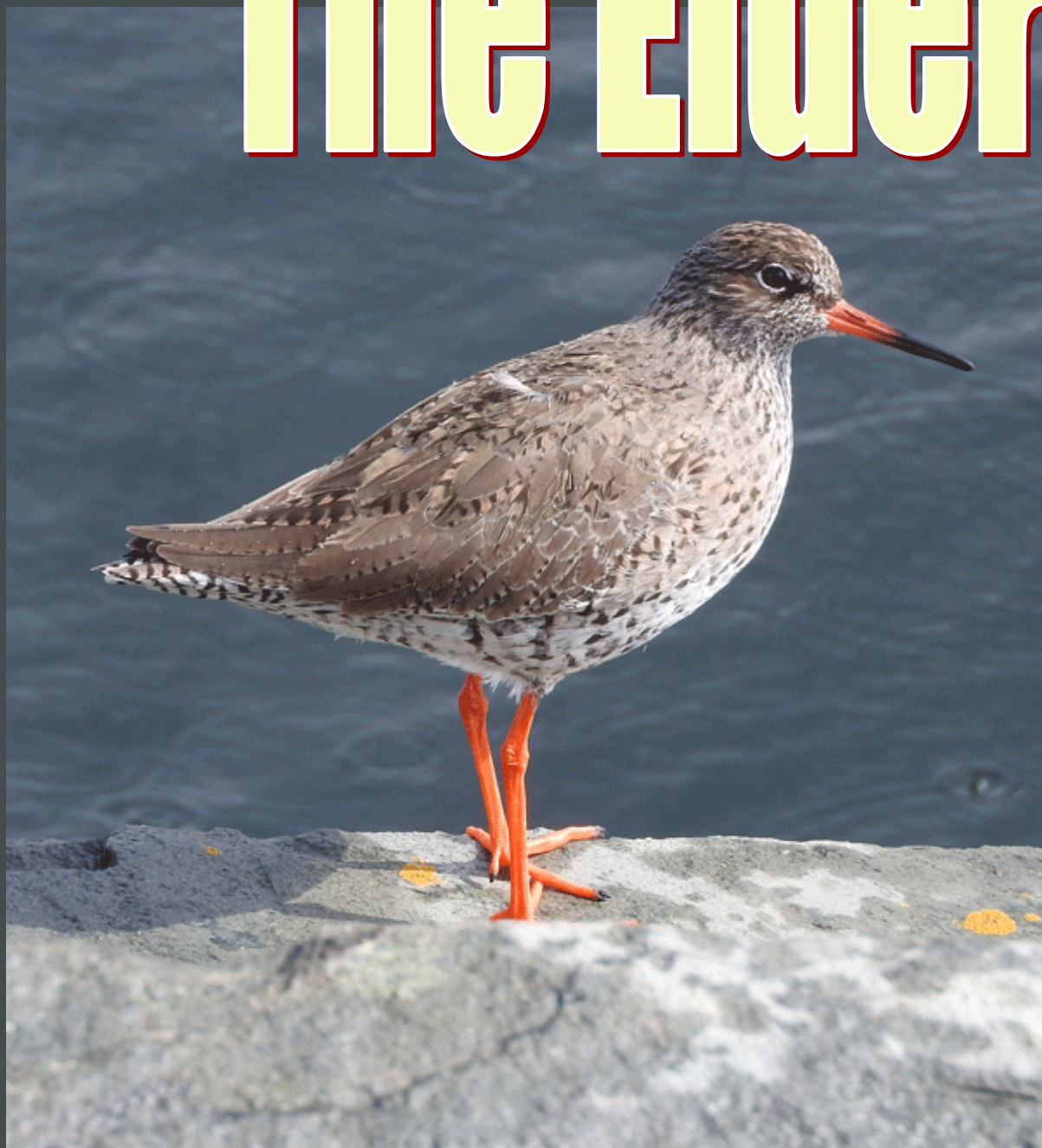


June 2017
Number 120

The Eider



Redshank, Dunoon, 13 April 2017 ©Steve Petty

Taynish NNR—25yrs of CBC work, pages 18-19

Recent bird sightings, pages 20-25

Proposed new fish farm in the Sound of Jura, pages 26-27

Club News

FIELD TRIPS 2017

If there is a chance that adverse weather might lead to the cancellation of a field trip, please check the club's website or contact the organiser the night before or prior to setting off.

Saturday 10 June. Loch Lomond RSPB Reserve. Led by Anne Archer (Phone 01700 811611.

E-mail archerspringbank@btinternet.com

Meet at the visitor hub/car park at the reserve at 10.00hrs (a map and details of how to get there were in the March *Eider*). Please let Anne know if you want to take part in this trip by 31 May as numbers need to be confirmed with the RSPB. There will be a charge of £5 per person. An RSPB staff member will show us around. Participants should be aware that there are no paths leading from the visitor hub, so most of the walk will be through farm fields (which may contain cattle) and other habitats such as woodland, fen and wildflower meadows. Wellies may be required, depending on weather conditions leading up to the visit. Paula Baker gave a talk about the reserve at one of our autumn meetings, an account of which appeared in the December 2015 *Eider*, pages 29-28.

Sunday 25 June. Skipness (Kintyre). Led by Katie Pendreigh (E-mail

katiependreigh@aol.com. Phone: 01583 441359). Meet in the car park beside the entrance gate to Skipness Castle at 10.00hrs. The Sea Food Cabin will be open for lunch.

Saturday 29 July. Clachan (Kintyre). Led by Malcolm Chattwood (Phone: 01546 603389. E-mail malcolmchattwood@gmail.com). Meet at the Clachan Village Hall car park (map ref.

Inside this issue

Club news	Page 2-4
Spring meeting 2017—talk summaries	Pages 5-8
BTO news and updates	Pages 9-10
ABC field trip to Lismore	Pages 11-12
ABC field trip to the Sound of Gigha	Pages 13-14
ABC field trip Benmore Gardens	Pages 15-16
Collared Dove eating seaweed	Page 17
Taynish NNR—25yrs of CBC	Pages 18-19
Recent bird sightings	Pages 20-24
Proposed new fish farm in the Sound of Jura	Pages 25-26
Information about the ABC	Page 27

NR766562) at 10.00hrs.

Saturday 26 August. Colonsay. Led by David Jardine (e-mail dcjardine@btinternet.com phone 01546 510200). A full-day visit with transport provided. Numbers will be limited by the size of the minibus on Colonsay. Rendezvous—Kennacraig Ferry Terminal at 09.15hrs, arrive Colonsay c13.30hrs, depart Colonsay 19.15hrs, return Kennacraig 22.50hrs. The tides are favourable for a trip to Oronsay, but a decision on whether to do so will be taken once a weather forecast is available. Ferry fare—£21.00, with Colonsay bus-fare c£5.00. To book please email dcjardine@btinternet.com

Saturday 16 September to Tuesday 19 September. Tiree. Led by David Jardine (e-mail dcjardine@btinternet.com phone 01546 510200). A provisional booking has been made for some accommodation on Tiree from Saturday 16 September to

Acknowledgements

Very many thanks to the following for their contributions to this issue—John Aitchison, John Bowler, Malcolm Chattwood, Jim Dickson, Ron Forrester, Bob Furness (including photocopying & dispatch), Lottie Goodlet, John Halliday, Mike Harrison, David Jardine, Eddie Maguire, Alistair McGregor, Amy Millard, David Palmer, Linda Petty (proof reading), Philip Price, Nigel Scriven, Margaret Staley, Gary Woodburn and Richard Whitson

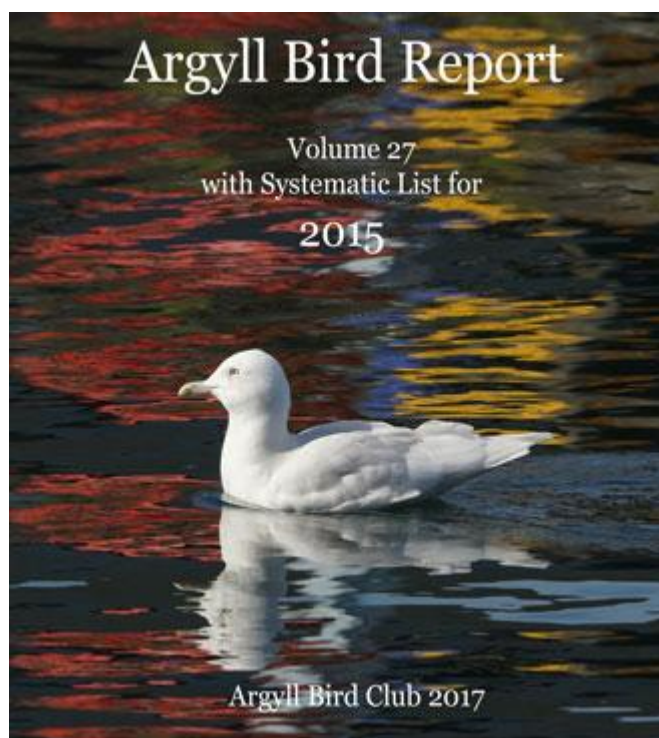
Tuesday 19 September. Ferry departs Oban at 07.15hrs on Saturday and returns to Oban 22.40hrs on the Tuesday. Accommodation and transport from Oban is currently estimated to cost about £110/head, based on four persons sharing a car. Food costs will be extra. If you are interested in going on this visit please contact David at an early date to secure a place and to allow arrangements to be finalised.

INDOOR MEETINGS 2017-18

Autumn Meeting and AGM 2017. Saturday 4 November at the Cairnbaan Hotel (<http://www.cairnbaan.com/>), near Lochgilphead (phone: 01546 603668). See the programme below. Lunches will be available in the hotel.

Spring Meeting 2018. Saturday 3 March at the Inveraray Inn (www.inveraray-inn.co.uk). Details to follow in the December *Eider*.

