

RECENT REPORTS March 2016

31 March: Rooks are sometimes thought of as ugly birds but this individual at Loch Gilp, Mid-Argyll today was looking at its best in fresh breeding plumage (Jim Dickson).



Rook - Loch Gilp, Mid-Argyll 31 Mar (Jim Dickson).

A drake **Mandarin Duck** has been seen on the River Sorn at the Woollen Mill (near Bridgend), Islay (per Ian Brooke). As far as we know this is a first for the island. Presumably introduced by someone, although there are past records from Orkney and Shetland of individuals that one assumes were wandering birds that had arrived 'under their own steam'. Most likely from the UK mainland, although one was found that had been ringed in The Netherlands.

The first **Sandwich Tern** of the year at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, Kintyre appeared offshore early this afternoon (Eddie Maguire /Iomhar McMillan/Rab Morton).



Sandwich Tern – MSBO, Kintyre 31 Mar (Eddie Maguire).

30 March: A Greenshank and a breeding plumaged Black-tailed Godwit were at Loch Gruinart, RSPB Reserve today (Roger Broad).

A flock of about 60 **Redwings** drew attention to themselves by their chattering as they perched in trees near Connel, Mid-Argyll, this morning (Mike Harrison).

A **Sandwich Tern** was at Bruichladdich, Islay today and the first winter **Glaucous Gull** is still at Machir Bay (Val Wilson/David Clugston per Ian Brooke).

29 March: A male Ring Ouzel landed on crag beside John, near Lochan Add (nr. Loch Leathan), Mid-Argyll this morning, then took off quickly, alarming (John Halliday).

Black-tailed Godwit in full breeding plumage in front of old hide at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve, Islay this evening ('Islay Birders'). Also 3 **Snow Buntings** seen by a visitor on the

shoreline/strand at Uiskentuie, Loch Indaal (Wayne Hall per Ian Brooke).

34 **Pale-bellied Brent Geese** feeding close to the shoreline at Keils, Jura today, included a small group feeding closely around a pair of feeding Mute Swans (Roger Broad).

First **Sand Martins** reported at Killiechronan, Mull this morning (Arthur Brown per Alan Spellman).

A couple of images from Poltalloch Farm (Barsloisnoch – Moine Mhor). The Starling was giving a very distinct Tawny Owl 'kewick' call!



Redwing - Poltalloch Farm (Moine Mhor), Mid-Argyll 29 Mar (Jim Dickson).



Common Starling - Poltalloch Farm (Moine Mhor), Mid-Argyll 29 Mar (Jim Dickson).

28 March: A **Barn Swallow** was at Balvicar, Seil Island, Mid-Argyll today and a **Common Chiffchaff** at Bardrishaig, Luing (David Jardine).

From the ferry in West Loch Tarbert heading to Islay today: 7 **Great Northern Divers**, 1 **Black-throated Diver** and one **Slavonian Grebe** (Roger Broad).

On Islay today: an **Osprey** at Loch nan Cadhan (Gary Turnbull per Ian Brooke) and a **Barn Swallow** at Blackrock (Peter Gill per Ian Brooke).

A **Barn Swallow** was at Oyster farm, Gruinart, Islay and a **Richardson's Canada Goose** at Carnain (Val Wilson/David Clugston). And six **Sand Martins** were at Loch Leathan (nr.

Lochgilphead), Mid-Argyll (John Halliday).

A **Common Kingfisher** was seen at Loch Cuin, Dervaig, Mull today and twelve **Purple Sandpipers** on Staffa (Arthur Brown per Alan Spellman).

Two **Whooper Swans** and a single **Greenshank** at the Add Estuary, Mid-Argyll this morning (Jim Dickson).

At Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, Kintyre today: 10 **Purple Sandpipers** and 2 **White Wagtails** (Eddie Maguire).



Purple Sandpiper – MSBO, Kintyre 28 Mar (Eddie Maguire).

27 March: A **Common Chiffchaff** was singing near Minard Castle, Mid-Argyll at 09:00 this morning (Paul Daw) and a **Sand Martin** was at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve today (James How per Ian Brooke). Four **Sand Martins** over Loch Leathan, (nr. Lochgilphead), Mid-Argyll in the evening (Blair Urquhart).

A **Northern Wheatear** was at Caravan site, Carsaig Bay (Tayvallich) today (Dougie Menzies - Bute)

This **Reed Bunting** has been coming to bird feeders in Oban, Mid-Argyll recently (Linda Kerr per Richard Wesley). Mike Harrison had up to three **Reed Buntings** feeding on the ground below the bird table in his garden at Connel, Mid-Argyll in Jan. Maybe they'll become garden bird regulars in future?



