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The Eider



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A Northern Gannet coming into land on Ailsa Craig during an ABC field trip

Two successful field trips to Ailsa Craig

New Bird Atlas
Northern Goshawk identification
Recent report for May-July

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Inside this issue

Editorial	2
Indoor meetings	2
Future field trips	3-4
New Bird Atlas	4-5
First Ailsa Craig trip	5-6
Second Ailsa Craig trip	6
Three true stories	7
Black-throated Thrush's tale	7-8
Unusual Great Tit nest	8
Wild Caledonia	8-9
Goshawk identification	10-11
Recent reports	12-20
Titbits	21
Autumn meeting programme	21
Treasurer's report 2006-07	22
Minutes of last AGM	22-23
Agenda for 2007 AGM	23
About the ABC	24

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Editorial

This is a reminder that the pre-publication offer expires on 1st November 2007, after which the full price of £45 plus postage and packing will be charged for the book. Most ABC members have yet to order their copy/copies, so don't miss out. The pre-publication offer of £25 for members and £35 for non-members provides excellent value for money! Both prices are inclusive of postage and packing.

We have been receiving a very good stream of pre-publication orders for the book both from club members and from elsewhere. These pre-publication sales provide useful cash towards the cost of printing the book. At the moment page layout and proof reading by the editors is nearing completion, and so we hope it will be ready to go to the printers in September, and be available for distribution before the end of the year.

Members receiving the printed *Eider* will find further copies of the pre-publication leaflet enclosed. If you have already ordered your copies then please feel free to pass these leaflets on to friends who may be interested. Additional order forms can be obtained from Bob Furness (e-mail: r.furness@bio.gla.ac.uk phone: 01301 702603). Bob has a large stock of these, so if you know of any venue where they can be displayed, he would be more than happy to post some onto you.

The Annual General Meeting of the club will be held at the autumn meeting (programme on page 21). We hope that as many of you as possible will attend, as this is your opportunity to influence the future direction of the club. There is at least one vacancy on the committee, so if anyone is interested please, contact the secretary. Katie Pendreigh (see back page) before the meeting.

Remember that copies of the book can only be bought at the reduced rate until the 31st October, after which date the full price of £45 plus p&p will apply.

ABC indoor meetings

The committee is now planning the next four indoor meetings, the dates and venues of which are given below. Most follow the usual format, but in spring 2009 we are trying something different. The club has many members on the larger Argyll islands, but it is very difficult for these folks to attend one-day meetings on the mainland. Thus, to try and rectify this we are starting to plan for a weekend meeting on Islay in spring 2009, jointly with the newly-formed Islay Bird Group. We will be including more details about this weekend in future issues of the *Eider*.

Autumn meeting 2007

Saturday 10th November at the Cainbaan Hotel near Lochgiphead (<http://www.cainbaan.com/>). The programme is on page 21

Spring Meeting 2008

Saturday 8th March at The Argyll Hotel, Inveraray, (<http://www.the-argyll-hotel.co.uk/>). The programme will be in the December *Eider*

Autumn Meeting 2008

Saturday 8th November (provisional date) at the Cainbaan Hotel near Lochgiphead (<http://www.cainbaan.com/>).

Spring Meeting 2009

Friday 24th-Sunday 26th April. A weekend meeting on Islay, jointly with the Islay Bird Group. This event will combine some indoor sessions and birding excursions. More details will appear in either the December 2007 or March 2008 *Eider*.

Future field trips

Machrihanish Seabird Observatory and the Scottish Owl Centre—Saturday 15 September 2007

Meet at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory at 10.30hrs. The observatory is about 1km west of Machrihanish village, on Uisaed Point. Much depends on the weather, but at this time of the year there is a chance of viewing sea-bird migration, including skuas, and possibly Balearic Shearwaters. Eddie Maguire, the warden, will be there. As well as the birds, Eddie will be more than happy to show you his impressive digiscoping gear. The web address is:

<http://www.machrihanishbirds.org.uk>

In the afternoon we will visit the Scottish Owl Centre on the outskirts of Campbeltown. They have an exciting range of species, all of which are very well cared for. We hope to be at the centre for the feeding time at 14.30hrs. The Great Grey Owl, which usually takes part in a flying display is a truly magnificent bird! The entrance charge is £5.50 for adults. The web address is:

<http://www.scottishowlcentre.com/>

If you would like to come on this excursion, please contact me before 12 September and let me have your phone number, just in case I have to cancel it at the last minute due to adverse weather condition.

Steve Petty

E-mail: stevepetty@btinternet.com

Tel: 01700 800235

Estuary birds and digiscoping around the Add Estuary and Loch Crinan—Sunday 23 September 2007

Meet at Island Add Bridge, Add Estuary at 10.00hrs. The trip will probably last until after lunch, about 14.00hrs, although this can be flexible depending on the weather, people's interests etc. We will be looking for any autumn migrants in the area, particularly ducks and waders, and as a bit of fun we could try our hand at digiscoping what we find. The best photos could appear in next *Eider*!

If you are interested please bring your telescope, digital camera (if you have one), wellingtons and a packed lunch. I would envisage bird watching from around Islanddadd Bridge first, then moving on to Loch Crinan and the Crinan Ferry later, which may involve some car sharing to make it easier to get around.

Jim Dickson

E-mail: j.dickson@tiscali.co.uk

Tel: 01546 603967



LITTLE GREBE.

Badgers (and possibly Pine Martens) and bird watching in Speyside

The Rothiemurchus Estate near Aviemore has developed a number of very successful businesses based on wildlife. One is a badger-watching experience that may be of interest to club members. They have a heated, carpeted, double-glazed "hide" on private land close to Loch an Eilean, where up to 12 visitors can spend the late evening watching a floodlit baited area frequented by Badgers, and occasionally by Pine Martens. Bob and Sue Furness tried this out in June, and had excellent views of a group of Badgers within inches of the windows, though we did not see a Pine Marten that night. It is possible to book on the internet to visit this hide, and the evening in the hide (with local expert naturalist guide) costs about £18 per adult. For details see <http://www.speysidewildlife.co.uk/HolidayList.aspx?location=Evening>

It was suggested to us that there may be a better chance of seeing a Pine Marten there in the autumn or spring rather than midsummer, especially since of course the evening starts earlier (we did not see badgers until after 23.00hrs although we entered the hide at 20.00hrs and waited patiently)! CCTV footage showed that there had been Pine Martens at the bait the previous night, but not until about 01.00hrs, and long after visitors that night had left.

A visit to the hide could, of course, be combined with a weekend in Speyside to look for the special local birds such as Crested Tits, crossbills (Scottish or otherwise) and Capercaillie. If members would be interested in a group visit for a weekend either in spring 2008 or in autumn 2008, can you please contact me to let me know of your interest—though this will not yet require any firm commitment until we get an idea of whether enough folk would like to go to make it worth setting up a group booking.

Bob Furness

E-mail: r.furness@bio.gla.ac.uk

Tel: 01301 702603

Sound of Gigha—Saturday 19 April 2008

Paul Daw has been running this popular field trip for a number of years. The report about this year's trip appeared in the June *Eider* on page 5. Further details of the 2008 excursion will appear in the December *Eider*.

Colonsay—Weekend 16-18 May 2008

David Jardine has kindly agreed to organise a weekend on Colonsay in 2008. Further details will appear in the December *Eider*.

Northern Spain—11-17 June 2008 (provisional)

It is hoped that more information about this trip (flights times and costs) will be available in time for the autumn meeting. The tentative arrangements are to fly from Glasgow to Santander, with a change in the south of England. The provisional dates are 11-17 June 2008, but these may change depending on the availability of flights and accommodation. I hope accommodation will be at the Hotel del Oso at Cosgaya (<http://www.hoteldeloso.com/>) in the Pi-

cos de Europa, but this depends on whether enough accommodation is available once the flight information is published. It may also be possible to have a night or two near wetland areas on the coast (June *Eider*, pages 2-3 for more information).

Steve Petty

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The new Bird Atlas

Bird Atlas 2007-11 is a huge and exciting project that will map the abundance and distribution of birds in Britain and Ireland during the breeding season and winter. It will be fascinating to look at the changes in distribution since the last breeding and wintering atlases. There have been two previous breeding atlases (1968-72 and 1988-91) and just one winter atlas (1981-84). How have bird populations in Argyll changed? Are species like Goldfinch (see box opposite) and Siskin, wintering further north in larger numbers, perhaps due to an increase in garden feeding? Will Stonechats be wintering further into the hills, due to milder winters? Will species like Nuthatch continue their spread north into Argyll? How widespread are breeding Greylag Geese? What species are in trouble? Will Wood Warblers, Whinchats and Spotted Flycatchers show large declines?

Thousands of birdwatchers will be needed to take part in fieldwork throughout the UK. Every birdwatcher of every level can help. We need all your records—whatever you see, whenever, wherever! There are two components to the fieldwork: Timed Tetrad Visits (TTVs) and gathering Roving Records. TTVs involve two visits in the summer and two in the winter to a tetrad (2km x 2km square). Each visit is for a minimum of one hour and the idea is to record species you see and hear, so we can calculate species abundance. Of equal importance are general birdwatching visits to 10-km squares (Roving Records) where the aim is to compile a species list of everything you see and hear. With 1,101, 10-km squares in Scotland, and 142 in Argyll, there is a lot of counting and recording to be done!

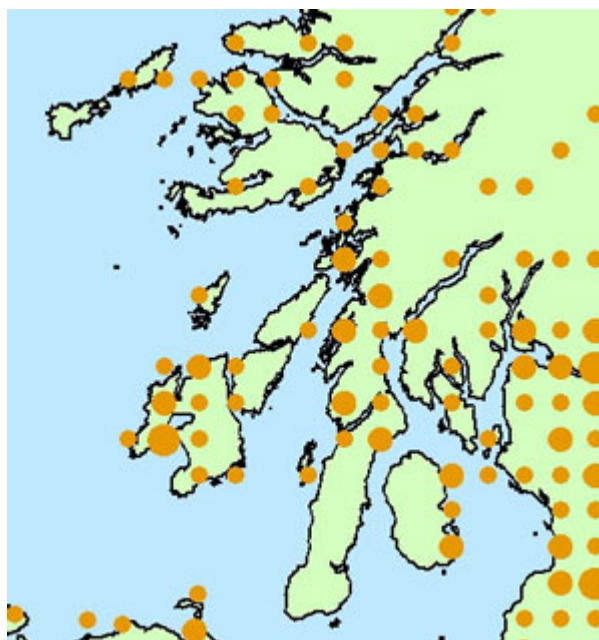
Anyone birding in Argyll can make a real contribution to the Atlas. From 1st November 2007, simply make a note of every species you see and record which 10-km square you are in, and then enter the records online at www.birdatlas.net or fill out a Roving Records form (available from BTO HQ). If you supply bird lists to projects like BirdTrack or the Garden BirdWatch, these will be automatically fed into the atlas database, so the good news is that they do not need to be submitted twice!

If you'd like to help with the important TTVs contact your local Atlas Organiser. This can easily be done by logging onto www.birdatlas.net and clicking on "taking part", then "Your Regional Organiser". Otherwise contact Bob Swann (details below) who will put you in touch with your organiser. You can then volunteer to cover as many of the eight survey tetrads as you wish in as many 10-km squares as you wish. Remember the project will run over four years and each of the eight tetrads just has to be visited during ONE year of the project.

It is going to be a massive undertaking. Getting full coverage of



Goldfinches have become a more regular sight at garden bird feeders in Argyll, and elsewhere in Scotland. They are also known to feed on conifer seed during winter. So, has their distribution in Argyll changed since the winter Atlas of 1981-84 (figure below from the Winter Atlas, ©BTO)?



Scotland, particularly in winter, with short days and unpredictable weather is not going to be easy. However, the effort is going to be very worthwhile. Not only is atlasing fun, it gets you out into new areas, finding new sites and new birds. It is also a good way of putting something back into your birding. The results from this atlas will be the basis for the conservation of birds in Britain and Ireland for the coming decades. Your effort will help conserve Scotland's bird populations for years to come. So get in touch

with your local Argyll organiser and adopt a 10-km square now.