Raffle Prizes. Donations of raffle prizes for indoor meetings are always welcome.



Programme for the ABC's Autumn Meeting Saturday 4 November at the Cairnbaan Hotel, near Lochgilphead	
Time	Session
0930	Doors open, coffee and tea
0950-1000	Welcome and introduction— <i>Mike Harrison</i> , Chairman of the Argyll Bird Club
1000-1030	Recent bird sightings and photographs— <i>Jim Dickson</i> , Argyll Bird Recorder
1030-1100	The people and birds of Ethiopia— <i>Neil Hammatt</i>
1100-1120	Coffee/tea
1120-1210	The birds of Colonsay and Oronsay— <i>David Jardine</i>
1210-1230	Talk to be arranged
1230-1400	Lunch (available in the hotel, if required)
1400-1440	AGM
1440-1500	BTO surveys and updates— <i>Nigel Scriven</i>
1500-1530	Bird watching in Costa Rica— <i>Sue Furness</i>
1530-1600	Tea/coffee
1600-1620	Results from the Argyll Bird Club's rookery survey— <i>David Jardine</i>
1620-1630	Raffle and closing remarks

ARGYLL BIRD REPORT 27 (2015)

All members should have received the latest *Argyll Bird Report* for 2015. If you have not, please contact Bob Furness (contact details on back page). Additional copies of the report can be purchased from Bob for £12.00 each including postage (UK only). Cheques should be made payable to the 'Argyll Bird Club'. We would like to sell as many copies as possible before the next report is published, so if you know of any outlets that would be willing to stock it, please let Bob know.

THE ARGYLL BIRD CLUB'S WEBSITE

Do visit our website (www.argyllbirdclub.org) to find out about up-to-date arrangements for meetings, recent sightings of birds, including photographs, and lots more.

To keep the website updated takes a lot of effort. We urgently need more help, to cover periods when the usual compilers are on holiday etc. So, if you have some previous experience with maintaining websites, why not give us a hand. If you are interested please contact any club officials to learn more about what is involved.

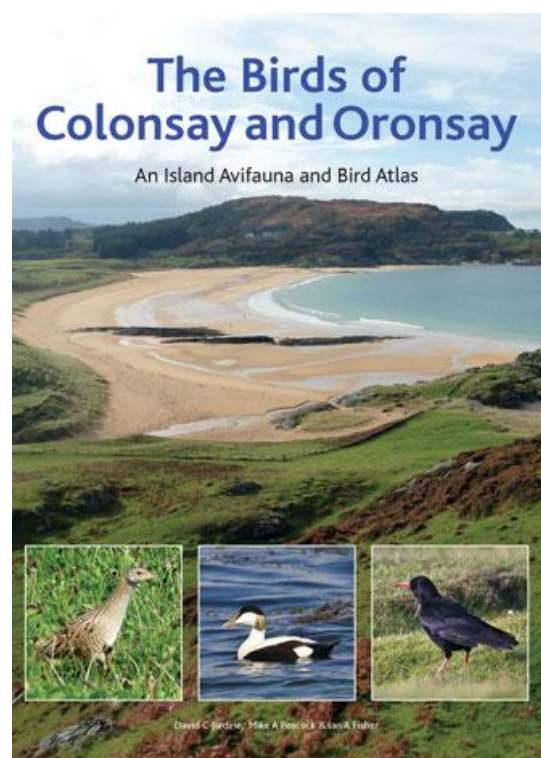
ROOKERY SURVEY UPDATE

A huge thank-you to everyone who helped with the Rookery Survey. It looks as if full coverage has been achieved, but we are awaiting the last few figures to be sent in so it is too early to give a final total. However, some Rookeries are no longer in use and some new ones have been located. It does appear that numbers have declined in some areas, but it is too early to assess the overall trend. If you have any counts which have not yet been sent in, please send them to argyllrookeries@outlook.com as soon as you can. David Jardine



THE BIRDS OF COLONSAY AND ORONSAY

A new book on *The Birds of Colonsay and Oronsay* is now at the printers and will be available during the summer. This Argyll Bird Club published volume has been produced by David Jardine, Mike Peacock and Ian Fisher as a companion volume to the recently published *Birds of Bute* produced by club members Ron Forrester, Ian Hopkins and Doug Menzies. The key features of the 384 page book are full details of the occurrence of the 230 species, which occur or have occurred on the islands, along with 165 maps showing summer and winter distribution during the *Bird Atlas 2007-11*, and 100 graphs showing population trends or monthly and annual occurrences. The book contains 174 colour photos, all but four of which have been taken on the islands. Introductory chapters cover the landscape and habitats of the islands, a history of ornithology and bird conservation (which includes details about bird remains in the Mesolithic shell-middens on Oronsay), an avifauna for the islands and an introduction to the species accounts. There are five appendices including population estimates, details of museum specimens of birds from the islands and one on the Gaelic names for birds on Colonsay. The book will cost around £25 and will be available on-line from bookshop@colonsay.org.uk or at Argyll Bird Club meetings from the authors (thus saving post and package).





Royal Marine Hotel, Hunters Quay, Dunoon ©Steve Petty

Summaries of talks at the Spring Meeting on 4 March

Introduction

An improving morning on the Clyde on Saturday 4 March saw 35 members and two visitors arriving at the Royal Marine Hotel in Dunoon for the spring meeting of the club. After the usual introduction from the chairman, Mike Harrison, County Bird Recorder Jim Dickson reported on some of the birds which had been recorded in Argyll since the last meeting in November. Covering both rarities and some commoner species, Jim illustrated his talk with some excellent photographs. After demonstrating the quality of images obtained using a modern bridge camera he encouraged us all to carry a modern digital camera when out birding. Jim completed his report with a quick tutorial on the key features used to separate Glaucous and Iceland Gulls, both of which have been recorded in Argyll this winter.

Argyll Bird Club Rookery Survey—David Jardine. Details of this survey were given by David in an article in the March 2017 *Eider* (pages 19-20)

Wildlife Crime—Alistair McGregor, SSPCA (retired) (summary by Mike Harrison)

A former gamekeeper and water bailiff, Alistair McGregor worked for seven years in the special investigations unit of the SSPCA. After summarising the main aspects of the Wildlife and Countryside Act and the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act, Alistair described some of the ac-



Alistair McGregor ©David Palmar www.photoscot.co.uk



tivities which can be carried out legally, e.g., the use of cage traps, but which can cross the line into criminality if the necessary conditions of use are not met. For instance, not inspecting traps at least every 24 hours. Similarly, spring traps can legitimately be used provided conditions are met, such as guarding the traps to exclude non-target species. He cautioned against interfering with any traps we may come across in the countryside, but encouraged the reporting of suspicious activity and the collection of photographic evidence. He also described some of the activities which cannot be used legally, such as the use of poisoned baits and the catching of birds using lime sticks, and warned us that any corpses which we find may be contaminated with poison. With police resources increasingly stretched (this talk was to have been given by a wildlife crime officer, but none was available). Alistair's talk illustrated why there is currently a campaign to increase the powers of SSPCA inspectors in this area.

BTO survey updates—Nigel Scriven. Details of current surveys were given by Nigel in an article in the March 2017 *Eider* (page 18). Also see pages 9-10 in this issue.

Technology, tags and tracks—Ben Darvil, BTO Scotland (summary by David Jardine)

In an ever-changing world, the use of technology to help us understand birds, and in particularly their movements, was a challenging task for Ben. Nevertheless, he ably explained how the various devices worked including how the 'doppler effect' could be used in satellite tracking. Recent advances have meant that these devices are becoming smaller all the time. Tags which previously could only be fitted to large birds are now regularly fitted to medium-sized birds, with prospects of them becoming light enough for smaller birds before long.

At present the largest devices provide regular updates

of the position of birds in real time to a high degree of accuracy using satellites. Other small devices use global positioning system (GPS) loggers, which 'download' the position of a bird on a periodic basis when the bird is within the range of a mobile phone mast. Alternatively a lighter version of these is available where the tag is recovered from the bird (after it is recaptured) and the data are downloaded from the device. The smallest devices record the time of dawn and dusk through a light detector and when these are recovered from the bird it is possible to work out its location—day-length gives latitude and sunrise gives longitude. Such devices can be fitted to very small birds, but are only accurate to 200km and do not provide useful information at some latitudes.

Ben provided a number of 'case studies' based on these technologies. The BTO study of Cuckoos in Britain has shown they use two different migration routes to their wintering ground in central Africa. There is a western route via Iberia and western Africa, and an eastern route via Italy (which has an important staging site in the valley of the River Po) and then south over the centre of the Sahara. Previously there had only been one



Ben Darvil, BTO ©David Palmar www.photoscot.co.uk

ringing recovery of a British Cuckoo in Africa.

It has been found that Cuckoos in southern England and Wales, where populations are declining, use the western route, while Cuckoos from Scotland and northern England, where populations are stable, migrate through Italy. This is the first confirmed case where a difference in migration mortality has been linked to population trends.

More recently tags have been put on Cuckoos in other European countries. All have been found to winter in central Africa. Tags have even been deployed on Cuckoos in China, which looked as if they would winter in the Indian Sub-continent, but after 'refuelling' birds flew directly across the Indian Ocean to winter with the other Cuckoos in Central Africa. For more information on the Cuckoo projects see: www.bto.org/science/migration/tracking-studies/cuckoo-tracking/about

Another use of technology involved using GPS trackers to estimate the height at which Lesser Black-backed Gulls were flying. This technique also allowed the height of the birds to be established after dark, when visual observations are not possible. This project showed gulls flew at a very low altitude while over the sea, but rose to a greater height over land. Such information is useful in assessing the potential mortality of different wind farm proposals and to allow such proposals to be redesigned. In closing Ben showed a remarkable tracking sequence of a Herring Gull in Cornwall, which combined with images from GoogleEarth allowed a complete flight-path to be viewed, including the field where the gull flew up and down following the plough!

