	27.50	7.40
Bird Recorder expenses	133.53	70.56
Public meetings	340.90	259.40
Data Protection registration	0.00	0.00
Total	750.28	1958.71
Surplus/Deficit for year	1499.22	495.72
Brought forward	5709.97	5214.25
Assets at end of year	7209.19	5709.97

Minutes of the Last (2001) AGM

September 2002

PRESENT. Approximately 38 members attended the meeting held on November 3rd 2001 in the Cairnbaan Hotel, which was chaired by Nigel Scriven.

APOLOGIES. Moira Campbell, Dave Anderson, Arthur French and Pam Staley.

MINUTES OF 2000 AGM. The minutes of the AGM held on October 28th 2000 were approved and signed as correct (proposer: John Anderson, seconder Norman Rae).

MATTERS ARISING. None

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT. Last year's AGM proved a difficult meeting, with problems finding a secretary to replace Roger Broad, only to be rescued by Peter Staley offering to step in for one year only, until another person could be found. Peter has taken on the role with his customary diligence and efficiency. I am very grateful to him for his work in the post during his one-year stint and thank him on behalf of the committee and the club.

There was bad news and good news, which is a bit of a theme for this year. The Bird Report was a little later coming out than previously, but Clive Craik and Paul Daw made sure it was as good as ever.

After plenty of talk and little action by anyone, David Wood seized the bull by the horns and convened a publication group in February in Inveraray, connected to Malcolm Ogilvie on Islay by telephone link, to consider the "Birds of Argyll" book proposal. There was a great deal of enthusiasm for the project. In fact, so much enthusiasm that the meeting concluded with two books planned: volume one slanted towards a systematic list treatment, and volume two more towards a habitat treatment.

This is a very exciting project and will be a landmark in Argyll ornithology and a major achievement for the Club. Much initial work on volume one has been done by Tristan ap Rheinallt, in consultation with several others and it is anticipated many authors will

be contributing to the species accounts.

Then came Foot and Mouth disease. While it didn't arrive in Argyll, it caused problems nevertheless, curbing many birding activities, national surveys and leading to the cancellation of Club outings, and frustration all round. It was astonishing how quickly access to the countryside could be closed down, how compliant and responsible the general public could be, and yet how difficult it was to re-open access once the threat receded. It was timely that it coincided with the consultation on the Land Reform Bill, and was a stark illustration of value of countryside recreation to the rural economy compared to modern day farming.

Two indoor meetings at Cairnbaan and Dunstaffnage continued to provide a variety of speakers on interesting and topical subjects. The talk by Marina Curran-Colthart in March was a precursor to the launch of the Argyll and Bute Biodiversity Action Plan later on in the year. Several Club members were involved in its development, but now it is time for all of us to be involved in its implementation. It represents a significant step forward in nature conservation in Argyll, recognising the importance of our Fauna and Flora, and should help give it greater protection. The Club has a clear contribution to make in monitoring and education.

The Eider appeared 4 times during the year, occasionally thinner than usual, as there were less contributions forthcoming, perhaps reflecting the impaired birding possible during the FMD crisis. The Club website will continue to be developed, thanks to Bob Furness and Glasgow University, and will be increasingly useful as more birders gain internet access.

My thanks go to all the committee for their support and contributions during the year, but especially to Peter Staley for stepping into the breach when it was most needed.

SECRETARY'S REPORT. The revised Constitution as adopted at the AGM on October 23rd 1999 has been submitted to the Inland Revenue Edinburgh as the controlling body for Charities in Scotland, and I have received a letter from them

Minutes of the Last (2001) AGM (continued)

confirming that it is acceptable and that we remain recognised as a Charity.

There were four committee meetings held in the last 12 months.

A sub-committee under the chairmanship of Dave Wood has been set up to pursue the "Birds of Argyll" Book Project. Members of this committee are Paul Daw, Steve Petty, Nigel Scriven, Bob Furness, Tristan ap Rheinallt, Clive Craik, Malcolm Ogilvie, and Jane Mitchell who has kindly agreed to act as secretary. The first meeting was held at Inveraray on February 28th 2001. Other members of the club who may wish to participate in this project are David Jardine, Helen Docherty, and Roger Broad.

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT (Given by Bill Staley). Prior to this AGM there were 160 memberships of the club, comprising 1 corporate, 1 junior, 54 family, and 104 ordinary. There have been two renewals today bringing the total to 162. Details of distribution of members by postcode were then given.