Bird Atlas 2007-11 is a partnership between the BTO, the Scottish Ornithologists' Club and BirdWatch Ireland. Fieldwork will be organised through a network of local Atlas Organisers. To find out more, visit the website www.birdatlas.net or contact the Scottish Organiser of the atlas project at bob.swann@bto.org or on 07919 378876

Bob Swann. Scottish Organiser, Bird Atlas project.

First trip to Ailsa Craig—24 June 2007



After an early start, the group of 12 arrived in Girvan for a 10 o'clock departure to Ailsa Craig aboard MFV Glorious on a virtually windless morning (photos opposite). The trip out produced some good flocks of Manx Shearwaters and increasing numbers of Gannets and auks, including a few Puffins, as we approached the island. Skipper Mark McCrindle soon had us all safely ashore to spend just over three hours on the island.

We had lunch on the picnic table outside Bernie's abode, with a Common Whitethroat singing on the slopes above and Twite flitting around the lighthouse area. Many Common Blue butterflies were seen here too. After an early lunch the party split into two. Bob Furness and some fitter members headed uphill to the uppermost part of the Gannet colony on the cliff top (photo opposite). Those more prone to vertigo opted to follow Bernie north along the shore in search of the newly established Puffin colony. However, it was by no means effortless, as we soon found the boulders along the beach were not the easiest substrate to walk on (photo opposite)! A gull colony was our first encounter, mainly Lesser Black-backed Gulls, but also a few Herring and Great Black-backs. Just past the northern foghorn we came across the first small colony of Razorbills and Common Guillemots, a few Kittiwakes and some Fulmars nearby. A few Puffins were flying into a grassy area above the crags, which according to Bernie appears to be a newly established breeding site this year.

Rounding the next headland we were faced with vast number of breeding Guillemots, Razorbills and Kittiwakes on spectacular cliffs. Shags were breeding amongst the boulders below the cliffs, with most nests containing chicks. And here was the main Puffin colony, which has increased in numbers annually since the highly successful rat eradication programme. Most counts that were made ranged between 70 and 100 birds at any one time, and many birds were arriving with sand eels, a sure sign that at least some pairs had chicks. On the cliffs above the Puffin colony we saw our first Gannet nests, which extended around the northern and western cliffs of the island. The most recently published count in 2004 estimated the colony at 27,130 apparently occupied sites (AOS), but Bernie commented that the count had been done early in the season and the actual figure was probably nearer 40,000 AOS. This colony continues to increase in size and could soon become the largest in the UK.



Top. The party setting off from Girvan. ©Steve Petty

Middle. Bob Furness collecting samples from the gannet colony. ©David Palmar www.photoscot.co.uk

Bottom. The party negotiating the boulder beach below the massive cliffs along the north-east coast. Large numbers of Kittiwakes and auks were nesting on these cliffs. ©Steve Petty



The Eider

We retraced our steps along the beach and consumed the rest of our food outside Bernie's place. Bob's group safely returned from their exploits on the cliff top. Bernie then guided us to a nearby piece of corrugated tin lying on the ground. Underneath were 8-10 Slowworms, apparently quite a low count compared to some of Bernie's in the past! We left the island at 14.30hrs as planned, and Mark kindly took the boat around the western and northern Cliffs for us to appreciate the size of the Gannet colony. Bernie pointed out one area where the birds were stripping Bracken for nesting material from the hillside above the colony. They had not just removed the fronds, but roots and all, so preparing bare ground for future colony expansion—a novel way of eradicating Bracken!!

With black clouds gathering over the mainland, we headed back to Girvan. More Manx Shearwaters were seen on the return journey as well as our only Storm-petrel. The rain set in about half way across and by the time we arrived in Girvan, most of the party were pretty wet (see photo opposite), but very satisfied after a wonderful trip! Many thanks are due to Bob Furness for organising the trip and

to Bernie Zonfrillo for sharing with us his extensive knowledge of the island.

Steve Petty



Two very wet characters (Brian Little and Bernie Zonfrillo) enjoying the return journey! ©David Palmar www.photoscot.co.uk

Second trip to Ailsa Craig—1 July 2007

Another dozen people, many from the Argyll Bird Club, took the MFV Glorious from Girvan, skippered by Mark McCrindle, and landed on Ailsa Craig on the 1st of July.

Wonderful views of Manx Shearwaters, a Kittiwake and a seal were obtained, but few Gannets until we were really near Ailsa Craig.

Near the jetty, Twite, which had been present on the 24th on the wires by the old industrial buildings were still there. For this second visit we all stayed on lower, and (or so I thought) safer ground!

On walking past the sign which read "These bridges and walkways are unsafe. Do not proceed past this point", we were confronted by a two-foot wide concrete path, sometimes with a vertical drop as much as 5m above the beach.

At various points, the path was punctuated by bridges, some of slippery concrete, some of rotting wood, with no parapet or guard rail to speak of, most of which had been eroded by the salt spray over the decades, and the remains of which could not be trusted! The alternative struggle across the boulder beach was preferred by some in the party—equally unsafe and potentially ankle-turning!

We noticed Navelwort, a Herring Gull chick too young and fluffy to be on the water, a group of Eider ducks and four Black Guillemots. Along the cliff there were kittiwakes, Puffins, and some more seals offshore. At this point we were stopped in our tracks by a steep buttress going down into the sea, which was at an exceptionally high tide. Some of the more adventurous waited for a lull in the waves, then jumped and waded from boulder to boulder to get past the promontory. We were rewarded by a better view of Puffins, and of a cave.

On the way back to the boat there was a poorly Lesser Black-backed Gull, which Bernie thought might have been

infected by a virus.

A trip round the island then followed, with good views of the Kittiwake colony, the Guillemot colony, Guillemots and Razorbills on the water, and finally the Gannet colony, with hundreds of gannets flying above us. We then dropped Bernie off to stay and mend the roof of his cottage, and headed back to Girvan.

On the way back many gulls pounced on the bits of lunch which were thrown into the water. This attracted the attention of two Gannets which gave us magnificent close-up views as they followed us for a few minutes, before they realised there were no fish to dive for, only cheese sandwiches and crisps!

Fantastic close-ups of Manx Shearwaters followed (photo below), and finally a great view of the Waverley as she steamed into Girvan. It was hard to imagine a better way of spending a day out. Thanks to Bob Furness, Bernie Zonfrillo and the Argyll Bird Club for another excellent day's birdwatching!

David Palmar www.photoscot.co.uk



©David Palmar

Here are three true stories – with minor details changed to spare blushes...

1. I met a man digging up primroses from the side of the road. He said: "Me and my wife love having them in the garden. They're so beautiful. We've been taking them from this bank for years. Mind you, there aren't many left now. It must be the traffic fumes."

2. I met a man and his grandchildren taking Common Gull eggs from a skerry in Loch Creran. He said: "I love seagull eggs for my tea. We've been getting them here for years. It doesn't matter—they just lay again—then you can take more eggs. They always lay again. But there aren't many seagulls here now compared with years ago. I blame the fishermen taking all the fish."

Club members will not need reminding that gulls' second clutches are much less productive than their first. In 2007 I was forcibly reminded of this. On the night of 18 May a tidal surge (a high tide with strong onshore wind) flooded several low lying islets in my study area, removing many half-incubated clutches of Common Gulls including one whole colony. Some of the birds laid again, but their productivity was very low compared with normal years.

3. I was in someone's garden admiring butterflies on the buddleia. He said: "Aren't they beautiful? I stand here for ages sometimes, just watching them. Wonderful! But there aren't nearly as many as there used to be. I remember when they just rose off the flowers in huge clouds. I blame the farmers. You know—all those poisons they spray. Now, if you'll excuse me please, I must get on with the gardening before it rains. I'm just going to strim those awful nettles—they're covered with hundreds of black caterpillars. I must zap them before they get my vegetables."

Some of our most beautiful butterflies depend entirely on stinging nettles. The masses of dark caterpillars that are very obvious on nettle patches in June become the Peacocks (photo below) or Small Tortoiseshells that fly later in the summer. Their caterpillars, surrounded by web coated with black droppings, may look rather unattractive, but nettles are their only food. They will not touch anything else so are not a threat in the garden. If you remove the nettles, you destroy the butterflies. And the same is true of Painted Ladies and thistles...

The larvae of Red Admirals also live on nettles but, rather than clinging together in obvious colonies, they live singly in tents made by spinning the edges of a leaf together. The caterpillars themselves are invisible and you have to look fairly carefully to spot the tents. There can be many living singly like this in a patch of nettles, and they can be widespread. Destroy the nettles and you may well be killing dozens of Red Admirals—unintentionally, but as surely as if you were pulling their wings off one by one.

Clive Craik



Peacock ©Steve Petty

The Black-throated Thrush's tale



Black-throated Thrush on Bute. ©Philip Kirkham

Although Bute is not well known for rarities (compared with Shetland or Islay) during the course of writing a booklet about the island's birds, two very great rarities have appeared. A Snowy Egret appeared in May 2002. During the last week in January 2007 an assiduous feeder of birds in her sheltered back garden in Rothesay reported a bird she thought to be a Black-throated Thrush, after research in our Public Library. Her identification was spot on and for about three weeks Rothesay was on the twitchers' list.

The Black-throated Thrush (*Turdus ruficollis atrogularis*) breeds from Eastern Russia to the Yenisei, the Tunguska and northern Attai. If you have never heard of these places, it is because Central Asia is a very long way away, served by neither Ryanair nor Easyjet!

As Phil Kirkham's fine photograph shows (opposite), this bird is about Fieldfare size,

The Eider

with a distinct black throat and upper breast. The bird was a first-winter male. It lives on the edges of coniferous forests, and migrates to spend the winter in Iraq, Iran, Baluchistan and northern India. Not all birds migrate, and those that stay in Russia may move westwards when very cold weather sets in. The few records of the birds in Britain usually occur in mid winter. The first Scottish record is of a bird in Perth in 1879. It did not appear in Scotland again until 1957. There are still less than twenty records for the whole of Britain, so it is certainly a very rare bird.

Why did it suddenly appear in a Rothesay garden in Janu-

ary. Perhaps the garden owner is listed in the Good Bird Food Guide !!! One can speculate that it arrived on the mainland late in the year and that a cold spell at the end of the year drove it onto the Madeira of the Clyde, well known for its mildness!!

The lesson from this tale? Never take the birds in your backyard for granted. Look at them carefully. On the day I watched the thrush, a male Blackcap appeared at the feeder—a nice winter record.

Michael Thomas

Great Tits nest in traffic cone

On 9 June, at the edge of a busy car park by Dunstaffnage Marine Laboratory and Argyll College, near Oban, Mary Craik noticed a Great Tit carrying food down into a hole at the top of a traffic cone. Careful investigation inside the cone revealed a nest with at least six young. The large round base had been completely filled with moss and the nest was in the middle—quite a lengthy construction job! (photo)

Nesting birds will tolerate a lot of disturbance as long as it is harmless and regular. These Great Tits were not deterred by students and staff frequently walking past, or by a bus stop where people stood waiting, all within two metres, and they sometimes entered the cone when people were standing a few metres away. Robin Harvey and Clive Craik took turns over the next few days to photograph the parent birds entering and leaving the cone. It was very close to a children's nursery, and the sight of middle-aged men sitting in a car for long periods and pointing a camera attracted a few stares—fortunately no charges are pending!

We wrote a message on the cone asking people not to move it and eventually, when the birds had left, we checked inside. There were no corpses so all the young must have flown, although the narrow vertical exit would have tested their aerobatic skills. The cone was 29cm tall and the hole at the top had a diameter of 5cm. The inside of the base was 30cm in diameter.

Clive Craik & Robin Harvey



Adult Great tit about to enter the traffic cone to feed its chicks (upper) and the nest with the cone removed (lower). ©Clive Craik & Robin Harvey

Argyllshire—a Wild Caledonia holiday

Well, three holidays actually—and really quite civilised - wild only in the wildlife sense!