Some conservation issues—David Palmar (summary by Malcolm Chattwood)

Most club members will know David Palmar—either through field trips when carrying a tripod, camera and very long lens, or at indoor meetings where he encourages us to buy his excellent quality cards and goods, which are the product of the same very long lens. It might also be that you have been engaged in conversation, when David is distracted enough from talking about photographing birds to extoll the virtues of campervans. It was with these thoughts in mind that I anticipated a series of typically high quality photographs of species of conservation concern taken whilst out on various campervan excursions around Scotland and elsewhere. However, what we heard was well illus-

trated, wide-ranging and thought-provoking.

Split into two parts, David's talk looked at some of the major issues, which are causing concern in the 21st Century. The uses of coal and oil for the generation of power and transport have been major influences. Climate change has been linked to a decline of arctic sea ice, rising sea temperatures and mean sea levels. These factors have a potential negative impact on birds such as the Puffin. Further impacts on birds of conservation concern (BoCC) such as Curlew, Dotterel, Corn Bunting and Tree Sparrow were discussed. The increase in open moorland for grouse shooting and sheep rearing has resulted in a reduction in forested areas with a consequent increase in fluvial flooding episodes in areas such as Ballater on Deeside recently.

It would be easy to become dispirited by all the negative impacts described by David in the first part of his talk, but that would not be in his character. The second half of his presentation described a number of areas where conservation initiatives are making inroads into some of the damaging impacts affecting the wider environment as well as birdlife. Re-establishing peat bogs by damming drains, flood alleviation schemes, reducing the amount of plastic entering the marine environment, and reducing energy use through improved efficiency and insulation were all highlighted as ways in which environmental damage was being mitigated.

Finally David looked at some of the ways in which renewable energy could provide benefits. Although many sources of renewable energy generation present potential problems, not least with their intermittency, a combination of methods could reduce the demand on fossil fuels for power generation. A number of methods were described, some in their early stages of development and some novel ideas like the road in France containing integrated solar panels, and a floating solar farm in Japan. Finishing on a positive bird-related note, David reminded us that 13 BoCC had recently moved from the amber to green category including the Red Kite.

Listing: Birding and Beyond—Ron Forrester (summary by Jim Dickson)

Ron Forrester gave a personal account of his journey through listing bird species he has seen over the years in an upbeat, light hearted and amusing way. He began by giving accounts taken from the late Prof M. F. M. Meiklejohn (a well known Scottish birder) who in the 1960s and 1970s gave his orni-

thological listing accounts in the *Glasgow Herald*. Then the exploits of Ron Johns, who in the 1970s and 1980s had the biggest British bird list—probably at the expense of his first marriage! In the early 1960s only seven or eight birders in the UK had lists of more than 300 species and nowadays there are many with UK lists of over 500 species! Ron recalled that he had surpassed 200 species in a single year several times in the past, with 214 totalled in 1977. However, as he began to travel abroad more, his UK listing 'suffered'. In 2009 he managed to see 1,100 world species, but this fell a long way short of the 6,833 species seen by a Dutch birder in 2016! Since 2011 Ron has again been keeping a UK year list, and in most years this exceeds 180 species, but that usually includes trips to England to supplement the list.

In 2012 he began to turn his attentions to butterflies! Having seen many species in the past he looked back through his notebooks to see just how many of the 57 regular UK species he had seen and came up with 32. He repeated the same process for dragonflies. He had noted 13 of the 42 species regularly occurring UK species. So in 2013 he made a concerted effort to list both butterflies and dragonflies, seeing four new species of each that year. In 2014, holidays to hotspots for these insects were planned and a further eleven species of dragonflies were added. But, as Ron amusingly informed us, he was 'led astray' by a local recorder who suggested he should begin looking at moths! As 'mothing' was an evening activity it shouldn't interfere with his 'birding' activities! So he became an avid 'mother', and by the end of 2014 had noted 129 species on Bute, mostly



Chequered Skipper photographed and 'listed' by Ron in North Argyll ©Ron Forrester

in his own garden.

Still not content with his listing, Ron now wanted to improve his flower identification skills, but quickly found that this did interfere with his birding—too much time was spent looking at the ground! He joined botany walks to 'learn more', occasionally joined by his wife, who now complains that botanists move even slowly than the 'stop start walks' of birders! In 2014 he noted 215 flower species and 183 UK bird species.

Ron's next interest became 'Pan species listing', this being the sum of all flora and fauna species recorded, with 12,000 up for grabs in the UK, of which 7,000 are insects. In 2015 he noted four new species of butterflies, one new dragonfly and took 'mothing' to a new level, noting 196 species that year as well as 301 flower species and 188 bird species.

On 10 May 2016 he set out at 04.30hrs on Bute to see how many bird species he could find in a day—he recorded 94. He remarked that for a Scottish island it appears I slay has the daily record of 100+ species, and added that Roy Dennis had noted 96 species in a day on Fair Isle during exceptional conditions. That year Ron saw 231 moth, 430 flower and 186 bird species and has now crept over the 1,000 UK Pan list! He has still to see the 12 remaining UK dragonflies and six butterfly species. He thoroughly recommends listing 'beyond birds' especially when there are less birds to note in the summer months, and says that listing adds pleasure to the hobby, and more importantly by sending in records of the various flora and fauna in to the relevant organisations, this helps contribute to our knowledge. So he concluded - 'Get Out There' and 'List It'!

Conclusion

After drawing the raffle and thanking the donors for the prizes, the speakers for their excellent talks and Nigel Scriven for arranging the programme, Mike Harrison closed the meeting with an invitation to the Autumn Meeting and AGM at Cairnbaan on 4 November.

Mike Harrison



Ron Forrester ©David Palmar www.photoscot.co.uk

BTO news update 2017

Woodcock annual breeding season counts 2003 to 2015

In addition to the nationwide Woodcock surveys conducted in 2003 and 2013, annual counts of roding males are important to assess fluctuations in Woodcock abundance over time. In light of the worrying decline in Woodcocks highlighted by the 2013 survey (a reduction in the size of the British population of 29% in ten years), continued counts are all the more important.

Annual counts are analysed using a statistical model that examines the change in maximum number of Woodcock registrations over time, whilst taking into account variation between sites. The resulting trend shows how the average number of woodcock seen has varied in relation to an index value of one in the first survey year (Figure 1).

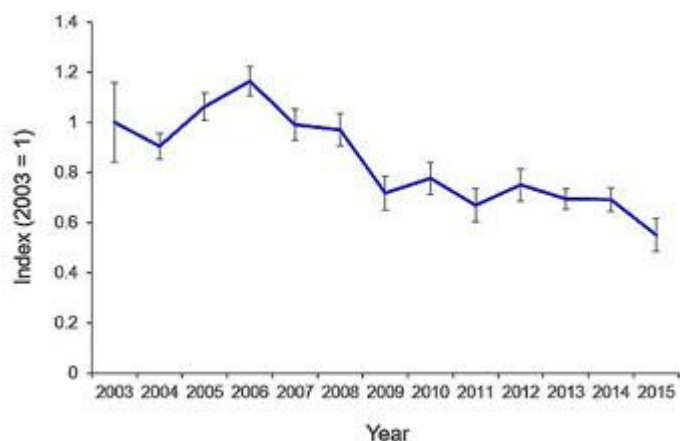


Figure 1. Annual change in the relative abundance of Woodcock based on counts of roding males

Following a period of relative stability between 2009 and 2014, numbers of displaying males dropped in 2015. Given this worrying trend, it is essential that we keep these counts going and greater participation will enable us to reduce the errors around annual estimates.

We are grateful to all the surveyors who have taken part in annual Woodcock surveys to date and would urge you to continue. The counts involve three evening visits to woodland between 1 May and 30 June: for full details see <http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/woodcock-survey> or email woodcock@bto.org

To learn more about current research on breeding woodcock visit <http://www.woodcockwatch.com/tracking-woodcock/tracking-breeding-woodcock/>

Find the Gap: *European Breeding Bird Atlas 2*

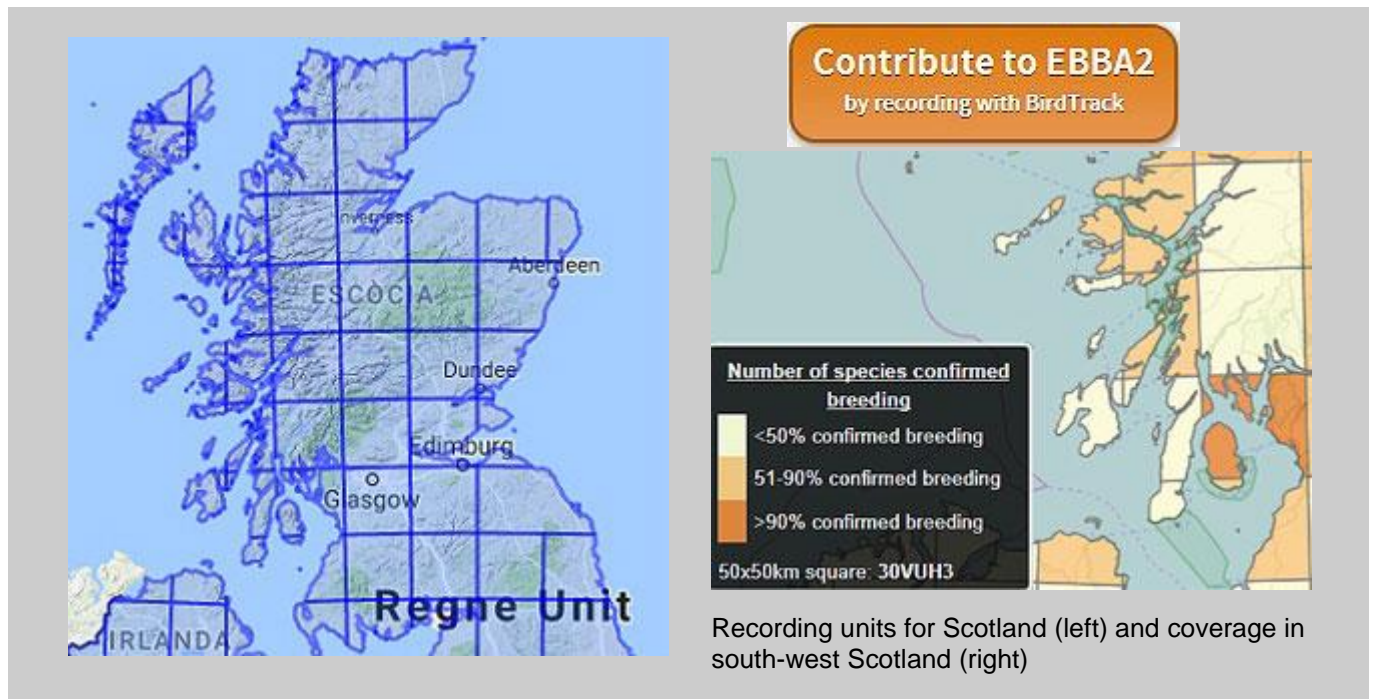
This is an ambitious project led by the European Bird Census Council (EBCC) and involving bird organisations across Europe (including BTO, BirdWatch Ireland and RSPB), to map the distribution and abundance of more than 500 species breeding in Europe. Fieldwork is being carried out during 2013-17 and there are more than five thousand 50 x 50 km squares to cover.

