

December 2011
Number 98

The Eider



Brown Shrike photographed on Tiree by ©Jim Dickson

Scottish Birdwatchers' Conference

Field Trips and Reports

Recent Reports

Twite Movements Update: MSBO

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Mystery Bird– minus the head. See the back page to find out what it is.

Acknowledgements

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Tom Callan, Paul Daw, Jim Dickson, Bob Furness, Mike Harrison, Eddie Maguire, Brian Rains, Nigel Scriven, Agnes Stewart, Ian Teesdale

Editorial

Welcome to the December edition of the Eider. Well, the weather continues to provide a topic of conversation especially when the South East of Britain is suffering from severe drought and the Argyll rainfall seems set to break records for the amount having fallen this year. Unfortunately, this is due to the North Atlantic jet- stream hitting slightly further south than usual and coming up against anti-cyclonic weather over England. The renewable energy resources have at least benefitted from the windy weather with energy production up by at least 50 per cent on last year (the cynics will point out that renewable resources produced 30 per cent less than expected last year). The strong winds have also contributed to an exciting autumn for birders with; large numbers of seabirds passing the western seaboard , a scattering of rarities and an influx of rarer geese. Finally, the Spring meeting in 2012 is likely to be a very popular event as it is a joint event with the BTO and SOC. The full brochure and booking form can be found in this edition of the Eider so.....book early to avoid disappointment!!

Scottish Birdfair Announced For 2012

19 & 20 May are the dates announced for the first annual Scottish Bird-fair, to be held at Hopetoun House near Edinburgh. It is hoped to attract over 5000 birders and wildlife watchers.

There will be celebrity talks, demonstrations, exhibitions and trade stalls. Tickets are priced at £12 for the day (£10 concession), £20 2-day (£18 concession) and under-16 are free.

Volunteers are being sought for work prior to the event, for setting up and stewarding on the day (free entry benefit).

More details: www.scottishbirdfair.org.uk

Online Mammal Recording

Yes, it is the mammal equivalent of BirdTrack, although it's not called MammalTrack.

The Mammal Society are planning a National Mammal Atlas of Britain and British Islands.

To gather records they have set up an online recording system, developed with the Biological Records Centre.

For a direct link go to:

www.brc.ac.uk/mammals/recording.php

For more info on mammal recording:

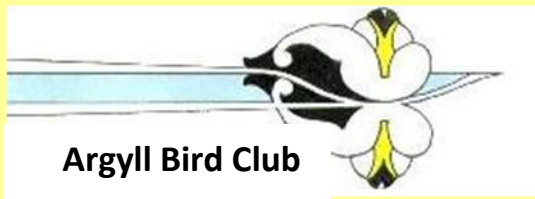
[www.mammal.org.uk/index.php?](http://www.mammal.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=357&Itemid=329)

[option=com_content&view=article&id=357&Itemid=329](http://www.mammal.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=357&Itemid=329)

Spring Indoor Meeting 2012

Our Indoor Meeting in the spring will be a joint Argyll Bird Club/BTO/SOC meeting. The excellent programme and a booking form are included in this Eider. Contrary to our normal club practice, **it is necessary to book in advance for this event.** Lunch will be provided as part of the booking fee. Members of Argyll Bird Club can book for a special fee of only £10 per person. If you would like to attend, please send your booking form and cheque/PO to Robin Anderson, BTO Scotland, School of Biological and Environmental Sciences, University of Stirling, Stirling FK9 4LA, **clearly marking the box on the booking form showing that you are an Argyll Bird Club member** so that you qualify for the reduced rate.

Joint ABC/BTO/SOC Spring Indoor Meeting Brochure and Programme



Scottish Birdwatchers' Conference

Saturday 17 March 2012
The Corran Halls, Oban, Argyll

Birds & Other Wildlife of the West Coast

Hosted by BTO Scotland, the SOC and Argyll Bird Club



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www.fssbirding.org.uk

Birds and other Wildlife of the West Coast

Oban, best known as the Gateway to the Isles and the Seafood Capital of Scotland, provides the perfect location for this west coast themed conference. Our speakers will showcase leading scientific research on some of Scotland's most iconic wildlife and internationally recognised habitats found in what are arguably Scotland's last real wild landscapes, the Isles and mainland of the beautiful west coast.

Speakers

Richard Evans	RSPB
Eric & Caitlin Bignal	Scottish Chough Study Group
Nienke van Geel	The Scottish Association for Marine Science
John Calladine	BTO Scotland, Senior Research Ecologist
Clive Craik	The Scottish Association for Marine Science
Chris Thaxter	BTO, Research Ecologist
Christine Urquhart	SNH, Policy and Advice Officer, Ornithology
Rob Fuller	BTO, Director of Science

Displays & Sales

A number of local conservation charities, artists, photographers and other traders will have stands at the conference. The BTO, SOC and Argyll Bird Club will have sales and information tables.

The Corran Halls

As a multifunctional facility, the Corran Halls is a perfect venue (on The Esplanade in Oban) and is easily accessible by car or train, located just off the main A85 on the northern edge of the town. There is disabled access, a hearing loop system and ample free car parking available on site. A location map and transport details will be sent with booking confirmation. If you are interested in car sharing then please contact BTO on 01786 466560, email: scot.info@bto.org.

Extend Your Stay - Activities on Sunday 18 March

BTO Scotland will be offering free bird survey training on Sunday 18 March 2012 in the Oban area. Details will be sent with booking confirmation (together with discounts from wildlife trip providers). Go to www.oban.org.uk for local information on Oban and the surrounding area.

Programme – Saturday 17 March 2012

09.00	Registration and Tea/Coffee
09.45	Welcome and Introduction - Chris Wernham (Head of BTO Scotland) Nigel Scriven (Argyll Bird Club)
10.00	White-tailed Eagles in Scotland: back for good? - Richard Evans A review of what White-tailed Eagle re-sighting and breeding data tell us about progress in re-establishing this long lived species; and of how concerned we should be about the risks to resident Golden Eagles.
10.30	Supplementary feeding of sub-adult Choughs in Islay - Eric & Caitlin Bignal Presenting the preliminary results of a management initiative started in December 2009 providing supplementary food for sub-adult Choughs in Islay.
11.00	<i>Tea/Coffee</i>
11.30	Marine renewable development and conservation challenges for marine mammals - Nienke van Geel Current knowledge about the interaction between marine renewables and marine mammals, and pre-construction research on the west coast of Scotland.
12.00	Birds in upland woodland: towards a Scottish tree-line? - John Calladine Looking at data gleaned from a number of studies to assess how new afforestation might influence some upland bird populations.
12.30	<i>Lunch</i>
14.00	Mink and seabirds in west Scotland - Clive Craik The talk will describe the effects of American mink on seabirds breeding on small islands in the sea lochs and sounds of west Scotland, and the successes and failures of mink control over the last 25 years.
14.30	Marine renewable energy developments and their potential effects on seabirds - Chris Thaxter Focusing on the importance of understanding the risks to seabirds when foraging at sea during breeding and when migrating.
15.00	<i>Tea/Coffee</i>
15.30	Goose conservation and management in Scotland - Christine Urquhart Exploring past and future goose conservation and management, with reference to British Greylag geese and Greenland white-fronted geese.
16.00	Breeding waders of the Uists: 30 years of change - Rob Fuller The machair of the Uists continues to carry remarkable populations of six species of breeding waders, though the picture now looks very different to the 1980s.
16.40	Raffle
16.50	Summing Up and Closing Remarks - Ken Shaw (SOC President)

BOOKING FORM

Name(s) (Block capitals please) _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Telephone _____

E-mail _____

Any dietary requirements _____

I/we would like to book _____ places and enclose a cheque/PO for £ _____

Please PRINT exactly what you would like to appear on your name badge

Name _____ Affiliation/Location _____

I am a member of (tick ☒ all that apply) BTO ☐ SOC ☐ Argyll BC ☐

Please send me membership details for BTO ☐ SOC ☐ Argyll BC ☐

Please indicate where you heard about the conference

Conference and Booking Fee

The charge for the conference (incl. VAT) is **£10.00 for members of Argyll Bird Club** **£29.00 for others**. This includes registration fee, lunch and all teas/coffees. Please return the booking form with the payment to arrive no later than **26th February 2012**, cheques being made payable to "British Trust for Ornithology" written in full. Applications will be accepted in the order they are received, so please book early to avoid disappointment. Booking confirmation will be sent to all delegates. We regret that no refunds can be issued after 5th March 2012.

This year we are offering a Young Person's price of £10.00. If you are aged 25 or under please tick ☐ this box (bring proof of age with you when you attend the conference).

For bookings and further information please contact:

Robin Anderson, BTO Scotland, School of Biological & Environmental Sciences,
University of Stirling, Stirling FK9 4LA

Field Trips

Saturday 31 December: Tayinloan. Walk off the Christmas fayre with a walk in the Tayinloan area. Meet at Katie Pendreigh's house along the pier road. Access to the Gigha ferry pier is currently prohibited due to work on the jetty. Details from Katie : tel 01583 441359.

Saturday 28 January: Ormsary. Meet at Ormsary community centre for a walk in Ormsary estate and along Loch Caolisport. As per the last trip, the afternoon might be spent along West Loch Tarbert. Details from Mark Williamson: tel 01880 770 162.

Saturday 25 February: Appin. Muster in the car park at the rear of the Castle Stalker View Tea Room at 1030hrs on Saturday 25 February. The tea room is on the west (seaward) side of the A828 Connel to Ballachulish road approximately 1.5 miles north west of Appin village at grid reference NM925476. The plan is to spend the morning walking the Jubilee bridge and footpath around the shores of Loch Laich before returning to the tea room for soup and sandwich lunch. The afternoon will be a walk round the headland south west of Port Appin, overlooking the Lynn of Lorn and Airds Bay. Boots will be required.

This is a repeat of the February 2011 trip which was reported in the *Eider*. Contact Mike Harrison, jmharrison@iee.org, or tel 01631 710656.