Reed Bunting - Oban, Mid-Argyll Mar 2016 (Linda Kerr).

26 March: Two **Magpies** have been seen together in Furnace, Mid-Argyll during the past week (Mike & Sybil Masters) and a **Magpie** appeared in a garden at Southend, Kintyre today at 16:00hrs (Grant/Georgie Edmondson). Per Eddie Maguire, who says, "This reinforces my long held belief that this species moves between N Ireland and Scotland in the early spring".

It looks as though the customary spring wandering of Magpies in Argyll is underway (see *Magpies in Argyll* under the 'Publications' tab) – do let us know of any further Magpies seen in Argyll.

In Kintyre today: the first-winter **Iceland Gull** was hanging around the Old lifeboat station by Machrihanish Seabird Observatory and geese at West Parkfergus, The Laggan included 300+ **Greylag Geese**, 2 **Pale-bellied Brent Geese** and a single **Pink-footed Goose** (Eddie Maguire / Iomhar McMillan).



Pale-bellied Brent Geese – The Laggan, Kintyre 26 Mar (Eddie Maguire).

This **Muscovy Duck** photographed from the lay by at Furnace, Mid-Argyll this morning was possibly the same individual as one seen there on 08 Jun 2015 (Andy Craven).



Muscovy Duck - Furnace, Mid-Argyll 26 Mar (Andy Craven).

25 March: On Islay today, a male **Northern Wheatear** was seen at Kilchiaran this morning (Bob Davison per Ian Brooke) and another at **Wheatear** at Risabus on the Oa (Dave Robinson per Ian Brooke).

24 March: At last... a bit of westerly and a wee bit of action at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, Kintyre 09:00-15:00hrs (SE force 4 am / W force 4 pm). A drake **Velvet Scoter** flying S with 4 **Common Scoters** (10:58) and a first-winter **Iceland Gull** (14:45-15:00) were the stars of the day. Also, a flock of *ca* 60 **Sanderlings** flying S, 2 **White Wagtails** on the point and 360 **Greylag Geese** on pasture at West Machrihanish (Eddie Maguire).



Iceland Gull – MSBO, Kintyre 24 Mar (Eddie Maguire).



Iceland Gull – MSBO, Kintyre 24 Mar (Eddie Maguire).



Velvet Scoter with Common Scoters – MSBO, Kintyre 24 Mar (Eddie Maguire).



Greylag Geese – West Machrihanish, Kintyre 24 Mar (Eddie Maguire).

A **Northern Wheatear** was seen near Loch Spelve, Mull this afternoon, along with 5 **Common Eider** (Joe Margetts per Alan Spellman).
First **Lesser Black-backed Gull** on Oronsay, Colonsay today (Morgan Vaughan).



Lesser Black-backed Gull – Oronsay 24 Mar (Morgan Vaughan).
A **Lesser Redpoll** at feeders in Ormsary, Mid-Argyll today (Errol Crutchfield).



Lesser Redpoll - Ormsary, Mid-Argyll 24 Mar (Errol Crutchfield).
Around the Moine Mhor/Add Estuary today: 8 **Greenland White-fronted Geese**, 12 **Lesser-black backed Gulls**, 4 **Goosanders** and 20 **Redwings** (Andy Craven) and now 2 **Greenshanks** at the Add Estuary (Jim Dickson).



Greenland White-fronted Geese – Barsloisnoch (Moine Mhor), Mid-Argyll 24 Mar (Andy Craven).

23 March: A **Northern Wheatear** was reported from The Ross of Mull today – first in Argyll so far (Tony Jeffree per Alan Spellman).

At the Add Estuary, Mid-Argyll today a single **Greenshank**, a male **Hen Harrier** and a 'probable' (distant) **Scandinavian Rock Pipit** (Jim Dickson).

Members of the tit family looking their best at Cairnbaan today:



Long-tailed Tit – Cairnbaan, Mid-Argyll 23 Mar (Jim Dickson).



Blue Tit – Cairnbaan, Mid-Argyll 23 Mar (Jim Dickson).



Coal Tit – Cairnbaan, Mid-Argyll 23 Mar (Jim Dickson).

22 March: In Dunoon today: 26 **Purple Sandpipers** at the Crazy Golf (George Newall). There has been a report of a **Common Cuckoo** calling at Springbank (between Bridgend and Bowmore), Islay today... (Alistair Hutchison per Ian Brooke).

