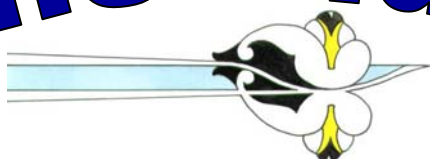


# The Eider



*The Eider* is the Quarterly Newsletter of the Argyll Bird Club (<http://www.argyllbirdclub.org>)

Scottish Charity Number SC 008782

## Editorial

I hope many of you will come to the autumn meeting at the Cairnbaan Hotel. A very interesting day has been arranged by Bob Furness. The programme was first published in the June *Eider*, but is repeated here on page 2—just as a reminder! We will again be holding a raffle at the meeting, so if any of you have suitable prizes, please bring them along.

The AGM is also held at the autumn meeting. This provides you with an opportunity to influence how the club operates, so please come along to express your views. The papers for the AGM are included towards the end of this issue.

Have you managed to look at the club's website yet? The address now appears at the top of this page. I've had no response from members, apart from some of the committee, so I would value any comments, including ideas on how the site can be improved. The main challenge over the winter will be to fill in the missing pages. In particular, the area birdwatching accounts need to be prepared—any volunteers? Once this is done the site should provide a valuable information source, not only for Argyll residents, but for visiting birdwatchers.

I would like to express the club's thanks to those who have helped to get the website online; Kate Petty for designing and developing the site, Argyll & Bute Local Biodiversity Partnership and Scottish Natural Heritage for providing grants for the software to run the site, and Margaret Staley for allowing her paintings to be used and for designing the new logo. I'm now trying to quickly acquire the skill to keep the site up-to-date!

Digital cameras really seem to have taken off. Up to this issue I've been struggling to find enough good photos. Now, I find I have too many! But, I'm not complaining and I'm very grateful to all those avid photographers!!

I hope the increased use of colour photos will encourage more of you to take the

electronic version of the *Eider*. At present the circulation lists for the e-*Eider* stands at around 30, but I'm sure this number could be increased. The e-*Eider* is visually better, arrives up to a week earlier than the mailed version and saves the club money, if you opt to take the electronic version only.

For help and contributions to this issue, I would like to thank John and Helen Anderson, Roger Broad (and the Argyll Raptor Study Group), Clive Craik, Paul Daw, Jim Duncan, Bob Furness, Mike Gear, Keith Grant, David Jardine, David Merrie, David Palmer, Katie Pendreigh, Linda Petty (proof reading), Kirsten Robb, Keith Shackleton, David Shrewsbury, Margaret Staley, Michael Thomas and David Wood.

## Autumn Meeting

To be held at the Cairnbaan Hotel, near Lochgilphead on Sat 6th November 2004

The programme is on page 2

Spring Meeting

To be held most probably on Sat 12th March 2005. Confirmation of date and venue will appear in the December *Eider*

## From the Chairman

After our long summer break, the committee had an excellent and very full meeting at Inveraray on 24 August. The level of commitment by everyone on the committee is exceptionally high, and as always, I'm really grateful to everyone involved for advancing the work of the club. We are greatly assisted by Helen Anderson's full and accurate minutes, helping everyone to keep track of who is to do what!

*Access to Scotland's Countryside*

Birdwatchers in Argyll have, for many years, enjoyed a pretty good level of ac-

September 2004

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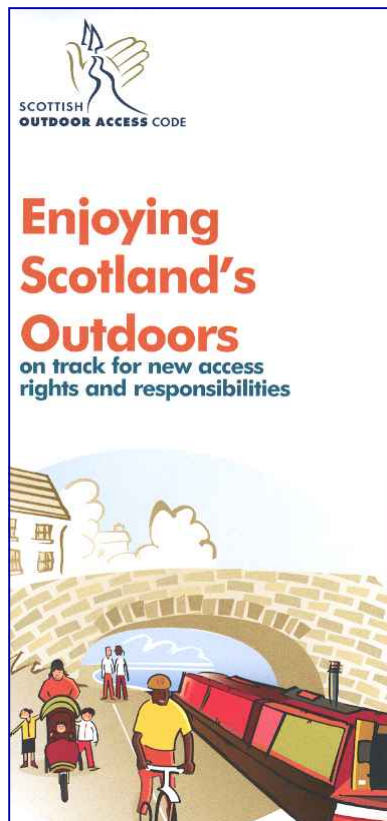
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To receive the electronic version of *The Eider* in colour, members should send their e-mail address to the Editor (contact details above). Past issues (since June 2002) can be downloaded from the club's website.

## The Eider

cess to their favourite sites. It's easy to forget that, in parts of Scotland, relations between land managers and members of the public wanting to enjoy the outdoors have sometimes been strained. On the one hand, many people are a bit unsure about where they can and cannot enjoy access. On the other, land managers want visitors to understand that the countryside is also a working environment.

There should be a lot more clarity for everyone from late 2004, when new rights of access to the countryside are expected to be enacted by the Scottish Parliament. The Scottish Outdoor Access Code, with its emphasis on responsible access, is available right now. It's the official guidance for everyone to understand their rights and responsibilities in different settings and in common situations you might find in the outdoors. You can find more information on this on SNH's web-site (<http://www.snh.org.uk>). Click on 'A-Z Index' then on 'Access'. There's also a summary update enclosed with this copy of the *Eider*.



## Birds of Argyll, and the Argyll Bird Report

We've been making steady progress with the species accounts for the club's forthcoming book, with publication expected in 2005. I'm also pleased to report that several club members have provided tremendous help to Paul Daw in processing bird records for the report—many thanks to you all!





We need to concentrate for the next few months on making significant progress with the book, which will be such a landmark for the club. Work on the 2003 *Argyll Bird Report* is continuing in parallel, but with the same folk involved in writing both, some trade-off may be inevitable. Please bear with us! We are working hard on both publications with the aim of getting them to press as soon as possible.

I hope you can make it to our next meeting at Cairnbaan (programme below). Look forward to seeing you then.

*David Wood*

## Programme for the Autumn Meeting on Saturday 6th November 2004

Cairnbaan Hotel, near Lochgilphead

09.00	Doors open, coffee and tea 
10.00-10.05	Welcome & introduction—David Wood (Chairman of the Argyll Bird Club)
10.05-10.15	Round up of recent bird sightings—Paul Daw (Argyll Bird Recorder)
10.15-10.45	Capercaillie conservation—Helen Doherty (SNH)
10.45-11.20	Shetland's rain geese—Dave Okill (Shetland Bird Club & BTO Rep. for Shetland)
11.20-11.50	Coffee 
11.50-12.20	The use of feeders by garden birds—Dan Chamberlain (BTO Scotland)
12.20-12.30	The Argyll Bird Club's website—Steve Petty (Editor of <i>The Eider</i> )
12.30-13.40	Lunch (available in the hotel lounge) 
13.40-14.20	Annual General Meeting
14.20-14.50	Wind farms and birds—Simon Lawrence (Lawrence Environmental Consultants)
14.50-15.20	Tracking seabird migration—Bob Furness (University of Glasgow)
15.20-15.30	Argaty Red Kites
15.30-16.00	Raffle, tea and coffee 

## Argyll Raptor Study Group (ARSG) - Monitoring Summary for 2003

The ARSG monitors the breeding performance of raptors throughout Argyll. This is the first annual summary to appear in the *Eider*. These data will eventually appear in the *Argyll Bird Report* for 2003.

The collection of reproductive data have involved much time by a small, dedicated group of raptor enthusiasts; namely D Anderson, R Broad, I Dillon, M Eaton, A French, S Gordon, M Gregory, A MacDonald, J Weir; J Halliday, F Harmer, P Haworth, I Hopkins, J How, D Jardine, A Keys, S Money, M Ogilvie, M Peacock, RSPB, D Sexton, D Walker. Most of the information has been provided by members of the ARSG, but important contributions have come from several other sources included in the list above, particularly in connection with the National Golden Eagle Survey. The ARSG is grateful for permission to include information provided by Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) and Doug Trigg from the FCS Barn Owl study area in Knapdale and Kintyre. *Produced on behalf of ARSG by Roger Broad*

## Red Kite



Red Kites (photo David Shrewsbury)

Three records, all of single kites: one nr Dervaig, Mull on 21 Feb, one nr Rare Breeds Centre, Oban ca 10 Apr and a bird with tags nr Tarbert, Kintyre on 26 Oct.

## White-tailed Eagle

**Breeding Scotland:** 31 territorial pairs were located and breeding was confirmed at 25 sites. Sixteen successful pairs fledged 26 chicks (Sea Eagle Project Team). With double the number of chicks fledging than in the previous best year (13) it is anticipated that there will be a further increase in sightings of wandering immatures in Argyll from 2004.

**Argyll:** In addition to breeding birds on Mull there was a good scatter of wandering/dispersing birds seen or reported in Argyll. As usual most were on the islands including Mull (minimum of 12 individuals), Lismore (Dec), Scarba (Oct), Jura (minimum of 5 individuals with records in 8 months) and Islay (records of one reported between 24 Feb and 24 Mar may refer to the same bird, a different individual was seen in Nov). On the mainland, records included two at Loch Feochan (Jan) and singles at Loch Melfort (Apr) and Scammodale (Sep). Reports in Oct included two in Appin and singles at Loch Etive and Butterbridge, Glen Kinglas and in Nov one was seen at Crinan.

## Hen Harrier

Several known breeding sites in mid Argyll and north Kintyre remain either unoccupied or attracted adults that did not stay to breed. Where pairs were present elsewhere, good weather during the breeding season coupled with reports of high Field Vole numbers allowed them to have a very productive and successful season. Few monitored breeding attempts ended in failure. Productivity was consistently high in all areas.

A summering, non-breeding ringtail (probably female) was recorded on Colonsay in May and June.



Hen Harrier nest with five eggs

Area	Sites checked	Territories (Ts) occupied	Ts where eggs laid	Ts known to have fledged young	Minimum number of young reared	No. of young per successful territory
Mull <sup>1</sup>		31	24	19	55	2.89
Islay		5	5	5	15	3.00
Jura		2	2	2	7	3.50
Mainland (not Cowal) <sup>2</sup>	9	5	2	2	7	3.50
Cowal <sup>3</sup>		11	10	10	29	2.90
Bute		5	5	5	14	2.80
<b>Total</b>		<b>59</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>2.95</b>

<sup>1</sup>Summary of survey carried out by PH under contract to SNH. Most of Mull surveyed except for 2 known sites. Thirty-one sites occupied; 24 nests located; 19 successful pairs fledged 55 young. No evidence of bigamy. One pair had a first year male.

<sup>2</sup>Several sites surveyed by John Halliday remain unoccupied. Not included in the above table is a pair present at one additional site where the behaviour indicated that it was successful although the brood size was unknown.

<sup>3</sup>One pair failed at the large young stage (predated by a fox?). One pair successfully fledged a brood of 6.



## Sparrowhawk

## Sparrowhawk—summary of breeding data from Cowal in 2003

Category	Territories (Ts) occupied	Ts where eggs laid	Ts known to have fledged young	Min number of young fledged	No of young per successful territory
Fully monitored	2	2	2	7	3.5
Brood size unknown	4	4	4	Brood size not known	
Outcome unknown	1	1	Outcome not known		

**Notes:** Data from Cowal are shown in the table opposite.

On Colonsay: at least 3 occupied sites were located, but breeding outcome unknown.

## Common Buzzard (Ian Hopkins co-ordinator)

Area	Sites checked	Territories (Ts) occupied	Ts where eggs laid	Ts known to have fledged young	Min number of young fledged	No of young per successful territory
SW Mull	34	31	16	15	19	1.26
Colonsay	53	27	8	8	14	1.75
Islay	6	6	5	3	5	1.66
Cowal <sup>1</sup>	33	33	9	8	17	2.12
Bute	29	29	29	27	53	1.96
<b>Total</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>1.77</b>

**Notes:** Not all occupied territories were followed up, hence the sometimes large difference between “territories occupied” and “territories where eggs laid”.

*Clutch size:* The mean clutch size for 2 nests on Colonsay was 3.0 and for 28 nests on Bute was 2.4 (minimum).

*Hatching date:* Estimates for 5 nests on Colonsay (using wing length growth curves) gave a mean date of 16 May.

*Brood size:* Mean brood size was 1.88 on Colonsay (8 broods) and 1.90 on Bute (28 broods).

<sup>1</sup>Excluding Glenbranter study area.

## Golden eagle

The information comes from the 2003 National Survey and includes data collected by ARSG members and by RSPB staff and contractors. All known territories were visited except one (not included in table opposite). This latter site is a historical territory which is now >80% under forestry, has not been occupied in recent years and is presumed still to be vacant. A similar data set from the 1992 national survey is provided for comparison.

**Occupied territories:** In 2003, 75 territories held pairs and 5 held single birds. In 1992, 82 territories held pairs and 2 held single birds.

Four additional territories have been identified since the 1992 National Survey (1 on north mainland, 1 on south mainland and 2 on the islands). In only one case is it certain that the territory has been recently established in the intervening period.