TREASURER'S REPORT. The accounts show that the Argyll Bird Club had a surplus of £495.72 in the financial year 2000-01. Our assets at the end of the year stood at £5709.97, the highest in the history of the club. This represents our bank balance only, and excludes from consideration any non-cash assets of the club such as unsold copies of Bird Reports and sales items. However, the cash value of this stock is small, and to an extent hypothetical (for example, most remaining back numbers of Bird Reports are of a few particular issues that are now most unlikely ever to be sold).

Income in 2000-01 was very similar to that in the previous year. Expenditure decreased by nearly £500. Much of this was due to expenditures happening to fall just before or just after the start of a financial year, and so represents happenstance rather than any significant trend in club expenditure.

In view of the healthy state of the club's bank

balance I would not recommend any increase to the subscription rate (any decrease would be inconvenient to administer and would be unwise as it would set us on a track of declining funds). Since the club will probably be publishing one, possibly two, books in the near future, we are likely to see a substantial part of our bank balance required at least initially to fund that development. In the longer term, sales of the book(s) may recover our expenditure on book production, but there is a considerable element of uncertainty regarding the net income or expenditure that may go into the book project. I would suggest that the club should plan to make use of most of its funds to support the book project, regardless of whether this turns out in the long term to be a financially profitable enterprise.

After considerable discussion, the club committee decided to continue with a single signature on our cheques. This makes administration very much easier, and given the small sums of money we deal with seems unlikely to lead to fraud. However, I am inclined to suggest that we alter this arrangement to require two signatures from any of three committee members. This would bring us into line with recommended practice for charities.

After examining possible higher rate interest accounts, I found that there was little merit in moving money from our Treasurer's account. With the present low interest rates the differentials between accounts are small, and most of the accounts offering higher rates of interest involved strings that made them less attractive to the club. It is also unclear at present how soon we may need access to money in support of the book project.

Since the start of financial year 2001-02 our income and expenditure appear to be following the normal pattern, suggesting

Minutes of the Last (2001) AGM (continued)⁹

September 2002

that the current financial year will see accounts continuing to be similar to those of the last few years, though possibly with costs of public meetings increasing.

After this report from the treasurer, two points were raised from the floor. The first was to complement the club on the continuing high standard of the Bird Report without increase in costs. The second was a question whether the club had as yet supplied data to a commercial organisation. The response was no, but requests were presently being processed and would be charged for. It was suggested that a complimentary copy of whatever report results from information provided should be given to the club as a condition of supplying the data.

ELECTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND APPOINTMENT OF OFFICE BEARERS. Three members of the previous committee stood down at this AGM, Peter Staley, David Anderson and Helen Doherty. The new committee was elected as follows.

Chairman. Nigel Scriven was re-elected, proposed by Josie Wall, seconded by Dorothy Thomas.

Secretary. John Anderson volunteered and was elected, proposed by Nigel Scriven, seconded by Mike Wall

Treasurer. Bob Furness was re-elected, proposed by Paul Daw, seconded by Roger Broad.

Vice Chairman. David Wood was re-elected, proposed by Jane Mitchell, seconded by Margaret Staley

There were no other nominations for these office bearing positions.

The following committee members were re-elected en-bloc: Roger Broad, Peter Kirk, Steve Petty, Bill Staley, Clive Craik, and Arthur French.

The two remaining vacancies on the committee were filled by:

John Simpson, proposed by Jane Mitchell, seconded by Iain Hopkins

Jane Mitchell, proposed by Peter Staley, seconded by Eva Shrewsbury.

Pam Staley continues as membership secretary - this is not a committee post.

AOCB

The proposed wind farm in Cowal was discussed. It appeared that the RSPB had been involved in consultations, as had the local community. The AGM closed at 1446hrs.

Peter T. Staley (9 November 2001)

Officials and Committee of the Argyll Bird Club

Chairman: Nigel Scriven, 2 Allt na Blathaich, Lock Eck, Dunoon PA23 8SG

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

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

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

Membership Secretary: Pam Staley, 16 Glengilp, Ardrishaig PA30 8HT

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

Committee: Roger Broad (Killearn), Michael Gear (Appin), Arthur French (Dunoon), Peter Kirk (Lochgilphead), Jane Mitchell (Tighnabruaich), John Simpson (Cardross), Bill Staley (Ardrishaig),

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