I first found out about wildcaledonia.co.uk when I was talking to wildlife crime officer Sergeant John Simpson about Hen Harriers, and he said he had been planning for five years to set up a wildlife holiday company. He mentioned that it might be quite useful if the customers could have a photographic input, so I agreed to become involved to the extent that my full-time teaching job allowed me to, that was at weekends only.

So it was that one weekend in each of April, May and June of 2007, I set off in a spotting car with Kenny Stewart, one of John's fellow wildlife crime officers, while John took several holidaymakers, mostly from south-east England, in his Toyota Land Cruiser, to see the birds and some other wildlife too, of Loch Lomond, Rannoch Moor, Ardgour, Ardnamurchan, Mull and central Argyllshire.

I soon learned what a deeply knowledgeable fund of wildlife expertise John possesses, and how sharp Kenny is as a

spotter, both of them characteristics which are superbly appropriate for leaders of a wildlife holiday. In addition to the many ornithological sites already known to John and Kenny, the spotting car would go ahead, or go along a side road at various points, and stop and phone or radio to John when a worthwhile bird was seen, a system which often worked very well for the clients.

Of the hundred or so species we saw during those three weekends, there were many particular highlights:

- Migrating Whooper Swan, Greylag Geese and Green-shank on the April trip.
- Hen Harrier, Black Grouse lekking, and Eider nesting in the Loch Lomond area.
- Golden Eagles near Loch Lomond, in Ardgour and on Mull.
- Red-Throated, Black-Throated and Great Northern Divers, in places such as Rannoch Moor, the Sound of Mull and Loch Scridain.
- Black Guillemots nesting in the most unnatural of places, including under piers and in harbours.
- A dawn walk through Ariundle Oak Wood, which started with nesting Swallows and House Martins, and a Spotted Flycatcher doing what it says on the tin; then there were Willow Warblers singing in every small

patch of woodland, Wheatear, Stonechat and Whinchat sitting on bushes in the more open areas and culminating in a Slow Worm on the walk back for breakfast.

- Sea watching at Ardnamurchan with wonderful views of Rhum, Eigg and Muck, (and of the most westerly traffic lights on the mainland of Great Britain!), and on the several ferries we used - amongst birds seen while sea watching were Shag, Cormorant, Gannet, Razorbill, Guillemot and Manx Shearwater.
- Sea Eagles on Mull, magnificent birds with a huge wingspan, and Ravens in the mountains everywhere.
- Hooded Crows on Mull, common enough to those who live in Argyllshire, but a new bird for many of John's clients.
- Corncrakes on Iona in May and June, which rewarded our patience by emerging from beds of yellow flag irises.
- Ospreys at Ford and displaying Red-Breasted Mergansers at Bellanoch.
- The occasional Otter and Stoat, and plenty of Red Deer.
- Many interesting small bird species, such as Twite, Common Whitethroat and Linnet.
- Superb mountain scenery and history brought alive by John's enthusiastic manner in places such as Loch Lomond, Rannoch Moor and Glen Coe.

During the holidays, we stayed in a choice of either bed and breakfast or hotel accommodation. The facilities were en-suite and the food was very good where ever we stayed. There were some early starts, and some optional evening excursions, which many people participated in, wanting to get the most from their time in Scotland.

My input into the holiday consisted of driving, spotting and helping the clients get the best from their cameras. There were many discussions about the advantages and problems of digital photography, about the best shutter speed or aperture, about the benefits of shooting raw, or about different types of lenses. In the evenings, some of the clients' photos were downloaded on to my laptop, and this was used as a backup in case of anything going wrong with their memory cards. I also showed the clients many of the photos which I took myself. Some of these are printed with this article, and more of my results from these holidays can be seen on my website at www.photoscot.co.uk. To get the flavour of one of these tours, start with the Loch Lomond page, and follow the links at the foot of each page to Rannoch Moor, Ardgour, Ardnamurchan, Mull and Argyllshire.

I hear that on the rest of the holiday which I couldn't go on, (due to an inconvenient thing called teaching getting in the way), there were nesting Crested Tits, and amongst other species there were close up views of Ring Ouzel, Dotterel, Ptarmigan and Snow Bunting. These reports have stimulated my ornithological salivary glands into action. I can't wait to get to the Cairngorms and see these iconic species and perhaps photograph some of them. But that will have to be another article!

David Palmar



Two photos taken by David Palmar (www.photoscot.co.uk) during his trips with Wild Caledonia. A Lapwing (opposite) at Fiddlen, Mull and an Osprey (below) carrying a fish at Ford, Loch Awe.



It may come as a surprise to most bird-watchers in Argyll that the Goshawk has the highest non-acceptance rate of any species considered by the Argyll Rare Birds Committee. Why is this the case, as surely a medium-sized bird of prey should be quite straightforward to identify.....or is it?

The goshawk is certainly not a regular breeder in Argyll, with the last possible breeding record over 20-years ago. Also, Argyll is quite distant from the nearest, largest breeding populations in the Scottish/English Borders (Petty 2007). Therefore, it is important that all claimed records are critically examined, and not just accepted at face value, in order to build up an accurate picture of its occurrence.

Each year there are up to ten claims of Goshawk sightings in our recording area, but only around three or four records are submitted to the records committee for assessment. Since 1993, of 13 records submitted only three have been accepted. On the surface it appears that many of these submitted records are plausible, with several descriptions being based on the birds' size—'large buzzard-sized raptor' that is 'too large for Sparrowhawk'. Other than this, there are often few details about plumage or other characteristics. This is not altogether surprising as views are often brief as a bird disappears into the tree canopy. But, Goshawks do hunt over open ground, and like other raptors they can spend much time soaring when the weather conditions are suitable. Personally I have only seen five or six birds in Britain, one in the USA, two in Greece and six at close-range migrating at Gibraltar, southern Spain. Most of these sightings were straightforward. However, separating a male Goshawk from a female Sparrowhawk is reputed to be difficult—but is it? If uncertain, it is best steer clear of 'firming up' the record from a 'possible' into a 'definite' when you are writing a description! If in doubt, the bird is almost certainly a Sparrowhawk!

When examining Goshawk records in a bit more detail, a few things become apparent. A significant number of claims are made by visitors to parts of Argyll, particularly Mull, who often have little if any experience of Goshawks. Could this be similar to inexperienced visitors turning Common Buzzards into Golden Eagles? Recent reports have included photographs of a Buzzard that was

claimed as a Goshawk, and another report that was definitely a Hen Harrier. The size of the bird is often the main factor supporting the bird's identification and referred to as 'buzzard sized'. Although some female Goshawks do approach the wing span of a Common Buzzard's, generally they are some 10-15% shorter winged, although average body mass is greater than in Buzzards (Cramp & Simmons 1980, Forsman 1999, Mullarney et al. 2000). What is often difficult in assessing records is that although size is given, often there is nothing else on which to base this 'impression', unless flying alongside a Buzzard or being mobbed by crows. Vinicombe (2003) says that in his experience, flying Goshawks appear to be intermediate in size between Sparrowhawk and Common Buzzard. A distant Goshawk tends to appear big rather than huge.

The potential to misidentify a female Sparrowhawk as a Goshawk is always there if for some reason the observer is inexperienced or has misjudged the distance involved. At times, a soaring female Sparrowhawk can appear quite large, particularly when there is nothing else to compare its size with, but if you stick with it until it flaps, its wing action is a give away, being very rapid compared to the slower, more powerful flaps of a Goshawk (see below). But, to be able to make these judgements you need to first be very familiar with Sparrowhawks. So, one bit of advice is to spend a lot of time watching soaring Sparrowhawks, and noting their behaviour and wing action. Now is a good time to do this, with birds dispersing from breeding areas and juveniles developing their aerial agility, and often jousting with other raptors high in the sky.

Often few details are given about flight action or wing shape, although both are useful to confirm identification. Similar to Sparrowhawk, Goshawk flight typically consists of a few flaps followed by a glide, which is then repeated. However, the flaps are slower and more deliberate in Goshawk and the wings often appear paddle-shaped and show more 'tapering hands'. When in a fast glide or stoop they can appear Peregrine like, except for the much longer tail. While soaring they are quite different to Common Buzzard, and in fact are more like Honey-buzzard, as neither species raise their wings to gain height as do Common Buzzards.



A rare photo of a male Goshawk brooding chicks, which is mainly done by the female. Note the contrasting grey upper parts and white, lightly barred under parts, and the broad white supercilium above the eye. ©David S Whitaker

Structurally Goshawks are quite different from Sparrowhawk. Goshawks are bulky, powerful birds compared with the far more slightly-built and agile Sparrowhawk. In fact, the difference between Goshawk and Sparrowhawk is similar to the difference between Peregrine and Merlin, but few would confuse a Peregrine with a Merlin or vice-versa! You only have to look at average body weights of Sparrowhawk and Goshawk to realise this. From the largest to the smallest these are; female Goshawk 1414g, male Goshawk 865g, female Sparrowhawk 264g and male Sparrowhawk 144g (Cramp & Simmons 1980). Thus, male Goshawks are more than three times the body mass of female Sparrowhawks—an area where there is reputed to be so much confusion over identification! On top of this the plumage colouration of adult female Sparrowhawks and adult male Goshawks is widely different (see later).

In flight, adult Goshawks appear white below, including the underwing, whereas Sparrowhawk look much duller due to broader barring and buffer background tones. Both species have white undertail coverts, but in Goshawks these are exceptionally long. Perched Goshawk when seen from the front can appear as a large white blob in the tree tops, suggesting a Wood Pigeon sunning itself, or even a white-morph Gyr Falcon (Vinicombe 2003). The colour of the upper body of adult Goshawks is quite different to that of adult Sparrowhawks. Adult males are grey, only a little darker than Wood Pigeons, and this contrast beautifully with the white, lightly barred under parts, and dark grey (almost black) crown and ear coverts with a broad white band in between (above the eye) (photo on previous page). These differences are accentuated because Scottish Goshawks derive almost entirely from birds introduced from Fennoscandia, which are both larger and greyer than central and southern European clines (Petty 2007, Petty in

press). In contrast, juvenile Goshawks have heavily streaked underparts, pale tips to the brown upper body coverts (photo below), and a slightly narrower 'hand' and comparatively longer tail than the adult (Forsman 1999). What is surprising in descriptions sent in for assessment is that most birds are aged as adult, although some are not aged at all. One would expect to receive descriptions of the very distinctive juvenile birds as these tend to wander furthest from their breeding strongholds, and are therefore more likely to occur in Argyll.

These notes highlight some of the important features to look out for if you encounter a potential Goshawk in Argyll, which hopefully may lead to more accepted records in the future. Good quality records will help us build up a better picture of the occurrence of this magnificent species in our region. Good luck!

Jim Dickson

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Right: An adult Goshawk showing the white, finely barred underparts. The long, white undertail coverts are just visible to the bottom right of the photo. ©Steve Petty

Left: A nestling Goshawk about ready to fledge. Note the heavily marked under parts with a buff background, and the dark brown upper covert feathers with light brown/buff tips. ©Steve Petty



This report is a selection from the sightings already published on the website. Records included are not necessarily of 'rarities' but may also relate to birds in unusual places or behaving in untypical ways. I have also included records from areas that are not normally well covered. In particular I would welcome more reports from Cowal, Kintyre and North Argyll. You can send them in by e-mail, post or telephone.

Despite the generally wet and windy weather this summer it has been a good season for scarce wildfowl on Tiree with breeding records for both **Gadwall** and **Pintail**. A beautiful drake **King Eider** was present off the west coast of Kintyre in May and June. It has also been a good year for breeding **Black-throated Divers** and an impressive number of confirmed **Little Grebe** breeding records were received, including several pairs in Cowal. **White-tailed Eagles** have bred for the first time on Jura and **Hen Harriers** produced at least two young in Appin. It seems to have been another good year for **Corn Crakes** with several records outwith the core areas and record numbers on Tiree. There have been several mid-summer records of **Curlew Sandpipers**, and **Pectoral Sandpipers** were found on Mull and Tiree. Two **Lesser Yellowlegs** were also reported and a **Baird's Sandpiper** was found on Tiree. A visitor to Jura found two **Dotterel** on a hill top in late July, which could represent a breeding record. The second impressive rarity of the summer was a **Whiskered Tern** seen at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 7th July. If accepted this will be a new species for the Argyll list.