Saturday 31 March: Sound of Gigha. The annual field trip to the Sound of Gigha will be on Saturday 31st March 2012. We'll be meeting as usual at the car park at Ronachan Point just off the A83 (grid reference NR741548) at 10.00am. From here we'll call in at the coast near the West Coast Salmon site and then onto Tayinloan to check the fields there. We'll take the 12:00 ferry to Gigha, mainly to look for birds in the Sound and break for lunch. Snacks can be ordered at the hotel on the island. After returning from Gigha, if the weather and tide conditions permit, we'll walk along the shore to look for waders and migrants. Spring birding in the Sound of Gigha can be a rewarding experience. This trip will be a repeat of a similar field trips in spring, accounts of which appeared in the *Eider*. Details contact **Paul Daw** (Tel 01546 886260. E-mail monedula@globalnet.co.uk)

Field Trip Reports

Loch Gilp, Add Estuary and Elsewhere, 24 September 2011

With a forecast of fresh to strong southerly winds and the occasional shower eight members and friends met at the Corran Bridge car park in Lochgilphead on Saturday 24 September. The wind was already evident as a lone Swallow struggled past and with the tide right up to the sea-wall, the local gulls were lined up on the grass next to the children's play area, facing down the loch (NR862878). Close scrutiny of the flock revealed Black-headed, Herring and Common Gulls but the recently-reported Mediterranean Gull was nowhere to be seen. A flock of Oystercatchers were also on the green and the local Jackdaws were busy digging up the grass. Mallard were roosting on the opposite shore of the burn and three Mute Swans could be seen further down Loch Gilp towards Ardrishaig. A Raven flew across the loch and Rooks could be heard calling beyond the town. With no open shore and with the wind blowing straight up the loch we decided to cross to the Add Estuary for the rising tide and, hopefully, some shelter. The gulls flew up and circled as a Sparrowhawk dodged through the trees and across the burn but two Pied Wagtails hunting insects on the grass seemed unconcerned. As the party set off towards the west coast we were overflown by two RAF Hercules transport planes, apparently trying to give us the best possible view.

It seemed a different day altogether at Islandadd Bridge (NR805925) with warm sunshine and shelter from the wind. Oystercatcher and Curlew were seen from the bridge and many birds were visible in the distance towards Crinan Ferry. Yachts were migrating through the canal towards the Clyde as we walked along to the hide overlooking the estuary and a Robin sang in the woods. The plump brown birds which we had seen earlier were identified as Teal by the green specula glinting in the sun. A solitary Redshank was seen at relatively close quarters but some other waders, smaller than Curlew, remained at an awkward distance. One eventually came closer and revealed itself to be a Black-tailed Godwit; two others, smaller still, remained frustratingly unidentifiable. Red-breasted Mergansers were on our side of the estuary; a raft of Wigeon was close to Crinan Ferry, along with two Mute Swans, and a good few Grey Heron were scattered across the marshes. As

lunchtime approached and the tide covered the bare mud we decided to head for Loch Sween for the afternoon. Returning along the canal towpath a couple of Red Admiral butterflies were added to the Speckled Wood seen earlier.

The waters of Caol Scotnish appeared to be devoid of birds as we drove south towards Tayvallich and it was obvious from the trees and the water that the wind was still blowing fiercely. Through Tayvallich we continued on to the normally reliable site of 'The Puddles' at the south end of Linne Mhuirich (NR710823). About 20 Raven were seen just before reaching the parking place and a Buzzard was hanging in the wind over the hill but, alas, only a dozen Mute Swans and a Grey Heron were on the loch. The only distraction from the serious business of eating lunch was the occasional flight of wind-whipped foam across the shore. Onward to the Danna causeway (NR699798) and, along the road, a Wheatear and the day's first Stonechats – a welcome sight after the losses of the past two winters. A group of 20 Red-breasted Mergansers were in the bay to the west of the causeway while Oystercatcher, Curlew and Redshank roosted on the point. A Grey Heron's head peeked over the grass to see what we were up to; we were watching a pair of Bullfinches which had advertised their presence by calling, as did a Wren and a Great Tit. Three Swallows came past and two more members arrived to increase the party to ten. The final stop, and the end of the road, was at Keills. That was after pausing on the way to watch a Merlin hunting amongst the gorse bushes on the hillside above the road. The track across to the jetty at Keillbeg (NR688807) produced some more Wheatears, Stonechats and the ubiquitous Meadow Pipits but the time we spent at Keillbeg was possibly the best of the day. The Sound of Jura was alive with birds, mainly gulls but Razorbills, Guillemots, Manx Shearwaters and a few unidentified divers were all seen flying south. A couple of very unscientific sample counts suggested that several thousand birds per hour were on the move. Kittiwakes and a few Gannets could be seen feeding and a large number of gulls were bathing in the fresh water at the head of the bay at Keillbeg and roosting on the rocks at the point. Great Black-backed, Herring, Common and Black-headed Gulls were there in numbers, along with a few Kittiwakes and, eventually, a lone Lesser Black-backed. A group of at least 25 Ringed Plover were roosting on a rock in the bay. A Slavonian Grebe appeared just off the point and, as a shower approached from the south west and we decided to call it a day, many more Kittiwakes came in to land on the point or in the sea just outside the bay.

We returned to the cars and added a Chaffinch to the list of species for the day, a list which was surprisingly long given the conditions and the inauspicious start at Lochgilphead. And it was only after we had started to return home that rain arrived. A most enjoyable day.

Species List

Unidentified Divers	Eurasian Oystercatcher	Meadow Pipit
Slavonian Grebe	Ringed Plover	Rock Pipit
Manx Shearwater	Black-tailed Godwit	Pied Wagtail
Northern Gannet	Eurasian Curlew	Wren
European Shag	Common Redshank	Robin
Grey Heron	Black-headed Gull	Stonechat
Mute Swan	Common Gull	Northern Wheatear
Eurasian Wigeon	Lesser Black-backed Gull	Great Tit
Eurasian Teal	Herring Gull	Eurasian Jackdaw
Mallard	Great Black-backed Gull	Rook
Common Eider	Black-legged Kittiwake	Hooded Crow
Red-breasted Merganser	Common Guillemot	Common Raven
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	Razorbill	Chaffinch
Common Buzzard	Feral Pigeon	Common Bullfinch
Merlin	Barn Swallow	

Mike Harrison

A Bridge too Far: (Connel Bridge and no further), 26 November 2011

The weekly weather forecast including Saturday 26th November did not look good and although there were some changes as the day approached, it looked likely to be wet and windy. Sure enough, I awoke to the sound of rain on the window although, at that stage, not too much wind in the trees. The rain radar showed Lorne (and most areas to the north and east) to be covered by rain with a further pulse just heading into Ireland on its way to Scotland. As if to confirm what a daft idea this trip was, my wife uncovered some weather statistics which showed that Oban averages 20 wet days per month in November. And this was certainly one of them.

I put my weatherproofs on and drove across the bridge to the muster point. It wasn't just the rain – the visibility was also very poor! I could just make out the telephone mast about half a mile away. A Cormorant flew over the bridge, struggling with the turbulence from the strong south-westerly wind. There was no sign of the Jackdaws and Feral Pigeons which live amongst the bridge girders. Robin Harvey arrived from Benderloch and we sat in the car discussing our recent WeBS counts and watching the curtains of rain blowing past. 10:15 came, but no more members did. Robin went home. 10:30, no-one else is going to come now, thank goodness. Go home.....

And it just rained all day.

Mike Harrison

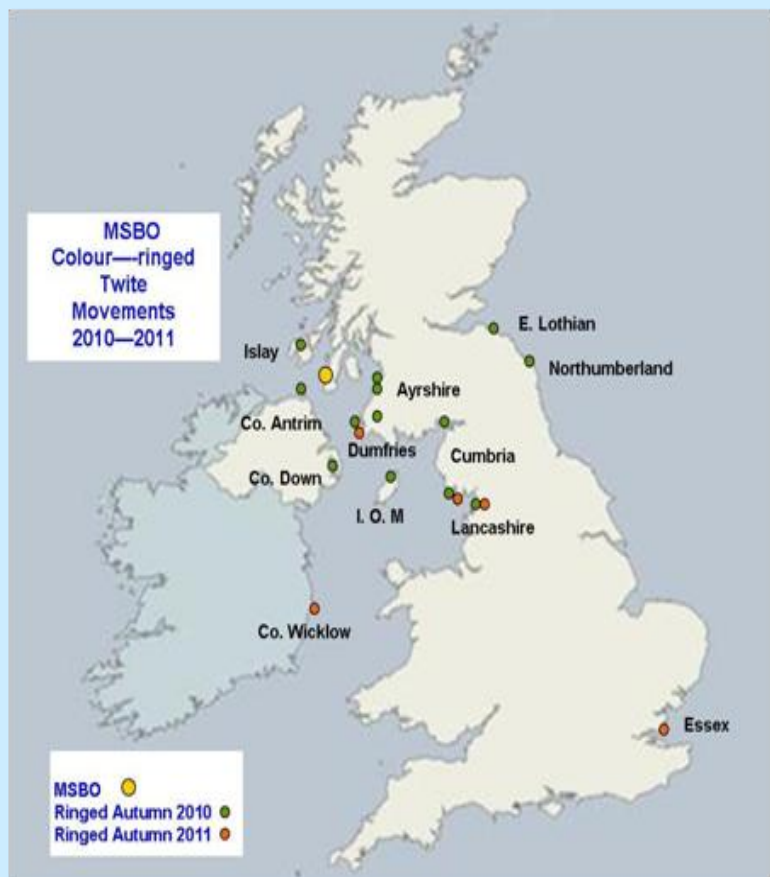
Notes

MSBO colour-ringed Twite Movements, autumn 2011 (Late November Update)

*This autumn has proved to be exciting! Remember, we only joined the **UK Twite colour-ringing study scheme** last year (autumn 2010) and already some extraordinary movements of our birds have been reported.*

A grand total of 17 colour-ringed MSBO birds were sighted recently; most were on the established SE route for NW England (Cumbria and Lancashire) but there were four real surprises; remarkably, they dispersed to locations in SE Scotland (Lothian), NE and SE England (Northumberland and Essex) and the Republic of Ireland (Co Wicklow).

- An autumn 2011 colour-ringed bird was photographed at The Naze, Essex on 29th October 2011. (**Simon and Pat Cox**) *This bird travelled some **600 km SE**; our furthest movement to date.*
- Another autumn 2011 colour-ringed bird was seen well at Six Mile Point, Co Wicklow on 1st November (**Dick Coombs / Derek McLoughlan**). This movement was **264 km SSW**. This location is on the east coast of Ireland just south of Dublin City.