The atlas will provide up-to-date breeding distribution and relative abundance maps across the whole of Europe and importantly, will be able to show changes in species distribution since the first *European Bird Atlas* published in 1997. Knowing where birds occur and how distributions have changed is crucial to effective targeting of conservation policies and action. Across Europe, great coverage has already been achieved in countries with few local experts, little regular monitoring and huge accessibility challenges. Capacity-building through local workshops is inspiring and educating many new birdwatchers.

In the UK and Ireland, data collected for *Bird Atlas 2007-11* falls just outside the fieldwork period of EBBA2 (2013-2017), so it is important to gather as much new information as possible to ensure that British and Irish data are up to date and collected using the same grid as everywhere else in Europe. It is notable that there are many gaps in confirmed breeding evidence for squares covering Argyll (see next page).

Three ways you can help

1. Log records with breeding evidence from Britain and Ireland in BirdTrack. Any record of a bird in suitable breeding habitat in the breeding season, with an appropriate breeding evidence code, can be used by EBBA2 for producing distribution maps. Records from anywhere within Britain and Ireland are encouraged, as long as the 'site' is within one of the 50 x 50 grid squares.



2. Collect complete lists. Complete lists have added value for EBBA2 because they will contribute to mapping of distribution and abundance. When you go birdwatching, please make a list of all the species you positively identify by sight or sound. Record the start and end time of your visit and provide a count for each species whenever possible.

3. Enter your sightings from birdwatching

trips to continental Europe. If you are visiting anywhere else in Europe in the upcoming breeding season, your bird records, along with the appropriate breeding evidence, will help fill important gaps in knowledge.

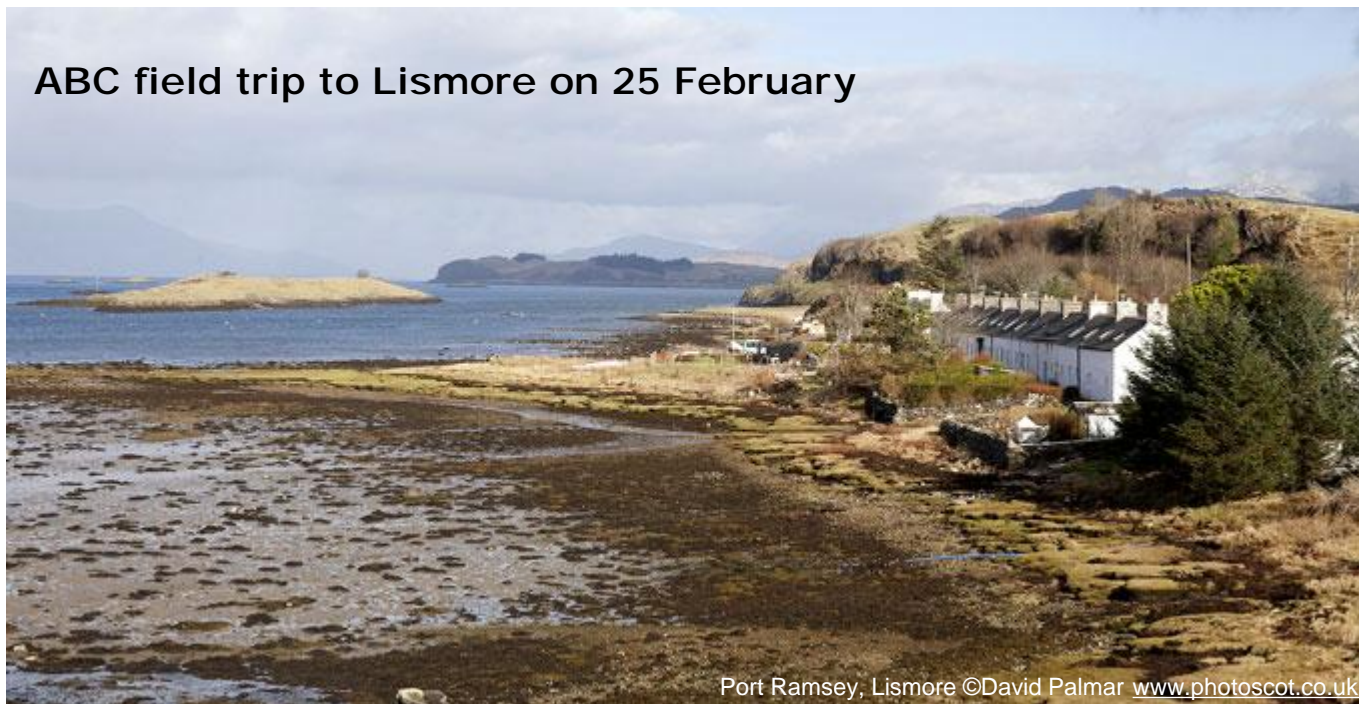
For further information see

<https://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/find-gap-european-breeding-bird-atlas-2>



Canary Pine (*Pinus canariensis*) forests of Tenerife—don't forget to record bird sightings from holidays abroad ©Steve Petty

ABC field trip to Lismore on 25 February



Port Ramsey, Lismore ©David Palmar www.photoscot.co.uk

Early in the week the weather forecast for Saturday looked horrendous, heavy rain all day and gale force winds, but by Wednesday there was a hint that the storm would go through early in the morning. So, a decision was made to delay the start of this outing by a couple of hours, as there was limited shelter on the island. This proved a wise move as blue sky started to appear as the group met, the wind dropped and by the afternoon it even felt pleasant in the sun in sheltered spots.

The island bird list started while waiting for the small foot-ferry at Port Appin. The first interesting sighting was a flock of around 170 Kittiwakes which flew north through the narrows in a tight flock and made their way up Loch Lhinne. Later while at Port Ramsay, another larger flock of Kittiwakes, estimated to include around 2000 birds was also seen moving north up the Great Glen. This 'visible migration' was a sure sign of spring with these northern seabirds returning to their breeding grounds. It was interesting to see them to take the 'overland route', suggesting that further observations on Lismore would pay dividends. Other birds noted at the narrows included several Black Guillemots, a few Eiders and a solitary Great Northern Diver

The bird feeders at the cottage at Point helped with the island list, there was even a single Coal Tit, which is uncommon on Lis-

more, and several Greenfinch. While walking down the east coast two Greenshanks were disturbed; their tri-syllabic call alerting the party to their presence. They settled on the shore to the north near Point allowing good views in the scope (photo below). It was presumed these birds were making their way back to breeding grounds, or had come down from the hills, which still had a smattering of snow, to feed on the shore.

Once Stronacroibh was reached the party left the main road and turned right for Port Ramsay. A few Greylags were hiding in the field behind some spruce, which allowed our photographers to compare the images from a traditional SLR and telephoto lens with a modern 'bridge-camera'. Shortly afterward the caterpillar of a Ruby Tiger (moth) was found crossing the road, or in view of the amount of water from the earlier rain, swimming might have been the better term.



Greenshank on Lismore ©David Palmar www.photoscot.co.uk

The tide had turned and was starting to come into the small bay at Port Ramsay. Being the only real bay on Lismore it held many birds, which the group enjoyed watching while having lunch. On the shore were 24 Oystercatcher, 18 Curlew, four Redshank and two Ringed Plover, which were heard and eventually found. Around 15 Teal flew off and also on the shore were eight Wigeon, six Mallard, three Shelduck, and seven Red-breasted Merganser were perched on the shoreline rocks.

After lunch a short walk was taken round to Fennachrochan where two Little Grebes were found in the bay along with a female otter with two cubs. Afterwards, the group retraced its steps, adding Rock Pipit and Song Thrush on the way, and timing their arrival at the jetty just as the ferry arrived.

On the return trip the skipper of the ferry cut the throttle allowing the skilled hands of David Palmar and Jim Dickson to 'capture' the details on a colour-ringed (white with green lettering JJJ) Cormorant roosting with Shags on Sgeir Mhor (photos opposite). This was later identified as BTO ring number 5206499, which was ringed as a chick (brood of four) on the Island of Pladda, off the Isle of Arran on 30 June 2014. This was the first report of this bird (details from Iain Livingstone, Clyde Ringing Group).