Many visitors have been treated to close-up views of **Common** and **Arctic Terns** feeding in Oban Harbour this summer—an unusual phenomenon. **Stock Doves** are normally very difficult to see in Argyll. So the fact that there have been three records during this period, two of which were supported by photographs, is truly remarkable. The first rarity of the summer and another potential first for Argyll was a **Marsh Warbler** photographed singing (with typical full range of mimicry) on Tiree on 8th June.

Observers full names in brackets except: BA=Bill Allan, JB=John Bowler, TC=Tom Callan, PD=Paul Daw, JD=Jim Dickson, EJM=Eddie Maguire and SG=Stuart Gibson.

Wildfowl (and Gamebirds)

A pair of **Whooper Swans** was seen at a potential nesting site in Mid-Argyll on 11th May. What was presumably the same pair were seen on Loch Leacann, Mid-Argyll on 24th July. They didn't have any chicks with them, so we do not know whether they attempted to nest or not (Roger Broad). The only previous breeding records in Argyll are on

Recent Report Updates

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<http://www.argyllbirdclub.org>

On the home page 'click here for latest bird reports' takes you to straight to the most recent update. This page is updated every 7-10 days

Tiree. A pair of **Mute Swans** was seen with four very small young at the head of Loch Striven, Cowal on 21st May (TC). Near the Islandadd Bridge at Moine Mhor a **Mute Swan** was photographed carrying at least three very small young on her back on 10th June (Laurence Langan) and the pair of **Mute Swans** in the harbour at Tarbert, Kintyre were seen with five small cygnets on 11th June (photo below).

An early brood of nine **Shelduck** (just hatched) was at 'Stinky Hole', Campbeltown Loch on 10th May (EJM) and later, on 14th July, a pair of **Shelducks** at Balliemore, near Otter Ferry were accompanied by six large young (TC).

Two **Mandarin Ducks** were on the pond at the Hunter's Quay caravan park, Cowal on 23rd May (Ronnie Stokes). Three male **Wigeon** in breeding plumage at Ulva Lagoons (Loch Sween) on 17th June were unusual for the time of year (TC) and four drake **Wigeon** were new in at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 21st June (JB). A female **Gadwall** with a brood of nine, two-thirds grown ducklings was found at Loch Bhasapol, Tiree on 10th July—the first successful nesting here since 1989! They were still present on 31st July, but were accompanied by a second female **Gadwall** with a brood of three (JB). A pair of **Teal** at Loch Melldal-loch, Cowal had a brood of five young on 13th June (TC). A fledged brood of five **Pintails** was found on Tiree on 25th July (JB). This is always a rare breeding species in Argyll. A pair of **Garganey** was seen from the hide at Loch Gruinart, Islay on the afternoon of 6th May (James How) and a drake **Garganey** was on a pool near Heylipol Church, Tiree on 9th



Mute Swan in Tarbert Harbour on 31st May with five small cygnets getting a free ride!

All the cygnets survived. On 18 August they were full grown, but still with their parents.
©Steve Petty

Stop Press

The first Balearic Shearwater of the year at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory was seen on the morning of 5th August. It was followed by three on 18th August and one on 19th. A juvenile Little Gull was just off the point on 20th August (Eddie Maguire/John McGlynn).



Drake Garganey at Heylipol Church, Tiree on 9th May. ©John Bowler

May (photo above, JB).

A brood of seven young **Shovelers** was at Loch Bhasapol, Tiree on 5th June and three late **Goldeneyes** were seen at Loch Riaghain, with three broods of **Tufted Duck** totalling 23 ducklings on Loch Bhasapol, Tiree on 14th June (JB). A female **Greater Scaup** in non-breeding plumage was on Loch Gilp (towards Ardrishaig) on the afternoon of 15th June (JD). An **Eider** with five recently fledged ducklings was seen on Loch Gilp, near Ardrishaig, on the morning of 15th May. Much later in the season, two female **Common Eiders** with broods of young were at the head of Loch Feochan on 23rd July. One had a brood of two large young but the other still had three downy young (PD)

An adult **King Eider** arrived at the Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on the evening of 12th May and was promptly photographed (see photo on front cover of the June 2007 *Eider*). What was presumably the same returning individual was seen off Rhunahaorine Point, Kintyre on the morning of 24th May (EJM) and on 6th July (Tom Charman, SNH).

A female-type **Long-tailed Duck** was at the southern entrance to Dunstaffnage Bay, Mid-Argyll on 3rd May with 101 **Common Eiders** (83 males) (SG, BA). Counts of 85 **Red-breasted Mergansers** and 63 **Common Scoters** were made in the Sound of Gigha on 3rd July (JD, BA). A female **Red-breasted Merganser** with a brood of six ducklings was on Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 19th June (JB), another female was seen with two small young at Otter Ferry on 30th June (TC) and a third female was seen in the Add Estuary with seven ducklings on 8th July (Malcolm Chattwood). A female **Goosander** was seen with five young on the River Cur at the head of Loch Eck, Cowal on 5th June (Peter Woods).

A **Red-legged Partridge** was seen for a few days in late June at the edge of Lochgilphead Golf Course, near the hospital at the start of June (Douglas Niven per JD). A **Common Quail** calling on Colonsay on 15th June (David Jardine per JD) and one calling from arable field at Cornaigbeg, Tiree at 02.30hrs on 30 June were the only records so far this year (JB).

Reeve's Pheasants have not been reported before in Argyll. The males are spectacular birds with tails that can be over 1m long! Males were seen on several occasions in late April/early May 2006 near the head of Loch Striven, Cowal. On 8th May 2007 two males were seen in the same area fighting with a male Common Pheasant and a dead male

was picked up nearby, later the same day (Steve Petty). A male seen at Ballimore, Cowal, also on 8th May, was reportedly one of several released on the estate there in 2006. A female was in Tom's garden at Otter Ferry on 24th July (TC).

Seabirds – divers, grebes, shearwaters, herons etc. (and other seawatch species)

On 2nd May, two **Red-Throated Divers** in breeding plumage were on Loch Restil at the Rest and be Thankful (BA), a **Black-throated Diver** in full breeding plumage was on Loch Scridain, Mull (Brian Rains) and numbers of **Great Northern Divers** at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory peaked at 22 (EJM). Three **Black-throated Divers** in breeding plumage were seen performing the face to face 'circle dance' display on a hill loch near Inveraray on 9th June (PD). On 31st July, Roger Broad found two small **Black-throated Diver** chicks, seen previously at a site in Argyll, which had both survived and could leave the loch at any time. It is not often that both chicks of a brood survive to fledging in Argyll. It has turned out to be quite a good year for **Black-throated Divers** in the county with four chicks fledging, including one at a site where there has been no record of a chick in more than 25 years (Roger Broad, Laurence Langan)!

A summer-plumage **White-billed Diver** was reported near Staffa on 3rd May (Brian Rains) and John Bowler had great views from a Kayak of 18 **Great Northern Divers** in Hynish Bay, Tiree on 4th May—several were calling! Good views were had of a **Great Northern Diver** in breeding plumage off Keillmore, Loch Sween, Mid-Argyll on the afternoon of 12th May (Ian Hopkins *et al.*) and two **Great Northern Divers** seen in Loch na Keal, from Killiechronan on 15th May, included an adult in breeding plumage (SG, Shaun McCullagh).

Six **Little Grebes** in close proximity of one another (three pairs?) were on the Black Lochs (Kilvaree), near Oban together with a **Red-throated Diver** on 2nd May (SG, BA). A **Little Grebe** with two tiny young and a **Moorhen** were on the pond near Lerags, near Oban on 9th May (BA), a pair of **Little Grebes** were seen with four well feathered young near Millhouse, Cowal on 2nd June and another pair with at least two very small young were at Inveryne Farm, Cowal on 5th June (TC). **Little Grebes** also bred successfully on the flooded gravel pit at Benderloch, North Argyll (Robin Harvey) and an adult **Little Grebe** with well grown juveniles was seen on Ardencaple House loch, Seil, Mid-Argyll on 10th June (Stephen Welch). **Little Grebes** seem to be doing well in Cowal this year. Another brood of young (at least two chicks) was seen at the upper Powder Dam Loch (near Millhouse) on 19th June (TC), a pair with at least one young at Bishop's Glen, Dunoon and a second (replacement) clutch of three eggs were found at Knockdow, Cowal on 22nd June. The first brood had reportedly been killed by **Moorhens** and at least two young were there on 27th July (George Newall).

Birds seen in Argyll waters from the ferry from Oban to South Uist on 5th July included 92 **Manx Shearwaters** between Oban and Craignure, 7-8 rafts of auks in Sound of Mull of which were 90% **Razorbills** (c.450 -500 birds), a **Great Skua** at the north end of Sound of Mull, **Puffins** in

The Eider

ones and twos (total of about 30 birds), 15 **Storm Petrels** with **Manx Shearwaters** and auks at northern edge of Argyll Waters and a pale-phase **Arctic Skua** (2m from ferry handrail!) off Gott Bay, Tiree (BA, Anne-Lise Dickie).

A seawatch from Aird (north coast of Tiree) during 18.25–19.25hrs on 28th July in NW 4-5 winds with squalls produced two two **Sooty Shearwaters**, three **Storm Petrels**, 55 **Manx Shearwaters**, 250 **Gannets**, 90 **Razorbills**, 60 **Arctic Terns** and a single **Little Tern** (JB). The best daily count of **Manx Shearwaters** off Machrihanish Seabird Observatory so far was 450 flying south in 3h from 06.00hrs on 19th July. There was a big influx of **Shags** around Machrihanish from 15th July (500+ in the bay), and 450 flew north in 3h from 06.00hrs (EJM). Approximately 400 **Manx Shearwaters** were seen flying past Ardalanish Bay, Mull on 24th July (Tom Wells). Two **Storm Petrels** were seen between Staffa and Tiree on 20th June (JB) and the best daily count of **Storm Petrels** off Machrihanish Seabird Observatory so far was made on 27th July, with 14 in 8h (EJM).

The highest southerly movement of **Northern Gannets** off Machrihanish Seabird Observatory during the month was 330 in 4h from 06.00hrs on 26th July (EJM) and a high count of 77 **Shags** was made in the Sound of Iona, Mull on the same day (Tom Wells).

There was a spate of reports of a **Grey Heron** (or Grey Herons) visiting gardens at Tullochgorm, Minard, even one reported as a Crane(!), in late July/early August. One theory is that it/they may have been taking advantage of the large numbers of frogs and toads about in gardens at the time. None of the gardens has a pond (PD).

Raptors, rails etc.

A **Red Kite** was reported by a visitor (Rena Moore) near Claonaig, Kintyre on 19th July (per EJM). Four immature **White-tailed Eagles** seen soaring together briefly around Ben Hynish, Tiree on 2nd May must have been quite a sight (JB). Three adult **White-tailed Eagles** were seen at Killiechronan, Mull at 05.30hrs on 19th May (SG). A **White-tailed Eagle** sighted near Inverinan (Loch Awe), Mid-Argyll at approximately 12.30hrs on 7th June was probably an adult bird. It flew following the road towards the bridge and then away to the left behind the waterfall area calling as it went (Adrienne Watson). A pair of **White-tailed Eagles** that have been nesting on Jura this year produced two young. This, the first range extension south of Mull, has been eagerly awaited for many years (Stephen Welch, Roger Broad).

There were many reports of **Hen Harriers**, including male and female birds at Moine Mhor on several dates during the period (BA, Anne-Lise Dickie, JD, Lawrence Langan, Malcolm Chattwood), an adult male hunting on the edge of the forestry/farmland near to Ormaig, Mid-Argyll on 3rd May (Karl Pipes), a late bird at Balinoe, Tiree on 16th June (JB), a male at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 1st July (EJM), a male north of Tayinloan on 9th July (JD), a male hunting in the hills above Glen Lonan, Mid-Argyll on 11th July (PD) and a 'ringtail' at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 25th and 27th July (EJM).

In the late afternoon of 8th June a male **Hen Harrier** was seen over the summit at Goirtein Point (Loch Fyne), Cowal.