*This is our third sighting in Ireland although, it is the first Scottish-ringed **Twite** to be found in the Republic. Earlier this year, two birds colour-ringed at MSBO during autumn 2010 were both found in Northern Ireland - one on Bird Island, Strangford Lough and the other on Rathlin Island. In addition, a bird colour-ringed in Co Donegal (Republic) was photographed at MSBO about 4 years ago.*

- An autumn 2010 colour-ringed bird was seen at Dunbar (East Links), Lothian on 5th November 2011 (**Mark Edin**). This is 245 km ENE. This is the first MSBO Twite to be found on the Scottish North Sea coast.
- Also, two autumn 2010 colour-ringed birds were photographed at Long Nanny burnmouth, Beadnell, Northumberland on 6th November 2011 (Gary Woodburn). This movement was 259 km ENE. These two birds are the first MSBO **Twite** to be sighted in Northumberland and our first to reach the English North Sea coast.



Other recent movements include...

L999078 was ringed at MSBO on 20th September 2011 and controlled at Heysham Harbour, Lancashire on 28th October and retrapped there on 31st October 2011 (per **Pete Marsh**).

L999092 was ringed at MSBO on 20th September 2011 and controlled at Heysham Harbour on 9th November 2011 (per **Pete Marsh**).

Sightings of MSBO colour rings...

One 'possible' MSBO c/r bird (green/white) was sighted, very briefly, at Killinallan, Islay on 18th September 2011 (**Nick Wilkinson**).

At least seven MSBO colour-ringed birds (ringed autumn 2011) were seen and some photographed at The Wig, Loch Ryan, Dumfries and Galloway on 1st November 2011 (**Ruth Eastwood**).

Apparently there was an influx of some 300+ **Twite** at The Wig on this date.

One (ringed autumn 2011) was seen at Walney BO, Cumbria on 2nd November 2011 (per **Pete Marsh/Walney BO website**).

One (ringed autumn 2010) was seen at Heysham Harbour, Lancashire on 9th November 2011 (per **Pete Marsh**).

MSBO autumn 2011 colour-ring sequence Note metal above c/r on left leg (project identifier; image by Eddie Maguire)

Eddie Maguire; warden MSBO.
25th November 2011

What is the Bird Conservation Targeting Project? (BCTP)

The Project was developed to target management and resources towards important bird sites that hold scarce and declining farmland and woodland birds. It started in England in 2004 in order to plug the gaps in knowledge of distributions and abundance since the BTO breeding bird atlas of 1991.

The project uses distribution maps to guide the spending of hundreds of millions of pounds of agri-environment and woodland grant schemes, and to influence woodland management to benefit birds in publicly owned woodland.

This targeting helps ensure that grants are allocated to put the right conservation measures in the right place. The maps are derived from many datasets in order to get the most up-to-date distributions.

In Scotland the list comprises of 30 species of scarce and declining farmland and woodland birds that are likely to benefit from improvements to their breeding habitats.

The maps are readily available via the RSPB website at:

www.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/projects/targeting/index.aspx

This web page gives general information about the project, and downloadable details about it. To view Argyll species, go to the 'view targeting maps' page, scroll down to location and choose Argyll and Bute. Choose your species of interest, then click the 'go' button. The screen then jumps to the top of the page, so it's easy to think it hasn't worked, but you need to scroll down again to find the link to the pdf file that has appeared just below the 'go' button. If it's not there, it will be one of the 7 species for which there isn't an Argyll map (as of

14/11/11). The 2011 maps use data from 2005-2009 and some data from 2010. They are the most up- to- date maps currently available.

There are also maps for bird assemblages. Choose 'arable' for seed-eating birds and 'grassland' for farmland waders.

Table of Scottish BCTP species, and availability of Argyll Maps.

Species	Argyll map	Species	Argyll map	Species	Argyll map
Barn Owl	Y	Lapwing	Y	Snipe	N
Black Grouse	Y	Lesser Redpoll	Y	Spotted Flycatcher	Y
Capercaillie	Y	Long-eared Owl	Y	Tree Pipit	Y
Chough	N	Marsh Tit	N	Tree Sparrow	Y
Corn Bunting	N	Nightjar	Y	Twite	Y
Corncrake	Y	Redshank	Y	Whinchat	Y
Curlew	Y	Redstart	N	Willow Tit	Y
Grasshopper Warbler	Y	Reed Bunting	Y	Wood Warbler	Y
Grey Partridge	Y	Ring Ouzel	Y	Yellow Wagtail	N
Hawfinch	Y	Scottish Crossbill	N	Yellowhammer	Y

Y = map available N = map not available

Corncrakes: Good News and Bad News

The good news is that Corncrake numbers have increased this year over last year.

Data from the RSPB (www.rspb.org.uk/media/releases):

	2011	2010
Coll	116	121
Tiree	391	385
Mull	7	8
Iona	34	24
Colonsay/Oransay	72	58
Islay	81	79
Argyll total	701	685
Scotland total	1213	1168

The bad news is that there have been cuts to the Scottish Government budget of 22% until 2015, which may jeopardise many of the gains that have been made, not just for Corncrakes.

Apparently the cuts are disproportionate, and many budgets are untouched, although it could be that those budgets may be harder to reduce.

Farmers David and Sarah Hobhouse of Balnahard on Colonsay, said: *"Over the last 20 years or so, government agri-environment schemes have been the saving factor for agriculture on the island. The payments have not only had a huge impact on target species, like corncrake, but they have contributed massively to maintaining diverse agricultural activities. Without this support the cattle would have long gone, and the fencing and fields lost, to be replaced with a smaller work force, and less use of ferries and other local services. Island farming can no longer be sustained on a purely commercial basis, as we are too far from both markets and suppliers, and our associated extra costs are considerable. Conservation payments are our lifeline."*

Nigel Scriven

Confessions of a part- time birder

If you follow the road out of Campbeltown along the south shore of Campbeltown Loch, you soon come to an abrupt corner, opposite Davaar Island. Here the road runs beside what is known locally as the Kildalloig shore. People from the town often come to this spot and take a stroll along the road. On the 13th October I received a phone call from a friend of ours out walking on that particular stretch of road. She was watching a bird with a lot of white on it which she could not identify and asked if I would be willing to pop down to see the bird myself. I duly obliged and after a short time relocated the bird flitting between the shore, road and field boundary. The bird certainly looked very white, particularly in flight but also had buff/brown markings on the wings and head. We eventually concluded that the bird must be a young Wheatear. I have certainly seen Wheatears on this stretch of shore before, which served to strengthen my conviction.



Autumn Wheatear © M Williamson

Next day, I received a visit from Allister and Agnes Stewart, the observers from the previous day. They had revisited Kildalloig shore and managed to photograph the bird obtaining one good, clear shot of the bird standing on the road. We checked the Wheatears in the Collins Guide against the photograph obtained and everything matched apart from the bill which, instead of being narrow and black was stout and flesh coloured—clearly not a Wheatear's bill. At this point we decided to contact Paul Daw- my unfailing resort when faced with an avian identification crisis. Unfortunately, being rather technophic and possessing neither a computer nor the means with which to send the images through to Paul, meant we all had to take a trip to a friends house some ten miles away. Later that day Paul rang to say that the problem was solved. The bird was in fact a Snow Bunting.



Male Snow Bunting Kildalloig, Kintyre 14 October ©Agnes Stewart.

I then remembered that about a decade ago, I had seen a pair of Snow Buntings on one of the shores down here, but it must have been before I had any dealings with Argyll Bird Club, because as far as I remember I never told anyone about it.

Tristan ap Rheinallt's long and very thorough article on the Snow Bunting (Argyll Bird Book) makes it clear that in Argyll as a whole, it is a bird of regular occurrence. Autumn birds in south Kintyre are evidently passage migrants. My own experience of these beautiful birds prior to Kintyre came whilst discussing a winter climb in one of the gullies on the north face of Ben Nevis. It was cold and gloomy and I was unhappy and frightened and very envious of these cheerful birds as they fluttered around us gobbling up the crumbs from our picnic lunch.

Ian Teesdale

Editors note: In July 1987, I had the privilege of meeting up with a male Snow Bunting on the summit of Ben Nevis during very inclement weather. The wind was howling, the rain driving horizontally and the cloud base was down to 2000feet. I was sheltering amongst the ruins of the weather station on the summit and eating my picnic lunch when I was joined by a male Snow Bunting . I held out some ginger cake which the Snow Bunting took from my hand. It did this about three times and then disappeared. I've never forgotten that moment.....

Recent Reports

September to
December 2011

Paul Daw

(Tel. 01546 886260)

e-mail:

monedula@globalnet.co.uk

The latest news on bird
sightings in Argyll is
available on the Argyll
Bird Club website at
www.argyllbirdclub.org

RARITIES:

At least two (**Pallid Harrier** and **Brown Shrike**) new species for Argyll were reported during the period, as well as a possible third, **Thayer's Gull** (see below for details).

WILDFOWL (and GAMEBIRDS):

Mute Swan. A total of 18 were at Ulva Lagoons, Loch Sween on 7 October (Tom Callan) and 42 at Loch Skerrols, Islay on 28 October included 12 juveniles (per I & M. Brooke).

Black Swan. An adult bird was with Whooper Swans at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree from 13-26 October (John Bowler).

Whooper Swan. A flock of 9 flew s at Tayinloan, Kintyre on 17 September (Katie Pendreigh) the flock of 9 flying E over Machrihanish Seabird Observatory towards The Laggan on 18 September were possibly the same birds (Eddie Maguire). A total of 13 adults at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 16 September must have included newly arrived birds but numbers were back down to 3 on 21 September (John Bowler). Twenty were in Loch Gruinart, Islay on 15 September (per Ian Brooke). On Tiree during October 35 at Loch a' Phuill on 9th increased to 138 on 15th. A large influx occurred at The Laggan (nr Campbeltown), Kintyre on 15-16 October; counts on 17 and 18 October produced 237 and 210 respectively by Tonrioch Farm and adjoining fields and also at West Parkfergus. An exodus occurred on 19 October, when about 100 flew S past Machrihanish Seabird Observatory (largest group 30). Only 80 were found on The Laggan on this date (Eddie Maguire). A similar influx occurred on Islay from 12-14 October and included 304 between Rockside and Sunderland on 13 October. Most had departed by the evening of 19 October but 125 were still at Sunderland Farm on 25 October (per I & M. Brooke).