The figures include a clutch that was laid and incubated by a pair in immature plumage. The clutch subsequently failed.

National Survey	Sites checked	Territories (Ts) occupied	Ts where eggs laid	Ts known to have fledged young	Minimum number of young reared	No of young per successful territory
2003	100	80	52	29 (30)	30 (31)	1.03 (1.03)
1992	96	84	59	27	28	1.03

( ) = figure includes chick half grown on last visit.

Three chicks were removed under licence (2 Mull, 1 Cowal) from broods with twins. These subsequently fledged as part of the re-establishment project in Ireland. If all 3 had remained and fledged in Argyll the total number of young reared in 2003 would have been 33 (34) and the number of young/successful territory would have been 1.13.

Golden Eagle  
(photo Peter Kirk)



Golden eagle: summary of data 1992, 1996-2003							
Year	Territories (Ts) checked	Ts occupied	Ts where eggs laid	Ts known to have fledged young	% of occupied Ts that fledged young	Min. number of young fledged	Number of young per successful pair
2003	100	80	52	29 (30)	36.25% (37.50%)	30 (31)	1.03 (1.03)
2002	62	57	36	15	26.31%	15	1.0
2001	54	54	27	18	33.3%	21	1.16
2000	62	59	28+	19	32.2%	22	1.15
1999	61	57	28	16	28.0%	17	1.06
1998	61	54	?	22	40.7%	27	1.22
1997	58	53	?	25	47.1%	31	1.24
1996	57	54	37+	25	46.2%	29	1.16
1992	96	84	59	27	32.14%	28	1.03

## Osprey

The Osprey population increased with the addition of two new pairs. While most pairs were successful, productivity was lower than usual as a result of small brood sizes.

The table opposite summarises data for the last five years.

Year	Territories occupied	Territories known to have fledged young	Minimum number of young fledged	No of young per successful territory
2003	7	6	9 <sup>1</sup>	1.50
2002	5	3	6	2.0
2001	5	5	10	2.0
2000	4	4	9	2.25
1999	4	4	9(10)	2.25

<sup>1</sup>Brood size: b/1 x 3, b/2 x 3.

## Kestrel

Common Kestrel—summary of breeding data for 2003						
Area	Sites checked	Territories (Ts) occupied	Ts where eggs laid	Ts known to have fledged young	Min number of young reared	No of young per successful territory
Islay <sup>1</sup>	3	3	3	3	6	2.0
Islay <sup>2</sup>	1	1	1	Outcome not known		
Colonsay	1	1	1	Outcome not known		
Cowal <sup>1</sup>	1	1	1	1	5	5.0
Cowal <sup>2</sup>	10	10	10	10	Brood size unknown	
Cowal <sup>2</sup>	5	5	5	Outcome not known		

<sup>1</sup>Fully monitored; <sup>2</sup>Data incomplete

## Merlin

Little information on breeding Merlins was reported. Four sites were checked (one on Islay, one on North Argyll and two in Cowal), all were unoccupied.

Birds were present in six areas (Tiree, Islay, 2 on Jura, Kintyre, N Argyll), but few sites were followed up. One pair had a brood of five well-grown chicks on 24 June and agitated behaviour in late June-early July confirmed two other breeding attempts (Jura and N

Argyll). A pair present in Kintyre in early May either failed or did not breed.

The site in N Argyll was previously unknown. On Tiree, although there was no evidence of breeding activity in 2003, the presence of an adult male and female in suitable breeding habitat, where the female was last seen on 16 June, is of interest. Merlins have not been recorded breeding on Tiree in recent years.

## Peregrine Falcon

### Peregrine Falcon—summary of breeding data in 2003

Area	Sites checked	Territories (Ts) occupied	Ts where eggs laid	Ts known to have fledged young	Min number of young reared	No of young per successful territory
Misc Islands <sup>1</sup>	5	5	3	2	4	2.0
Islay	3	3	2	2	2	1.0
Mainland (exc Cowal)	6	3	3	3	5	1.6
Cowal	7	6 <sup>2</sup>	3	3	4	1.3
Bute	2	2	2	1	2	2.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>1.54</b>

<sup>1</sup>Colonsay: Substantial increase in resident pairs. Two breeding and two failed/not breeding pairs in 2003.

<sup>2</sup>Occupation: Four pairs and two single birds. Three pairs laid eggs and one either failed or did not breed

**Tiree:** Information incomplete (not included in table above). Breeding confirmed with a minimum of one chick fledged.

## Barn Owl

### Barn Owl—summary of breeding data in 2003

Area	Territories (Ts) occupied	Ts where eggs laid	Ts known to have fledged young	Min number of young fledged	Number of young per successful pair
Kintyre/Knapdale (FCS)	21 <sup>1</sup>	21	15	45	3.00
Cowal	5	5	5	21	4.20
Islay	2	2	2	3	1.50
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>3.13</b>

<sup>1</sup>A pair was present and eggs were laid at an additional site, but the outcome was unknown (not included in table).



Adult Barn Owl (photo Steve Petty)

## Tawny Owl



Tawny Owl chick (photo Steve Petty)

### Tawny Owl—summary of breeding data in 2003

Area	Territories (Ts) occupied	Ts where eggs laid	Ts known to have fledged young	Min number of young fledged	Number of young per successful pair
Bute	1	1	1	1	1.0
Cowal	12 <sup>1</sup>	12	12	27	2.25

<sup>1</sup>11 nest boxes and one natural site in a crag

**Note:** Breeding was also proved on Scarba, an infrequently visited island, where a single fledged chick was recorded on 21 June.

## Long-eared Owl

*Colonsay:* One occupied site fledged one chick.

*Gigha:* One pair located and calling young heard.



## Short-eared Owl

## Short-eared Owl—summary of breeding data in 2003

Area	Territories (Ts) occupied	Ts where eggs laid	Ts known to have fledged young	Min number of young fledged	Number of young per successful pair
Islay	1	1	1	2 (3)	2.00+
Kintyre	3-4	?	?	?	-
Cowal <sup>1</sup>	4	4	4	9+	2.25+

<sup>1</sup> The figures in the table underestimated the breeding success of SEOs in 2003, which markedly contrasts with the situation in 2002 when breeding was not confirmed anywhere in Cowal. The information for individual sites on the Cowal show that one pair fledged b/5 and another hatched c/7, but although only two large young remained in the nest on the last visit, there were signs that others had already left the nest. In one glen where one nest was proved to have fledged at least b/1 later information from the gamekeeper reported 15 SEOs in the glen in the late summer in three separate groups.



Adult Short-eared Owl at nest (photo Mike Richards)

## Raven

## Raven—summary of breeding data in 2003

Area	Territories (Ts) checked	Ts occupied	Ts known to have fledged young	Min number of young fledged	Number of young per successful territory
Tiree <sup>1</sup>		2	1	4	4.00
SW Mull <sup>2</sup>		14	12	37	3.08
Colonsay <sup>3</sup>		13	9	33	3.66
Islay <sup>4</sup>		7	7	26	3.71
Bute <sup>5</sup>		6	4	12	3.00
Cowal		13 <sup>6</sup>	8	18	2.25
<b>Total</b>		<b>55</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>3.17</b>

<sup>1</sup> No complete census carried out, but 7-8 pairs recorded. Breeding outcome only known for two sites (one site failed and one successfully fledged b/4). These two are included in the table above (JB).

<sup>2</sup> At least 16 sites were occupied. Outcome of breeding attempts unknown at two sites and are not included in the table.

<sup>3</sup> The most successful season recorded in over 10 years of monitoring on Colonsay, no doubt because of a benign March and a fantastic April with chicks well grown by the time the weather turned poor in May (DCJ).

<sup>4</sup> One tree site fledged b/5 (J How).

<sup>5</sup> Seven occupied sites were located. The breeding outcome is known for six sites (included in table), but while the behaviour of adults indicated that the seventh site was successful, the number of fledged chicks was unknown (not included in table).

<sup>6</sup> The figures in the table include a tree nest that failed. Not included in the table above are (i) an additional six pairs that nested and were successful, although the brood size was not accurately known and (ii) another four pairs that nested but the outcome was unknown.

## Field Trip Report—Return to Largybaan

In an earlier issue of the *Eider*, I wrote about my first visit to the Largybaan cliffs in 1963. Almost to the day, 41 years later, here I was back again with five other ABC members. We met in Campbeltown at the temporarily abandoned (?) ferry terminal for Ireland. Luckily we had two 4WD vehicles between us, so we proceeded to Auchencorvie Farm to see Ewan Johnston who farms at Largybaan, and to thank him for his offer of transport, which we now did not need. Local man Robert Brown was with us, and he knew of **Barn Owls** on the way in at Glenahanty and also the barn at Largybaan. We found owls in both places, although they did not appear to be nesting. High on the hill above Glenahanty a male **Hen Harrier** was hunting. **Buzzard**, **Hooded Crow**, **Chaffinch** and **Wood Pigeon** were also checked off on our way. **Swallows** were nesting in the barn. We left the cars just beyond Largybaan Farm and walked directly out to the cliffs. **Ravens** were calling and we saw more **Buzzards**. Hundreds of **Green-veined White** butterflies decorated trackside flowers. Nearer the cliffs we saw several **Small Heaths** and a single **Small Copper** butterfly.

Although the rest of Kintyre was having a fine sunny day, the Mull



The sea cliffs of Larybaan (photo David Merrie)

## The Eider

sea mist stretched out from Cnoc Moy and covered the cliffs at first. However, this gave us time to botanise along the upper cliffs of Binnein Fithich. Here we found, amongst others, **Early Purple Orchid**, and **Purple Saxifrage** (both over), **Kidney Vetch**, **Yellow Saxifrage**, **White Stonecrop**, **Goldenrod**, and **Lady's Mantle**. In fact, it is more the botanic interest which gives Largybaan its SSSI status and the reason why the SWT has adopted it as a reserve. It contains a montane flora typical of parts of the Grampian highlands as well as a maritime plants, and is thus unique.

The mist soon cleared and the party split into three. Ian T and Billy stayed on watch at the top. Ian H, Robert and Katie descended the 1000 feet or more to the base of the cliffs to look for seabirds, whilst I edged along the top of the cliffs to the north to look for the botanic speciality of the area *Oxytropis campestris*, so rare it does not have an English name. It occurs in only two other locations in Britain, both in central/east Scotland. About halfway along, near a shining outcrop of quartz, I found it and spent a while photographing it. The cliffs adjacent contained **Thrift**, **Bird's Foot Trefoil**, **Sheepsbit**, **Burnet Rose** and **Greater Stitchwort** and a **Common Blue** butterfly enjoying the warm sunshine.

Meanwhile down below, the others saw **Fulmars**, **Shags**, **Razor-bills**, **Guillemots**, **Rock Pipits** and **Wren**. Out at sea, **Herring** and **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** swung in and out, and **Gannets** commuted to and from Ailsa Craig. A large submarine slipped north, probably keeping a check on the former member of the Service sitting at the top of the cliffs!

We all re-convened at the cliff-top. Billy and Ian T had seen a **Kestrel** and I spotted a **Peregrine** over the moor on my way back. Robert took us to see down the great cleft in the cliffs where the local **Golden Eagles** had their eyries. We did not see the pair, and they appear not to have nested this year. Mist intervened again, but soon cleared to let us see two nests far below. Parties of **Rock**



Yellow Oxytropis at Largybaan (photo David Merrie)

**Doves** came inland. Just 100 yards away we found, not just a few clumps of *Oxytropis campestris*, but a huge buttress of the cliffs falling away for hundreds of feet covered with its soft pale yellow blossoms and lime green pinnate leaves. Nearby we also saw some spotless spotted orchids (*Dactylorhiza fuchsia*, Ian T thinks they are subspecies *o'kellyi*), and a fine clump of **Wood Vetch**, and **Roseroot** another montane plant.

Time to go home! On the way back to the cars we saw **Wheatear**, and on the drive back **Stonechat**, families of **Pied Wagtails**, more **Ravens** and two **Grey Wagtails**. Fields of silage were being cut beside the road to Campbelltown, and the newly cut sections were thronged with scavenging **Rooks** and **Common Gulls**.

David Merrie

## Field Trip Report—Scarba: The Rough Isle

**E**ight stalwarts of the club met at Craobhaven on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> July for a 5.30 pm departure in Duncan Phillips Farsainn motorboat. A slight delay ensued whilst Ian and Billy were prised from the pub, but we were soon heading out into a brisk sou'wester with a choppy sea. We had been asked to land at the south end, but the wind would have made that rather difficult. However, we espied calm water next to a rocky shore on the east coast, and Duncan very skilfully edged into a spot where we could clamber ashore. Not far away, through rush and bog was a bit of level ground, which the



The 'upper camp' (photo David Palmer)

“oldies” (David 1, Roger, Richard, and our young chaperone David 2) thought was good enough and far enough to carry kit for our camp. The younger element (Ian and Billy, David 3 and Janet) scrambled up a muddy track to find a nice grassy plateau with a fine view. We were fortunate that the evening, though overcast, was dry and relatively midge free, thanks to the breeze.