A short stop at Loch Laich at high tide before heading home found two Greenshanks, possibly the same birds as earlier. Overhead at least two adult White-tailed Eagles were drifting over



Upper photo. A group of Cormorants and Shags (adults and juveniles of both species) ©Jim Dickson

Lower photo. Close-up of the colour ring spotted on one of the Cormorants ©David Palmar www.photoscot.co.uk



the hills, along with a young Golden Eagle as well as several Buzzards enjoying the wind and the late afternoon sunshine—a fitting end to a day, the portents for which had not been good!

Species List for Lismore: Greylag, Canada Goose, Shelduck, Wigeon, Teal, Mallard, Eider, Goldeneye, Red-breasted Merganser, Great Northern Diver, Little Grebe, Cormorant, Shag, Heron, Buzzard, Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover, Curlew, Redshank, Greenshank, Common Gull, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Kittiwake, Black Guillemot, Rock Pipit, Pied Wagtail, Wren, Dunnock, Robin, Stonechat, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Jackdaw, Rook, Hooded Crow, Raven, House Sparrow, Chaffinch, Greenfinch (43 species)

David Jardine

ABC field trip to The Sound of Gigha on 25 March



Excellent viewing conditions at West Coast Salmon ©Mike Harrison

Early arrivals at Ronachan Point on a beautiful spring morning were rewarded by the sight of the only Gannet and Ringed Plovers of the day, but there were plenty of treats in store for those who came later. The water of the Sound of Gigha was so smooth that we could see birds on the surface all the way across to Gigha and beyond. Indeed, a flock of about 20 Whooper Swans looked as though they were nearer to Jura than to the mainland. But there were plenty of birds close at hand too, including a line of seven Slavonian Grebes showing a good range of plumages from nearly full winter to nearly full breeding. Also on the water were Great Northern and Black-throated Divers, Common Scoter, Red-breasted Merganser and Eider, while Common and Great Black-backed Gulls, Oystercatcher and Cormorant were on the rocks and Pied Wagtail and Rock Pipit could be seen on the beach. Meanwhile, Song Thrush, Robin, Chaffinch, Wren, Greenfinch and Goldcrest were heard in the woodland across the road.

Mallard and Shelduck were seen close to the shore as we drove further south to our next vantage point. Arriving at 'West Coast Salmon' the distinctive call of a Raven attracted attention, as did several raptors which could be seen soaring in the morning sunshine. Two of the three were confidently identified as Buzzards but the third escaped before a consensus was reached. After a calling Pheasant, a drumming Great Spotted Woodpecker and a Goldfinch in the trees we finally made it to the beach where

Slavonian Grebes, Great Northern Divers and Common Scoter were again numerous. A Wheatear spotted on the beach was the first of the spring for all the members present, now numbering ten with one visitor, as were a couple of Sand Martins further down the coast towards Rhunahaorine Point.

Some of the local flock of Greenland White-fronted Geese were seen in a field along the road to Tayinloan, along with Rooks and Rock Doves. Starlings and Collared Doves were seen around the farm by the ferry car park at Tayinloan and another Wheatear was found on the beach. There seemed to be fewer birds on the water between Tayinloan and Gigha than there had been at our other two sites, but maybe that was just due to different vantage points. Great Northern Divers were easily seen from the ferry (photo below), as were several Black Guillemots which, like the earlier grebes, were showing a range of plumages. Common Scoter could be seen



Great Northern Diver ©Mike Harrison

further from the ferry, a single Long-tailed Duck was more distant still.

As the ferry gently approached the slip in Ardmish Bay, Greylag Geese were paddling their way along the rocky shore. Two Oystercatchers and two Curlews were picking over the mud and weed exposed by the tide while a Grey Heron stalked the shoreline. Blackbird and Bullfinch were added to the list as we walked up the road from the ferry slip. A pair of Stonechats were exploring some dead bracken and House Sparrows were plentiful around the houses in the village. After lunching in the sunshine in the hotel garden we enjoyed a leisurely walk along to the woodland by Achamore House, pausing on the way to watch a soaring Peregrine. A Blue Tit and a Great Tit had visited the hotel garden. Coal Tit and Long-tailed Tit were found along the road in and near the woodland. After a single Treecreeper had been added to the list several more were subsequently found with three together in one tree. After finding a flock of Siskins enjoying the cone crop in a plantation we reluctantly decided that it was time to retrace our steps to the ferry slip.

Three Long-tailed Ducks on the return crossing

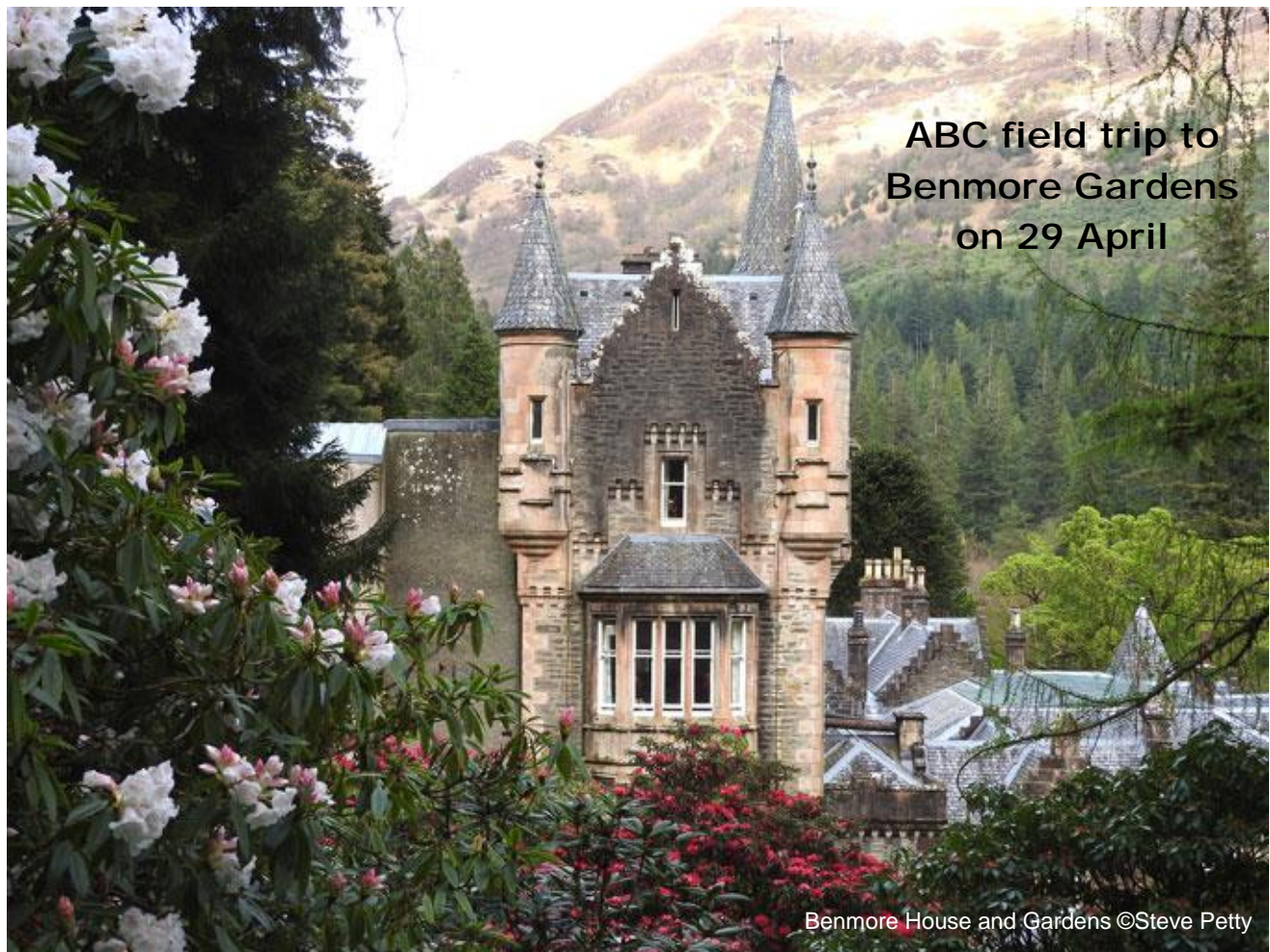
was the only improvement on the outward journey and the party dispersed from Tayinloan with 59 species on the list having enjoyed good company and good birding on a day of glorious weather.

Species List. Mute Swan, Whooper Swan, Greenland White-fronted Goose, Greylag Goose, Common Shelduck, Mallard, Common Eider, Long-tailed Duck, Common Scoter, Red-breasted Merganser, Common Pheasant, Black-throated Diver, Great Northern Diver, Northern Gannet, Great Cormorant, European Shag, Grey Heron, Slavonian Grebe, Common Buzzard, Eurasian Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover, Eurasian Curlew, Common Gull, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Black Guillemot, Rock Dove, Woodpigeon, Collared Dove, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Peregrine Falcon, Western Jackdaw, Rook, Hooded Crow, Northern Raven, Goldcrest, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Sand Martin, Long-tailed Tit, Eurasian Treecreeper, Wren, Common Starling, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush, Robin, European Stonechat, Northern Wheatear, Dunnock, House Sparrow, Pied Wagtail, Rock Pipit, Chaffinch, Bullfinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch and Siskin (59 Species).

Mike Harrison



Achamore Woodlands, Gigha ©Steve Petty



Ten folk met in the car park at Benmore Gardens. It was a dull day with the odd spell of drizzle, although later on we did fleetingly catch a glimpse of the sun. On the bridge over the River Eachaig, just before entering the gardens, we had good views of a pair of Goosanders on a shingle bank, no doubt looking for a suitable tree hole where the female could lay her eggs. The usual pair of Dippers around the bridge was absent, but we did see a Grey Wagtail. On the nearby fields was a large flock of crows, around 20 in total, that included Carrion, Hooded and Hybrid Crows. Woodpigeons and a Mistle Thrush were also seen here.