Pink-footed Goose. A flock of *ca* 50 flew S at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 9 September (Eddie Maguire). A flock of 22 flew south over The Glebe, Tiree on 10 October (John Bowler) and 7 were at Loch Gruinart, Islay on 20 October (Mary McGregor).

Greenland White-fronted Goose. A flock of six flying S on 25 September were the first this autumn at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory (Eddie Maguire). The first arrived on Tiree on 11 October and on 26th an all island count found 372 birds of which 51 (13.7%) were juveniles with a mean brood size of 2.1 in 24 families (John Bowler). A flock of 30 came in off the sea at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 10 October and headed into The Laggan (Eddie Maguire). A total of 51 at Loch Gruinart on 7 October had increased to 409 by 22 October (James How).

Greylag Goose. The WeBS count at Loch Craignish & Loch Beg on 16 October found 57 birds (Julia Randall) and 126 were found during the Loch Etive WeBS count (Mike Harrison). Approx. 700 were at Loch Gorm, Islay on 9 October (Bob Davidson).

Greater Canada Goose. The WeBS count at Loch Creran, North Argyll on 16 October found 71 birds (Robin Harvey).

Barnacle Goose. On 14 September, 45 were in Loch Gruinart estuary (Michal Sur) and by 30 September 77 were on the salt

marsh there (per Ian Brooke).

Snow Goose. A fine adult blue-phase bird was found with Greylags at Cornaigmore, Tiree on 12 October but not seen again (Bill Allan). A count of the resident flock on Coll on 26 October found 22 adults and 3 immatures at Breachacha Bay (Jim Dickson).

Pale-bellied Brent Goose. One on 7 September was the first of autumn at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory and five were there on 13 and 26 September (Eddie Maguire). On Tiree, 2 headed south over Salum on 18 September, 2 headed south off Mannal on 25 September, 8 were at Gott Bay 26-28 September with 7 there 29-30 September (John Bowler). On 25 September 98 were on the saltings at Loch Gruinart (James How) and 277 were counted in Loch Gruinart on 28 sep (Michal Sur). A flock of 50 were at Haunn, Mull on 6 September (Anand Prasad) and 7 were at Croig, Mull on 28-29 September (Andy Mortley per Anand Prasad). Two of seven birds that appeared briefly near Otter Ferry on 25 September had coloured rings. They re-appeared the following day at the nearby fish-farm and enough details of the rings were obtained to report them to Graham McElwaine of the Irish Brent Goose Research Group. Both birds had been ringed in Dublin Bay in early April 2010 and spent the subsequent breeding seasons at Skerjafjörður in Iceland before returning to Dublin Bay for the winter. Neither had been recorded in Argyll before. Seven were at Gott Bay, Tiree on 2 October, 25 were at Sorobaidh Bay (Jerry Wilson) and 58 headed S off Sandaig on 5th and 30 were at Balephetrish Bay on 17 October (John Bowler). Sixty flew S past Machrihanish Seabird Observatory in 8hrs on 6 October with 63 flying S on 18 October (Eddie Maguire).



Colour ringed Brent Geese in Loch Fyne

©Tom Callan

Eurasian Wigeon. A count at the Add Estuary on 11 October found 193 birds and 178 were in Loch Gilp on 30 October (Jim Dickson).

American Wigeon. A male was found at Gartmain, Loch Indaal, Islay on 14 October (Peter Roberts). An immature male was also reported in the same area later in the month by which time the adult had moved inland to Loch Skerrols (per Jim Dickson).

Gadwall. On Tiree, 6 were at Loch a' Phuill 1 – 10 September, with 3 there on 18th and 1 on 24th, and 2 were at The Reef on 15 September (John Bowler). Two were near the sea at Tayinloan, Kintyre on 28 September (Katie Pendreigh). Two at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 15 October had increased to 7 on 17th (John Bowler) and twelve were at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve on 9 October (Bob Davidson).

Eurasian Teal. A total of 165 were at Loch a' Phuill on 26 October (John Bowler) and 509 were counted at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve on 21 October (James How).

Pintail. Eight flew S at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 12 September (Eddie Maguire). Numbers at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree peaked at 14 on 10 September (John Bowler) and 57 were counted at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve on 21 October (James How).

Tufted Duck. Numbers at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree during October peaked at 55 on 17 October (John Bowler) and ca60 were reported from Loch Gorm, Islay on 9 October (Bob Davidson).

Common Pochard. A drake at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory flew S then N on 30 September (Eddie Maguire) and a single drake was at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree 15-27 October (John Bowler).

Greater Scaup. A total of 19 flew S at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 24 September (Eddie Maguire).

Common Eider. Only 357 were counted at Otter Ferry for the Firth of Clyde Eider Count. A considerable reduction on earlier years (e.g. 1,117 in 2002) (Tom Callan). This reflects a continuing (and so far unexplained) decline in Common Eider numbers throughout the count area (Chris Waltho).

Long-tailed Duck. One flew W off Aird, Tiree on 6 October (John Bowler) and 6 were reported at the head of Loch Indaal on 27 October (per I & M. Brooke).

Common Scoter. Six flying S on 13 September

was the largest flock of the month at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory (Eddie Maguire).

Velvet Scoter. A single drake flew S at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 5 October (Eddie Maguire).

Red-breasted Merganser. The WeBS count at Loch Craignish & Loch Beg on 16 October found 44 birds (Julia Randall).

Goosander. Unusual numbers at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory included 2 “redheads” on 16 September followed by three on 25 and 9 on 29 September (all redheads) (Eddie Maguire).

Red-legged Partridge. Two were seen at Bunnahabhainn, Islay on 17 October (Peter Roberts).

SEABIRDS – divers, grebes, shearwaters, herons etc (and other seawatch species):

Red-throated Diver. A total of 92 flying S at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, on 19 dates 7 – 28 September included 24 in 6 hrs on 22 Sep (Eddie Maguire). Four were off Aird, Tiree on 13 September (John Bowler) and four were in Kilfinan Bay, Cowal at the WeBS count on 28 September (Tom Callan) and five were seen at Port Charlotte, Islay on 15 October (per I & M. Brooke).

Great Northern Diver. On the morning of 7 October, 15 flew west off Aird, Tiree in 1.5hrs (John Bowler). At Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, 23 flew S in 7 hrs on 18 October (Eddie Maguire).

White-billed Diver. A summer-plumaged adult flew west past Aird, Tiree at 0810hrs on 18 October in strong NW winds. If confirmed this will be a first record for the island (John Bowler).

Great Crested Grebe. One was photographed flying S past Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 29 September (Eddie Maguire).

Little Grebe. Singles were seen on Tiree; at Loch Bhasapol on 26 sep (Jim Dickson) and at The Reef on 29 September (John Bowler). A total of 19 were recorded during the Loch Etive WeBS count on 16 October (Mike Harrison) and 15 were found during the Loch Sween WeBS count (Paul Daw).

Slavonian Grebe. Seven were at the head of Loch Indaal, Islay on 27 October (per I & M. Brooke).

Fulmar. Higher counts on Tiree included: 145 flying west past Aird in 2 hrs on the afternoon of 6 September (John Bowler).

Sooty Shearwater. A good passage on Tiree where nine flew west past Aird in 2 hrs on the afternoon of 6 September, 2 were seen between

Mull and Tiree on 6 September (Graham Todd), 5 flew west past Aird in 2 hrs on 7 September, 2 SW past Hynish in 1 hr on 10 September, 2 west past Aird in 1 hr and 2 west past Aird in 2 hrs on 13 September, 4 west past Aird in 2 hrs on 14 September and 20 flew SW past Hynish in 1hr on 20 September (John Bowler). On Islay, one was at Frenchman's Rocks on 6 sep with 5 there on 6 September (Jim Dickson) and one was seen off Haunn, Mull on 7 September (Anand Prasad). On 6 October, 6 flew W off Aird, Tiree in one hour with another 6 there in 2 hrs during the afternoon (John Bowler).

Manx Shearwater. A total of 2,000+ were rafting / foraging well offshore at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 5/6 September (Eddie Maguire). The highest count on Tiree was 1078 flying west past Aird in 2 hrs on 14 September (John Bowler). On Islay, 743 were counted during a 100 minute sea-watch at Frenchman's Rocks on 14 September (per P. Roberts).

European Storm-petrel. One flew S at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 12 September and a total of 10 flew S in 9hrs on 13 September (Eddie Maguire). Four flew W past Aird, Tiree on 13 September and one was off SW Coll on 28 September (John Bowler). Two were seen off Hynish, Tiree in 1.5 hrs on 3 October (Jerry Wilson) and one from the ferry between Mull and Tiree on 8 October (Bill Allan).

Leach's Storm-petrel. One flying S on 12 September was the first of autumn at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory (Eddie Maguire). On Tiree, 12 flew west past Aird in 2 hrs and 2 were seen between Mull and Tiree (Graham Todd) on 6 September, 1 west past Aird in 2 hrs on 7 September, 9 west past Aird in 2 hrs on 13 September and 4 flew west past Aird in 2 hrs on 14 September (John Bowler). During October, 2 were seen between Coll and Mull on 5th (Jim Dickson), one flying west off Balevullin, Tiree in 1.5hrs on 6th (Jerry Wilson), 5 west off Aird in 2 hrs on 6th (John Bowler) and 2 west off Aird in 1.5hrs on 18th (John Bowler). A total of 35 (singles) flew S at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory in 8hrs on 6 October, one appeared offshore on 11 October after days of W-NW winds and heavy rain and a total of 18 (singles) flew S in 7hrs on 18 October (Eddie Maguire).

Northern Gannet. On Islay, 985 were counted during a 100 minute sea-watch at Frenchman's Rocks on 14 September (per P. Roberts). At least

65, in two groups, seen from the Tarbert – Portavadie Ferry on 1 October in a feeding frenzy with gulls/auks (Tom Callan).

Shag. A total of 112 headed SW past Hynish, Tiree in 1 hr on 3 October (John Bowler) and 57 were recorded during the WeBS count at Loch Creran, North Argyll on 16 October (Robin Harvey) The WeBS count at Loch Craignish & Loch Beg on 20 November found 29 birds (Julia Randall).