It was then met by the female and did a food pass. Almost immediately a male **Peregrine** appeared and battle commenced with all three participating. The male harrier then set off after the Peregrine, flying very straight and fast enough to catch up with the Peregrine and make passes at it. The Peregrine then landed on a rock only for the Harrier to climb to a considerable height before stooping (like a Peregrine) for a very close near contact. The Peregrine landed on another rock and the Harrier did a repeat stoop. The chase then passed from view. TC (the observer) said; he'd never seen anything quite like it before!

A family group of four **Hen Harriers** were seen at a site in Appin on 18th July. Two fledged young were standing on an old wall, and the male appeared at the crest of Appin Hill, calling, and up flew either another young or the female to whom he passed food. A wonderful sight as Mike says (Mike & Penny Gear)!

A description has been supplied for a **Northern Goshawk** seen at Benmore Lodge, Loch Ba, Mull on 12th June (Irene Boston per Alan Spellman). One or sometimes two, **Ospreys** were reported regularly fishing in the River Add at Moine Mhor and Loch Crinan (BA, JD, Malcolm Chattwood), and one was seen flying north over Ganavan near Oban on the evening of 30th May at 18.00hrs (SG) and another was seen near Gallachaille (Loch Sween) on 26th July (JD/BA).

Common Kestrel sightings include a female at Gallanach, Oban on 2nd May (SG/BA), a female nesting on the cliffs on the west coast of Seil Island, Mid-Argyll feeding two young on 10th June (Stephen Welch), a female and juvenile hunting in the hills above Glen Lonan, Mid-Argyll on 11th July (PD) and a female at the Add Estuary on 26th July (JD/BA).

An early **Merlin** was at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 22nd July (EJM), and a **Merlin** hunting Meadow Pipits at The Reef, Tiree on 31st July was the first of the autumn (JB). A **Peregrine Falcon** was seen flying over Oban Seil farm, Mid-Argyll on 12th June (Stephen Welch) and an adult was at the Add Estuary on 26th July (JD,BA).

A migrant **Corn Crake** was disturbed and put to flight by the farmer at West Parkfergus, The Laggan near Campbeltown on 3rd May (EJM). Many **Corn Crakes** were all over the island of Tiree by 4th May, with 100+ calling males (JB). A similar number were reported from Coll at the same time (Simon Wellock). A bird was heard calling during a visit to Eileach an Naoimh, one of the Garvellachs Islands, on 16th June (Ian Kemp), three have been heard on the McCormaig islands this year and one was briefly heard near Kilmartin, Mid-Argyll (per Andy Robinson). On Tiree, the island running total in mid-June was about 350 calling males (another record, JB). A **Corn Crake** was reported by several people calling near Hillside Farm, west of Campbeltown, from 11th July onwards (per EJM).

Moorhens have bred successfully on the flooded gravel pit at Benderloch, North Argyll. A second brood of five **Moorhen** chicks (same or different parents?) was seen on 9th June (Robin Harvey). Two juvenile **Moorhens** were at Ler-

ags pond, near Oban with a parent bird on 22nd June (BA).

Waders

A female **Oystercatcher** was sitting on six eggs at Otter Ferry on 8th June (see page 21). They were obviously two clutches of three! Although most **Oystercatcher** first clutches at Otter Ferry were lost for various reasons, a brood of three medium-sized young were seen there on 30th June (TC).

A **Little Ringed Plover** put in a brief appearance at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 21st July (if accepted this will be only the second record for Argyll since one was seen on Islay in May 1983). Twelve **Black-tailed Godwits** and 30 **Common Redshanks** were also present (EJM).

A pair of **Ringed Plovers** with brood of two young was seen at Otter Ferry on 5th June (TC) and three pairs were found on Ledaig beach, North Argyll on 22nd June, including a nest with three eggs in Marram Grass. Also present were a **Dunlin** in breeding plumage, two **Curlews** and a female **Turnstone** (BA/SG).

Two **Dotterel** were found on a hill top north of the Paps on Jura at 500m on 26th July. They appeared to be in non-breeding plumage and could have been an adult and juvenile (Andrew Westwood). Given the date, the fact that **Dotterel** as autumn passage migrants are unusual in Argyll and that breeding was suspected on Islay in 1990, there is at least a possibility that this represents a breeding record.

A count of 60 **Sanderling** at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 18th July was the maximum for the month (EJM) and four adult **Sanderling** at Ardanish Bay, Mull on 25th July were still in breeding plumage (Tom Wells).

Large numbers of waders about on Tiree on 28th May included at least four **Little Stints** with 525 **Dunlin**, 540 **Ringed Plover** and five **Sanderling** at Loch a' Phuill in the evening as well as 460 **Sanderling** and 185 **Dunlin** at Balephetrish Bay (JB). The 30th May was a red-letter day for waders on Tiree. A **Pectoral Sandpiper** was located feeding on its own on a blanket bog pool and a **Baird's Sandpiper** (a first for the island) was feeding, also on its own, on the machair close to Loch a' Phuill. Two **Curlew Sandpipers** (one in breeding plumage) were also at Loch a' Phuill (photo opposite). The **Baird's Sandpiper** was still at there on 31st May (JB). Another **Pectoral Sandpiper** was seen and photographed at Uisken beach, Mull on 6th June (photo, top of next column), together with two breeding-plumaged **Curlew Sandpipers** (Bob Hastie). On 14th May a single **Curlew Sandpiper** was at Traigh Ghrianaidh, Tiree. It was still there on 15th and 16th May. Another single **Curlew Sandpiper** (in mostly red plumage) was with a handful of **Dunlin** at Miodar, Tiree on 5th June (JB). Two **Curlew Sandpipers**, both in full breeding plumage, were at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree with 70 **Dunlin** and a single **Greenshank** on the evening of 26th June (JB).

A high count of 750 **Dunlin** was made at Clachan, Tiree on 6th May and a big passage of **Dunlin** took place on Tiree on 8th May—100s on the machairs and ploughed fields, plus a group of 450 at Vaul Bay. A total of 555 **Dunlin** were counted at Loch a' Phuill on 14th May (JB). A total of 80



Top: Pectoral Sandpiper At Uisken, Mull on 6 June. ©Bob Hastie

Opposite: Curlew Sandpiper at Loch a' Phuill on 30 May. © Bill Allen



Dunlin were on the two main beaches on Iona on 21st May together with a single **Whimbrel**, 25 **Ringed Plovers** and nine **Sanderling** (BA/Anne-Lise Dickie).

Surprising numbers of waders were still at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 16th June including 79 **Dunlin**, 70 **Redshank**, 45 **Ringed Plovers** and one **Black-tailed Godwit**. A late flock of 34 **Sanderling** were at Traigh Bhagh, Tiree on 18th June (JB). At least 50 **Dunlin** at Otter Ferry on 16th July were the first 'autumn' arrivals, with some, if not all, in partial breeding plumage (TC) and a count of 50 **Dunlin** at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 17th July was the maximum for the month (EJM).

Among waders found during a WeBS count and mowing survey on Tiree on 25th July were a single **Ruff**, six **Knot**, four **Black-tailed Godwits**, six **Greenshanks**, six **Turnstones**, one **Sanderling** and 82 **Dunlin** at Loch a' Phuill, and 20 **Black-tailed Godwits** and four **Bar-tailed Godwits** at Gott (JB).

A **Woodcock** was roding at Killiechronan, Mull at 04.00hrs on 19th May (SG), and a nearly fledged Woodcock chick was seen crossing the road north of Tayvallich, Mid-Argyll on 14th July (BA).

Three **Bar-tailed Godwits** were in Loch Gilp at lunch-time on 24th July (JD) and six **Whimbrel** were at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory the same day (EJM). In common with many parts of Argyll and the Clyde basin, **Whimbrel** were present in large numbers at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory in May. About 300 birds were logged in early May with a peak of 160+ on 3rd May (EJM). On Tiree there were 37 **Whimbrel** at The Reef, on 5th May, 25 at Balephetrish on 7th May, scattered groups of up to 15 (with three **Black-tailed Godwits**) at Crossapol on 8th May and 26 at The Reef on 14th May (JB). Tayinloan (Kintyre) had seven on

The Eider

6th May, with 33 a few days previously (Katie Pendreigh). Three **Whimbrel** were seen at Killiechonan, Mull on 15th May together with a pair of **Ringed Plovers** displaying in song flight (SG/Shawn McCullagh) and a flock of 16 **Whimbrel** were flying over Lochgilphead at lunchtime on 19th May, heading towards the Add Estuary (JD).

Waders at the Add Estuary on 10th July included 45 **Curlews**, 26 **Oystercatchers** and two adult **Black-tailed Godwits** (JD) and a total of 36 **Curlews** were at Heylipol, Tiree (JB). A single **Greenshank** was at the Add Estuary on the morning of 22nd June and another **Greenshank** was there on 13th July (JD). Seven **Greenshank**, three **Whimbrel** and three **Bar-tailed Godwits**, were at Lochdon, Mull on 23rd July (Tom Wells).

A **Lesser Yellowlegs** was seen from the hide at Loch Gruinart, Islay on the afternoon of 6th May, together with two **Ruffs** (James How). A second **Lesser Yellowlegs** was reported with **Common Redshank** and **Curlew** at Croig, Mull at lunch-time on 3rd June (Peter Thompson per Alan Spellman).

A displaying pair of **Common Sandpipers** was on the loch-side near Blarcree, North Argyll on 10th May (SG,BA) and five pairs of **Common Sandpipers** were displaying in the Killiechonan area of Mull on 15th May (SG, Shawn McCullagh). A **Common Sandpiper** was seen with four young along the River Cur at the head of Loch Eck, Cowal on 5th June (Peter Woods).

Skuas, gulls, terns and auks

An adult pale-phase **Pomarine Skua** was seen from the Oban to Craignure ferry at approximately 13.00hrs on 19th May (Phil Woollen) and on 30th May two flocks of 16 Pomarine Skuas and a lone bird (33 birds in all) were seen flying north through the Sound of Luing in one hour. They included three dark-morphs, and a pale-morph **Arctic Skua** was also seen (Richard Else).

The first **Arctic Skuas** of the year were four passing through Hynish Bay on 6th May (JB). Further sightings included a single dark-morph flying south past Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 13th May (EJM), a pale-morph bird seen from Oban to Craignure ferry on 17th May, and three (two dark and one light morph) seen from the ferry NE off Colonsay the same evening (Phil Woollen), two dark-phase **Arctic Skuas** and a **Great Skua** seen from the 09.50hrs Mull-Iona ferry on 18th May. An **Arctic Skua** was at Loch Riaghain on 24th June (JB). Five **Arctic Skuas** were heading north (towards Jura?) off Rhunahaorine Point, Kintyre on 26th June (BA) and five more seen from Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 5th July, where around 30 were seen in all during July (EJM). A single **Great Skua** was in Gott Bay, Tiree on 12th May (BA, Anne-Lise Dickie). Further singles were seen on Tiree on 3rd, 4th and 24th June and two were at Loch Riaghain on 25th July (JB). A pair of **Great Skuas** were on territory on the Isle of Staffa (on the evening of 20th June) with another just offshore (JB). Elsewhere, an early **Great Skua** flew south past Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 3rd July (EJM), singles were seen from the Oban–Tiree ferry on 6th and 12th July (Anne-Lise Dickie) and two were seen in Loch na Keal, Mull on 29th July (Tom Wells).

A first-summer **Little Gull** was found at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree in the drizzle on the afternoon of 14th May and a rather tatty first-summer bird was at the same location on 19th June to-



Top: A probable first-summer American Herring Gull at Loch Basapol, Tiree on 25 May. ©John Bowler

Middle: A dark-phase Arctic Skua at Machrihanish SBO on 19 June. ©Eddie Maguire

Bottom: A probable Yellow-legged Gull at Machrihanish SBO on 17 June. ©Eddie Maguire

gether with an all-white **Common Gull** (JB).