21 March: At Poltalloch/Barsloisnoch (Moine Mhor), Mid-Argyll this morning: 3 **Barnacle Geese** and 2 **Pink-footed Geese** in with the Greylag/Canada flock (Jim Dickson).

19 March: 27 **Whooper Swans** on the mud at head of Loch Gilp, Mid-Argyll this morning. Counted at Westport marsh (nr Campbeltown), Kintyre this afternoon: 6 **Common Shelducks**, 110 **Wigeon**, 142 **Teal**, a pair of **Tufted Ducks**, 4 **Little Grebes**, 6 **Moorhens**, 39 **Lapwings** and 42 **Curlews** (Jim Dickson).

A **Blue Tit** that keeps picking a fight with his reflection in a car window and wing mirror at St Catherine's, Cowal (Graham Thomas).



Blue Tit admiring its reflection - St Catherine's, Cowal 19 Mar (Graham Thomas).



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18 March: A **Black-throated Diver** photographed off Machrihanish SBO, Kintyre today appeared to show some features of **Pacific Diver** (*Gavia pacifica*), however in difficult light conditions only one reasonable photograph was obtained (Eddie Maguire).



'diver species'- MSBO, Kintyre 18 Mar (Eddie Maguire).

A n/br winter-plumage **Red-necked Grebe** today (12 noon) at Loch Crinan, Mid-Argyll NR 785 955 (first seen from the road at NR 808 952 ca 1.5 miles away) and last seen swimming N past Eilean nan Coinean at 13:00: always 250-300 metres off-shore. Also 51 **Whooper Swans** on mud at Loch Crinan and another 20 flying over heading NW (Jim Dickson).



Red-necked Grebe - Loch Crinan, Mid-Argyll 18 Mar (Jim Dickson).



Red-necked Grebe - Loch Crinan, Mid-Argyll 18 Mar (Jim Dickson).



Red-necked Grebe - Loch Crinan, Mid-Argyll 18 Mar (Jim Dickson).

Message from Harry Scott : “Just a quick note to say that the yellow **T82 darvic ringed Oystercatcher** you sighted near Lochgilphead on 14th Dec 2015 has arrived back safely here in Deeside. It was sighted last night at our spring roost site.” (per Jim Dickson).

17 March: A flock of 39 **Whooper Swans** over Lochgilphead, Mid-Argyll at 10:40 in low cloud were later seen again grounded nearby at Loch Crinan (Jim Dickson).



Coal Tit – Cairnbaan, Mid-Argyll 16 Mar (Jim Dickson).



Siskin – Cairnbaan, Mid-Argyll 17 Mar (Jim Dickson).

16 March: An amazing number of **White Wagtails** arrived at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, Kintyre today. A total of 10-12 were around the point all morning: this is unprecedented for mid March and would be more normal for passage numbers here during mid-late April. This early passage is obviously influenced by high pressure over the UK. In addition, at least 10 **Purple Sandpipers** were nearby and *ca.* 40 **Common Eiders** by the old Lifeboat Station (Eddie Maguire / Iomhar McMillan).



White Wagtail – Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, Kintyre 16 Mar (Eddie Maguire).



White Wagtails – Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, Kintyre 16 Mar (Eddie Maguire).



Common Eider - Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, Kintyre 16 Mar (Eddie Maguire).

The **Red-necked Grebe** off Bowmore at Loch Indaal, Islay was seen again today, also 6 **Slavonian Grebes** (Peter Roberts per Ian Brooke).

A **Grey Wagtail** was seen visiting a garden pond in Connel (Mid-Argyll), the first in 25 years. A male **Blackbird** wearing a metal ring has been around the same garden for the last few days. Photographs of the ring show that it is not the Norwegian bird which was here earlier in the winter (see 27 December 2015 below) but more photos will be needed before the ring can be identified. A male **Yellowhammer** has been singing nearby on the recent sunny mornings (Mike Harrison).

15 March: A single **Greenshank** at the head of Loch Feochan, Mid-Argyll (Jim Dickson). With high pressure firmly in charge, a 6hr sea-watch at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, Kintyre delivered an early migrant - an immaculate male **White Wagtail** that fled N a few seconds after we identified it! Also flying north were 7 **Curlews** and an adult **Lesser Black-backed Gull**. **Ringed Plovers** were displaying continuously in the sunshine and the first 2 **Twite** (including an MSBO autumn 2014 colour ringed bird) appeared at the feeding station (Eddie Maguire / Iomhar McMillan).