Cattle Egret. One was reported being seen in a field with sheep at Croig, NW Mull on 27 October (Richard Atkinson, Brian & Sophia Fuller). If accepted this would be only the second record for Argyll and about the ninth for Scotland.

In an amazing re-run of what happened on Islay in October 2009 and on Mull recently both this species and Little Egret have now turned up the same time on Tiree. On 17 November John Bowler had the Cattle Egret nearly fly against his car at Whitehouse! It's been seen at various other locations on Tiree until at least 25 November and if confirmed will be a first for the island. The Little Egret is suspected of having been on the island since 5 November was confirmed at Barrapol on 10 November (John Bowler).

Little Egret. One was found and photographed at Pennyghael, Mull on 9 November (Andy Howard) . And see above for Tiree record.

Grey Heron. A total of 29 were recorded during the WeBS count at Loch Creran, North Argyll on 16 October (Robin Harvey).

RAPTORS, RAILS etc.:



Pallid Harrier © Brian Rains

White-tailed Eagle. Two adults were seen at Goirtein Point, Loch Fyne, Cowal on 22 September (Yvonne McCrone per Tom Callan). Two were seen over the Sound of Islay on 7

October (John Aitchison) and on 16 October (George Jackson). Two were again seen over the Sound of Islay on 25 November (James How).

Pallid Harrier. A juvenile was seen and photographed by Brian Rains at Pennyghael Estate, Mull on 20 September. The photo looks good and if accepted by BBRC this will be the first record of a new species for Argyll.

Amazingly a juvenile Pallid Harrier was seen, and again photographed, flying S off Machrihanish Seabird Observatory at 13:40hrs on 22 September (Eddie Maguire; also seen by Dave Millward and Jo Goudie). The chances are that this would have been the same individual as the Mull bird. However an unprecedented number of Pallid Harriers have been reported in Britain this autumn, including several in Shetland, so it's just possible this might have been a different bird.

Hen Harrier. At least 5 different birds were around on Tiree during September and October (John Bowler).

Golden Eagle. A sub-adult bird was again at Sandaig, Tiree on 18 September and Hough on 19th after belated records from west of Hynish in mid August (Graham Todd per John Bowler). Two were in hills behind L. Cam and L. Drolsay, Islay on 24 September (Per Martin Armstrong and Bob Davidson). Four were seen during a guided walk at The Oa, Islay on 18 October (per I & M. Brooke).

Osprey. A bedraggled bird perched on a ruin at Moss, Tiree on the afternoon of 13 September (John Bowler). One was at Loch Skerrols, Islay on 13 and 18 September (per James How) and a juvenile was at Loch Indaal, Islay on 4 October (Bob Davidson).



MSBO Pallid Harrier © Eddie Maguire

Merlin. Near daily sightings of up to 5 birds on Tiree during October (John Bowler) and two were seen during a guided walk at The Oa, Islay on 18 October

(per I & M. Brooke).

Gyr Falcon. A dark morph **captive bird** belonging to Dougie Mackenzie in Saddle, Kintyre that had escaped during October was later found at Tayinloan in a 'hungry' condition! (per Jim Dickson).

Peregrine Falcon. At least 2 pairs were around Tiree during October (John Bowler).

Water Rail. On Tiree, up to 3 birds calling from marshes at Balephuill all month, 2 were calling at Sorobaidh Bay creek on 1 September (Keith Gillon) and one was calling at Kilkenneth on 4 September (John Bowler).

Common Coot. A juvenile was at Loch Bhasapol, Tiree 18 and 21 November (John Bowler).



Baird's Sandpiper – Tiree photo © Jim Dickson.

WADERS:

Oystercatcher. A count at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve on 19 November found 327 birds (per Mary McGregor and David Mason) and a total of 448 was found at Holy Loch during the WeBS count on 16 November was unusual (George Newall).

Ringed Plover. Fifty flying S on 12 September were part of a total of 295 at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory during the month (Eddie Maguire). Forty were at Otter Ferry on 2 November (Tom Callan).

Dotterel. A juvenile was at Ruaig, Tiree on 25-26 September (Jim Dickson).

American Golden Plover. A juvenile at Kilmoluaig, Tiree on 7 October was seen later in the month at Barrapol and Middleton (Jerry Wilson, Bill Allan and John Bowler).

European Golden Plover. On 26 September, 1,350 were counted around Tiree (John Bowler).

Approx 1,000 at Clochkiel Farm, The Laggan, Kintyre from 1 – 19 November included several 'grey-plumaged types' which were photographed here and at Westport Marsh (Eddie Maguire). The all-island count on Tiree 16 – 17 November found a total of 4,195 birds (John Bowler) and approx. 1,100 were at Ardlarach, Islay on 16 November (Malcolm Ogilvie).

Grey Plover. Three flying S at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 20 Sep were the first of autumn there (Eddie Maguire). Single juveniles were at two sites on Tiree on 19 September (John Bowler) and three were at Loch Gruinart on 17 September (Nick Wilkinson). Eight were at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve on 19 November (per Mary McGregor and David Mason).

Northern Lapwing. On 22 September, 119 were counted at Gruinart Flats, Islay (David Mason per Ian Brooke) and on 9 October, ca200 were at West Park-fergus, The Laggan, Kintyre (Eddie Maguire). A flock of 300 were at Westport Marsh, The Laggan, Kintyre from 5– 14 November and a flock 500+ were at Lintmill, The Laggan on 15 November (Eddie Maguire). A count at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve on 19 November found 551 birds (per Mary McGregor and David Mason).

Red Knot. Two flocks totalling 40 on 4 September were part of a total of 154 flying S at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory during the month (Eddie Maguire). On Islay, 38 were at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve on 14 September (James How) and the highest count on Tiree was 9 at Gott Bay on 8 September (Mark Fanshawe/Bill Allan). Five flew S at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 4 October (Eddie Maguire) and one at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 11 November was unusual for the time of year (Eddie Maguire).

Sanderling. The maximum day count at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory during September was 260 flying S on 8th (Eddie Maguire). The highest count on Tiree was 134 at Gott Bay on 19 September (John Bowler). Thirty were at Camas Cuil an t-Saimh, Iona, Mull on 15 September (Tom Callan) and 144 were counted at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve on 22 September (per James How). A flock of 90 were in Machrihanish Bay, Kintyre on 26 November (Eddie Maguire) and 64 were at Killinallan, Islay on 12 November (James How). The highest count on Tiree was 205 at Hough Bay on 5 November and different wintering leg-flagged birds had all been ringed in Iceland.

Little Stint. On Islay, 5 were at 'Smelly Corner',

Bridgend, Islay on 4 September, 4 were at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve on 7 September and 4 were at Gruinart Floods on 9 September (Jim Dickson). A juvenile was at Gott Bay 3 – 4 September with 3 there on 5th (Keith Gillon) and a juvenile was at Vaul Bay on 12 September (John Bowler). One was at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 26 September (Eddie Maguire).

White-rumped Sandpiper. An adult bird was on floods at The Reef, Tiree on 15 September (John Bowler).

Baird's Sandpiper. A juvenile found in a flock of Dunlin at Bridgend, Loch Indaal on Islay was seen 4 and 5 September (Jim Dickson). The last Islay record was on 5 Sept 1999. Argyll's second record this autumn of this American wader was found at Sandaig, Tiree on 26-27 September (Jim Dickson).

Pectoral Sandpiper. One found at Loch Gruinart on 19 September was still in the area on 20 September (Mick Durham/Bob Davidson). A juvenile found at Sandaig, Tiree on 24 September (Jim Dickson) was seen again later in the month at Sandaig, Barrapol and Balinoe. (John Bowler, Jim Dickson, Jerry Wilson). Juveniles were seen on Tiree at Balinoe on 2 October (Jerry Wilson), Barrapol on 5th (Jerry Wilson) and Sandaig on 14 October (Bill Allan).

Curlew Sandpiper. One photographed flying S at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 6 September was followed by a flock of 20+ on 10 September (a record number for this site) (Eddie Maguire).

After a single juvenile at Gott Bay on 1 September (Keith Gillon), numbers on Tiree built up to 11 juveniles at Loch a' Phuill on 15 September and a total of 22 juveniles at various sites on 19 September. Five were at Sandaig on 26 September (John Bowler). Two juveniles were in the Loch Gruinart area from 4 to 9 September and 5 were in the Loch Gruinart estuary on 13 September (Jim Dickson). A late bird was at Sandaig, Tiree 1 – 7 November (John Bowler).

Purple Sandpiper. A total of 32 at Crazy Golf, Dunoon on 15 November was the highest count for the autumn so far (George Newall) and numbers at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory peaked at 27 on 22 November (Eddie Maguire).

Dunlin. Approx. 700 were at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve on 22 September (per Ian Brooke) and on 11 October, 31 were counted in the Add Estuary (Jim Dickson).

Buff-breasted Sandpiper. A juvenile was found with Golden Plover at Barrapol, Tiree on 29

September (Jim Dickson & Bob Grove).

Ruff. Unprecedented numbers were recorded on Tiree mid-month. After one at Balephuill on 1 September (Keith Gillon), a large influx on 15 September involved 19 at Loch a' Phuill and 15 at The Reef, with 16 at the latter site on 16th and a bumper 33 at Loch a' Phuill on 18th. Birds were more scattered on 19 September, with some 21 seen at various sites, 18 were around the island on 24 September and 11 were still at Barrapol on 27 September (Jim Dickson/John Bowler). Large numbers were also recorded on Islay with a maximum of 25 at Loch Gruinart Flats RSPB Reserve on 25 September (James How) and 19 still there on 29 September (Michal Sur). A single flew S at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 25 September (Eddie Maguire). Recorded on Tiree throughout October including 9 on 16 October (1 at Barrapol, 6 at Middleton and 2 at Loch a' Phuill) and a late male was at Balephuill, Tiree on 2 November and then at Loch a' Phuill on 4th (John Bowler).

Jack Snipe. Two were at Barrapol, Tiree on 25 October (John Bowler).

Common Snipe. Higher counts on Tiree included 50 at Barrapol on 1 November and 45 at Loch Bhasapol on 18 November (John Bowler).

Woodcock. Approx. 100 birds were flushed by Snipe shooters on Tiree on both 16 and 17 November. Unprecedented numbers for the island (John Bowler) but perhaps giving some indication of the large numbers of this species present in Argyll in winter. Eight were at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve on 20 November (James How).