The entrance to the gardens always looks impressive with a view along the Sierra Redwood Avenue, where the trees are now over 150 years old. The gardens were looking splendid, with a profusion of rhododendrons in flower, deciduous trees and shrubs with newly emergent fresh green foliage and many conifers with male flowers and immature cones. One of first places we visited was the newly commissioned Red Squirrel hide, but no squirrels were seen! However, we did see a Song Thrush carrying food, indicating it had a nest nearby with hungry chicks. Considering the vari-

ety of conifer species in the gardens, it was not surprising that Goldcrest was our most frequently encountered bird. Males seemed to be singing everywhere, and soon everyone was familiar with their song and call notes.

From various vantage points, we kept scanning the hills on either side of Loch Eck for Peregrine and Golden Eagle, but none were seen. We did get excellent views of a nearby Common Buzzard repeatedly hovering over a nearby patch of ground, but it failed to catch anything.

Many summer migrants were back and in full song. A Cuckoo was heard at the start of the trip and Willow Warblers were abundant, but surprisingly we didn't hear a Chiffchaff, although birds were singing there a few days previously. A number of Blackcaps were located and we had some grand views of Tree Pipits, and their parachuting song flight into the top of trees. A few Swallows were hawking around, but with the cold wind it must have been hard for them to find enough food. We had a brief view of one House Martin high overhead.

From one of the high viewpoints we headed for

the recently developed Chilean Rainforest section, with super views up Glen Massan. Surprisingly, two Canada Geese flew down the glen. We spent a little time admiring Guy Elder's superb Chilean refuge, inspired by churches on islands off the coast of Chile. It was made of locally-sourced oak timber and uses wooden pegs instead of nails. It is sited in an area that has been planted with Monkey Puzzle, and endangered tree species in the Andes of Chile and Argentina. All the species of conifer that occur in Chile have been planted in this area, the result of expeditions by staff of the Royal Botanical Society of Edinburgh to this part of the world to collect seeds and plants. In addition, numerous species of *Notofagus* (southern beeches) have been planted here too, together with many other species of shrubs and the striking bamboo (*Chusquea* sp.).

After descending from this high part of the garden we admired the recently re-gilded Golden Gates, which formed the original entrance to Benmore House. Soon after, a Nuthatch was briefly heard calling, not far from where one was singing earlier in April. Perhaps breeding will occur here before much longer? Botanical gardens certainly

seem to attract this species.

Most of us stayed for an enjoyable lunch and chat at the garden café, after which we paid a short visit to the hide overlooking Holy Loch at Broxwood. But, we didn't stay for long as a cold wind was blowing directly into the hide, and birds were pretty scarce, apart from Grey Heron, Mallard, Teal, Oyster Catcher, Redshank, Herring Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Common Gull and a party of Long-tailed Tits.

Species list (Benmore Gardens only). Canada Goose, Mallard, Goosander, Common Pheasant, Common Buzzard, Herring Gull, Wood Pigeon, Common Cuckoo, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Barn Swallow, House Martin, Tree Pipit, Grey Wagtail, Wren, Dunnock, Robin, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush, Blackcap, Willow Warbler, Goldcrest, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Eurasian Nuthatch, Carrion Crow, Hooded Crow, Common Raven, Chaffinch, goldfinch, Siskin, Common Bullfinch,

Steve Petty



Some of the ABC members enjoying a walk through Benmore Gardens ©Steve Petty

Collared Dove eating seaweed



Collared Dove eating seaweed, Lismore, April 2017 ©David & Janet Jardine

In mid-April, while waiting for the ferry at Ach-nacroish, Lismore, we were surprised to see a pair of Collared Dove (*Streptopelia decaocta*) fly down from the houses to the piece of shore by the slipway. They flew round in circles several times with one bird clearly chasing the other, which appeared to be determined to land on the shore.

We were intrigued to understand why it wanted to land there; initially it landed by a wet shingle area below the high tide mark and we wondered if it had landed in order to have a drink. However, shortly afterwards it flew closer and landed on the seaweed covered rock and started to feed. As the ferry was almost at the slipway, we could only grab a few photos and were not able to get a sample of the brown seaweed for identification. However its position in the upper littoral zone, and appearance in the photos, suggests that it may have been Channelled Wrack *Pelvetia canaliculata*.

Birds of the Western Palaearctic lists the food of

Collared Dove as 'cereal grain, and seeds and fruit of other herbs and grasses and occasionally, green parts of plants, invertebrates, and bread'. It further notes 'small molluscs taken rarely', but the dove did not appear to be selecting for something within the seaweed. It appeared to just be removing the tips of the fronds, or the reproductive receptacles, which it is presumed will be more nutritious than the rest of the thallus. Given the very brief period of this observation it was not possible to establish whether this feeding was for the dove itself, or whether it was collecting food for nestlings. While it appears that Collared Dove may not previously have been recorded feeding in the marine environment, this short observation demonstrates its adaptability and provides further evidence of why it has been so successful in colonising most parts of Scotland during the last half century.

David and Janet Jardine

Birch wood in Taynish NNR ©Steve Petty

Taynish NNR

25 years of CBC field work

Taynish National Nature Reserve (NNR) is located on a peninsula on the western side of Loch Sween in Knapdale, Mid Argyll. Native broadleaved woodland has survived here for over 6,000yrs. Sensitive management throughout its history has allowed Taynish to remain a very special place. The reserve is a mixture of woodland, scrub, bog, foreshore, grassland and heath, which together support a rich diversity of wildlife.

In 1990, two Common Bird Census (CBC) plots (woodland and coastal plot) were established to represent the full range of habitats present on this diverse NNR. I carried out the fieldwork and analysed the data throughout the period, thus maintaining continuity and survey accuracy, although 2013 and 2014 were missed due to other work commitments. The completion of 25 years of CBC field work was achieved in 2016. This account updates a previous article in the March 2016 *Eider* (pages 6-7).

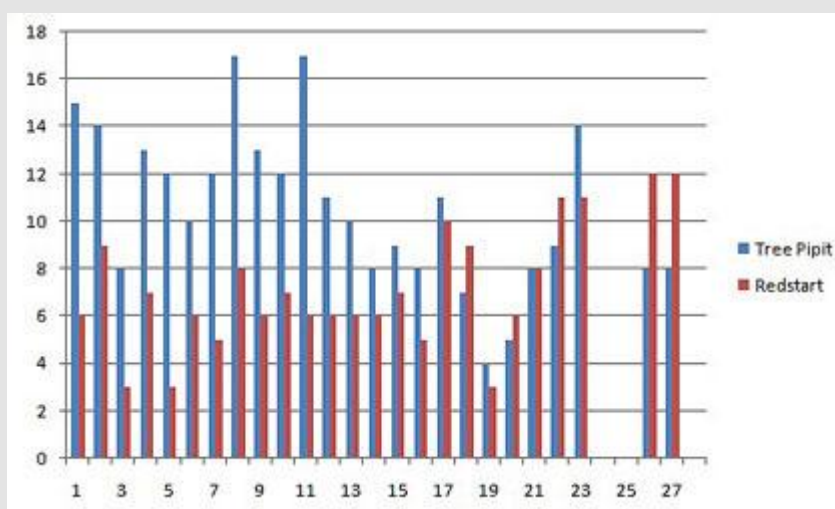
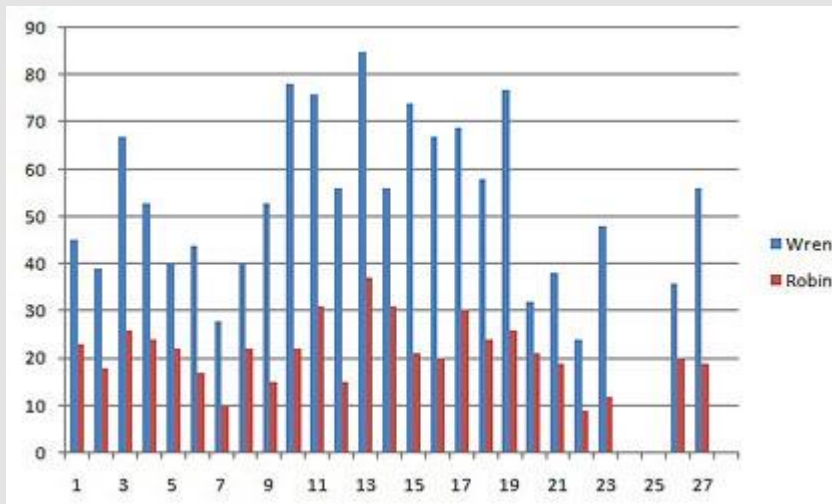
Throughout this period, the total number of bird territories and the total number of species recorded annually have remained high and shown little variation amongst years, probably reflecting the rich habitat diversity. However, some interesting trends among individual species have emerged during the survey.

Notable upward trends included the amber listed Redstart from as low as three territories in 1992 to a record level of 12 territories in 2015 and 2016 (see figure on next page). There has been a significant increase in Blackcaps from one or two territories in the 1990's to an outstanding 22 territories in 2015 (down to 14 in 2016). Similarly Garden Warblers have increased from one or two in the 1990's to eleven territories in 2015 (down to five in 2016). Willow Warbler, now an amber listed species, and the most abundant breeding species at Taynish, has shown a gradual increase from a low 41 territories in 1992 to an outstanding 137 territories in 2011 and 112 territories in 2016. Blue Tits have increased from as low as eleven territories in 1992 to 39 in 2015 and 35 in 2016.

Notable declining species include the Tree Pipit from a high of 17 territories in 1997 to only four in 2008 (eight in 2016—see figure on next page), Wood Warbler from eleven territories in 1998 to zero territories in 2012 (currently only a single territory), Starling from seven territories in 2002 to zero currently, Cuckoo from four territories in 2000 to zero territories in recent years and Skylark from five territories in 1993 to zero territories currently. All of these five species are



Robin ©Steve Petty



The graphs show the number of territories from 1990 (1 on the bottom (x) axis) to 2016 (27 on the x axis). No counts were made in 2013 and 2014 (24 and 25 on the x axis).