On the crossing and offshore in the Sound of Luing we met the expected **Gannets**, **Razorbills**, **Guillemots**, **Great Black-backed** and **Herring Gulls** and **Kittiwakes**.

After supper, which was generally accom-

panied by copious canned liquid refreshment, we all convened at the top camp and set off along the island's low road northwards for a mile or so, during which **Wren**, **Wheatear**, **Redpoll** and **Yellowhammer** were added to the expedition's list.

A calm night gave us all a well-earned rest, the sea lapping softly, to within four feet of Richard and David 2's tent. About 6 am the soft spitting of rain on canvas could be heard and by the general reveille of 7.30 it was definitely raining with a south wind behind it. Undeterred, the low camp wended their wet way up to the top camp and we all discussed the day's plans.

We had had time to observe that the most noticeable plants of this part of Scarba were **Bog Pimpernel**, **Skullcap**, **Marsh Ragwort**, rushes of various sorts, sundews, **Marsh Thistle**, all of which favour wet and boggy places.

We split into four parties of two. Ian and Billy opted for a diretissima to the summit, and thence to the northern cliffs. The summit was beset with cloud and driving rain, but they were lucky to see a **Short-eared Owl**, and by the cliffs, a **Kestrel** and **Raven**. Returning by the “big house” they saw **Swallows** a **Swift** and four



The party embarked (photo David Merrie)





Roger and 'plastic skirt' drying off in a cave  
(photo David Merrie)

**Mistle Thrushes.** Below the house there were immature **Grey Wagtails** and **Pied Wagtails**, and **Common Gull**.

David 1, Roger, Richard and David 2 headed across country to the south cove, Bagh Gleann na Mhaol, seeing **Skylark** and **Snipe** on the way. The bay had a usable and spacious bothy and we dried off inside. **Swallows**, **Song Thrush** and **Dunnocks** were seen nearby. **Pied Wagtails** had made 3 nests in an outhouse.

David 2 and Richard returned to camp via Meall Buidhe, to rest before an afternoon foray. They discovered the local pair of **Buzzards** had an eyrie in the cliff just below the top camp. David 1 and Roger proceeded west along the shore to caves used by outward-bound types, with bracken mattresses and fish-boxes full of kindling. On the cliff beyond was a **Raven's** nest. From here we zig-zagged uphill past many small lochs, none of which contained any avian presence, though one was a picture of water-lilies and water horsetail. A break in the clouds enabled us to see the summit of Cruach Scarba. We made a dash for it, but by the time we arrived, the cloud and rain had returned. We saw **Meadow Pipits** and **Hoodies**, but no owls, although we did find a couple of their favourite **Short-tailed Voles**. After half a mile downhill we met a beautifully crafted old hill track that took us back to the house, near which we had a fine cock **Whinchat**.

David 3 and Janet had been to the north coast opposite Lunga and had seen a **Sparrowhawk**, **Herons** and many deer, both **Red Deer** and **Sika Deer**.

At supper-time the rain paused enough to inspire a few of us to take a short stroll along the rushy east shore below the hanging wood of birch, oak and beech. We arrived home just in time to avoid a soaking. Overnight the rain kept coming, drumming heavily on the canvas at times and the wind buffeting the tents, but everyone stayed dry and warm, despite Richard and David 2 having a stream either side of their tent, and by 6 am the rain and wind had ceased.

We emerged to an "iffy" morning, with swarms of midges and parting clouds with still a wee shower in them. The outlook seaward was clearer, and amongst the usual seabirds we saw a **Red-throated Diver** flying south, and **Shags**, **Cormorants** and an **Arctic Skua**. By the time we all met at top camp, the day had resolved to be a cracker - our reward for enduring yesterday! Both **Whitethroats**

## Species seen on the Scarba trip in 2004 compared with trips to other Argyll island in 1975/76

Scarba 2004	Garvellachs 1975	Lunga 1976
Red-throated Diver	Great-northern Diver	Northern Fulmar
Northern Gannet	Northern Fulmar	Manx Shearwater
Great Cormorant	Great Cormorant	Northern Gannet
European Shag	European Shag	Great Cormorant
Grey Heron	Common Eider	European Shag
Common Eider	Common Buzzard	Grey Heron
Hen Harrier	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	Common Shelduck
Common Buzzard	Golden Eagle	Mallard
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	Peregrine Falcon	Common Eider
Golden Eagle	Eurasian Oystercatcher	Red-breasted Merganser
Common Kestrel	Eurasian Woodcock	Common Buzzard
Eurasian Oystercatcher	Eurasian Curlew	Eurasian Sparrowhawk
Common Snipe	Black-headed Gull	Eurasian Oystercatcher
Common Sandpiper	Mew Gull	Eurasian Woodcock
Arctic Skua	Lesser Black-backed Gull	Eurasian Curlew
Mew Gull	Herring Gull	Common Sandpiper
Herring Gull	Great Black-backed Gull	Black-headed Gull
Great Black-backed Gull	Black-legged Kittiwake	Mew Gull
Black-legged Kittiwake	Common Guillemot	Lesser Black-backed Gull
Common Guillemot	Razorbill	Herring Gull
Razorbill	Black Guillemot	Great Black-backed Gull
Black Guillemot	Rock Pigeon	Black-legged Kittiwake
Short-eared Owl	Common Wood Pigeon	Sandwich Tern
Common Swift	Eurasian Collared Dove	Atlantic Puffin
Skylark	Common Cuckoo	Common Guillemot
Barn Swallow	Common Swift	Razorbill
Meadow Pipit	House Martin	Black Guillemot
Rock Pipit	Meadow Pipit	Red Grouse
Grey Wagtail	Rock Pipit	Meadow Pipit
Pied Wagtail	Winter Wren	Rock Pipit
Winter Wren	Hedge Accentor	Pied Wagtail
Hedge Accentor	European Robin	Winter Wren
Whinchat	Northern Wheatear	Hedge Accentor
Stonechat	Song Thrush	European Robin
Northern Wheatear	Common Blackbird	Whinchat
Song Thrush	Common Whitethroat	Stonechat

Table continued on next page

Scarba 2004	Garvellachs 1975	Lunga 1976
Mistle Thrush	Willow Warbler	Northern Wheatear
Common Whitethroat	Hooded Crow	Song Thrush
Willow Warbler	Common Raven	Common Whitethroat
Blue Tit	Chaffinch	Willow Warbler
Great Tit	Twite	Goldcrest
Hooded Crow	Common Redpoll	Blue Tit
Common Raven	Common Bullfinch	Hooded Crow
Chaffinch	Reed Bunting	Common Raven
Common Redpoll		Chaffinch
Yellowhammer		Twite
		Common Redpoll
		Common Bullfinch
		Reed Bunting
<b>Total 46 species</b>	<b>Total 44 species</b>	<b>Total 49 species</b>

and **Willow Warblers** were seen near top camp, and later in woods near the "big house".

Ian, Richard and David 2 headed up and southwest along the old hill track that we'd found yesterday. They discovered 2 immature **Hen Harriers**, a **Whinchat**, **Stonechats**, **Skylarks**, **Meadow Pipits** and **Oak Eggar** caterpillars. David 3 and Janet visited the big hill loch seeing **Stonechat**, **Wren** and **Hoodie**.

There were butterflies everywhere - particularly **Ringlet** and **Green-veined Whites**, and Richard and David 2 saw **Meadow Brown**. A few bright dragonflies were about too; two which were photographed were male and female **Highland Darters**.

David 1 and Roger ambled to the north end, in company, till the ways diverged, with Ian, Richard and David 2. We found a party of nine **Twite** by cattle feeders on the road and more near the house. **Blue Tits**, **Great Tits** and **Chaffinches** also visited the feeders. Near the house, we again saw **Song Thrush** and **MistleThrush** and more **Wheatears** and **Willow Warblers**. **Sika Deer** were very numerous in the northeast part of the island.

North of the small harbour below the house, we saw a female **Hen Harrier**. Lunch was taken looking into the Grey Dog racing between Scarba and Lunga, with a white-sailed yacht driving through it. **Tysties** flew along the sound and **Shags** sunned themselves on rocks. Seven **Oystercatchers** called from the shore.



Highland Darter (photo David Merrie)

Later, we went westward towards the big cliffs. Here in a hollow with small parties of Red Deer we saw two **Ravens** and a **Golden Eagle**. Two deer ran from the eagle, perhaps shepherding fawns away. Along the north-facing cliffs we also saw **Buzzard** and **Kestrel**, and back near camp another **Whinchat**. Out in the sound a large party of **Eider** ducklings was being chaperoned by four adult females.

The day was crystal clear, warm and balmy with marvellous views of all the island and summits both onshore and offshore. The sea abated to flat calm. By the time our transport arrived at 5.30pm, low tide had arrived. A small dinghy, crewed by two youngsters, accompanied the motor-boat and ferried us from shore to boat. All agreed a great weekend had been had, despite the downpour on Saturday, or perhaps because, of our successful weathering of it!

Our only regrets were that we did not reach the western seabird cliffs due to the weather, and we did not see Corrievechan in full spate due to time of tide.



'Farewell to Scarba' (photo David Palmer)

In the table, I've included the total bird list for the weekend and beside it, for comparison, the lists of trips made in 1975 and 1976 to the nearby Garvellachs and Lunga. You will see there is a potential of about 70 species, with a total of 46 for this trip, 44 for the Garvellachs and 49 for Lunga.

*David Merrie*

## Lochwinnoch Book Sale

This year's eagerly awaited RSPB Lochwinnoch Nature Reserve's Second-hand Natural History Book Sale will be from Saturday 18th to Sunday 26th September 2004 (10-5pm). There are several ways you can get involved.

- Donate books - all proceeds going to RSPB.
- Let us have some 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 a local expert (our preferred option).
- Ask for an auction list.
- Come to the reserve and buy books.

There will be no selling prior to the event but afterwards, a list of books remaining will be produced and items sold off from this. We can send you this list on request.

Anything natural history (books, magazines, journals, pamphlets, even maps etc) qualify for the sale. Quite a few good books have already come in including rare/scarc/out of print, but we are always looking for more. Books need to be with us ASAP. You can



hand books in at:

- RSPB Lochwinnoch Nature Reserve, Largs Road, Lochwinnoch, Renfrewshire, PA12 4JF (any day from 9am-5pm) Contact Joan Shaw Tel: 01505 842663.
- RSPB South & West Scotland Regional Office, 10 Park Quadrant, Glasgow, G3 6BS (Mon-Fri from 9am-5pm) Contact Clare Ferguson Tel: 0141 331 0993.
- RSPB Scotland Headquarters, Dunedin House, 25 Ravelston Terrace, Edinburgh, EH4 3TP (Mon-Fri 9am-5pm) Contact Clare Mills Tel: 0131 311 6500.
- RSPB Vane Farm Nature Reserve, by Loch Leven, Kinross, KY13 7LX (any day from 9am-5pm) Contact Colin Shaw Tel: 01577 862355.
- RSPB Crossmichael Office, The Old School, Crossmichael, Castle Douglas, Dumfries & Galloway, DG7 3AP (Office hours Mon-Fri 9-5.15pm, although there might not always be someone in). Please contact Chris Rollie Tel: 01556 670472.

*For further details, please contact Joan Shaw on 01505 842663.*

## Birding Trip to Trinidad and Tobago—January 2004

A group of 11 met up with our *Travelling Naturalist* guide Keith Grant at Heathrow and flew to Trinidad; an extraordinary and enjoyable experience to leave England in an icy freezing January and arrive in the steamy tropical heat in Port of Spain 14 hours later.

We had a long drive in two mini-buses through the flat lands of central Trinidad to the town of Arima and then climbed slowly up a very narrow and extremely winding mountain road through steep forested slopes. At about 1,500ft we left the “main” road and turned down into the estate in which the Asa Wright nature centre clings to the hillside. Despite the late hour, we were met by smiling staff with a welcoming Rum Punch and some food, before falling into bed.

### *The First Few Days*

On the first morning we get up at 5.15 to get organised for a 6.00 (dawn) start on the famous lodge veranda or balcony. This stretches all across the front of the building with a comfortable rail on which to lean, with about 20 barstools available to sit and watch the unfolding dawn show. Fresh coffee (grown and processed on the estate) is provided and the staff loaded up 4-5 feeding tables just below the veranda



White-bearded Manakin (photo Keith Grant)

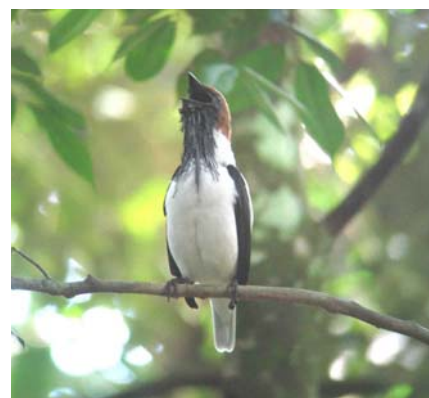
with fruit and bread, as well as having humming-bird feeders all round the area. The ground slopes away quite steeply; the area having a profusion of flowering shrubs and trees, so there is wonderful varied viewing, from extreme close-up to far distant forest and everything in between.