The first juvenile **Black-headed Gull** was seen at the Add Estuary, Mid-Argyll on 10th July and a build up of adult and first-summer birds in the area included 35 in the Add Estuary/Loch Crinan and 15 in Loch Gilp (JD). A presumed first-summer **American Herring**

Gull showing the full suite of characters for *smithsonianus* was at Loch Bhasapol, Tiree on the afternoon of 25th May—it was feeding on a dead Greylag Goose (photo on previous page, JB). On 17th June, a probable *richahellii* **Yellow-legged Gull** was photographed at Machrihanish, Kintyre (photo on previous page, Eddie McGuire per JD). Second-year **Iceland Gulls** were reported on Tiree, and at Campbeltown Harbour and Loch Gilp through May and early June (JB, Calle Ljungberg, EJM). Much more unusual was one at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 7th and 11th July (JB). **Iceland Gulls** in Argyll in July or August are rare, the last such record being in 1996. A first-summer **Glaucous Gull** was at Salum, Tiree on 2nd June and an apparent **Great Black-backed/Glaucous Gull** hybrid at Sandaig was photographed by visiting birders (JB).

Up to eight **Little Terns** had returned to last year's breeding site on the west coast of Kintyre on 7th May. They were present throughout May and June and up to 20 were counted on 15th July (Katie Pendreigh, EJM, JD, BA). At least 30 **Little Terns** were in Gott Bay, Tiree on 14th May (BA, Anne-Lise Dickie) and this has been a bumper year for this species on Tiree. Some 60 chicks fledged from two sites—the best season for 15 years.

An adult **Whiskered Tern** was seen for an hour or so mid-morning on 9th July at c.200m on the rocks at the tern colony off Machrihanish village and later in flight (EJM). If accepted this will be a new species for the Argyll list. One was reported in Cumbria on 20th June so this could be the same bird (JD).

Unusual numbers of **Sandwich Terns** have been seen at Machrihanish this summer. Up to five were present at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory in May (EJM) and a flock of 45 was roosting in Machrihanish Bay on 5th July (EJM). Other **Sandwich Tern** sightings included two at Rhunaharine, Kintyre on 16th July, one at Sorobaidh Bay, Tiree on 26th July (JB) and six (four adults and two juveniles) at Kirn near Dunoon on 27th July (George Newall).

The first **Arctic Tern** appeared at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 26th April (EJM) and the first two **Common Terns** reported this year were on Loch Feochan, nr Oban on 2nd May (BA). Two **Arctic Terns** were at Traigh Bhagh, Tiree on 3rd May with six **Little Terns**, and 40 **Arctic Terns** were sheltering on rocks at Balephetrish Bay on 6th May (JB). Two first-summer **Arctic Terns** (very unusual here) were at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree with the breeding adults on 16th June (JB). A first-summer **Common Tern** at Loch an Eilein, Tiree on 21st June was the first of the year here and an adult **Common Tern** was at Gott Bay the same day (JB). Tiree's **Arctic Terns** seemed to falter this year, with many colonies being abandoned. However five pairs of **Common Terns** were late-nesting at one site (JB).

A quick visit to Loch Gilp at lunch time on 11th July found 27 'Commic Terns' (JD). The first juvenile **Arctic Tern** was seen at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 14th July. The local tern colony at Machrihanish village did well this year with six pairs of **Common Terns** and 20 pairs of **Arctic Terns** (EJM). Around 60 passage **Common Terns** were resting in Machrihanish Bay on 27th July along with 25 **Arctic**

Terns, including two first-summer birds (EJM).

An adult **Roseate Tern** was heard calling several times at Machrihanish on 11th May and was then located just off the Observatory with a loose group of foraging **Sandwich** (six) **Arctic** (20) and **Common Terns** (two). All birds drifted off slowly to the south. **Roseate Terns** are one of the rarest seabirds in the UK and a major rarity in Argyll (EJM).

At least 170 **Common Guillemots** were in Loch Fyne on 3rd July and 16 or more **Little Terns** were at Rhunaharine Point (JD,BA). Six **Puffins** were seen from the ferry, between Colonsay and Scarba on 17th May (JD) and on 18th May a single **Puffin** flying south past The Lady Rock (from Oban-Craignure ferry) was the observer's first sighting of this species from this ferry (SG). A single **Puffin** was seen off the south coast of Islay from the Kennacraig-Islay ferry on 22nd July (Malcolm Chattwood).

Oban Harbour terns

In Oban at lunch-time on 17th June a number of terns were fishing in the harbour, up to about ten at a time and mostly **Arctic** but with at least two **Common Terns**. They were fishing furiously and the water near the North Pier was 'boiling' with fish at times. Some were seen coming up with small fish (Sand Eels?) and then flying off to the NW. They sometimes flew past quite close to the pier giving an excellent opportunity to hone one's skills at separating the two species. Seeing the two species together the longer tail streamers on Arctic were quite striking (PD). Stuart Gibson remarked at the time that to see terns in the harbour was very unusual and that they had been around for the previous week. He saw them there feeding frequently throughout June and much of July. Where they had come from and where they might have been going remained a mystery until we went to the fount of all knowledge regarding terns in the area and Clive Craik reported as follows.

"The Ganavan colony (mainly **Arctic Terns**) sadly lost all their first chicks when small. They relaid, but so late that there was little hope of any fledging (see below for likely reason). The **Common Terns** in Oban Harbour are coming from a strong Loch Etive colony. As there are few Sand Eels or clupeids locally this year, they are flying in flocks to Oban Harbour. You can see groups of five, ten or more flying over Connel Bridge, past Saulmore Peninsula, and round Dunstaffnage Castle. Some of these fly across land at Dunbeg peninsula (all unusual). They seem to be bringing mainly small Pollack to the chicks, which are not doing badly. Overall, many **Arctic Terns** have failed locally this year, apparently because of food shortage (clupeids/Sand Eels) in at least some cases. **Common Terns** are stronger and deeper-diving and can exploit gadoids more easily, although they are having to fly fair distances to find them (as from up Loch Etive to Oban Harbour). The biggest and best colony is at Loch Melfort (350 pairs of mainly **Common Terns** are doing well). Also large numbers are in Sound of Mull, but mink are a problem there".

There were often two dozen or more terns in the harbour and the majority were usually **Common Terns**. However, the maximum count of 41 birds, in the late afternoon of 4th July, included a minimum of 40% **Arctic Terns**. It was interesting to note the increased number of **Arctic Terns**,

The Eider

which proved that there were more birds involved than individual counts might suggest. Just two **Common Terns** were in Oban harbour at lunchtime on 31st July (SG).

Doves, owls, woodpeckers etc.

Five **Rock Doves** were seen at Killiechronan, Mull on 15th May and three **Cuckoos** were calling in the area (SG/Shawn McCullagh).

A **Stock Dove** visiting a garden near Slockavullin in early July was photographed. It was feeding on seeds and nuts dropping from bird feeders on an apple tree (Brian John). By an amazing co-incidence another **Stock Dove** was seen a few days later (photographed on 11th July) in a club member's garden. This time it was at Rhugarbh Croft, Appin, North Argyll and was even more remarkable as this is the first record of **Stock Dove** in North Argyll since November 1985 (Mary Gregory)! Both birds were also seen subsequently and the reddish bill, a key feature in distinguishing Stock Doves from Rock Dove and Feral Pigeon when on the ground, was very noticeable. It is unusual enough to see a Stock Dove in Argyll let alone get pictures! (PD). To complete an excellent month for this scarce Argyll species, a **Stock Dove** was seen near Inverchaolain Church, Loch Striven, Cowal on 27th July (George Newall).

A **Wood Pigeon** at Balephuill, Tiree on 4th May was noteworthy. They are just about annual visitors on Tiree. Further singles were seen on Tiree on 5th and 19th June (JB). A **Turtle Dove** was been reported in a garden at Dervaig Road, Tobermory, Mull for some days during the third week of June (Sandra Davies per Norman Storie, RSPB).

A **Common Cuckoo** was at Carnan Mor, Tiree on 12th May (JB). A rufous-morph female **Cuckoo** was seen near Loch Nant, Mid-Argyll on 6th June (PD) and another rufous-morph bird (female, definitely not a juvenile) was seen from the garden at Lagganmore in Glen Euchar, near Oban on 3rd July (BA). A **Cuckoo** seen twice at Dalmally Golf Course, Mid-Argyll on 17th June was apparently resident near there (Robin Harvey). Another was seen repeatedly (not calling at all) at Rhugarbh Croft, Appin, North Argyll over a period of ten days in the latter part of June (Mike Gear) and a late bird was at Kilbride Farm, near Millhouse, Cowal on 25th July (TC).

A roosting **Tawny Owl** was found during the day and photographed, near the shore at Ballimore, Cowal on 14th May (TC). Two reports have been received of nesting pairs of **Long-eared Owls** (always a notable event in Argyll). One pair was at Ardfarn, Mid-Argyll and another was on Seil Island. Both pairs had young during the first week of May (Clive Craik, R & L Grant per SG). Just before dusk on 8th July a young **Long-eared Owl** was flying around just behind a cottage at Balvicar, Seil, Mid-Argyll. It landed for a short while calling continually, before it flew off (Richard Wesley). This suggests that the breeding pair on Seil reported earlier in the year raised at least one young successfully (PD). A pair of **Short-eared Owls** along the Grass-point Road, Mull and one by the railway at Torosay, on 10th June, were among very few reports of the species on Mull, or elsewhere in Argyll, this year (Andy Oldacre & Alan Schofield per Alan Spellman).

The first **Common Swift** of the year was seen early on 6th



A pair of Stock In Brian John's garden at Slochavullin in early July. ©Brian John

May as it scythed its way through the air at Glencruitten, Oban (SG). The first **Swifts** over Campbeltown appeared on 7th May, with 15 on 13th May (EJM). Two were over Combie Street, Oban at noon on 11th May. This was nearly a week since the first sighting of the year in Oban, so a delayed arrival this spring (SG). In the afternoon of the same day two more were feeding frantically (scaring the Swallows and Sand Martins) on the Euchar River, near Oban, and five minutes later three were bombing about over the Feochan River, head of Loch Feochan (BA). Further sightings included one at Bridgend near Lochgilphead on 13th May (Sue Chattwood, M Chattwood), at least three over Benderloch, North Argyll on 22nd May (Mary Gregory), two over the Add Estuary on 2nd June (JD), four in Glen Lonan, Mid-Argyll on 16th June (Stephen Welch) and two flying south over Tullochgorm, Minard, Mid-Argyll on 5th July (PD). There was a suggestion that some youngsters could have been on the wing in Oban on 15th July. Numbers there had begun to increase sharply, with 33 counted over the High Street, Oban at 21.00hrs (SG).

Passerines

Breeding Records

Two recently fledged **Robins** were in a garden at Cornaigbeg, Tiree on 5th June—the first confirmed breeding on the island since the late 1990s (JB). Early fledged young included **Blackbirds** in Oban on 1st May, a young **Robin** in Campbell Crescent, Oban on 7th May (SG), **Siskin** juveniles in the garden at Tullochgorm on 7th May and a fledged brood of four **Stonechats** at Baugh, Tiree on 8th May (JB). The first **Barn Swallow** eggs hatched at Otter Ferry on 1st June (TC), a male **Northern Wheatear** was seen feeding at least one recently fledged young at Easdale, Seil Island on 10th June (Stephen Welch) and a **Treecreeper** at Ballimore, near Otter Ferry, was feeding approximately four recently fledged young on 14th June (TC). A pair of **Great Tits** was nesting in a traffic cone with the top sawn off at the Laboratory at Dunstaffnage on 22nd June (Robin Harvey) (see article on page 8).

A pair of **Great Spotted Woodpeckers** and two young were in a garden at Glenbranter on 23rd June (Peter Woods). A male and a female **Common Crossbill** with at least four juveniles were present in a tree at Otter Ferry on 3rd July. It seems likely that there were more in the area as much



Sky Lark (left) and Twite (right) on Colonsay in May.
©Jim Dickson



evidence found of cones (Japanese/Hybrid Larch and Sitka Spruce) from which, virtually without exception, all the seeds have been removed (TC).