14 March: A **Common Chiffchaff** and 3 **Goldcrests** were at Balephuill, Tiree today (Janet Bowler).

At Loch Caolisport, Mid-Argyll today: 2 **Red-throated Divers**, 13 **Black-throated Divers**, and an immature **Golden Eagle**. In the Skipness area, Kintyre: 2 **Black-throated Divers**, 6 **Great Northern Divers**, 4 **Ringed Plovers**, a **Sparrowhawk**, a **Great Spotted Woodpecker**, 75 **Fieldfares**, 3 **Long-tailed Tits** and 35 **House Sparrows** (Jim Dickson).

A **Red-throated Diver** heard flying over Tullochgorm (Minard), Mid-Argyll calling this morning (Paul Daw).

13 March: Highlight of today's WeBS counts were: a **Great Crested Grebe** at Airds Bay, Taynuilt on Loch Etive, Mid-Argyll (Mike Harrison), a **Greenshank** at Loch Scotnish (Loch Sween), Mid-Argyll (Paul Daw) and a new juvenile **Glaucous Gull** at Add Estuary/Loch Crinan, Mid-Argyll (Jim Dickson).

A **Goldcrest** at Balephuill, Tiree was first of spring (Janet Bowler).

At Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, Kintyre the only significant observations during a 2 hr watch this afternoon were a female **Long-tailed Duck** and a first-winter female **Merlin** (Eddie Maguire).



Long-tailed Duck – MSBO, Kintyre 13 Mar (Eddie Maguire).

Lots of song and activity around Duntrune, Loch Crinan, Mid-Argyll today, including two pairs of **Yellowhammers**, 8+ singing **Song Thrushes**, 4 **Mistle Thrushes**, a pair of **Bullfinches**, 4 **Greenfinches**, a **Great Spotted Woodpecker** and 2 **Pied Wagtails** (Jim Dickson).



Song Thrush - Duntrune, Mid-Argyll 13 Mar (Jim Dickson).



Mistle Thrush - Duntrune, Mid-Argyll 13 Mar (Jim Dickson).



Female Bullfinch - Duntrune, Mid-Argyll 13 Mar (Jim Dickson).

12 March: Panicking **Barnacle Geese** alerted Ewan to the presence of an **Osprey** flying north over Danna, Loch Sween, Mid-Argyll at 08:00 this morning. Another was seen doing the same at 12:00 (Ewan Halley). Our first report this spring.

Jim found no Ospreys at Loch Gilp or the Add Estuary this afternoon but he got these nice photos, despite the poor light:



Little Grebe – Loch Gilp, Mid-Argyll 12 Mar (Jim Dickson).



Common Goldeneye – Loch Gilp, Mid-Argyll 12 Mar (Jim Dickson).

11 March: Caught while photographing a **Common Gull** in unusual plumage at Campbeltown Loch 13:00-14:00hrs this afternoon, the **leucistic adult Herring Gull** appeared on the screen!0 Also, 32 **Wigeon** and 11 **Teal** by the entrance of the loch (S bank) (Eddie Maguire).



Common Gull with leucistic adult Herring Gull Campbeltown Loch, Kintyre 11 Mar (Eddie Maguire).

09 March: Most of the **Argyll WeBS Counts for February 2016** are now in and have been added to the website. We are happy to say the Islay counts have been posted promptly on the BTO WeBS Count website. This means we are now able to include the counts for Loch Indaal, Loch Gruinart and Loch Gruinart Floods in the table, which increases its value and interest considerably. To accommodate them we have temporarily deleted columns for some sites that have not been counted recently. These will be reinstated should counts for them recommence. We are also hoping to include counts for The Strand, Colonsay shortly. **The full tables of counts for February 2016 can be found under the WeBS Count tab.**

In Kintyre: 7 **Whooper Swans** (including a first-winter) were by the east pool at The Strath, The Laggan, Campbeltown this afternoon. Also, 18 **Wigeon** were feeding on the south bank at the entrance to Campbeltown Loch along with **Common Shelducks**, 2 **Little Grebes**, 70 **Oystercatchers** and 11 **Turnstones** (Eddie Maguire).



Wigeon - Campbeltown Loch, Kintyre 09 Mar (Eddie Maguire).



Common Shelducks - Campbeltown Loch, Kintyre 09 Mar (Eddie Maguire).

08 March: An adult **Mediterranean Gull** coming into summer plumage was seen at Lochgilphead at 08:45 today (Jon Close).