Wren and Robin (upper figure) have fluctuated during this period. In contrast, Tree Pipit has declined and Redstart has increased (lower figure).

red listed nationally. Other red listed species including Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush, Grasshopper Warbler, Spotted Flycatcher, Linnet and Lesser Redpoll have remained relatively stable at Taynish. However, Grasshopper Warbler has shown evidence of a decline in recent years with zero territories in 2015, compared to seven in 2011. The amber listed Oystercatcher has declined from five territories in 2002 to zero territories currently. Other amber listed species, Mallard, Snipe, Common Sandpiper, Meadow Pipit, Dunnock, Bullfinch and Reed Bunting have remained relatively stable.

Wrens and Robins have fluctuated greatly over the years, probably reflecting variations in survival due to winter conditions, as peaks and troughs coincide (figure above). Wren and Robin populations peaked in 2002 with 85 and 37 territories respectively and both reaching all-time lows in 2011 with 24 and 9 territories respectively.

In recent years there has been evidence of a decline in Sedge Warblers, down from a peak of 13 territories in 1998 and 1999 to an all-time low of only two territories in 2016, White-throat down from a peak of 10 in 2001 to an all-time low of a single territory in 2016, Chaffinch down from 43 in 2004 to an all-time low of 19 territories in 2016 and Buzzard down from a regular single territory to zero.

I suspect that this unique long-term data set not only reflects bird population trends in Taynish, but also provides a valuable indicator of population trends over a much wider area of Argyll. For example, the increase in Blackcaps and the decline in Wood Warblers seems to be a county-wide phenomenon. Comments from club members on this aspect would be welcome by the editor.

John Halliday

Editor note: The full data set of the breeding bird populations within the Taynish CBC plots can be viewed under the 'Publications' tab at <http://argyllbirdclub.org>

Recent bird sightings February to April 2017

Golden Plover, Tiree on 4 April ©Richard Whitson

Presented here are records of rare and unusual species, as well as counts and movements of more common species recorded in Argyll during the period. I wish to thank to everyone who sent in records and apologise for any errors or omissions. Ideally records should be submitted using the Argyll Bird Recording System or by using the BTO BirdTrack System. For information about either scheme please email:

abcrecorder@outlook.com

A more detailed and up-to-date account of recent sightings, including a list of spring migrant arrival dates, is available on the Argyll Bird Club website.

Note: Machrihanish SBO = Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, Kintyre

Swans, ducks, geese & gamebirds

BLACK SWAN. One was with Whooper Swans at The Laggan, Kintyre on 29-30 Mar and Kilkivan Farm on 1-8 Apr (photo below).

ACKLING GOOSE. Up to four, possibly five birds were reported from Islay during Feb-Mar.

PALE-BELLIED BRENT GOOSE. A high count for mainland Argyll of 200+ at Loch Gilp, Mid-Argyll on 22 Apr.

WIGEON. A drake American x Eurasian Wigeon hybrid was at Holy Loch, Cowal on 1 Apr (George Newal, Alistair McGregor, photo below).

GREEN-WINGED TEAL. A male was at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 10 and 15 Feb, and a male on Islay at Gruinart and was seen occasionally during Feb-Apr.



Left photo: Black Swan at The Laggan, Kintyre on 30 March ©Eddie Maguire

Right photo: Hybrid drake American x Eurasian Wigeon at the Holy Loch, Cowal on 1 April ©Alistair McGregor

PINTAIL. Outwith records from the islands, a female remained at Ormsary, Mid-Argyll from Jan until 7 Feb at least. Another female was on the Crinan Canal near Crinan, Mid-Argyll on 6 Feb. Eight (4mm, 4ff) were at the head of Loch Gilp, Mid-Argyll on 27 Apr.

SHOVELER. A total of six was at Westport Marsh, Kintyre on 4 Apr.

GARGANEY. Single drakes were seen at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve, Islay on 21 and 26 Apr and at Canal Loch, Coll on 26 Apr.

POCHARD. Four were on Ardnave Loch, Islay on 10 Feb. A male was at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 3 Mar. A male was at Campbeltown Loch, Kintyre on 15 Apr. A pair was at Heylipol Church Loch, Tiree on 23Apr.

LONG-TAILED DUCK. A high count included nine at Loch Indaal, Islay on 1 Mar. An inland record of a female at Loch Ceann a' Chroin (near Ford), Mid-Argyll to 7 Mar.

VELVET SCOTER. Two were at the Sound of Gigha, Kintyre on 5 Feb. One was at Loch Tuath, Mull on 20 Apr.

Seabirds (divers, grebes, shearwaters, petrels also egrets & herons)

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER. A high count of 127 birds was made at the Sound of Gigha, Kintyre on 5 Feb. Roost counts around the Mull sea lochs (per. David Shackleton) gave a total of 501 birds at the end of Mar, and a total wintering population of around 600 seems likely.

MANX SHEARWATER. A very early bird was found grounded in a garden at Carradale, Kintyre during week commencing 6 Feb. The next report was more typical with one passing south off Machrihanish SBO, Kintyre on 16 Mar.

LITTLE EGRET. One was seen again at Loch Cre-ran, North Argyll on 12 Feb and remained in the area until at least 21 Mar. One was at Point Sands, Kintyre on 23 Feb (Nick Fletcher).



Black-tailed Godwit, Tiree on 25 April ©John Bowler

GREAT CRESTED GREBE. Two were off Ardentinn, Cowal during Feb-Mar.

SLAVONIAN GREBE. A high count of 72 birds was made at the Sound of Gigha, Kintyre on 5 Feb. Fifteen were at Loch na Keal, Mull on 4 Feb.

Raptors to rails

OSPREY. The first very early report was from Campbeltown, Kintyre on 16 Mar.

MARSH HARRIER. One was at Machir Bay, Islay on 27 Mar and presumably the same bird again nearby at Gruinart on 1 Apr.

CORN CRAKE. First report was at Totronald, Coll on 19 Apr.

Waders

GOLDEN PLOVER. A massive flock of 7,500 was at The Reef, Tiree on 13 Apr with a further 500 at Loch a' Phuill the same day. Good numbers on Islay included 400 at Ardnave on 26 Apr.

SANDERLING. Sixty were present at Machrihanish SBO, Kintyre on 4Apr.

JACK SNIDE. One was at Foreland, Islay on 18 Mar.

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT. A Scottish record



Whooper Swans, Loch Gilp, 13 March ©Jim Dickson



Little Ringed Plover, Oronsay on 18 April
©Amy Millard

count of 2,270 was made on Tiree on 25 Apr (including 15 colour-ringed birds) with a flock of 1,750 at Kilmoluaig, 470 at Loch an Eilein, 38 at An Fhaodhail and 12 scattered birds elsewhere. Strong passage on Islay included a high count of 300 at Ardnave on 26 Apr. The strong northerly winds also resulted in high numbers at Loch Gilp, Mid-Argyll with 270 (flocks of 120 + 150) on 27 Apr. On Mull, 100 were at Lochdon on 21 Apr.

WHIMBREL. The first report was of one at Lochdon, Mull on 29 Mar, followed by one at Loch Craignish, Mid-Argyll on 7 Apr. A peak of at least 20 birds were at Machrihanish SBO, Kintyre on 19Apr. Strong passage on Islay included a high count of 97 at Uisken-tuie on 28 Apr.

GREENSHANK. Higher counts included three at RSPB Loch Gruinart, Islay on 3 Feb and three at Loch Laich, North Argyll on 17 Feb.

COMMON SANDPIPER. One was seen and photographed at Ronachan, Kintyre on 5 Feb and one was at Ormsary, Mid-Argyll on 3 Mar and at Claonaig, Kintyre on 12Apr.

Skuas, gulls, terns & auks

LONG-TAILED SKUA. An adult was reported north of Appin, North Argyll on 30 Apr.

KITTIWAKE. A flock of at least 2,000 were seen flying north past Lismore, North Argyll on 25 Feb.

LITTLE GULL. An adult and two first-winter

birds were at Loch Gilp, Mid-Argyll during Feb-Apr, giving a total of at least five different birds there this winter. A first-winter bird was at Loch Indaal, Islay on 18 Apr. Two (age not stated) were on Oronsay, Colonsay on 30 Apr.

RING-BILLED GULL. A first-winter bird was at Craignens, Islay from 15 Feb until at least 8 Mar (photo below).

ICELAND GULL. A juv remained at Ormsary, Mid-Argyll in to mid-Feb. A pure white juv remained at Campbeltown Harbour, Kintyre up to 28 Apr. An adult flew down the Sound of Islay on 1 Feb. Two (a juv and a second-winter) were at Knock, Mull during 14 Feb-Mar. A juv was at Killiechronan, Mull on 22 Feb. On Tiree, juvs were at Traigh Bhi on 4 Feb and Loch Bhassapol on 23 Feb. A juv was off Glengorm, Mull on 4 and 23 Mar. An adult flew south past Machrihanish SBO, Kintyre on 21 Mar and a juv was at Machrihanish Holiday Park during Mar.

KUMLIEN'S (ICELAND) GULL. A juv (from Jan) remained at Ormsary, Mid-Argyll until mid-Feb.

GLAUCOUS GULL. Good numbers lingered from the winter period with up to ten different juvs on Tiree in early Mar and several singles were noted on Mull, Islay and Mid-Argyll. A first-winter 'Viking Gull' (a Glaucous x Herring Gull hybrid) was at Bowmore, Islay from 15 Feb.

LESSER BLACK BACKED GULL. The first report was from the Oban area, Mid-Argyll on 19 Feb.

SANDWICH TERN. First report was of two off Bruichladdich, Islay on 27 Mar.

LITTLE TERN. First report was of two at Salum Bay, Tiree 10 Apr.