We were simply overwhelmed by the spectacle of dozens of often brightly-coloured tropical birds coming to the feeding tables in an increasing parade as the light brightened and the sun rose. We saw 25 new species in the first 45 minutes!

Then off to a splendid buffet breakfast, followed by a slow guided walk up the lodge approach drive with Keith and Roodal (our local very experienced guide and driver). We saw birds everywhere; the most striking being two different manakin species (**White-bearded & Golden-headed Manakin**).

Our group seemed to be settling down well, as we walked slowly back to the lodge for a welcome beer (“Carib”, man!) and lunch, although it was hard to leave the veranda as there was so much to see. New species all the time, notably **Purple Honeycreepers**, **Green Honeycreepers**, **Turquoise Tanagers** and a **Tufted Coquette** (a tiny hummingbird no bigger than part of your little finger, with red helmet-like plumes on its head).

After lunch, another guided walk down one of the forest trails below the lodge to see two extraordinary birding experiences. First, a **White-bearded Manakin** lek (a display area for the males) with about 8 white and black males displaying low down in the forest under-story, chirping and buzzing (literally!) while dashing backwards and forwards from one favoured perch to another. As they fly, they snap or crack their wings behind their backs creating a noise like breaking twigs or snapping fingers together, seeming quite unconcerned by the nearby audience. Second, after much patient watching and



Bearded Bellbird (photo Keith Grant)

waiting, straining vertically upwards, listening to three **Bearded Bellbirds** calling to each other high in the forest canopy (the noise is hard to describe—a bit like a loud cracked metal bell), we eventually had excellent views of this extraordinary, bizarre-looking bird. It is about the size of a **Jay**, black and white with a chestnut head and a mass of dense black wattles hanging down from its lower bill, just like a very tangled beard—hence its name.

On succeeding days, we had the usual pre-breakfast watch as dawn came up, with masses of birds on the feeders—perhaps the highlight being the large **Chestnut Woodpecker**, a striking-looking bird (much bigger than our **Green Woodpecker**) with a bright yellow crest. After breakfast, we either drove off to walk in different areas, or further explored the various trails in the lodge grounds. Roodal knew where the various species were most likely to be found, but had also perfected techniques for calling birds in.

The first trick is to imitate the local common **Ferruginous Pygmy Owl**, which greatly annoys all smaller birds that rapidly congregate to find and mob it. When Roodal used this ruse, not only did lots of mobsters appear, but also a real **Ferruginous Pygmy Owl**! I think it was a bit disappointed not to find a real mate! We



## The Eider

had lots of interesting birds to look at and also excellent views of the owl, which answered Roodal rather mournfully!

Another technique was to play the taped call or song of an unusual bird on a small portable tape-recorder. This was dramatically successful with the **Antpitta**, a skulking species which we often heard (its call is a single mournful note that sounded like blowing across the top of an empty bottle), but is seldom seen. The tape soon resulted in the call getting closer and eventually we had brief, but good views. Tapes were also successful later with a **Silvered Antbird** alongside a river and with two species of trogon.

One trip took us up over the 3,000ft hills and down to the north coast at Blanchisseuse, where a picnic lunch in a beachside shelter was enlivened by **Brown Pelicans**, **Magnificent Frigate Birds** (the airborne pirates of the area), swifts, swallows and much else to see. Perhaps the highlight was a brilliantly-coloured tiny **Pygmy Kingfisher**, which sat obligingly still, allowing Keith to get a digiscoping picture.



Pygmy Kingfisher (photo Keith Grant)

We all congregate for drinks and a check of the individual and group bird lists for the day at 6.30 pm, with dinner at 7. The Asa Wright Centre is laid out on a steep hillside with the central building providing office, meals, library etc, as well as its justly famous verandah. The rooms are dotted around in the sloping grounds above and below the centre, but are all virtually invisible because of the lush tropical shrubs and trees. Even walking back to my own room, I was always stopping for birds seen or heard—such is the almost overwhelming variety of the birdlife!

### *Trip to Arripo and the Nariva Swamp*

On this occasion, we drove back down to the flat lands of mid and southern Trinidad and visited the palm-fringed sands of the east coast where we stopped at several sites with masses of new birds. Many treasures were seen, with Roodal again successfully calling in several rare or skulking species—antshrikes and

spinetails being examples. We again had lunch in a rather decrepit, huddled facility but there were birds everywhere - orioles, woodpeckers, kingfishers etc. On the drive back, to watch the wonderful spectacle of about 150 **Red-bellied Macaws** landing high on a bit of bare palm-trunk and then sliding down with much noisy chattering to roost communally in the palm fronds.

The Nariva Swamp is a wetland protected under the Ramsar Convention. It was full of interesting birds, but curiously criss-crossed by rudimentary pot-holed tracks, with simple shacks on either side raised on stilts and reached by boardwalks over the waterways. There is also much simple farming, with cattle, buffalo and some sheep despite the very boggy water-filled land. However, I believe that one of the wise provisions of the Ramsar status is that although protection for the wetland and its wildlife is essential, the traditional ways of life of the local communities are also respected. People will be familiar with the Marsh Arabs of southern Iraq, living at peace in the wetlands there since Biblical times, whose life was destroyed by Saddam Hussein draining the marsh.

### *West Coast - Caroni Swamp*

Another day in the lowlands took us past Port of Spain to a river estuary and mud-flat shore with masses of interesting waders and sea-birds; skimmers, terns, sandpipers etc. The telescopes really come into their own here, as the birds are often spread out and some distance off. There were several stops around river crossings and on the edges of rice fields, where we found several species of heron and **Pinnated Bittern**, **Osprey** and a splendid **Long-winged Harrier**, quite like our **Marsh Harrier**.

At the Caroni Swamp we began a boat trip through the mangroves. We tied up on the edge of a lagoon about half a mile from the sea to wait for dusk and another Trinidad birding spectacular on a small island opposite that was covered with tall mangrove trees. As the light faded, increasing numbers of herons, egrets and cormorants arrived for their evening roost, to be followed by great skeins of **Scarlet Ibis**, around 2,000 in all, until the trees seemed to be covered in scarlet blossom!

### *Asa Wright: Oil-bird Cave and Night-drive to Waller-field*

This is one of the few places in the world where the extra-ordinary **Oil-bird** can be seen living in a cave. Visits are only by arrangement with the centre; only three people are allowed in to the cave entrance at a time, over a shallow flowing stream, deep in a narrow gorge. The **Oil-bird** is a relative of the nightjars, but unlike them, has evolved into an entirely fruit-eating species. Furthermore, it is the only bird

species which has developed echolocation (like bats) so it can fly at night through the forest. It is a big bird, with a wingspan of around four feet and locates fruit by smell alone. They are entirely nocturnal and roost in the cave during the day, with many young birds in rudimentary nests on the cave walls. The breeding cycle is prolonged, the young birds taking at least four months to mature, becoming very fat in the process (rather like young gannets), hence "oil" bird.

That evening, we drove down to Waller Field—a long abandoned Second World War airbase. After an excellent picnic supper and rum punch served from the buses as the light faded, Roodal again excelled himself, finding no less than three species of nightjar, all wonderfully displayed in the light of a powerful torch, (without any concern shown by the birds). The last of the three was the weird-looking **Potoo**, sitting bolt upright on a small twig, with truly enormous wide-spaced eyes. As the finale, after searching three different sites without result, Roodal eventually managed to draw in a **Tropical Screech-Owl** using its taped call.



Tropical Screech-owl (photo Keith Grant)

### *Tobago*

The final three days of the trip were spent in a pleasant beachside hotel on the north-eastern corner of Tobago (which is about 20 minutes from Trinidad by plane). The island of Little Tobago with its long established bird sanctuary was visible from our hotel across a mile or so of sea.

A glass-bottomed boat took our group out over coral reefs to the island, where we climbed a steep path to the crest of the hill, with viewing spots and a shaded platform at the best outlook. This gave wonderful views out over the sea to nearby rocky islets, with a continuous flypast of the beautiful and graceful **Red-billed Tropic Birds**. Cruising along somewhat above them, were numerous menacing **Magnificent Frigate-birds**. Every now and then one of these piratical birds would suddenly dive down in a lightning swoop onto any bird that they had spotted carry-

ing a fish, grab it by wing or tail and shake it until the victim let go its catch so it could scoop it up - so much easier than catching it yourself! Several of the tropic birds had lost their long tail-streamers in these attacks, leading me to misidentify them as a new species of tern! There were also **Red-footed** and **Brown Boobies** taking part in the flypast.

#### Summary and Conclusions:

This was an excellent birding trip to two

lovely Caribbean islands, with cheerful, friendly and welcoming people. The Asa Wright Centre must be one of the best bird venues in the tropics. It is also a comfortable place to stay in stunning mountain and forest scenery. The Blue Waters Inn on Tobago is more touristy, but again a dream location with good birding, including some special birds.

The birding was first rate with a great range of species seen - 205 in total, a high

proportion of the 'possibles'. The two most memorable spectacles for me were the **Scarlet Ibis** roost and the extraordinary **Bearded Bellbird**, but there were many, many others.

The trip could not have been better organized by the *Travelling Naturalist* Company, with Keith Grant as leader, to whom I am greatly indebted for all the accompanying 'digiscoping' pictures.

**Mike Gear**

## The Dunlin's Tale

**T**he **Dunlin**, a wading bird, is the commonest winter visitor to Britain, with about 600,000 birds in total. So, if you see a small wader feeding mouse like along the Bute shore at Ettrick Bay, St. Ninian's Bay, Kames Bay or around Craigmore Pier, it could be a **Dunlin**. The beautiful portrait by Keith Shackleton which accompanies this essay shows a group of **Dunlin** in summer plumage. In winter it loses its black belly. It is small (6-8 inches), round shouldered, short necked, dumpy, dun-coloured above with dull white underparts and a down-curved bill. Look out for the distinct white wing bar when it flies. Its name **Dunlin** derives from dunling meaning dun-coloured, which well describes its winter appearance. In summer it has a large black belly patch and a reddish toned cap and back.

Dunlins are travellers. For instance, a bird that nested on Uist was recovered wintering in Mauritania in North West Africa. One ringed on the Firth of Forth in January was recovered in Archangel, Russia in the following June. Birds ringed in Norfolk and Lincoln in September have been caught on the Clyde between November and January. So, when you see a small group busily feeding, won-

der from whence they have come.....and whither they are going.

About 9,000 pairs of **Dunlin** bred in northern and western Britain. These belong to the race *Calidris alpina schinzi*, which is also found in south-eastern Greenland, Iceland, the Baltic region and The Netherlands. Dunlin breed in Scotland from the machairs of the Outer Hebrides, which holds 33% of the British breeding population (where they are severely threatened by hedgehogs who feast on their eggs), up to the 1,000m contour in the Cairngorm. They are common breeders in the Flow Country of Caithness and Sutherland, which holds 39% of the British breeding population.

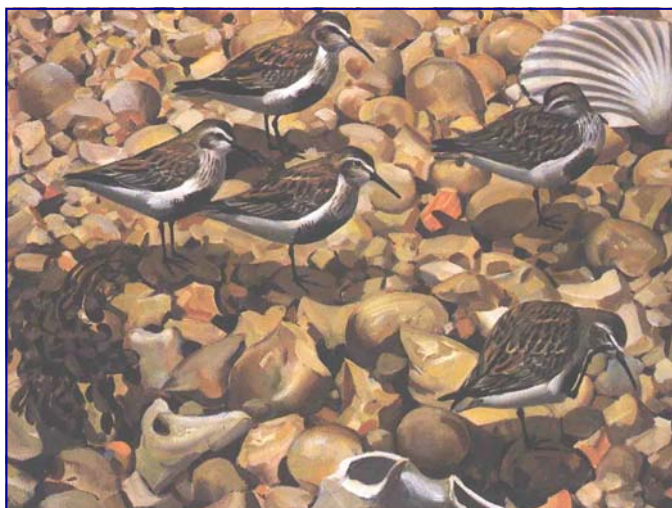
They are vocal on their breeding grounds, their call note, a sharp, shrill, rasping 'tre', 'cheerp', 'treep'. The Gaelic name for the **Dunlin** is 'gille-feedag', meaning boy or attendant who whistles. In the west of Scotland it is called 'plover's page'. This name derives from its breeding association with the **Golden Plover**, a species which shares the same upland breeding habitat, in the Pennines for example. The **Dunlin** attends the Golden Plover as a guard, warning of danger by its calling.

British breeding birds winter southwards, down to Mauritania. Our wintering populations are thought to be mainly Scandinavian and Russian birds. On Bute we see rather small flocks of up to 60 birds. Morecambe Bay, an internationally important wintering area, holds a January population of over 40,000 birds. The Inner Clyde is also important, with up to 10,000 birds that may be scattered over a very wide area by January. Bute birds are probably associated with this population.