A pair of **Barn Swallows** was seen feeding young in a nest fixed on steelwork of the sea lock gate of the canal at Crianan on 8th July, i.e. a mobile nest (Malcolm Chattwood)! Recently fledged **Common Whitethroats** were seen at Islandadd Bridge, Moine Mhor on 16th July (BA) and two adult **Garden Warblers** were seen taking food to a nest at Loch Peallach, Mull on 29th July (Tom Wells). There are very few recent records of **Garden Warblers** on Mull, but they may simply be overlooked (PD).

Other passerine reports

A **Sand Martin** colony at Millhouse, Cowal had approximately 60 active burrows, and around 80 **Sand Martins** were feeding over Loch Melldalloch, Cowal on 13th June (TC). **House Martins** were seen at Hynish and Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 11th May (JB). At least seven **House Martins** were flying around the house at Otter Ferry, Cowal on 20th May and by 17th June, five pairs were nesting there, a fourth nest having just been completed and a fifth nest just started (TC).

Tree Pipits were reported singing in May from Bonawe, North Argyll (SG/BA), near Otter Ferry (TC), Killiechronan, Mull (Shaun McCullagh), near Auchindrain, Mid-Argyll (PD) and at Ganavan, Bay, near Oban (SG). Numbers of **White Wagtails** at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory this spring peaked at 30+ on 4th May (EJM).

Two singing **Common Redstarts** were at Inion and two more at Ardchattan (both on the north shore of Loch Etive) on 3rd May (SG/BA). A female **Redstart** was seen near Glenbranter, Cowal on 23rd June (Peter Woods) and a juvenile was seen near the lake in Glen Lonan, Mid-Argyll on 23rd July (PD). Two pairs of **Whinchats** were present just east of Otter Ferry on 1st May. At least three pairs were in the area by mid May together with three or more pairs of **Common Stonechats** (TC). The male of the local **Whinchat** pair at Lagganmore, near Oban arrived back on 10th May (1st May last year) (BA).

An influx of Greenland-type **Wheatears** took place on Tiree in murky conditions on 4th May, with 15 in the Heylipol/Balinoe area alone (JB). The influx was also noted on Coll, with 40+ at Breachacha the same morning. A flock of ten **Mistle Thrushes** were flushed from the road between Ot-

ter Ferry and Glendaruel, Cowal on 26th July (TC).

A **Marsh Warbler** was singing its head off from bushes in the garden next to the Tiree RSPB Office at Balephuill on the afternoon of 8th June. The song was almost entirely mimicry including snippets of the songs of Blue Tit, Blackbird, Nightingale, Goldfinch, plus other less familiar species. The bird was also photographed (John Bowler). If confirmed this will be yet another Tiree first for Argyll. It was still present there the following morning.

Two **Sedge Warblers** and a **Grasshopper Warbler** were heard from the office window at Balephuill, Tiree on 1st May (JB) and a **Sedge Warbler** was singing at Bunessan, Mull on 2nd May (Brian Rains). **Grasshopper Warblers** were still 'reeling' at Glencruitten Drive, Oban on 14th July (SG), at Auchindrain, near Inveraray on 15th July (PD) and at Cairnbaan, Mid-Argyll on 24th July (JD). Two **Garden Warblers** were seen singing within 25m of each other at Tullochgorm, Minard on 11th May (PD). **Blackcaps** are obviously partial to soft fruit. Females were seen feeding on Raspberries in gardens at Tullochgorm, Minard and at Otter Ferry in mid-July (TC, PD).

In the Oban area on 2nd May, a **Chiffchaff** was singing at Dunbeg (Jane Road), **Blackcaps** were in song at Glenshellach and Gallanach, near Kerrera ferry, a pair of **Common Whitethroats** was at Glenshellach with a singing male at Glencruitten (Rare Breeds Park), a **Grasshopper Warbler** was reeling at Glenshellach, two **Sedge Warblers** were singing at Gallanach Beg with two more singing at the Black Lochs, Kilvaree (SG, BA).

On Colonsay, three **Blackcaps** and at least two **Chiffchaffs** were singing around Colonsay House grounds/gardens on 12th May and three **Grasshopper Warblers** were singing near Mid Loch Fada (JD). Birds seen/heard in the Killiechronan area of Mull on 15th May included **Tree Pipit** (two singing/displaying males), **Common Stonechat** (two pairs with fledged broods of one and three), **Grasshopper Warbler** (reeling male), **Sedge Warbler** (six singing, including one male impersonating Common Sandpiper, along shore of Loch na Keal), **Common Whitethroat** (three singing), **Blackcap** (two territories), **Goldcrest** (minimum of three territories), **Long-tailed Tit** (one pair), **House Sparrow** (small colony, Killiechronan House area), **Goldfinch** (singing), **Linnet** (one to two pairs present), **Lesser Redpoll** (one to two present) and **Common Crossbill** (six including one male) in a small copse of Scot's Pine, suggestive of a family party (SG, Shaun McCullagh).

The Eider

A **Common Whitethroat** at Carnan Mor on 5th May was the first of the spring on Tiree and one was singing at Balephuil on 21st June. Generally, they do not breed on the island (JB). Very few **Wood Warblers** were reported during the summer. The only records being (in North Argyll), from Bonawe and Ardchattan Priory (SG, BA) and near the Sea Life Centre, where one was seen attending a nest on the bank of a mossy ditch on 11th June (Stephen Welch). In Mid-Argyll, birds were singing at Inveraray Castle and Minard Woods (PD).

An early **Spotted Flycatcher** was flycatching in the grounds of Inveraray Castle on 1st May (PD). Encouragingly for this nationally declining species, birds were widely reported during the summer including at Killiechronan, Mull on 19th May (SG), on Tiree in late May and early June (JB), the Rare breeds Centre, Oban on 13th June (Stephen Welch), two pairs on territories near Glenbranter, Cowal on 17th June (Peter Woods), three territories at Ardchattan, North Argyll on 29th June (BA), singles at Otter Ferry on 2nd July (TC), Glen Euchar near Oban on 14th July (BA) and near Strachur House, Cowal on 23rd July (Peter Woods). Two adult **Spotted Flycatchers** were feeding four young at Loch Beg, Mull on 24th July (Tom Wells).

Two **Pied Flycatchers** were singing at Ardchattan-Bonawe, North Argyll on 3rd May (SG, BA) and a female Pied Flycatcher was seen briefly, flycatching, at Skipness, Kintyre on 11th June (PD). A large party of 41 **Long-tailed Tits** was threading its way through the Alders on the side of Loch Awe in front of Blarghour Farm accompanied by the usual **Treecreeper** on 4th June (Richard & Delys Marks). An adult male **Red-backed Shrike** was reported along the road to Grasspoint, Mull being pestered by Willow Warblers, Chaffinch and Meadow Pipits on 11th June (Alison Borlase per Alan Spellman).

A **Jay** that had been visiting a garden near Slockavullin was photographed for the first time on 4th July. They are sometimes heard in the nearby Poltalloch woods, but rarely seen because they are usually so elusive (Brian John). A total of 44 **Rooks**, including a few juveniles, at Drum Cottage, Kilfinan, Cowal on 13th June was unusual for this area (TC). A **Common Starling** on the bird table at Tullochgorm, Minard on 26th May was the first seen in the garden since April 2004 (PD)! A flock of 85 **Starlings** was seen at Fidden on 24th July (Tom Wells).

Two pairs of **Linnets** were at Moine Mhor on 8th May. Two more pairs were at Ardfarn, Mid-Argyll as well as a male **Lesser Redpoll** (BA). Many **Lesser Redpolls** were in the Cairnbaan, Mid-Argyll area on 13th July with one or two birds dotted around in several places, and six **Linnets** were at the Add Estuary (JD). The first flock of **Twite** (ten birds)

arrived at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 23rd July (EJM). A flock of 40 **Twite** at Ardanish Bay, Mull on 25th July included several young birds being fed by adults (Tom Wells). A female **Common Crossbill** in a garden at Balemartine, Tiree had arrived on 11th June and been attacked by a cat the previous night. It recovered though and flew off on 14th June (JB). A male **Bullfinch** was singing in a garden at Otter Ferry, Cowal on 19th May and seen carrying food for young at Otter Ferry on 6th June (TC). A male and female **Reed Bunting** were on *Phragmites* stalks at the Black Lochs, Lorn on 6th July (Angus Blair).

Other sightings

An **Orca** (Killer Whale) was seen in Gunna Sound on 11th May (JB). Very close views were had of a **Minke Whale** breaching alongside the ferry between Gigha and Islay on 26th June (Anne-Lise Dickie), and one was seen blowing off Goirtein, Loch Fyne on 1st July (TC). A **Basking Shark** was in Gott Bay, Tiree on 12th May (BA, Anne-Lise Dickie), and big numbers were about around Tiree in June e.g. 24 in Hynish Bay on 17th June and 38 off Sandaig on 9th June (JB). Another was seen off Coll Pier from the ferry on 5th July (Anne-Lise Dickie).

The 23rd June was a good day for **Otters**. Peter Woods saw one along the River Cur at the head of Loch Eck and Tom Callan had the good fortune to watch a probable female with two well grown young for an hour near Otter Ferry, being fed on fish and playing together. A **Red Squirrel** was seen running up through the Corran Halls car park in Oban on 11th May (BA).

Orange-tip butterflies were seen at Largiemore near Otter Ferry, Cowal on 30th April (TC) and flying along the Crinan Canal on 8th June (PD). A good early summer for **Painted Lady** butterflies. There was a big influx of **Painted Lady** butterflies on Tiree from 9th June (JB), two were in the garden of Oban Seil Farm on 9th June, they were present Ardenaple House Loch, Seil Island, and Ardfad quarry pools on 10th June (Stephen Welch). One or more **Painted Lady** butterflies and a **Cinnabar Moth** were seen at Otter Ferry 10th June (TC). Two **Painted Lady** butterflies were seen in the garden at Tullochgorm, Minard on 11th June (PD) and twelve were in grassland near Ledaig beach on 22nd June (BA,SG). A single **Scotch Argus** butterfly seen at Otter Ferry, Cowal on 23rd July was the first reported this year. On the whole the larger summer butterflies have been few in number so far. Something to do with the weather possibly (TC)?!

Paul Daw

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Titbits



Large Oystercatcher clutch: Tom Callan took this photograph of an Oystercatcher's nest with six eggs at Otter Ferry, Cowal in June 2007. Clutches of this size are unusual. The normal clutch size is 3-4 eggs. Individual females tend to lay eggs of a similar colour and size, and if you look closely at the photo, there appears to be at least two egg patterns in the clutch. Thus, this clutch may well be the work of two females. Interestingly, Tom found a similar clutch of five at the same location in 2005, which was also probably the work of two females (Eider, September 2005, page 3).

Sparrowhawk foraging in garage: One day in July, Mike and Jane Mitchell from Millhouse, Cowal found a lot of feathers in their garage. Most were from a small bird, but there was one larger one (photo below), which was later identified as a primary feather moulted by a male Sparrowhawk. The smaller feathers were from an adult Swallow. Apparently, the Sparrowhawk had entered the garage through a side door, the main doors being closed. It had killed at least one of the adults and plucked it on a rafter furthest away from the door. The Swallow's nest had contained at least two large chicks, and these had disappeared, although one was later found dead on the floor.



Tit Rescue: The photo shows a Coal Tit fledgling that Peter Staley rescued from drowning in his water butt. It then perched on his finger and seemed reluctant to leave its saviour!