Black-tailed Godwit. Continuing passage on Tiree included 31 at Balephuill on 1-2 September (Keith Gillon), 14 at Loch a' Phuill on 8 September (Mark Fanshawe), 25 at Loch a' Phuill on 10 September (John Bowler) and 6 there on 26 September (Jim Dickson). Two at Loch a' Phuill on 2 October were the last on Tiree (John Bowler).

On Islay, 45 were at Gartmain on 9 September and 50 were at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve on 26 September (Bob Davidson). Two singles flew s at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 13 September (Eddie Maguire).

Bar-tailed Godwit. Peak counts on Tiree included 12 at Gott Bay and 17 at Balephetrish Bay on 1 September (Keith Gillon) and 16 at Gott Bay on 27 September (John Bowler). The peak count at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve was 239

on 22 September (per Ian Brooke). Two flew S at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 6 September with two more on 30 September (Eddie Maguire). A Darvic ringed bird at seen Kenovay and Loch a' Phuill, Tiree in August had been ringed at Sunnmøre, Norway (62.30N-06.00E). On 11 October, 14 were counted in the Add Estuary (Jim Dickson). A count at Gartbreck, Islay found 236 birds on 20 November (Bob Davidson).

Whimbrel. Singles flew S at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 7 and 11 September with 2 on 8 September (Eddie Maguire) and singles were seen at various locations on Tiree from 1 – 26 September with 2 at Traigh nan Gilean on 4 September (Keith Gillon/John Bowler). Singles were at Loch Gruinart on 4 September and two were at Frenchman's Rocks on 7 September (Jim Dickson) and 8 flew past Tayinloan in a strong N wind on 11 September (Katie Pendreigh). A single late bird was at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 17 October (Eddie Maguire).

Eurasian Curlew. The peak count at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree was 65 on 16 September (John Bowler) and the highest count at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve was 429 on 22 September (per Ian Brooke). The WeBS count at Holy Loch, Cowal found 170 on 20 September (George Newall). A flock 345 were at Westport Marsh, the Laggan, Kintyre on 5 November (Eddie Maguire).

Greenshank. Few recorded in September, with singles at Balinoe, Tiree on 21 September (John Bowler), 2 at Loch Gruinart on 13 September (Jim Dickson), three at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve on 17 September (Nick Wilkinson) and one at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 26 September (Eddie Maguire). A surprising total of five birds were found during the WeBS count at Loch Creran on 16 October (Robin Harvey).

Lesser Yellowlegs. An elusive juvenile found at Barrapol, Tiree on 15 October was seen later that day at Sandaig and Middleton and then again at Barrapol on 16 October (Toby Green/John Bowler). A description and photographs were provided and if accepted this will be a first for Tiree. One seen at Ulva Lagoons in 2000 was the first Argyll record for 50 years but since then Lesser Yellowlegs have been found in Argyll every other year (discuss!).

Common Sandpiper. A late migrant was at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 18 September (John Bowler).

Turnstone. On 26 September, 84 were counted at Otter Ferry, 58 at the spit and 26 at the fish farm and 52 were at Killail (Otter Ferry) on 17 October

(Tom Callan). Peak passage at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory during September was 67 flying S on 7th (Eddie Maguire), 58 were at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve on 19 November (per Mary McGregor and David Mason) and the highest count on Tiree was 35 at Kilmoluaig on 19 September (John Bowler).



Grey Phalarope MSBO Lifeboat station Eddie Maguire

Grey Phalarope. A total of three occurred at Machrihanish on 14 September. One flew S in early morning, one was photographed by old station (Eddie Maguire) and the other was 'spinning' at Machrihanish water mouth 1km NE of MSBO at 18:00hrs (Jimmy McCallum). One flew past Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 6 September (Eddie Maguire). Three more flew S at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory during the gale on 6 October and one flew S on 18 October, also during a gale (Eddie Maguire). Two flew west off Aird, Tiree on 18 October. One was chased ashore by 3 Great Skuas (it got away!) (John Bowler). Another wader that appears in Argyll more frequently than in the past.

One was seen from the ferry on the sea off Soa, Tiree on 28 September (John Bowler) and one was seen in the Sound of Islay on 25 November (per James How).

SKUAS, GULLS, TERNS and AUKS (see also Seabirds above):

Pomarine Skua. Two flew west past Aird, Tiree on the afternoon of 13 September (John Bowler). One was chasing an adult Kittiwake together with Great and Arctic skuas off Haunn, Mull on 6 September (Anand Prasad). A first winter flew s at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory during the gale on 6 October and a total of 12 were seen on 18 October - only one adult (pale) was noted; the

others included 10 first-winter types and an immature (second-winter type; photographed): the largest group was 4 (Eddie Maguire). A juvenile was seen between Mull and Coll on 15 October, 6 (1 full adult, 2 sub-adults and 3 juvs) flew west off Aird, Tiree on the morning of 18 October and three flew W there in the afternoon (Toby Green/John Bowler). A first winter flew S past Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 1 November (Eddie Maguire) and three juveniles were seen between Mull and Coll also on 1 November (Andy Robinson).

Arctic Skua. Five flying S at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 14 September were part of a total of 16 during the month (7 dark morph adults, 6 pale morph adults and 3 juveniles) (Eddie Maguire).

A bird grounded at Scarinish, Tiree on 3 September was helped back to the sea. Also on Tiree, 10 flew west past Aird in 2 hrs on the afternoon of 6 September, 14 west past Aird in 2 hrs on 13 September, 17 west past there in 2 hrs on the morning of 14 September (John Bowler) and 3 were off Baugh on 20 September (Graham Todd). The last on Tiree were 7 flying west off Aird on 18 October, 2 flying west off Aird on 19 October and one off Milton on 30 October (John Bowler).

On Islay, a dark morph bird was at Bruichladdich on 12 September (per Ian Brooke), two were seen during a 100 minute sea-watch at Frenchman's Rocks on 13 September (per P. Roberts) and one was in Salen Bay, Mull on 19 September (Anand Prasad).

Long-tailed Skua. A flock of 3 adult and 4 juvenile Long-tailed Skuas passing within 100m of the pier at Arinagour, Coll were the highlight of an excellent sea-watch on 10 September (Simon Wellock). One was seen from Arinagour Pier, Coll on 4 October (Jim Dickson/Ross Ahmed) and another juvenile was seen from the Oban-Coll ferry off Coll on 6 October (Bill Allan). A first-winter bird flew S at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 6 October (photographed / Eddie Maguire) and at least one, probably two, first-winters flew S on 18 October (Eddie Maguire).

Great Skua. A total of 28 flying S on seven dates in September included 8 on 12th and 10 on 13th (Eddie Maguire). A total of 10 birds were found by the gull roost at Machrihanish water mouth (1km NE of MBO) during a severe southerly gale on 28

September (Martin & Leticia Conway per Eddie Maguire). High counts on Tiree, included: 21 west past Aird in 2 hrs on 6 September, 8 west past Aird in 2 hrs on 7 September, 30 west past Aird in 2 hrs on the afternoon of 13 September and 22 west past Aird in 2 hrs on the morning of 14 September (John Bowler). Four were seen during a 100 minute sea-watch at Frenchman's Rocks, Islay on 13 September (per P. Roberts). Frequent records on Tiree in October included 16 flying west off Aird on the morning of 18 October and 13 there in the afternoon (John Bowler). Four singles flew S past Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 6 October and 2 singles flew S on 18 October. The last was a single 4 November (Eddie Maguire).

Mediterranean Gull. A first-winter bird flew S past Machrihanish Seabird Observatory at 10:28hrs on 6 September and another first-winter was found there later the same day (both were photographed and images confirmed that two individuals were certainly involved as the birds sported strikingly different eye masks) (Eddie Maguire / Iomhar McMillan / John McGlynn).

Two first-winter flew S at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 4 October (Eddie Maguire -both photographed).

Laughing Gull. A first-winter bird was seen and photographed on 14 September in Seil Sound off Torsa Island. (Graham Tucker/Ben Allen).

Little Gull. A juvenile flew S past Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 8 September (second record this autumn) (Eddie Maguire).

Sabine's Gull. A total of 5 were reported off Kintyre's west coast on 13 September including: two adults and 2 first-winter birds flying S off Machrihanish Seabird Observatory (Eddie Maguire / Rod Angus / Iomhar McMillan / Derrick Goode / John McGlynn / Alastair Stevenson / Perry and Judyth Smale) and a first winter flying S off Ronachan Point (Perry and Judyth Smale). An adult flew S off Machrihanish Seabird Observatory at 07:40hrs on 14 September (Rod Angus). There was also a good showing on Tiree, with a juvenile west past Aird in 2 hrs on 7 September, a juvenile on the shore at Traigh nan Gilean on 7 September (Mark Fanshawe), 3 juvs west past Aird on 13 September and a juvenile west past Aird on the morning of 14 September (John Bowler). Juveniles were recorded off Tiree; at Aird on 6 October and at Balevullin on 7 October and one was off Ardmore Point, Mull on 8 October (Jerry Wilson / John Bowler). A first-winter flew S at

Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 5 October (Rod Angus) and three (all first-winters) were found during the gale on 6 October (2 were photographed - Eddie Maguire *et al*).

Ring-billed Gull. The returning adult was seen again at Dunstaffnage and Oban Bay, on 4th, 10th and 17th October (Bob Grove per Jim Dickson) and a first winter was seen briefly at Loch an Eilein, Tiree on 16 November (John Bowler).



Possible Thayer's Gull, Dunbeg ©Jim Dickson

Thayer's Gull. On 12 November Bill Allan picked out an unusual a grey winged gull at Dunstaffnage Bay. He managed to get some photos, which were enough to make him think it might be a Thayer's Gull - a species not currently on the British List! It was still present on 13 November and has been seen, photographed and studied closely by several others (incl. Jim Dickson and Simon Pindar) since. Feedback from gull authorities, including some in the United States, has been mixed with some agreeing it is Thayer's and others saying it could be a Kumlien's Gull, which is often described as a hybrid between Thayer's and Iceland Gull.

In the past this controversial gull has been variously treated as a sub-species of Iceland Gull, Kumlien's Gull and even American Herring Gull. The American Ornithologists Union now considers it a separate species while the British Ornithologists Union still treats it and Kumlien's as races of Iceland Gull. This will doubtless be a continuing story and we'll keep you updated.