Dunlin feed primarily on small insects such as diptera, flies, wasps and sandflies, caddisflies, mayflies and spiders and in winter on small invertebrates in the mud on the shore.

**Michael Thomas**

[**Editor's note:** this account is taken from *Ornithological Tales Book III*, which Michael is preparing about the birds of Bute. *Ornithological Tales Book I and II* are available from the Bute Museum, Stuart Street, Rothesay, Bute PA20 0EP and cost £4.50 each, including P&P. Cheques should be made payable to 'Bute Museum'.]



Dunlin by Keith Shackleton

## Record Breeding Success of Terns in Argyll in 2004

**H**ere's a ray of sunshine to counter the bad news of seabird breeding failures in the Northern Isles and elsewhere in 2004. In the Oban area, some seabirds enjoyed spectacular breeding success. In the Sound of Mull, at possibly the largest colony of **Common Terns** in the British Isles, about a thousand pairs fledged 1,500—2,000 young, a useful

addition to the British Isles total of 14,500 pairs of this declining species. It was the best breeding season at this colony since records began there in 1984. A trip in a small boat through the nearby tidal rocks and skerries on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2004 was dramatic. Hundreds of inquisitive young terns skimmed low back and forth around our heads.

Breeding success was equally impressive at most of the 15 smaller colonies of terns in this study area, which lies along the mainland coast between Mallaig in the north and West Loch Tarbert in the south. The second largest colony of **Common Terns** here in 2004 was at a mussel farm at South Shian in Loch Creran. In 1996, a mussel raft there was adapted to allow



terns to breed (see the *Eider* March 2004 pp 12-13 for account of this unique combination of shellfish farming and seabird conservation). Early in 2004, farm operations required us to move the entire superstructure to another raft—the fencing, the turf and vegetation, and all 20 plywood boards on which the terns breed. In April, Roger Thwaites (the former owner of the mussel farm, who first set up the tern facility), Rob Lightfoot and I spent two miserable weekends of rain and wind doing this. We were rewarded this summer when a record 80 pairs of **Common Terns** raised 109 young to flying (1.4 young/pair), a huge increase from the previous site record of 27 pairs and 50-odd young in 2003.

Smaller numbers of terns also bred well in Lochs Ailort, Moidart, Teacuis, outer Sunart, Leven, Etive and Feochan. Why should this have been so, especially in a year when, in the Northern Isles, terns and other seabirds had a disastrous year?

Years of severe food shortage, like those that often cause breeding failures of seabirds in Shetland, are almost unknown in west Scotland. During the

years 1980-2004 there was only one such year (1985). While Shetland seabirds depend largely on sandeels, there are three fish groups on which terns and other seabirds can rely in the west—sandeels, herring/sprats and gadoids—and simultaneous shortages of all three are unlikely. In this study area, predation is the main determinant of tern breeding success. Native predators such as **Otters** and **Peregrines** can have severe effects, but the birds have co-existed with these and adapted to them. This is not so with the introduced **American Mink**, now a common animal along the richly productive shorelines of the West Highlands.

The high productivity of the terns in 2004 was the rewarding result of ten years of mink control. Almost all the tern colonies that survive in the study area are now protected every year by trapping and removal of mink. Otherwise, like unprotected colonies in this area, they would have disappeared.

The downfall of such colonies has been their nearness to the mainland. Some are as close as 25 metres, nearly all are less than a kilometre offshore, and more distant ones are joined to the mainland by island chains. These short stretches of

water protect the ground-nesting birds from **Fox**, **Stoat**, **Hedgehog** and other land mammals. However, mink are aquatic and easily swim up to 2 km. When they reach islands and encounter high densities of nests, they prey heavily on eggs, chicks and incubating adults, often causing widespread whole-island breeding failures. When these are repeated yearly, the surviving adult birds eventually abandon affected sites, making whole sealochs and other areas empty of breeding waterbirds (seabirds, wildfowl and waders). As examples, visits in June to the empty islands of Lochs Caolisport, nan Ceall, Lomond, or almost the whole length of Loch Sunart will verify this. But where mink are removed, the birds can breed normally, the colonies thrive and, when conditions are good, as for terns in 2004 (despite bad weather), impressive numbers of young can be raised.

Many thanks to all who have helped with this work, especially to the late Ian Hynd, who financed much of the project, and to Isle of Shuna Shellfish, the new owners of the mussel farm, who have generously allowed the tern breeding facility to remain.

*Clive Craik*

## Notes from Colonsay

These two photos were taken by David Jardine on Colonsay in June 2004.

The top photo was taken during a storm on the 14<sup>th</sup> June, with waves crashing against the cliffs at Pigs Paradise. It was clear that some **Guillemot** and **Kittiwake** eggs/nests were being destroyed by the waves, but only those on the low, most exposed part on the breeding colony.

The bottom photo shows an intermediate blue-phase **Fulmar** that was prospecting along the cliffs at Urugaig on the 15<sup>th</sup> June.





## Recent Bird Reports from Paul Daw—May to July 2004

**I**t seems that the 2004 breeding season has been one of mixed success for Argyll's birds. Six **White-tailed Eagle** chicks on the wing seems a good result for Argyll considering the weather. Altogether a probable 19 are thought to have fledged in Scotland this year. In terms of numbers of calling birds, **Corn Crakes** have again reached record levels (for recent years at least), including 134 on Coll and an amazing 262 on Tiree. Clive Craik tells me that the huge tern (mainly **Common Terns**) colony in the Sound of Mull had a really first class season this year, fledging well over 1,000 young (see pages 13-14). As this is probably the largest **Common Tern** colony in Britain this is a very significant event for the future welfare of the species. Many of the smaller tern colonies where mink are controlled also had a productive season. Divers on the other hand appear to have had a poor year. Only one young **Red-throated Diver** was found on the lochs with nesting rafts on the Eredine/Ederline estates and on Coll 10 prs fledged only 6 young between them. However, on Coll a pr of **Garganey** bred successfully as did at least one pr of **Great Skuas**. Another pr of **Great Skuas** were reported nesting on Staffa. Also on Coll a pr of **Grey Partridge** was seen with 5 young in July. Although doubtless the result of released birds this is the first confirmed breeding record for this species in Argyll for at least 10 years. A pr of **Common Kestrels** nesting in the north east of Coll was the first recorded breeding record for the island. A probable **Dunlin** breeding record on Mull was also the first for many years. Records of breeding **Chaffinches** at more than 10 sites on Coll were very unusual for the island. There was also a probable breeding record for **Nightjar**, the first in Argyll for many years.

Although there have been recent reports of exceptional numbers of dispersing **Common Swifts** during August, breeding birds seem to have been in short supply. None were seen in Lochgilphead, for example, during the summer and I have only had regular reports from the Dunoon area. Please let me know of any Swifts seen in Argyll this summer. Nevertheless many common passerine birds appear to have had a good breeding season, despite the weather, and have successfully fledged second and third broods.

As always I would be very interested to hear from any members who have any breeding information, even for commoner species.

The month of May was quite exceptional

## Stop Press

Another good autumn for passage waders seems to be underway with exceptional of **Red Knot** including 79, mostly still in breeding plumage, in the Add Estuary on 13<sup>th</sup> Aug and 20 on 22<sup>nd</sup> Aug at Otter Ferry, and no less than 3 **Green Sandpipers** at Loch Gruinart on 1<sup>st</sup> August. A sub-adult **Glaucous Gull** was in the Add Estuary on 18<sup>th</sup> Aug. Full details in the next issue of the *Eider*!

for rare and scarce species, especially on Coll and Tiree. Full details are given below, but highlights of the period under review have included: a **Yellow-billed Diver** off Sorisdale, Coll on 22<sup>nd</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> May, a **Great White Egret** at Loch Gorm, Islay, a female **Smew** at Loch Poit na h-I (Pottie), Mull on 17<sup>th</sup> May, a **Black Kite** over Crossapol, Coll on 23<sup>rd</sup> May, a **Eurasian Hobby** west of Loch a' Chlair, Tiree on 6<sup>th</sup> May, a **Common Crane** on Coll on 3<sup>rd</sup> May, an adult **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** found at The Reef, Tiree on 17<sup>th</sup> May, a **Little Ringed Plover** on Coll on 7<sup>th</sup> Jul, a first summer **Mediterranean Gull** on, Tiree on 1<sup>st</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Jul, a **Common Nightingale** at Balephuill, Tiree on 2<sup>nd</sup> May, a male **Reed Warbler** at Carnan Mor, Tiree also on 2<sup>nd</sup> May and another at Ardanish, Mull on 16<sup>th</sup> May, a **Lesser Whitethroat** at Acha, Coll on 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> May, a **Common Rosefinch** found on Coll on 4<sup>th</sup> Jul and a **Hawfinch** at Heylipol, Tiree from 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> May. Most of these records are subject to confirmation when a description is received.

## Divers to Wildfowl

A second-year **Yellow-billed Diver** was reported off Sorisdale, Coll on 22<sup>nd</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> May. If confirmed this will be a first for Coll. In May a group of 1,200 **Manx Shearwaters** were feeding off Urvaig, Tiree on 7<sup>th</sup>, in association with a **Minke Whale** and an estimated 10,000 were seen off Sorisdale, Coll heading towards Rhum on 28<sup>th</sup> May. A single **European Storm Petrel** was seen from the ferry off Port Ellen, Islay on 20<sup>th</sup> July and 2 **Sooty Shearwater** and 4 **Storm Petrels** were seen from the ferry in the Sound of Mull on the afternoon of 26<sup>th</sup> Jul together with over 1,000 **Manx Shearwaters**. A **Little Egret** found on The Strand Colonsay on 3<sup>rd</sup> Jun remained until at least 7<sup>th</sup> Jun. A breeding plumaged **Great White Egret** roosting with Grey Herons at Loch Gorm, Islay on 16<sup>th</sup> May and at Loch Gruinart on the following day had originally been seen at Loch Gorm several days earlier.

A pr of **Whooper Swans** were present on Loch Assapol, Mull during Jun but with no evidence of breeding. A pr of large race **Canada Geese** seen on Kerrara on 2<sup>nd</sup> May were presumably the same as a similar pr on an islet at the east end of the Sound of Mull on 16<sup>th</sup> May. Thirty-five **Pale-bellied** and one **Dark-bellied Brent Geese** were on Loch Indaal, Islay on 15<sup>th</sup> May.

A pr of **Garganey** were seen on Coll with 5 small young on 1<sup>st</sup> Jul and a pr of **Northern Pintail** with a brood of 4 recently fl. young on 2<sup>nd</sup> Jul were the first successful breeding records on Tiree for several years. Although **Gadwall** were also present on Tiree during the summer, breeding was not recorded. The moult flock of **Common Eiders** at Otter Ferry



peaked at 540 in late Jul. A female **Smew** at Loch Poit na h-I (Pottie), Mull on 17<sup>th</sup> May was a very late record for this species.

#### Raptors to Gamebirds

A **Black Kite** was reported drifting slowly north over Crossapol, Coll on 23<sup>rd</sup> May. Again, if confirmed this will be a first for Coll. A **Northern Goshawk** was reported NW of Kilfinichen Bay, Mull on 13<sup>th</sup> Jul. **Ospreys** were reported from four locations on Mull in late May and a pr of which bred at a new site in Argyll and produced 3 young were among 7 prs nesting in the county this year. A female **Osprey** flew over the Dairy Lochs, Coll on 10<sup>th</sup> Jul and single birds were seen at 3 locations on Mull during Jun. On Tiree, an adult **Eurasian Hobby** was watched hawking dragonflies for some 2 hrs at close quarters west of Loch a' Chlair on 6<sup>th</sup> May - a first for the island. Another adult **Hobby** was reported near Ballard, Coll on 14<sup>th</sup> Jul.

As mentioned above **Corn Crakes** appeared in excellent numbers this year, but one seen at Rubha Riabhach, Appin on 12<sup>th</sup> Jul was presumably a passage bird. A **Spotted Crane** was heard calling on Coll in late May and a minimum of 11 calling **Water Rails** were located at 9 sites on Tiree during Jun/Jul. A pr of **Common Coots** were present at Loch Bhasapol, Tiree during the spring and breeding was suspected, although no young were located. A **Common Crane** seen and photographed (June *Eider*, page 12) on Coll on 3<sup>rd</sup> May was the first record for the island and the first in Argyll since 1995.