COMMON TERN. First report was of two at Loch In-



Ring-billed Gull, Islay on 3 March ©Gary Woodburn

daal, I slay on 18 Apr.

ARCTIC TERN. First report was of two off the Maze, Tiree on 23 Apr.

LITTLE AUK. One flew west off Aird, Tiree on 22 Feb.

PUFFIN. There was an early report of two flying west off Hynish, Tiree on 6 Feb.

Doves, cuckoos, owls, swift, king-fisher & woodpeckers

STOCK DOVE. Two were at Knockdow Estate, Cowal on 9 Feb. One was in song at Slockavuillin Woods, Mid-Argyll on 26 Mar. One was at Killellan Park, south Kintyre on 14 Apr.

CUCKOO. One calling at Clachan, Kintyre on 7 Apr and was probably the earliest bird reported in Scotland this spring

LONG-EARED OWL. One on Tiree was found moribund after hitting overhead wires and then being trampled by cattle on 17 Feb.

SWIFT. Three were over Campbeltown, Kintyre on 19 Apr, and one was present on 23 Apr.

KINGFISHER. One was at the mouth of the River Sorn, I slay on 11 Feb. One was on the Crinan Canal, near Crinan Woods, Mid-Argyll on 15 Feb. One was at Loch Striven, Cowal on 22 Feb. One was seen regularly at Loch Cuin, Mull during Feb-Mar. One was at Caol Scotnish, Mid-Argyll on 5 Mar. One was at Tioran, Loch Scridain, Mull on 19 Apr.

Passerines (larks to buntings)

GREAT GREY SHRIKE. One was in the Bridgend area, I slay from 15 Feb until at least 5 Mar then re-found at Avonvogie on 29 Mar. One was reported (unconfirmed) at Tioran, Mull on 19 Apr.

MAGPIE. One was at Carradale, Kintyre on 28 Feb and one was still at Tobermory, Mull in Feb.

SAND MARTIN. The first report was of one at RSPB Loch Gruinart Reserve, I slay on 19 Mar.

HOUSE MARTIN. A very early first report of one at Arinagour, Coll on 15 Mar was followed by one at RSPB Loch Gruinart Reserve, I slay on 19 Mar.

SWALLOW. The first report was of one at Knock, Mull on 28 Mar followed by reports of singles on I slay and Tiree the following day.

WOOD WARBLER. First report of one singing briefly at Dalvore Wood, Moine Mhor, Mid-Argyll on 19 Apr.

CHIFFCHAFF. First report was of one at Balephuil, Tiree on 14 Mar with the next at Achnabreck, Mid-Argyll on 24 Mar, thereafter numbers increased daily and were widespread.

WILLOW WARBLER. A very early report of one at Tayinloan, Kintyre on 24 Mar followed by the next at Gruinart, I slay on 3 Apr thereafter more frequent reports.

BLACKCAP. First report of one, in song, at Benmore Gardens, Cowal on 10 Apr.

GRASSHOPPER WARBLER. First report of one, in song, at Minard, Mid-Argyll on 17 Apr.

SEDGE WARBLER. First report of one, in song, at Keills, I slay on 13 Apr.

WAXWING. One was at Ardentinn, Cowal on 19 Feb.

RING OUZEL. First report was of a male in Glen Fyne, Mid-Argyll on 8 Apr.

NUTHATCH. A spring influx noted this year. One was again at Stronafian, Cowal on 24 Feb. One was at Loch Gair, Mid-Argyll on 2-11 Apr. One was at Benmore Gardens, Cowal on 10 Apr. Two-three were seen in a Glenbranter garden, Cowal during Mar-Apr. One was at the head of Loch Scotnish, Mid-Argyll from 20 Apr. One was near Taynish, Mid-Argyll on 23 Apr. One was at Ardrishaig, Mid-Argyll on 23 Apr. One was at Salen, Mull on 27 Apr.

REDSTART. First report was of a male in Dalvore Wood, Moine Mhor, Mid-Argyll on 19 Apr (see below).



Redstart, Moine Mhor on 19 April ©Jim Dickson



Upper photo: Wheatear, Loch Gilp on 19 April ©Jim Dickson

Lower photo: 'Scandinavian' Rock Pipit, Machrihanish SBO, Kintyre on 8 March ©Eddie Maguire

WHINCHAT. First report was of one at Loch Scridain, Mull on 29 Apr.

WHEATEAR. First report was of a male at Machrihanish SBO, Kintyre on 15 Mar followed by four or five singles on Mull on 18 Mar.

WHITE WAGTAIL. First report was of two at Machrihanish SBO, Kintyre on 23 Mar followed by strong passage in Apr with a daily high count there of 50 on 22 Apr. Good numbers on Tiree,

STOP PRESS

LITTLE EGRET. One was at Ardtorn, Mull on 1 May.

POMARINE SKUA. One was on Oronsay, Colonsay on 1 May.

with a peak of 32 along the coast between Sandaig and Balevullin 23Apr.

TREE PIPIT. First report was of one at Glen Aros, Mull on 17 Apr.

'SCANDINAVIAN' ROCK PIPIT. Two different birds, both showing features of the Scandinavian race *littoralis* in transition to summer plumage were photographed at Machrihanish SBO, Kintyre on 2 and 8 Apr.

BRAMBLING. One was at Cairnbaan, Mid-Argyll on 12 Feb. A male was at Ormsary, Mid-Argyll on 16 Feb.

CROSSBILL. Higher counts included 11 'flyovers' at Ormsary, Mid-Argyll on 5 Feb and 10 at Avonvoggie, Islay on 28 Mar. One was in song in a Cairnbaan garden on 30 Apr.

YELLOWHAMMER. Higher counts included 12 in a garden (feeding station) in Campbeltown, Kintyre during Mar to 11 Apr, and 8-10 in Southend, Kintyre during Mar with at least 10 remaining there until 7 Apr.

SNOW BUNTING. One was at Loch na Keal, Mull on 14 -17 Feb. One was at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 22 Feb. One was at The Oa, Islay on 7 Feb and 2 Mar. Two were at Machir Bay, Islay on 15 Apr.

LAPLAND BUNTING. Singles were at Clachan, Tiree on 12 Feb, Barrapol, Tiree on 15 Feb and at The Oa, Islay on 2 Mar. Three were at Ardnave, Islay on 31 Mar. A group of six at Sorobaidh Bay on 17Apr included four males coming into summer plumage. The last one noted (a female) was at The Reef, Tiree on 28 Apr.

Jim Dickson, Argyll Bird Recorder

Golden Plover, Tiree on 4 April ©Richard Whitson



Proposed new fish farm in the Sound of Jura



Dounie Bay ©Lottie Goodlet

Argyll Bird Club members may be interested to know that SEPA have received an application for a license for a new fish farm (intended to house 1.1 million salmon or rainbow trout) at Salen Mor Bay, beside Dounie on the Sound of Jura, a few kilometres south of Crinan.

Salen Mor Bay is an environmentally sensitive site, inside a recently created Marine Protected Area and close to the River Add, which has one of the few remaining populations of wild Salmon and Sea Trout between Tarbert and Fort William.

In recent years many fish farms in Argyll have experienced dangerously high levels of parasitic sea lice, which are becoming resistant to chemical treatment and can spread from farmed fish to injure or kill wild ones. Wild Salmon and Sea Trout have declined sharply in parallel with the rise of fish farming.

One of the main chemicals used to treat sea lice (Emamectin Benzoate) has recently been connected to the disappearance of seabed-living crustacea far beyond the immediate area of the fish farm cages. Some of these crabs, lobsters and prawns are destined for human consumption while others are potential prey for critically endangered Flapper Skate—a spectacular 3m long fish for which the Loch Sunart to the Sound of Jura MPA was created. Tagging studies show these skate are highly site faithful and use the deep trenches in the sound, one of which is so close to the fish farm site that thousands of tonnes of organic effluent would flow downhill into their habitat, an effect not accounted for in SEPA's pollution dispersal models. The proposed farm is of the maximum size currently allowed in Scotland (more than twice the size allowed in Norway or

the Faeroes) and the amount of faeces discharged would be comparable to the sewage from a town as big as Lochgilphead.

The skates' lives are little understood and SNH have expressed concern that their egg cases, laid close inshore, may be smothered. SNH have also requested further survey work after the possible identification of a community of northern sea fans and sponges (a rare, north-west Scotland biome) in video footage taken during an RoV survey of the seabed.

Dounie is also inside the Knapdale National Scenic Area, which ought to convey Scotland's highest level of landscape protection. The cages would block the bay to its current sustainable uses of creel fishing and scallop diving.

The background to this is that the Scottish Government plans to double fish farm production by



A Common Skate egg case, similar to the egg case of Flapper Skate ©John Aitchison



Salen Mor Bay looking north up the Sound of Jura. Twelve fish farm cages would dominate this view if the proposal was approved ©Philip Price

2030, so the industry is pushing for new sites in unsuitable, ecologically fragile locations, including several inside MPAs. Meanwhile disease and sea lice control methods are failing, while the adverse impacts of fish farms are becoming better understood.

If this concerns you as much as it does me, please have a look at the Facebook page or website of the newly formed 'Friends of the Sound of Jura', where there is more information about the proposal and the harm it would do.

Website: <https://douniebay.wordpress.com/blog/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/friendsofthesoundofjura/>

The public consultation period for the SEPA license has ended, but you can join the campaign against this fish farm by adding your name to this petition.

<https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/no-to-fish-farm-in-the-sound-of-jura>

If you leave your e-mail address at the same

time you will be informed of developments, including advice about when to write to the council's planning department, if planning permission is sought. SEPA's decision is expected within two months. Thank you.

John Aitchison



Articles for the September issue of the *Eider* should with the editor before the 20 August 2017

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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 unedited digital photographs (jpeg files preferred) of birds and their habitats to the editor. Please do not embed digital images in word files. 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 20th 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 and has around 400 members. 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 *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).