Iceland Gull. A very dark juvenile bird with all-dark tail and dark wing-tips feeding with 80 Herring Gulls behind a fishing boat off the SW tip of Lismore at 1400-1410hrs on 10 November was presumably the Thayer's/Kumlien's Gull seen later that week at Dunbeg? (John Bowler).

Glaucous Gull. A juvenile was photographed

flying south over Barrapol, Tiree on 27 October (John Bowler).

Kittiwake. Peak passage at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory occurred on 22 September with a total of *ca*1,700 birds flying S in 6hrs. Interestingly, the great majority, *ca* 70% or more were first-winter birds. A total of 1,130 flew S at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory in 3hrs on 1 November. Unusually, this mainly inshore passage occurred in a light S breeze (Eddie Maguire).

Little Tern. Two late birds were at Tayinloan, Kintyre on 29 September (Katie Pendreigh).

Sandwich Tern. The maximum count at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory during September was 12 on 19th (Eddie Maguire). Two were at Tayinloan on 28 September with one the following day (Katie Pendreigh). Five were at in Salen Bay, Mull on 19 September (Anand Prasad).

Arctic Tern. A total of 620 flying S at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory during September included 140 in 9 hrs on 13th and 191 on 24th (Eddie Maguire). There were also unusually high numbers on Tiree including: 33 SW past Hynish in 1 hr on the afternoon of 10 September, 150 SW past Hynish in 1 hr on 11 September, 108 west past Aird in 2 hrs on 14 September, 30 past Baugh (Graham Todd) and 54 SW past Hynish in 1hr (John Bowler) on 20 September, 30 feeding off Hynish on 25 September (John Bowler), 7 at Sorobaidh Bay and 8 at Hough Bay on 26 September (Jim Dickson). The WeBS count at Holy Loch, Cowal found one on 20 September (George Newall). Six were seen during a 100 minute sea-watch at Frenchman's Rocks, Islay on 13 September (per P. Roberts) and 9 were at Gartbreck on 15 September (Bob Davidson). Good numbers were seen off Tiree throughout October, including a total of 19 at Aird and Balevullin on 6 October, 2 at Milton on 28 October and a juvenile at Sorobaidh Bay on 31 October (John Bowler). At Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, 44 flew S in 8 hrs on 6 October (Eddie Maguire). Two late juveniles were at Hynish, Tiree on 1 November (John Bowler).

Common Tern. Four flew s past Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 24 September (Eddie Maguire).

Auk sp. At Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, a total of 750 (the majority Razorbills) flew S in 1hr on 26 October (Eddie Maguire).

Black Guillemot. Present daily at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, although the highest count on sea was just 7 on 4 November. Continues to be very scarce in Machrihanish Bay area and offshore

(Eddie Maguire).

Little Auk. One was feeding with other auks off Arinagour, Coll on 15 November (John Bowler).

Puffin. One was at Sorobaidh Bay on 1 September (Keith Gillon), 2 flew past Hynish on 10 September and 2 past Hynish on 11 September (John Bowler). Two were seen during a 100 minute sea-watch at Frenchman's Rocks, Islay on 12 September (per P. Roberts).

DOVES, OWLS, WOODPECKERS etc.:

Rock Dove. On 6 October, 330 were counted on a cut arable silage field at Clachan, Tiree (John Bowler).

Turtle Dove. A very confiding 1st-winter bird was at Sandaig, Tiree on 17 October (John Bowler).

Short-eared Owl. One was hunting at dusk along the roadside at Balephuill, Tiree on 19 October (John Bowler).

Common Kingfisher. One was seen well at Machrihanish Water, Kintyre on 23 September (Charles Robertson *et al* per Eddie Maguire). One flew over Ardkinglas Bay, Loch Fyne on 6 November (Glyn Toplis) and one was seen on the Lusragan Burn, Connel on 9 November (probably the first there since Nov/Dec 2009) (Mike Harrison).

Hoopoe. One was at Balemartine, Tiree on 30 September (Jim Dickson). The long staying bird that arrived near Duror (just N of the Argyll recording area) on 6 September was last seen on 14 September and, as far as we know, never did make it across the border to Argyll... (Tom & Allison McCallum)



Hoopoe at Balemartine, Tiree ©Jim Dickson

PASSERINES:

Short-toed Lark. A bird found and photo-

graphed on Oronsay by Mike Peacock on 1 Oct was brought in by the strong southerly air flow at this time (per Jim Dickson). If accepted this will be only the second Argyll record.

Sand Martin. A total of 28 flew s past Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 28 September (Eddie Maguire). Birds hung on late on Tiree with one at Barrapol on 26 September, two at Balemartine on 29 September and one still there on 30 September (Jim Dickson).

Barn Swallow. Small numbers on Tiree at the end of the month included two at Balephuill on 30 September (John Bowler). Two were at Bruichladdich, Islay on 27 September (George Jackson) and two late birds were at Tayinloan, Kintyre on 3 October (Katie Pendreigh). There were still at least 7 around Treshnish House, Mull on 30 September (Anand Prasad). Birds remained late on Tiree (or late passage?) with the last two at Balemartine on 18 October (John Bowler). A single very late bird came in off the sea at Machrihanish on 29 November (Eddie Maguire).

House Martin. A total of 12 flew s past Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 28 September (Eddie Maguire).

Meadow Pipit. More were about on Tiree than normal (for the time of year) in the mild conditions with 30 around island on 2 November (John Bowler).

Pied Wagtail. The highest count of passage birds on Tiree was 75 coming to roost at Balephuill on 30 September (John Bowler).

White Wagtail. The maximum day count of migrants at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory was 45 in 6hrs on 9 September. A few (5) were still around on 29 September (Eddie Maguire) and one was at Tayinloan, Kintyre on 25 September (Katie Pendreigh). Small number were seen on Tiree including 5 at Traigh Bhagh on 15 September (Jim Dickson).

Dunnock. Good numbers on Tiree, including 3 at Carnan Mor on 2 October were probably migrants (John Bowler).

Common Nightingale. One found (and photographed) at Vault, Tiree on 3 September (Keith Gillon) was seen again on 4th, 5th and 8th (Mark Fanshawe/Bill Allan/John Bowler). A rare bird anywhere in the west of Scotland this is only the fourth record for Argyll.

Black Redstart. An immature bird was seen at Hynish 25-26 October (Simon Wellock).

Common Redstart. A splendid male bird at Cornaigbeg, Tiree 13-15 October was watched flying

up high and then heading south on 15th (Bill Allan).

Whinchat. Two late female/juveniles were at Kilfinan Bay, Cowal on 22 September (Tom Callan) and one was at Calgary, Mull on 28 September (per Anand Prasad).

Common Stonechat. Six were at Ulva Lagoons, Loch Sween on 7 October (Tom Callan).

Northern Wheatear including 'Greenland' Wheatear. Many birds seen on Tiree during September were thought to be of the Greenland race *leucorhoa* (i.e. large and dark with many orangey tones above and below). These included 2 at Hynish and one at Beinn Hough on 1 September, 4 at Loch a' Phuill on 4 September through to 6 around east Tiree on 26 September and one at Gott Bay on 27 September (John Bowler). One Northern Wheatear was at Gartmain, Islay on 28 September (per Ian Brooke) and 3 were at Tayinloan, Kintyre on 29 September (Katie Pendreigh). Singles at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 8 dates during October with latest on 25th (Eddie Maguire).

'Greenland' Wheatear *leucorhoa*. Most Wheatears seen on Tiree throughout October were thought to be this race including the last at The Reef on 26 October (John Bowler).

Redwing. The first reported so far were four at Port Charlotte, Islay on 27 September (Bob Davidson).

Northern Wheatear. Good numbers at Keillbeg, Loch na Cille, Mid-Argyll on 19 July included at least 6 juveniles (Tom Callan).

Ring Ouzel. Single first winter birds were with other thrushes on Tiree, at Balephuill on 7 November and at Carnan Mor on 20 November (John Bowler).

Blackbird. An obvious arrival was noted in Kintyre from 5 – 10 November, with many around Machrihanish village and throughout The Laggan. On 10 November, a drive around the perimeter of Campbeltown Airport revealed a total of at least 180 birds (many small flocks of 6-10 noted and a larger gathering of about 18 birds near West Park-fergus) (Eddie Maguire). Very large numbers were also reported on Tiree with some 500 birds around the island on 16-17 November (John Bowler). A similar pattern was reported in Cowal and Mid-Argyll and 20 or so were at Otter Ferry on 8 November (Tom Callan). And on Islay, approx. 100 were at Gleann Mor on 9 November (Bob

Davidson). Although there is always a notable influx of Blackbirds at this time numbers do seem to have been larger than usual.

Fieldfare. Small numbers on Tiree early in the month then 300+ around the island on 26 October (John Bowler). Approx. 175 were with Redwings in a mixed flock of 350 at Ardlamont Point, Cowal on 18 October (Tom Callan). A large arrival was seen at The Laggan, Kintyre from 5 November, with many hundreds scattered around the periphery of Campbeltown Airport and surrounding farmlands. Around 800 were present at the airport on 9 November and what was thought to be a pre-roost assembly of this species (and Redwing) at Aros Moss just before dusk on the 10 November turned into a spectacular sight. The birds were silent, silhouetted like blankets of leaves on the tops of all the extensive (nearly bare) willow scrub on the Moss. An estimated 1,500 birds suddenly started calling and all took off simultaneously, climbing high into an almost clear but darkening sky; presumably the commencement of nocturnal migration (Eddie Maguire).

Approx. 500 were in a mixed flock with Redwings at Rockside, Islay on 26 November (Bob Davidson). The influx on Tiree in late October continued with on Tiree with some 600 birds around the island on 16-17 November (John Bowler). About 10 were enjoying wild cherries at the top of Loch Creran during the WeBS count on 25 November (Robin Harvey).

Redwing. Numbers on Tiree built up to *ca*500 around the island on 26 October (John Bowler). Approx. 175 were with Fieldfares in a mixed flock of 350 at Ardlamont Point, Cowal on 18 October (Tom Callan). An obvious arrival took place in Kintyre from 5 November with hundreds at The Laggan, but certainly not as abundant as Fieldfare this autumn (Eddie Maguire). Similar comments about the shortage of Redwings were made by observers in Cowal and Mid-Argyll. However a total of 460 were seen at Raslie Burn, Slockavullin, Mid-Argyll on 9 November (Jim Dickson). And on Tiree, some 1,200 birds were around the island on 16-17 November (John Bowler).