#### Waders

**Ringed Plovers** on Coll reached a peak of 950 at Crossapol on 14<sup>th</sup> May. In addition to the usual large flocks of **Golden Plover** on Tiree, including 1,200 at The Reef on 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 290 were at Crossapol Coll on 3<sup>rd</sup> May, and 87 were at Fiddon, Mull on 5<sup>th</sup> May. A male and 3 female **Dotterel** at Port-na-Luing on 7<sup>th</sup> May constituted yet another new species for Coll in what has been a remarkable spring for the island. A **Little Ringed Plover** reported from Coll on 7<sup>th</sup> Jul will, if confirmed, be only the second record for Argyll. **Little Stints** are always scarce in Argyll in spring so a count of 15 (4 in full breeding plumage) among a flock of 800 Dunlin at Vault Bay, Tiree on 20<sup>th</sup> May was quite exceptional. Surprisingly, single birds were also at Bridgend, Islay on 15<sup>th</sup> May, at Ardalanish, Mull on 16<sup>th</sup> May and at Crossapol Beach, Coll on 5<sup>th</sup> May with 4 at the latter location on 23<sup>rd</sup> May. Two **Curlew Sandpipers** at Vault Bay, Tiree on 24<sup>th</sup> May were also unusual in spring. Return passage on **Little Stints** was noted on Tiree in Jul with 2 adults at Loch a' Phuill on

28<sup>th</sup> and one was at Loch Buie, Mull on 21<sup>st</sup> Jul. Similarly a **Curlew Sandpiper** was seen at Miodar, Tiree also on 28<sup>th</sup> Jul. Six **Purple Sandpipers** were still on Staffa on 6<sup>th</sup> May. An adult **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** found at The Reef, Tiree on 17<sup>th</sup> May was a great surprise and gave good views until 19<sup>th</sup>. At least 3 male **Ruffs** were lekking at a site on Tiree in May.

**Black-tailed Godwits** on Tiree peaked at 48 at Loch an Eilein on 5<sup>th</sup> May and a heavy passage of **Whimbrel** included 33 at Heylipol, also on 5<sup>th</sup> May, and 9 at the Reef on 7<sup>th</sup> May. A flock of 65 **Black-tailed Godwits** at Loch Gruinart on 28<sup>th</sup> Jul were apparently gone by the next day. Adults in breeding plumage were also seen during Jul in Loch Gilp and on Tiree (max. 35 at Loch Riaghain on 19<sup>th</sup>). Eight adult **Bar-tailed Godwits** in breeding plumage were at Loch Gruinart on 23<sup>rd</sup> Jul joining the usual 'winter-plumaged' first-year birds that are present all summer. A single **Bar-tailed Godwit** in breeding plumage was at Otter Ferry on 16<sup>th</sup> Jul, an unusual location for this species and 124 **Common Redshank**, also at Otter Ferry, on 18<sup>th</sup> Jul was an exceptional count for this area. A **Spotted Redshank**, always a scarce bird in Argyll, was reported on Coll on 4<sup>th</sup> Jul. Another very scarce wader in Argyll, **Wood Sandpipers** are more often seen here in spring than autumn and one was west of Vault, Tiree on 9<sup>th</sup> May. **Green Sandpipers** are also scarce in Argyll so 2 at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 28<sup>th</sup> Jul were a good find.

#### Skuas to Woodpeckers

Quite unprecedented numbers of passage skuas were reported in May, including a raft of 125 **Pomarine Skuas** which flew alongside the Oban-Mull ferry for some way on 5<sup>th</sup> May and 19 **Pomarine**, 4 **Long-tailed**, 27 **Arctic** and 11 **Great Skuas** passing Hagh Bay, Coll on the morning of 16<sup>th</sup> May. A pale morph adult **Pomarine Skua** with full spoons was seen at close quarters from the ferry SW of Coll on 14<sup>th</sup> May. Of 10 **Arctic Skuas** seen on Tiree during May most were dark morph adults. A dark morph **Arctic Skua** was seen from the ferry in the Sound of Islay on 28<sup>th</sup> July.

A first-summer **Yellow-legged Gull**, another first for the island, was reported on Coll on 11<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> May. A first-summer **Mediterranean Gull** found at Cornaig, Tiree on 1<sup>st</sup> Jul and what was almost certainly the same bird was relocated at Loch an Eilein on 14<sup>th</sup> Jul. At least 300 **Black-legged Kittiwakes** were counted on the sea near the mouth of West Loch Tarbert on 28<sup>th</sup> Jul. A survey of **Little Terns** on Tiree found 67 apparently occupied nests although fledging success was poor (only 11 counted) due to cold wet conditions in

mid-June. However 27 prs at a colony on Coll fledged 34 young. Unusual numbers of **Sandwich Terns** have been reported during late summer including 2 off Hynish, Tiree on 11<sup>th</sup> Jul and all records are requested.

Over 200 **Common Guillemots** were counted in Loch Fyne on 8<sup>th</sup> Jul in the area between Loch Gare and Largiemore and, intriguingly, up to 4 **Atlantic Puffins** have been seen throughout the summer in the Otter Ferry - Loch Gilp area.

Once again Tiree produced a spring migrant **Turtle Dove**, at Heylipol on 16<sup>th</sup> May and another was at Fasachd, Coll on 7<sup>th</sup> May. A further single **Turtle Dove** was seen in Glen Aros/Glen Bellart on 2 occasions in Jul. A **European Nightjar** was heard reeling on two dates in Jun at a site in the Loch Awe area. This is the first probable breeding record for Argyll for over 10 years. Away from their usual breeding places **Common Swifts** were reported on Tiree on several dates in Jul, at Loch Spelve, Mull (4) on 8<sup>th</sup> Jun and on Ulva (3) on 17<sup>th</sup> Jul. A **Common Kingfisher** was reported at Bunessan, Mull on 25<sup>th</sup> May, continuing a recent run of records from the island.

#### Passerines

Following the first confirmed breeding for many years on Tiree last year at least 9 **Sand Martin** nest holes were located nr Loch a' Phuill. An adult **Red-rumped Swallow** was seen perched on wires outside Totronald, Coll on 4<sup>th</sup> May and again, hawking over the Roadside Lochs on the following day. A potential new species for the Argyll list let alone for Coll. There have been mixed reports of **House Martin** numbers in Argyll this year, but a flock of 100 feeding at Loch Gruinart on 23<sup>rd</sup> Jul would seem to suggest a good breeding season locally.

A lone **Common Nightingale** at Balephuill, Tiree on 2<sup>nd</sup> May obligingly often fed in the open and even hopped down the centre of the road. This is the first recorded occurrence of this species on Tiree and one of very few records for Argyll. Male **Common Redstarts** at Grishipol and at The Lodge, Coll were only the second and third records for the island. **'Greenland' Northern Wheatears** were noted at several sites on Tiree during May. A very late **Redwing** noted at Moss, Tiree on 20<sup>th</sup> May had lost all its tail feathers.

Another first for Tiree occurred on 2<sup>nd</sup> May when a male **Reed Warbler** was singing and feeding in willow scrub at Carnan Mor. Another **Reed Warbler** was singing in competition with a **Sedge Warbler** at a reed bed at Ardalanish, Mull on 16<sup>th</sup> May. Two **Reed Warblers** in one year is exceptional for Argyll although the species has been spreading north in Scot-

land in recent years. A male **Lesser Whitethroat** of unknown racial identity seen at Acha, Coll on 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> May was only the second record for the island. On Mull the leucistic **Willow Warbler** returned to the same site near Grasspoint, Mull where it was seen last year (June 2004 *Eider*, page 9).

No less than 5 **Spotted Flycatchers** were singing in the Loch Ballygrant area of Islay on 22<sup>nd</sup> May. **Pied Flycatchers** are scarce as migrants here so 2 different female birds on Tiree on 6<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> May were a surprise. Even more surprising was the adult male **Hawfinch** which fed on sunflower seeds in a garden at Heylipol

from 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> May. A **Black-billed Magpie** was reported just south of Salen, Mull on 8<sup>th</sup> Jun. A male **Common Rosefinch** found on Coll on 4<sup>th</sup> Jul is the only record for this species in Argyll so far this year. A leucistic **Siskin** visited a garden at Salen, Mull during May. Single **Common Crossbills** were reported from Uig, Coll on 23<sup>rd</sup> May and at Fishnish, Mull on 13<sup>th</sup> Jul. Two **Common Crossbills** flew over Tighnabruach Forest on 9<sup>th</sup> June, and birds (max 5) were seen or heard almost daily until 18<sup>th</sup> July, when the last three were seen. A late influx of **Snow Buntings** that occurred on Tiree in May included 5 at Traigh Bhi on 6<sup>th</sup> and

one was at Loch Gruinart for several days up to 14<sup>th</sup> May. There were also a late pr in the Fiddon/Uisken area of Mull from 1<sup>st</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> May.

#### Plants

Several specimens of **Spotted Rock Rose** (*Tuberaria guttata*) were found at a site on Coll in Jun. This is a first record for Scotland and is a nationally rare species, the only other sites being on Anglesey and the Llyn peninsula in N Wales.

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

## Dalriada Project



Mid Argyll has an extraordinary natural and cultural heritage. From the Crinan Canal to sea lochs, from Kilmartin House Museum to the forests and Moine Mhor moss, from quality local produce to talented musicians and artists and friendly communities—Mid Argyll is a special place. The

Heritage Lottery Fund and Argyll & Islands Enterprise have funded the Dalriada Project to gather the views, project and business ideas of the local community about how we can protect, restore and use this heritage. Projects based on these ideas will then

be developed in partnership to benefit Mid Argyll. To find out more and tell us what you think, log on to:

[www.dalriadaproject.org](http://www.dalriadaproject.org)

Or email the project's Community Officer at:

[kirsten.robbs@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:kirsten.robbs@forestry.gsi.gov.uk) telephone 01546 602518

The next Dalriada Festival is the 24th-26th September at Cairnbaan (opposite side of the road to the Cairnbaan Hotel), near Lochgilphead. The Argyll Bird Club will also have a presence at the festival (see below). See the Dalriada Project website for a full programme of events.

**Kirsten Robb**

## Forthcoming Field Trips/Events

### Dalriada Festival

The Argyll Bird Club will be providing birdwatching opportunities at the Dalriada Festival. Bob and Sue Furness will be at the bridge at Belanoch (on the Crinan Canal, half way between Cairnbaan and Crinan) on the Add estuary on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> September from 13.00-15.00 hrs for a birdwatching session. The club also hopes to have a presence at the festival site opposite the Cairnbaan Hotel.

### Island of Bute

David Merrie has arranged for Ian Hopkins to take folks round the 'hot spots' of Bute on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2005. Those coming from outwith Bute should meet at Colintrave for the 09.00hrs ferry, and cross to Bute where Ian will meet them. There should be a good selection of wintering birds, and many geese. More details will be given in the December *Eider*.

### Sound of Gigha

I will lead a field trip to the Sound of Gigha on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2005. For less experienced birders, some guidance on identification will also be provided. Meet at the car park at Ronachan Point just off the A83 (grid reference NR741548) at 10.30am. From here we will call in at the coast near the West Coat Salmon site and then onto Tayinloan. If the weather and tide conditions permit we will walk along the shore towards Rhunaharine Point to look for waders. We will then take the ferry to Gigha, mainly to look for birds in the Sound and break for lunch. Snacks can be ordered at the hotel on the island. After returning from Gigha we could check some of the morning's sites, if time, the weather and stamina allow.

This trip depends very much on suitable weather. Will those who intend to come please contact me, by phone or e-mail, at the latest on the evening before (Fri 1<sup>st</sup> April), so that I can confirm that the trip will go ahead and to give me some idea of how many people to expect. If the weather forecast is really atrocious it may be pos-

sible to postpone until the following Saturday.

Spring birding in the Sound of Gigha can be a rewarding experience. This trip will be a repeat of a similar successful visit in spring 2004, a full account of which appeared in the June 2004 *Eider* (page 4). Some of the highlights from this visit included all three species of diver, **Slavonian Grebes** (some in full summer plumage), **Common Scoters**, **Long-tailed Ducks** and **Greenland White-fronted Geese**. Perhaps, this year we will manage to locate the elusive **Velvet Scoter**?

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

## Notes from the last Committee Meeting

Following the usual pre-meeting exchange of informal news, views and chat on the 24th August 2004, 11 members of the Committee settled down to the business of the evening at 7.30pm. The minutes of the previous meeting (23rd April) were approved and gave rise to the matter of mink control to protect our seabird populations being



discussed further. Worryingly, there have been no applications for the SNH grant to help to finance anyone willing to undertake this work, although one possible lead will be followed up in the Minard area.

The Club's eye-catching promotion leaflet has already attracted interest, and together with the new website, has brought about positive feed back from as far away as Wales and importantly, some new members. SNH and LBAP were thanked for funding the software for our website. It was thought that Local Biodiversity money may also be available to develop a section on identifying some of the excellent bird-watching locations in Argyll. Please forward ideas and information to Steve Petty. Steve was thanked for the hours of hard work spent on setting up this excellent facility (with his daughter) and for the improved *Eider*, which now costs the Club more to send owing to its increased size/weight!

The *Argyll Bird Report* 2002 has already been processed and thanks to the help of Club members with data inputting, work has already started on the 2003 bird report. While the possibility of combining the 2002/2003 reports was put forward it was agreed that the general style of the report should remain unchanged although there is scope to reduce detail and incorporate occasional papers at the end. Bob Furness will carry out an investigation as to a full colour publication, which should not markedly affect the cost. Paul asked for guidance with a conflict of priorities on his time. Namely, between writing species texts for the *Birds of Argyll* book and the bird report. The logic of opting for the *Birds of Argyll* book as being the more urgent was agreed, as the SNH grant is available only until the end of March 2005.