Programme for the ABC's Autumn Meeting Saturday 10th November 2007 Cairnbaan Hotel, near Lochgilphead

Time	Session
0930	Doors open, coffee and tea
0950-1000	Welcome and introduction— <i>Nigel Scriven</i> (Chairman)
1000-1015	Recent bird sightings— <i>Paul Daw</i> (Argyll Bird Recorder)
1015-1115	Bean Geese in Scotland— <i>John Simpson</i>
1115-1145	Coffee/tea
1145-1230	Antarctica— <i>John Anderson</i>
1230-1245	Putting Scotland's birds on the map— <i>Jacqui Kaye</i>
1245-1345	Lunch (available in the hotel)
1345-1415	AGM
1415-1500	Belarus— <i>David Kent</i>
1500-1545	Tea/coffee
1545-1630	Wildlife photography— <i>Philip Kirkham</i>
1630	End of meeting

Argyll Bird Club—Treasurer's Report for the Financial Year 2006-2007

The Argyll Bird Club had a surplus of £2011.53 in financial year 2006-07 (box opposite). This was mainly due to the club receiving substantial grant income (£3242) that will be used in developing our data handling expertise and facilities and in the production of the *Birds of Argyll* book. Our assets at the end of the year stood at £25,304.99, which represents by far the highest level in the club's history. Income from subscriptions was £2553.23, the highest on record, reflecting our buoyant level of membership as subscription levels have remained constant for many years. Income from bank interest increased due to the high balance in the account. Raffle income continues to be a useful offset to the cost of providing free coffees and teas at indoor meetings. A slowly increasing number of members taking the electronic *Eider* kept postage and photocopying costs down. Expenditure on public meetings can mostly be attributed to room hire and refreshment costs. The publication of a *Argyll Bird Report* added significantly to the expenditure this year. For the third year the club paid insurance to cover risks of field outings. A major area of expenditure this year has been in "data handling developments". This aspect of the club's activities is central to the club, involving electronic storage of bird observations in Argyll. The expenditure, which has been supported by our grants from SNH, involved training in use of various software packages, purchase of software and hardware and broadband facilities. All of this development is a very important aspect of the modernisation of bird recording, and puts the Argyll Bird Club into a very good position for future data handling. The high level of returned subscriptions resulted mainly from one member being debited the annual subscription every month until the Treasurer noticed this! We will very soon be spending much of our capital on the printing costs of the *Birds of Argyll*, and so future sets of accounts will not show the current high level of assets at end of year.

Bob Furness, 15 July 2007.

B. Zonfrillo certified from the vouchers/cash books and other information shown to him, that the balance sheet was accurate.

Accounts for the 22nd year of the Argyll Bird Club 16 April 2006—15 April 2007		
Income	2006/2007	2005/2006
Subscription	2553.23	2147.23
Sales	27.50	14.00
Bank Interest	387.84	225.03
Fees and advertising	0.00	23.50
Other (raffles, donations, etc)	252.00	233.00
Grants	3242.00	9950.00
Field Trips	160.00	0.00
Total	6622.57	12592.76
Expenditure		
Bird Report	1695.00	0.00
Newsletter photocopying	300.00	0.00
Postage	297.00	209.18
Bird Recorder expenses	54.92	94.93
Public meetings	640.65	538.24
Publicity	0.00	380.70
Data handling developments	1273.47	0.00
Insurance	110.00	100.00
Field Trips	120.00	0.00
Total	4611.04	1333.05
Surplus/Deficit for year	2011.53	11259.71
Brought forward	23293.46	12033.75
Assets at end of year	25304.99	23293.46

Minute of 21st Annual General Meeting of the Argyll Bird Club, held at the Cairnbaan Hotel on Saturday, 4 November 2006

1. Apologies: Lilly Cregeen, David Merry, Ian Teesdale and Richard Wesley.

2. Minutes of the AGM of 5th November, 2005: the chairman, David Wood, promoted the following change to the minute published in the September 2006 *Eider*. Item 10. AOB the section *Scottish Ornithologists' Club* should read 'David Merrie also reported on the departure from the SOC of their Centre Manager, Bill Gardner, who will be an enormous loss' rather than 'David Merrie also reported on the dismissal by the SOC...'. With this alteration being approved, the minutes were proposed by Michael Thomas and seconded by Nigel Scriven

3. Matters arising not covered in following items: None

4. Chairman's Report: David Wood informed the meeting that, while it had been a privilege and a pleasure to serve as Chairman over the last four years, he was now standing down, although was willing to continue to serve the club as a Committee Member. David thanked Paul Daw and those involved in working on the *Argyll Bird Report* and informed the meeting that while the 2002/2003 reports are now completed and going to press, work has already begun on the 2004/2005 reports. He commented on how impressed he is by the look and quality of the *Eider* and thanked Steve Petty for his work in

editing and producing such an excellent magazine, also thanking him for his continuing work on the club website and the updating of material.

The leaders of the field trips were thanked for organising such interesting and enjoyable outings on behalf of the club and members were encouraged to consider leading a trip in the future.

David reported the SNH grant for data handling had been mainly taken up and used to good effect in that Paul and his helpers now have a standardised format using Microsoft Excel which also can be

used by volunteers for entering their own bird records. As well as allowing a quicker publication of the report, this format will enable data to be committed to the NBN Gateway (one of the conditions of the grant) to be completed in the near future before the final uptake of grant money.

David thanked all those involved in producing the *Birds of Argyll* book, which has entailed an immense amount of dedicated time and effort, and is expected to be published in time for the spring, 2007 meeting.

5. Secretary's Report: Katie Pendreigh reported that the committee had met four times throughout the year, the main items discussed being the *Birds of Argyll* book, the *Argyll Bird Report* and the handling of bird records, as well as the organisation of programmes and venues for club meetings and field trips. She thanked John Anderson, the outgoing secretary, for his valuable help and attention to detail when handing over the position and his wife, Helen, for advice on minute taking, also Steve Petty for checking over the minutes and David Wood for his leadership as chairman and for keeping discussions at committee meetings focused and relevant.

6. Treasurer's Report: Bob Furness reported that the Statement of Accounts for the year 16th April 2005 to 15th April, 2006 could be found in the September, 2006 edition of the *Eider*. He informed members that the club's financial position was healthy. The grant money awarded for the publication of the *Birds of Argyll* would soon be spent. However, it was difficult to predict how many copies would be sold over the next 2–3 years and, therefore, what income would be generated.

Bob pointed out that the publishing of the *Argyll Bird Report* for two years in one volume reduced both publishing and posting costs and that increased costs owing to the new postal charges and thicker/heavier copies of the *Eider* may be offset somewhat by an increasing number of club members receiving their copy of the *Eider* by e-mail, thus saving on postage.

7. Membership Secretary's Report: Owing to the absence of his wife Sue, Bob Furness reported that membership remained the same as last year and that while there were over 200 membership subscriptions, a large proportion of those were family memberships and the actual number of members was thought to be about 300. Bob indicated that the number of members paying subscriptions by standing order had increased, which gave

the advantage of easier administration and fewer postage costs. Members were reminded of the excellent promotion leaflets produced by John Anderson and encouraged to check that stocks were still displayed and available in local venues such as Libraries and Tourist Centres etc. as it was thought they had served to increase membership.

8. Field Trips: A request was made for Ian Hopkins to lead another field trip on Bute, as the previous one had been enjoyed so much. He kindly agreed to organise this for next year. Also, by popular request, Paul Daw agreed to organise another field trip to Gigha, and in the light of the interesting presentation on Conserving Glasgow's Farmland Birds, given earlier in the day by Liz Parsons, it was widely requested that the club should organise a field trip to take in the relevant farms.

Nigel Scriven reported that he was unsure of the situation regarding Sanda Island, at this time, but is working to improve matters. The question was raised of resurrecting the trip to Tiree, which had been unable to go ahead this year owing to problems of accommodation and the timing of weekend ferries. It was pointed out that similar problems would be presented in arranging a weekend trip to Coll. However, local people on both islands were reported as being happy to help, and perhaps trips did not have to be restricted to weekends. A club field trip to Mull was suggested with the possibility of combining this with the Treshnish Islands, and it was suggested that school holiday times were best avoided in arranging visits to any of the islands.

Steve Petty put forward the suggestion of a club trip abroad, with northern Spain

and/or Extremadura being promoted. In order to allow enough time to test the commitment of members' interest and to organise such a trip, it was thought this would probably take place during 2008 rather than next year.

9. Election of Office Bearers and Committee Members: Paul Daw offered a vote of thanks to David Wood for his innovations, dedicated work and commitment to the club in carrying matters forward over the past four years and David stood down as Chairman. Nigel Scriven, being vice chairman, took over the proceedings and the following Office Bearers and Committee Members were elected.

Chairman: Nigel Scriven (for one year only) proposed by Bob Furness, seconded by Josie Wall/Michael Thomas.

Vice-Chairman: Tom Callan, proposed by Richard Allan, seconded by Steve Petty

Secretary: Katie Pendreigh, proposed by Nigel Scriven, seconded by John Anderson

Treasurer: Bob Furness, proposed by Michael Thomas/Angus Barclay, seconded by Paul Daw

Membership Secretary: Sue Furness, proposed by Josie Wall, seconded by Angus Barclay

Other Committee Members: Richard Allan (BTO representative), Roger Broad, Danielle Clark, Paul Daw (Argyll Bird Recorder), Ian Hopkins, Steve Petty (Editor of the *Eider*) and David Wood (outgoing Chairman) were proposed by Nigel Scriven, seconded by Robin Harvey.

10.AOCB: There being no further business the meeting was declared closed.

Katie Pendreigh, 17 November 2006

Agenda for the 22nd Annual General Meeting of the Argyll Bird Club

The AGM will be held at 13.45hrs on Saturday 10th November 2006 at the Cairnbaan Hotel, near Lochgilphead (see programme for the Autumn Meeting programme on page 21)

Agenda

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of 2006 Annual General Meeting
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 and nominations are invited (current officials are listed on the back page)
10. AOCB (please notify the Chairman before the meeting)

Katie Pendreigh, Secretary, 20th August 2007

Articles for the next issue of *The Eider* should
with the Editor before the 25th November
2007
See the box opposite for more information



Officials and Committee of the Argyll Bird Club (2006/2007)

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

Vice Chairman: Tom Callan, Corra, Otter Ferry, Tighnabruaich, Argyll, PA21 2DH (phone 01700 821212)

Secretary: Katie Pendreigh, The Whins, Ferry Road, Tayinloan, Argyll PA29 6XQ (phone 01583 441359)

Treasurer: Bob Furness, The Cnoc, Tarbet, Arrochar, Dunbartonshire G83 7DG (phone 01301 702603)

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

Committee: Richard Allan (Oban), Roger Broad (Killearn), Danielle Clark-De Bisschop (Colintraive), Paul Daw (Minard), Ian Hopkins (Bute), Steve Petty (Tighnabruaich) and David Wood (Bellanoch)

Editor of the Argyll Bird Report: Tom Callan (see vice-chairman above)

Editor of the Eider: Steve Petty (contact details on page 2)

ABC Website: <http://www.argyllbirdclub.org>

Argyll Bird Recorder

Paul Daw, Tigh-na-Tulloch, Tullochgorm, Minard, Argyll PA32 8YQ (phone 01546 886260 e-mail moned-ula@globalnet.co.uk)

BTO Regional Representatives in Argyll

Argyll South, Arran, Bute & Gigha: Richard Allan (phone 01852 300 359; e-mail richardallan@compuserve.com)

Argyll North, Mull, Coll, Tiree & Morvern: Sue Dewar (phone 01680 812594; e-mail sue@wingsovermull.com)

Islay, Jura & Colonsay: John Armitage (phone 01496 860396; e-mail jsa@ornquest.plus.com)

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

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

The *Eider* is published during the first weeks in March, June, September and December. Articles for each issue must be with the editor before the 25th day of the month prior to publication. However, it greatly helps if material can be submitted well before these deadline dates. Contributions are accepted in the order they are received, which may result in some late submissions being held over until the next issue.

Opinions expressed in articles are those of the author/s and not 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 and biological diversity.

The club endeavours to provide a friendly and sociable forum for members of all ages, to meet and enjoy their common interest. This in itself provides a challenge as the human population of Argyll is relatively small and widely dispersed. The club hosts two one-day meetings each year, in spring and autumn. The venue of the spring meeting is rotated between different towns, including Dunoon, Oban and Lochgilphead. The autumn meeting/AGM is held in a convenient central location, usually near Lochgilphead. The club organises field trips for members. It publishes the 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 indoor meetings. New members are always welcome, whether you live in Argyll or not. Membership categories and rates are:

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

Subscriptions are due on 1st January and can be paid by cheque or standing order. New members joining after 1st October are covered until the end of the following year. Further information can be obtained from the Membership Secretary (see the box opposite).