Mistle Thrush. A mixed flock of thrushes at Otter Ferry on 4 November included 24 Mistle Thrushes (Tom Callan).

Grasshopper Warbler. A late bird was at Balephuill, Tiree on 15 September (John Bowler).

Sedge Warbler. Two were at Balephuill, Tiree

from 9 to 18 September (John Bowler).

Blyth's Reed Warbler. One was seen and photographed at Balephuill, Tiree by John Bowler, 19 Sept. This is only the second record for Argyll and our first in autumn, if accepted by the BBRC. It was found in the same location as the only other Argyll record, a spring bird on 3 June 2008 seen by the same observer.

Blackcap. Males and females were recorded at various sites on Tiree throughout the month including up to 6 (at Balephuill and Carnan Mor) on 11 September (John Bowler/Jim Dickson). Up to 4 seen on various dates and at various locations on Tiree throughout the month (John Bowler). A male was at Otter Ferry on 2 October (Tom Callan). Males were reported at Inveraray on 5 November (Robin Harvey) and Ardfarn, Mid-Argyll on 27/28 November (Julia Randall) and singles were found at various locations around Tiree 1 – 21 November (John Bowler).

Garden Warbler. Singles were at Balephuill, Tiree on 2 September (John Bowler) and at Vaul, Tiree on 4 sep (Keith Gillon).

Common Whitethroat. A late bird was at Balephuill, Tiree on 24-25 September (John Bowler).

Yellow-browed Warbler. One was at Main Road Farm, Balephuill, Tiree on 26 October (Jim Dickson).

Common Chiffchaff. Birds were seen in ones and twos at various sites on Tiree during the month including an *abietinus*-type bird at Balephuill on 25, 28 and 29 September and two there on 26-27 September. A fair showing on Tiree during October, including 9 at Balephuill on 1 October and green-grey *abietinus*-type birds at Balephuill on 25 and 27 October and *abietinus*-type birds were at Balephuill on 5 -6 November and at Balephetrish Hill on 21 November (John Bowler).

Willow Warbler. Late birds were reported on Tiree up to 28 September (one at Vaul – Jim Dickson). The last on Tiree was a juvenile at Balephuill on 23 October (John Bowler).

Goldcrest. A fair showing on Tiree including 4 at Balephuill on 27 October (John Bowler).

Pied Flycatcher. An immature bird was at Carnan Mor, Tiree 14-15 October (John Bowler).

Long-tailed Tit. Twenty were seen at Pier House, Otter Ferry, Cowal on 2 October (Tom Callan).

Eurasian Nuthatch. After a short break the birds at Ardkinglas, Loch Fyne re-appeared on 1 September (Glyn Toplis). One reported on bird

feeder at Melfort Timeshare Village, Mid-Argyll on 27 October was the first record for this area (Angela McAllister) and one or possibly two were still present at Ballimore (Otter Ferry) Cowal in the first half of October (per Tom Callan).

Brown Shrike. A first winter bird near to his house at Balephuill on Tiree was an exceptional find by John Bowler. It was found on 22 October and was present there until 7 November. It re-appeared briefly at Carnan Mor on 20 November (John Bowler).

This will not only be the first record for Argyll, if accepted, but is an extreme rarity in Britain and Ireland with only 10 or so records. This is the fifth record for Scotland, following three in Shetland and one in the Outer Hebrides (the latter in 2008). Amazing they appear in Britain at all as they breed in the E of Russian, China and Japan and normally migrate to south Asia!

Red-backed Shrike. A 1st-winter bird was present at Kilkenneth, Tiree 9-11 October (found by Bill Allan). Our first report since one also on Tiree in Sept 2007.

Eurasian Jay. Unusual numbers of Jays have been reported in Argyll this autumn. They always appear in some numbers at this time of year but a group of eight flying over Rhugarbh Croft, Appin on 6 October was the most Mary Gregory could remember seeing there. Robin Harvey also saw 8 together at Benderloch at about this time. Then, on 10 October, 16 were counted by Morag Rea, flying one after another into the trees near Barrahormid farm (Loch Sween) and heading towards Tainish. This is the **largest number of Jays ever reported in one place in Argyll** since records began! Interestingly Jim Dickson saw 7 at the same place on 15 October. There were also two records on Mull (where Jays are quite scarce) at this time (Danny Brooks) and they were recorded at several locations in Cowal in ones and twos 3 – 18 October (Tom Callan). We'd like to hear from anyone else who has seen larger than usual numbers of Jays.

Magpie. One was reported at Port Askaig, Islay on 8 September (Donald James MacPhe) and one was on peanuts at Crispie (NW of Portavadie), Cowal on 29 September (per Tom Callan).

Red-billed Chough. Fifty were counted at Ardnave, Islay on 9 November (James How and Mary McGregor). **Western Jackdaw.** Four were seen at Sorisdale, Coll (where the species is very scarce) on 2 October (Jim Dickson).

Hooded Crow. A mixed flock of at least 140, including Hybrid and Carrion Crows, was at Ardlamont Bay, Cowal on 18 October (Tom Callan). **Rose-coloured Starling.** A juvenile bird was found and photographed at Fidden, Mull on 26 September (Mike Wagemakers). **Brambling.** One was seen briefly at Balephuill, Tiree on 26 September. Singles were at Carnan Mor on 14 October, Kilkenneth on 24th with Twite at Loch a' Phuill on 27th and Vaul on 28th. Four were at Carnan Mor on 25 October (Toby Green/John Bowler). A female type/first-winter was seen (and photographed) regularly at the Machrihanish Seabird Observatory feeding station 7 – 23 November (Eddie Maguire). Two males were at Balephuill, Tiree on 4 November (John Bowler). Two were feeding with Chaffinches under Beech trees on the old Dunoon Road, Ardkinglas, Loch Fyne on 6 November (Glyn Toplis)

Greenfinch. The maximum count at the feeding station at Machrihanish Seabird was only 23 on 4 September (Eddie Maguire).

Goldfinch. A flock of *ca*100 (mainly juveniles) were at Ardlanish Bay, Mull on 11 September together with a few Linnets and Twite (Tom Callan), at least 80 were at Coull Farm, Islay on 28 September (per Ian Brooke), about 60 were in Black Park field, Treshnish, Mull on 10 September (Anand Prasad) and a flock of 40 or more were at Tullochgorm (Minard), Mid-Argyll on 20 September (Paul Daw). A flock of 45 were feeding in an 'organic' field at Evanachan, Cowal on 2 October (Tom Callan) and 38 were counted in the Add Estuary on 11 October (Jim Dickson).

Linnet. After 1 October, when 250 were at Mannal, numbers on Tiree declined during the month (John Bowler). A flock of 170 in a turnip field by Clochkiel Farm, The Laggan, Kintyre on 25 October was the largest gathering seen in the area for a long time (Eddie Maguire).

Twite. The highest count on Tiree in September was 160 on Hough machair on 4th (John Bowler), a flock of about 60 was at Black Park field, Calgary, Mull on 25 September (per Anand Prasad) and a flock of *ca* 50 were at Tayinloan, Kintyre on 23 September (Katie Pendreigh). The maximum count at the feeding station at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory to mid-month was only 30 on 16 September (Eddie Maguire). The highest count on Tiree in October was 170 at Balephetrish on 18th (John Bowler). A total of 150 were trapped and colour-ringed at Machri-

hanish Seabird Observatory during October (Eddie Maguire). So far this autumn 17 Machrihanish Seabird Observatory colour-ringed birds have been reported. These include sightings as far apart as Lothian, Northumberland, Essex and Co Wexford (Eddie Maguire). The largest flock on Tiree was 120 at Barrapol on 16 November (John Bowler), *ca*300 were at Kinnabus, Oa, Islay on 30 November (per David Wood) and five were seen in the Add Estuary on 9 November (Jim Dickson).

Lesser Redpoll. A flock of 35 were seen at Achamore, Coll on 2 October (Jim Dickson).

Common Crossbill. Four were feeding on cones in Ardkinglas Woodland Garden, Loch Fyne on 6 November (Glyn Toplis).

Common Rosefinch. A fine juvenile was at Balephuill, Tiree from 19 to 24 September with another there briefly on 30 September (John Bowler).

Lapland Bunting. Singles were seen on Tiree at Sandaig on 19 September, The Reef on 26 September and The Green on 28 September (John Bowler/Jim Dickson). On Islay, 11 were reported at Killinallan Gate on 18 and 20 September (Nick Wilkinson). A very vocal bird was with Twite at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree and another was calling in flight south over Balephuill both on 21 November (John Bowler).

Snow Bunting. One was at Mannal, Tiree on 25 sep and 3 at Sandaig on 28 September (Jim Dickson). On Islay, 2 were reported at Sanaigmore on 17 September (Nick Wilkinson).

A good showing on Tiree during October included: 6 at Hynish on 6th, a flock of 25 at Beinn Hough on 9th and 15 at Traigh nan Gilean on 22 October (Jerry Wilson /John Bowler). A male in fresh winter plumage was photographed at Kildalloig near the mouth of Campbeltown Loch on 14 October (Agnes Stewart/Ian Teesdale).

One was seen (and photographed) regularly at the Machrihanish Seabird Observatory car park 4 – 11 November (Eddie Maguire). Four were at Gott Bay, Tiree on 1 November, one was at Loch an Eilein on 7 November (John Bowler) and two were at Machir Bay, Islay on 5 November (Bob Davidson).

Other sightings:

A **Clouded Yellow** butterfly was seen at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory on 29 September (Eddie Maguire).

Paul Daw

Articles for the March issue of the *Eider*
should with the Editor before the 24th
February 2012

**Officials and Committee of the Argyll Bird Club
(2010/2011)**

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

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The mystery bird is a drake **Gadwall** photographed by Mike Harrison on Loch Etive, at Connel November 2011



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 week of March, June, September and December. Articles for each issue must be with the editor before the 24th day of the month prior to publication. However, it greatly helps if material can be submitted well before these deadline dates. Contributions are accepted in the order they are received, which may result in some late submissions being held over until the next issue.

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

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

More about the Argyll Bird Club

The club was established in 1985. 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).