With regard to the *Birds of Argyll* book, as well as David Wood's progress report for the *Eider*, the Committee was informed that Mike Gear had sent in a funding application to "Awards for All". David Wood is contacting species authors about their work being completed in reasonable time for publication in March 2005, and some available reference books were shown to the Committee by courtesy of SNH. John Bowler and David Merrie have also offered further help.

Bob Furness confirmed the completed programme for the Autumn Meeting at Cairnbaan Hotel on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2004, which together with the agenda for the AGM, is included in this issue. Thanks were given to Bob and all those involved in the considerable organisation and arrangements necessary to provide the Club with an informative and entertaining meeting. The past success that Roger Broad has had in promoting the raffle and selling

tickets has rewarded him with a request to continue! This he accepted. PLEASE BRING PRIZES TO BE RAFFLED.

It seemed a long time ahead, but arrangements for the Spring 2005 meeting were considered and the most suitable date, avoiding other relevant interest group meetings, was found to be 12<sup>th</sup> March 2005. Research is underway to identify a venue in the Oban area able for between 50-80 members, allowing them sufficient, comfortable space to discuss issues, view projected slides etc., as well as mingle and partake of essential tea/coffee breaks and last but most importantly, lunch! The names of several potential speakers were put forward including Mike Raven on the BBS survey, and Uwe and Julie Stoneman on the SWT and butterflies.

Mike Gear, who was thanked for his effort, had researched public liability insurance for Club outings. After discussion, the Committee agreed that Golden Valley Insurance Ltd. provided the most appropriate cover at a cost to the Club of £50 until the end of 2004, and £100 for a full year, which will be considered at the next Committee Meeting. This cover includes public liability, products liability and a limit of indemnity of up to £2 million. It was noted that, in the happy event of children becoming involved in Club outings, indemnity of £5 million would be more appropriate.

Suggestions for field trips 2004/2005 were promoted with dates and arrangements to be finalised. One day outings being planned include a repeat of Paul's successful Sound of Gigha trip, an outing to Colonsay leaving from Kennacraig, a trip to the Island of Sanda as well as a possible one day ringing session there and a visit to the Add Estuary, all of which should provide a variety of habitat and interest. Also under discussion and for further exploration is a trip to Orkney and a workshop on digiscoping. Roger Broad reported that the hoped for trip to Tiree this year had to be abandoned as it had been logistically too difficult to organise.

A letter from a Club member outlined concerns about the lack of birdwatchers visiting Sanda Island and its observatory. In the past, the boat service to access the Island has been unreliable, but this is now rectified and Nigel Scriven agreed to make arrangements for the Club trip already mentioned. It was also pointed out that day trips from Campbeltown pier can be booked at the Tourist Information Centre and include lunch on the Island (phone: 01586 552056 to book - let it ring for ages!).

Tom Callan kindly agreed to represent the Club at a Parliamentary meeting of The Scottish Environment LINK Marine Task Force in Edinburgh on 23<sup>rd</sup> September.

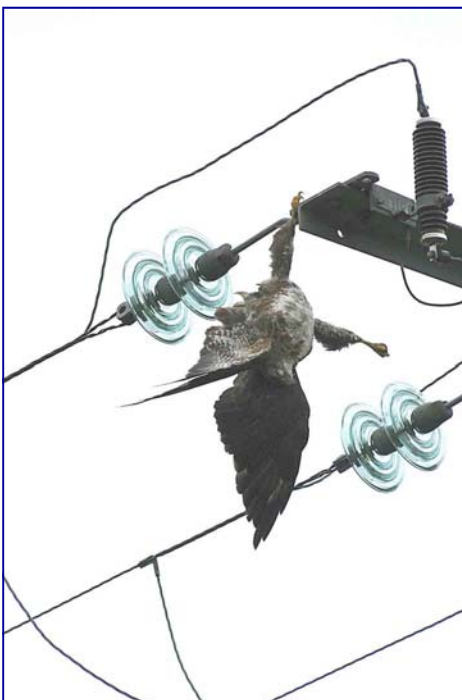
We look forward to hearing all about it. Marine Conservation material was passed to the chairman. The Secretary, John Anderson, reported having received material from LIPU; also available for anyone interested.

The Committee were informed that Bill Staley has outlined Definitions of Membership to the Club, with an analysis of issues, and suggestions of best practice, which was much appreciated and will be helpful for long-term use. Paul asked for discussion on a paper by Bill Gardner about the SOC Recorder Network to be included on the Agenda of the next meeting.

Steve asked for articles for the next edition of the *Eider* to be sent to him before the end of November. Arrangements were made for the next Committee Meeting to be held on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2004. With a great deal to think about and act on, as well as much more to talk about, we all departed for home shortly after 10.00 o'clock.

**Katie Pendreigh**

### Death on the Wires



This photograph, taken by Jim Duncan, highlights the dangers of some power line poles to raptors. The types of pole responsible for most raptor electrocutions have the wires and insulators above or level with the crossbar. Those with the wires and insulators suspended below the crossbar pose little risk to raptors. Jim and his wife actually witnessed this event. They saw the **Common Buzzard** fly towards the pole and perch on the crossbar near the wires, when in Jim's words "it was instantly zapped"! Not surprisingly, Jim had his camera at hand! The incident occurred in Glen Douglas on the 1<sup>st</sup> August.

## Treasurer's Report for the Financial Year 2003- 2004

The accounts (opposite) show that the Argyll Bird Club had a deficit of £267.67 in financial year 2003-04. This was slightly less than last year (and less than I expected), but this reduction can largely be attributed to the fact that some costs of copying and distributing the *Eider* were not included in the club's expenditure. Our assets at the end of the year stood at £6369.65, only slightly below the highest level in the club's history. This represents our bank balance only, and excludes from consideration any non-cash assets of the club such as unsold copies of *Argyll Bird Reports* and sales items. However, the cash value of this stock is small.

Income from bank interest has fallen with declining interest rates, and income from bird report sales was down due to the difficulty in selling copies of a report published rather long after the year it represents. As a result of the drop in bird report sales and the increase in bird report printing costs, the club may wish to consider in future whether publication of a rather late *Argyll Bird Report* in a printed form is the best way to spend a significant part of the club's money. For example, an alternative could be to post the bird report as a pdf file on the club's website.

The higher than normal Bird Recorder's Expenses is due to a decision by the Executive Committee to send two members to a two-day national Bird Clubs forum in England organised by the British Trust for Ornithology, in addition to the normal annual expenses.

Although no Bird Book costs fell within the 2003-2004 financial year, we are likely to see a substantial part of our bank balance required at least initially to fund the production of the *Birds of Argyll* book. In the longer term, sales of the book may recover part of that expenditure. In view of the healthy state of the club's bank balance I would not recommend any increase to the current subscription rate.

**Bob Furness, 28 May 2004**

## Argyll Bird Club's 19th Year Accounts 16th April 2003—15th April 2004

<i><b>Income</b></i>	<b>2003/2004</b>	<b>2002/2003</b>
Subscription	2053.82	2053.48
Bird Report Sales	77.50	223.00
Bank Interest	63.66	86.47
Sales	0.00	30.00
Other (raffles, donations, etc)	100.00	211.00
Grants	0.00	2000.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>2294.98</b>	<b>4603.95</b>
<i><b>Expenditure</b></i>		
Bird Report	1545.00	1598.00
Newsletter production	0.00	147.90
Postage	80.00	103.00
Bird Recorder expenses	295.50	69.25
Public meetings	584.15	729.55
Bird Book	0.00	517.13
Equipment purchases	0.00	2010.99
Returned subscriptions	58.00	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>2562.65</b>	<b>5175.82</b>
Surplus/Deficit for year	-267.67	-571.87
Brought forward	6637.32	7209.19
Assets at end of year	6369.65	6637.32

**Signed:** R.W. Furness, Hon. Treasurer

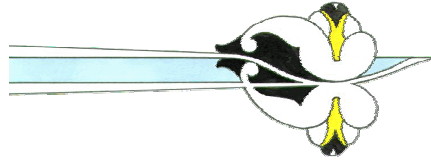
**Date:** 28 May 2004

I certify that from the vouchers/cash books and other information shown to me this balance sheet is accurate.

**Signed:** B. Zonfrillo

# ARGYLL BIRD CLUB

Scottish Charity No. 008782



The 19<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting will be held at 1400 hours on  
Saturday 6 November 2003 in Cairnbaan Hotel near Lochgilphead

## Agenda

1. Minutes of 2003 Annual General Meeting
2. Apologies
3. Matters arising not covered in following items
4. Chairman's Report
5. Secretary's Report
6. Treasurer's Report
7. Membership Secretary's Report
8. Future field trips
9. Election of Office Bearers and Committee Members  
A maximum of 12 can be elected - nominations invited

Position	Current	2004/5
Chairman	David Wood	
Vice Chairman	Nigel Scriven	
Secretary	John Anderson	
Treasurer	Bob Furness	
Committee	Roger Broad	
	Tom Callan	
	Paul Daw (Argyll Bird Recorder)	
	Mike Gear	
	David Merrie	
	Katie Pendreigh (Editor of The Eider)	
	Steve Petty	
	Bill Staley	

### Non committee member:

Membership Secretary Sue Furness

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

John Anderson, Secretary

14 August 2004



**Argyll Bird Club**  
18th Annual General Meeting  
Saturday, 8 November 2003 at 1330

Minute

Present: David Wood (Chairman), Nigel Scriven (Vice-Chairman), John Anderson (Secretary), Bob Furness (Treasurer) and 36 members.

**1. Apologies:** Ross Lilley, Lily Cregeen.

**2. Minute of AGM, 2 November 2002:** Proposed by Michael Gear, seconded by Roger Broad, approved by Members and signed by the Chairman.

**3. Matters arising:** None.

**4. Chairman's Report:** The Chairman thanked Committee Members for their dedication which made the Club work. He was also much encouraged by the good turnout and thanked Members for attending. He also thanked John and Helen Anderson for their secretarial work and Paul Daw, the Argyll Bird Recorder, for his tremendous work on recording all the sightings, assisted by Jane Mitchell and Mary Gregory, and for his other work. Jane Mitchell had stood down from the Committee but he was glad to report that she would continue to assist with inputting data for the Argyll Bird Report and was grateful for her contribution to the Club. The text for the 2001 edition of the Report was ready to go to the printers for publication around mid January 2004. He thanked Paul Daw and Clive Craik for their work on this Report. Decisions were being taken to speed up the publication process but basically the problem was one of workload. In particular, he asked for volunteers to help input the sightings data. This process may be made easier in the near future by the possible introduction of the Excel programme, developed by the Scottish Ornithologists' Club (SOC), which is simple to operate. The Argyll Bird Report is an important part of the Club's work and he invited members to approach him or Paul Daw with offers of help. The intended date for the publication of the Birds of Argyll Book is December 2004. Two-thirds of the species accounts were now completed and he thanked Tristan ap Rheinallt and the other authors for their hard work. SNH had so far given about £2000 towards the book and efforts to obtain other funding were underway. He thanked Steve Petty for his enthusiastic work as Editor of the Eider, which in its new format also raised the profile of the Club. He encouraged all members to receive the Eider by e-mail as this is easier and cheaper to distribute and the photographs are superb in full colour. He invited members to contribute articles and make suggestions as to how Club activities could be improved. He thanked Rhona Campbell (trip to Mull), David Jardine (Colonsay), David Merrie (Kintyre) and Nigel Scriven (dawn chorus) for organising field trips.

David thanked Clive Craik for all the work he had done over the years to lessen the effect of mink predation on seabird colonies and for his scientific recordings which are of great value. SNH is developing the idea of funding a short-term post to support mink control and other work in connection with the Local Biodiversity Action Plan. The Local Biodiversity Group had given strong approval for this. The person appointed will work closely with local groups and individuals. It is important to train local people in all aspects of mink control. Clive and Ian Mitchell will be advisers to this initiative. Members unanimously approved a contribution of £1000 and agreed that the Committee should consider options for the furtherance of this project. Clive emphasised that in the control of mink only certain areas should be targeted and at specific times. Freshwater sites should also be considered. Clive was thanked for demonstrating that mink control can be effective in conserving seabird populations and highlighting the looming disaster for seabird colonies as a result of mink predation. It was noted that Clive's work is now recognised nationally and internationally.

David told Members that his first year in the job had been a pleasure. However, he explained that it is not possible either for him or other Committee Members to do all the things that require doing or to take advantage of all the current opportunities. He had, therefore, decided that during his term of office he would concentrate his efforts on (1) resolving issues to do with the Argyll Bird Report and its timely publication and (2) the publication of the Birds of Argyll Book. However, he would continue to support other members with their activities. In particular, he called for volunteers from Members outwith the Committee to help with the work of the Club. The Chairman was thanked for all his work throughout the year.