07 March: In Dunoon this morning: 24 **Purple Sandpipers** and 38 **Turnstones** at the Crazy Golf (George Newall).

06 March: The **Red-necked Grebe** was seen on Loch na Cille at Keills (Loch Sween), Mid-Argyll again this morning, in exactly the same spot as it was on 17th January (Morag & Norman Rea).

The following were counted on Loch Indaal, Islay this morning, in flat calm conditions:

12 **Red-throated Divers**, 33 **Great Northern Divers**, 45 **Common Eiders**, 76 **Common Scoters** (two flocks, 54 and 22), a **Razorbill** and 2 **Black Guillemots** (Mike Peacock).

Four **Yellowhammers** (2 m, 2 f) were in a garden at Fearnoch Crescent, Lochgilphead this afternoon (Jim Dickson).



Yellowhammer – Lochgilphead, Mid-Argyll 06 Mar (Jim Dickson).

05 March: Three different **Richardson's Cackling Geese** (*Branta hutchinsii hutchinsii*) on Islay today. One at Kintra, then two different birds in with a large flock of 3-4 000 Barnacle Geese in a field near Ballygrant (John Nadin/ Colin Bushell/Jimmy Steele).



Richardson's Cackling Geese – Islay 05 Mar (John Nadin).



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Richardson's Cackling Geese – Islay 05 Mar (John Nadin).

A credible report of a **Snowy Owl** had been received: seen at a distance, twice in the Ben Udlaidh and Beinn Bhreac-liath area of the hills above Glen Orchy, North Argyll on 27 February. Although only a distant photo could be obtained it certainly looks very like a Snowy Owl and a description has been supplied. If accepted it would be the first in Argyll since two different birds were seen, on Coll and Tiree, in Jan 2005.



Snowy Owl - above Glen Orchy, North Argyll 27 Feb (George Allan)

04 March: First winter **Glaucous** and **Iceland Gulls** just south of the Oyster Bar (Loch Fyne), Mid-Argyll today (Colin Bushell per John Nadin).

Today at Loch Sween, Mid-Argyll: **Yellowhammers/Reed Buntings** still in the Barrahornmid as well as the first **Long-tailed Tits** of the week and a single **Redwing**; a female **Great Spotted Woodpecker** turned up in the garden. The highlight of the day was the warm sunshine which had bumble bees out enjoying the crocuses. (Sue and Kevin Richardson).

03 March: A female **Blackcap** at Hunters Quay, Dunoon today would most likely have been an overwintering bird (Callum Satchel).

Today at Loch Sween: 2 **Great Northern Divers** seen from Taynish Mill, a mixed flock **Yellowhammers, Reed Buntings** and the odd **Goldfinch** between Barrahornmid and Kilmory. Five male and 3 female **Common Goldeneyes** at the Puddle mid-afternoon and the 5 **Whooper Swans** appeared to depart (Sue and Kevin Richardson).

A pair of **Dippers** on the Lusragan Burn in Connel, Mid-Argyll this morning looked as if they

were prospecting for a nest site and the **Rooks** were noisily repairing nests in the rookery at North Connel, North Argyll. Two **Skylarks** were on the grass at Oban Airport, North Argyll and 22 **Ringed Plover**, 4 **Turnstone** and 10 **Oystercatchers** were nearby on Ledaig Beach. Offshore in Ardmucknish Bay were 4 **Slavonian Grebes**, 1 **Great Northern Diver**, a pair of **Red-breasted Mergansers**, 3 **Goldeneye** and about a dozen **Eider**. A **Grey Wagtail** was on the beach at Benderloch, North Argyll (Mike Harrison).



Whooper Swans - The Puddle (Loch Sween), Mid-Argyll 03 Mar (Sue and Kevin Richardson).

02 March: Five **Whooper Swans** still present at the Puddle (Loch Sween), Mid-Argyll this morning. Also, a pair of **Treecreepers** were in woods by Keills house and a **Common Snipe** was flushed from the salt-marsh below Keills chapel. A single male **Bullfinch** was again in the hawthorn in the garden at Coshandrochaid as were a host of Chaffinches, until a female **Sparrowhawk** dived in and caused a starburst of birds to evacuate immediately. The day's highlight occurred at ca 14:00, when an adult **White-tailed Eagle** passed over the Puddle and away over Taynish (Sue and Kevin Richardson).



Bullfinches – Coshandrochaid (Loch Sween), Mid-Argyll 02 Mar (Sue and Kevin Richardson).