**5. Secretary's Report:** John Anderson said that the Club had an excellent Committee and he enjoyed working with the new Chairman. He felt that the Club is on the verge of significant developments and that the publication of the Birds of Argyll Book would give it a much higher public profile. Mark Holling of the SOC had attended a Committee Meeting at which possible closer links between the two organisations had been discussed. At the last AGM he had been asked to write to the Scottish Executive to support the proposed introduction of the European Beaver to Knapdale but had received a fairly nondescript response which had been published in the Eider. David Wood reported that this letter had been useful during meetings between SNH and the Scottish Executive. John asked Members to come forward to organise field trips which were an enjoyable and important part of the Club and to be willing to offer themselves for Committee membership.

**6. Membership Report:** Bill Staley, Membership Secretary, reported that the Club has 158 members. He gave a visual bar chart presentation demonstrating several membership trends: analysis of membership type, numbers, length of

membership and location. Approximately 20% of members do not live in Argyll. Members agreed that the Club's publicity should be increased. One way of doing this was for members to distribute the Club leaflet, found on the website, to their local library and other community venues. Bob Furness suggested that every member be asked to recruit one new member. Bill informed members that when people resigned, a letter was issued asking them to cancel their Banker's Order. However, if this was not acted upon, the money was accepted as a donation as the Club had no control over Banker's Orders. Bill was thanked for his work and efficiency.

**7. Treasurer's Report:** Bob Furness reported that the Statement of Accounts for the year 15 April 2002 to 15 April 2003 had been distributed with the Eider and that the finances are in a healthy state, showing a balance at the end of the financial year of £6637.32 with a deficit for the year of £571.87. This is part of a decreasing surplus trend, partly due to the strategy to spend more on indoor meetings, which was to the members' benefit. The Argyll Bird Report was a significant part of the expenditure and perhaps sometime in the future this Report should not be printed but put on the website. He did not recommend increasing the subscriptions as the balance is healthy, it would incur additional administration, and could possibly lead to loss of members. It was suggested that the Committee consider inviting legacies. The Financial Report was unanimously approved, proposed by Roger Broad and seconded by Paul Daw. Bob was thanked for his able stewardship of the Club's finances.

**8. Election of Office Bearers and Committee Members:** The following were proposed by Josie Wall seconded by Clive Craik, and elected nem.con. Chairman - David Wood, Vice-Chairman - Nigel Scriven, Secretary - John Anderson, Treasurer - Bob Furness, Members - Roger Broad, Tom Callan, Paul Daw (Argyll Bird Recorder), Mike Gear, David Merrie, Katie Pendreigh, Bill Staley (Membership Secretary). Steve Petty (Editor of the Eider) was proposed by Helen Anderson, seconded by Nigel Scriven, and approved.

**9. Any Other Competent Business:** Steve Petty thanked all contributors to the Eider and reminded members that the next issue would be out in December. He would appreciate more articles and before 1 December. He hoped that through time more people would elect to receive the Eider by e-mail.

Paul Daw asked members to look for coloured rings on Greater Black Backed Gulls and report the details to him. Nigel Scriven made a similar request for Lesser Black Backs.

The Chairman thanked Nigel Scriven for organising the day's programme.

The meeting closed at 1445.

JA, 24 November 2003

## Recent Publications

This section provides readers with information about publications (papers in journals, reports, books etc) that have appeared since the last list appeared in the March 2004 *Eider*. The criteria for selection is that a publication must have a link to birds in Scotland. The selection is biased towards what I read, so I would welcome information about other publications for inclusion in future lists – **Editor**

Amar, A., Arroyo, B., Redpath, S. & Thirgood, S. 2004. Habitat predicts losses of red grouse to individual hen harriers. *Journal of Applied Ecology*, **41**, 305-314.

Bland, R. L., Tully, J. & Greenwood, J. J. D. 2004. Birds breeding in British gardens: an underestimated population? *Bird Study*, **51**, 97-106.

Clark, H. & Sellers, R. M. 2004. Origins and movements of common starlings wintering in the Highlands.

*Scottish Birds*, **24**, 29-42.

Cosgrove, P. J., Butler, J. R. A. & Laughton, R. L. 2004. Canoe and walking surveys of wintering goosanders, red-breasted mergansers, great cormorants and common goldeneyes on the River Spey, 1994-2003. *Scottish Birds*, **24**, 1-10.

Durant, J. M., Anker-Nilssen, T., Hjermann, D. O. & Stenseth, N. C. 2004. Regime shifts in the breeding of an Atlantic puffin population. *Ecology Letters*, **7**, 388-394.

Frederiksen, M., Harris, M. P., Daunt, F., Rothery, P. & Wanless, S. 2004. Scale-dependent climate signals drive breeding phenology of three seabird species. *Global Change Biology*, **10**, 1214-1221.

Fuller, R. 2004. Why are woodland birds declining? *BTO News*, **253**, 5-7.

Garthe, S. & Huppopp, O. 2004. Scaling possible adverse effects of marine

wind farms on seabirds: developing and applying a vulnerability index. *Journal of Applied Ecology*, **41**, 724-734.

Green, R. E. 2004. A new method for estimating the adult survival rate of the corncrake *Crex crex* and comparison with estimates from ring-recovery and ring-recapture data. *Ibis*, **146**, 501-508.

Harris, M. P. & Rothery, P. 2004. Wear of rings used on guillemots *Uria aalge*: caution in the estimation of survival rates. *Ringing & Migration*, **22**, 61-62.

Insley, H., Swann, B. & Rehfisch, M. 2004. Wader roosts and habitat loss. *BTO News*, **251**, 16-17.

Jackson, B. 2004. Snowy egret in Argyll & Bute: new to Britain. *British Birds*, **97**, 270-275.

Jackson, S. F., Kershaw, M. & Gaston, K. J. 2004. The buffer effect and

the selection of protected areas for waterbirds in Britain. *Biological Conservation*, **120**, 137-143.

Jackson, S. F., Kershaw, M. & Gaston, K. J. 2004. The performance of procedures for selecting conservation areas: waterbirds in the UK. *Biological Conservation*, **118**, 261-270.

Jackson, S. F., Kershaw, M. & Gaston, K. J. 2004. Size matters: the value of small populations for wintering waterbirds. *Animal Conservation*, **7**, 229-239.

Kokko, H., Harris, M. P. & Wanless, S. 2004. Competition for breeding sites and site-dependent population regulation in a highly colonial seabird, the common guillemot *Uria aalge*. *Journal of Animal Ecology*, **73**, 367-376.

Laurenson, M. K., Norman, R. A., Gilbert, L., Reid, H. W. & Hudson, P. J. 2004. Mountain hares, louping-ill, red grouse and harvesting: complex interactions but few data. *Journal of Animal Ecology*, **73**, 811-813.

Le V. dit Durell, S. E. A., McGrorty, S., West, A. D., Clarke, R. T., Goss-Custard, J. D. & Stillman, R. A. 2005. A strategy for baseline monitoring of estuary Special Protection Areas. *Biological Conservation*, **121**, 289-301.

Lengagne, T., Harris, M. P., Wanless, S. & Slater, P. J. B. 2004. Finding your mate in a seabird colony: contrasting strategies of the guillemot *Uria aalge* and king penguin *Aptenodytes patagonicus*. *Bird Study*, **51**, 25-33.

MacMillan, D., Hanley, N. & Daw, M. 2004. Costs and benefits of wild goose conservation in Scotland. *Biological Conservation*, **119**, 475-485.

Marshall, T., Evans, R. & McArthur, D. 2004. Windfarms and birds in Scotland. *Scottish Bird News*, **72**, 10-13.

Maxwell, J. 2004. The nuthatch in Scotland - part 1. *Scottish Bird News*, **71**, 7.

Maxwell, J. 2004. The nuthatch in Scotland - part 2. *Scottish Bird News*, **72**, 9.

Mee, A., Whitfield, D. P., Thompson, D. B. A. & Burke, T. 2004. Extra-pair paternity in the common sandpiper,

*Actitis hypoleucos*, revealed by DNA fingerprinting. *Animal Behaviour*, **67**, 333-342.

Mitchell, P. I., Newton, S. F., Ratcliffe, N. & Dunn, T. E. 2004. *Seabird populations of Britain and Ireland: results of the seabird 2000 census (1998-2002)*. London: T. & A.D. Poyser.

O'Brien, M. & White, C. S. 2004. Estimating the breeding wader population of Scottish uplands and salt marshes. *Scottish Birds*, **24**, 17-28.

Parish, D. M. B. & Sotherton, N. W. 2004. Game crops and threatened farmland songbirds in Scotland: a step towards halting population declines? *Bird Study*, **51**, 107-112.

Rebecca, G. W. 2004. Forest nesting merlin apparently specialising on barn swallows. *Scottish Birds*, **24**, 46-48.

Redpath, S. M., Arroyo, B. E., Leckie, F. M., Bacon, P., Bayfield, N., Gutierrez, R. J. & Thirgood, S. J. 2004. Using decision modeling with stakeholders to reduce human-wildlife conflict: a raptor-grouse case study. *Conservation Biology*, **18**, 350-359.

Reid, J. M., Bignel, E. M., Bignel, S., McCracken, D. I. & Monaghan, P. 2004. Identifying the demographic determinants of population growth rate: a case study of red-billed choughs *Pyrhcorax pyrrhcorax*. *Journal of Animal Ecology*, **73**, 777-788.

Rollie, C. 2004. The Galloway kite trail. *Scottish Bird News*, **71**, 13.

Shaw, D. J., Hydon, D. T., Cattadori, I. M., Hudson, P. J. & Thirgood, S. J. 2004. The shape of red grouse cycles. *Journal of Animal Ecology*, **73**, 767-776.

Summers, R. W. 2004. An early record of a parrot crossbill in Scotland. *Scottish Birds*, **24**, 43-45.

Summers, R. W., Jardine, D. C. & Dawson, R. J. G. 2004. The distribution of Scottish crossbills, 1995-2003. *Scottish Birds*, **24**, 11-16.

Taylor, I. R. & Grant, M. C. 2004. Long-term trends in the abundance of breeding lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* in relation to land-use change on upland farmland in southern Scotland. *Bird Study*, **51**, 133-142.

Votier, S. C., Bearhop, S., Ratcliffe, N. & Furness, R. W. 2004. Reproductive consequences for great skuas specializing as seabird predators. *Condor*, **106**.

Whitfield, D. P., Fielding, A. H., Mcleod, D. R. A. & Haworth, P. F. 2004. The effects of persecution on age of breeding and territory occupation in golden eagles in Scotland. *Biological Conservation*, **118**, 249-259.

Whitfield, D. P., Fielding, A. H., Mcleod, D. R. A. & Haworth, P. F. 2004. Modelling the effects of persecution on the population dynamics of golden eagles in Scotland. *Biological Conservation*, **119**, 319-333.

Wilson, A. & Wernham, C. 2004. Harriers and mining in the uplands. *BTO News*, **251**, 8.



Gannets by Margaret Staley



Articles for the next issue of *The Eider* should with the Editor before the 30th November 2004



The **Ivy** is a native plant that is abundant in Argyll, particularly in gardens. Its berries provide an important food for birds. These are large and highly nutritious, and are produced in late winter/early spring; at a time when other berries are scarce or absent. The leaves on the fruiting branches, as in this picture, are very different to those on non-fruiting stems. A large array of birds feed on the berries including, **Blackbirds**, **Song Thrushes**, **Mistle Thrushes**, overwintering **Blackcaps** and **Redwings** and **Fieldfares** in the spring on their return migration to breeding areas. (Editor)

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

**Chairman:** David Wood, Drover's House, Bellanoch, Lochgilphead, Argyll PA31 8SN (phone 01546 830272)

**Vice Chairman:** Nigel Scriven, 2 Allt na Blathaich, Loch Eck, Dunoon, Argyll PA23 8SG (phone 01369 840606 & 01505 843679)

**Secretary:** John Anderson, Ard Beag, Connel, Oban, Argyll PA37 1PT (phone 01631 710630)

**Treasurer:** Bob Furness, The Cnoc, Tarbet, Loch Lomond G83 7DG (phone 01301 702603)

**Membership Secretary:** Sue Furness, The Cnoc, Tarbet, Loch Lomond G83 7DG (phone 01301 702603)

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

**Editor of the Argyll Bird Report:** Clive Craik, Grendon, Barcaldine, Oban, Argyll PA37 1EC (phone 01631 720 327)

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

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

**Argyll Bird Club Website:** <http://www.argyllbirdclub.org>



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

Suitable illustrations greatly enhance the attractiveness of the *Eider*, and artists and photographers are encouraged to submit artwork and digital photographs (jpeg files preferred) of birds and their habitats to the editor.

The *Eider* is published around the 15<sup>th</sup> day of March, June, September and December. Articles for each issue must be with the editor before the 1<sup>st</sup> day of each publication month. However, it greatly helps if material can be submitted well before these deadline dates.

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

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

#### More about the Argyll Bird Club

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

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

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

Subscriptions are due on 1<sup>st</sup> January and can be paid by cheque or standing order. New members 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 (see box on this page).