

**September 2017**

**Number 121**

# The Eider



Rose-coloured Starling at Laphroaig, Islay on 24 June ©Garry Turnbull

**Pied-billed Grebe breeding in Argyll, pages 18-21**

**Recent bird sightings, pages 10-13**

**Treshnish Isles Auk Ringing Group, pages 227-29**

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## 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 16 September to Tuesday 19**

**September. Tiree.** Led by David Jardine (phone 01546 510200. e-mail [dcjardine@btinternet.com](mailto:dcjardine@btinternet.com)). A provisional booking has been made for some accommodation on Tiree from Saturday 16 September to 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 would like to go on this trip, please contact David promptly, as there are still a few places available.

**Saturday 28 October. Sound of Gigha.** Led by Mike Harrison (phone 01631 710656. e-mail [jmharrison@iee.org](mailto:jmharrison@iee.org)). Meet at Ronachan Point Car Park on the A83 (grid ref. NR741548) at 10.00hrs. Lunches will be available at the hotel on Gigha. The trip will include a short (3-4km) road walk on Gigha after some rough ground at Ronachan viewpoint.

**Sunday 26 November. Loch Gilp and the Add Estuary.** Led by Jim Dickson (phone 01546 603967. e-mail [meg@jdickson5.plus.com](mailto:meg@jdickson5.plus.com)). Meet at 10.00hrs in Lochgilphead at the Corran car park, opposite the caravan park, on the A83, close to the roundabout (A83/A816) at the western end of the town. Please bring your own lunch. The trip will include several short walks (each 300m maximum) on level ground.

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### 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). The programme is on the next page. Lunches will be available in the hotel.

**Spring Meeting 2018.** Saturday 3 March at the Inveraray Inn ([www.inveraray-inn.co.uk](http://www.inveraray-inn.co.uk)). The programme will appear in the December *Eider*.

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

### Acknowledgements

Very many thanks to the following for their contributions to this issue—John Bowler, Andrew Carter, Malcolm Chattwood, Jim Dickson, Mike Duckham, Bob Furness (including photocopying & dispatch), Mike Harrison, Ian Fisher, David Jardine, Hilary Lord, Eddie Maguire, Alistair McGregor, David Palmar, Linda Petty (proof reading), Jeremy Roberts, Nigel Scriven, Margaret Staley and Robin Ward

## PREPARATION OF ARGYLL BIRD REPORT 28 (2016)

Work on *ABR* 28 will start soon. If you have any outstanding records for 2016, please ensure they are sent to Jim Dickson promptly. Jim is currently looking for good quality photos of birds taken in Argyll in 2016 for the report. Please contact Jim if you have any that are suitable for consideration. We are also looking for folks to help on the editorial side (writing/collating species accounts, proof reading etc.), as Jim Dickson will be stepping down as editor in 2018. We hope the *ABR* 28 will be available at the Spring Meeting in 2018.

## THE ARGYLL BIRD CLUB'S WEBSITE HELP NEEDED

To keep the website updated takes a lot of effort. We urgently need more help with the 'recent reports' section, to cover periods when the usual compilers are on holiday etc. So, if you

have any previous experience with maintaining websites or would like to learn how to, why not give us a hand. Without more help, the almost daily updates to 'recent reports' will become less frequent. If you are interested, please contact any club official to learn more about what is involved.

Don't forget to visit our website ([www.argyllbirdclub.org](http://www.argyllbirdclub.org)) to find out about up-to-date arrangements for meetings, recent sightings of birds, including photographs, and lots more.

## 2017 ABC ROOKERY SURVEY

A big thank-you to the twenty-nine contributors (listed below) to this survey, which meant that complete coverage of Argyll was achieved.

In total, 2,519 nests were found in 67 rookeries, compared with 3,138 nests in 71 rookeries in 1975 (just under a 20% decline). Numbers in Kintyre were slightly lower than in 1975, but those in south Kintyre experienced a 41 % de-

### Programme for the ABC's Autumn Meeting

**Saturday 4 November at the Cairnbaan Hotel, near Lochgilphead**

Time	Session
<b>0930</b>	<b>Doors open, coffee and tea</b>
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	A month spent birding on Cowal— <i>Neil Hammatt</i>
<b>1100-1120</b>	<b>Coffee/tea</b>
1120-1210	The birds of Colonsay and Oronsay— <i>David Jardine</i>
1210-1230	Underwater photography of Argyll's marine life— <i>Mark Woombs</i>
<b>1230-1400</b>	<b>Lunch (available in the hotel, if required)</b>
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	<b>Tea/coffee</b>
1600-1620	Results from the Argyll Bird Club's rookery survey— <i>David Jardine</i>
1620-1630	<b>Raffle and closing remarks</b>

cline since 1996. Numbers on Islay have increased since 1975, but declined since the 1990s. There are no Rooks now breeding on Mull itself, with the only rookery in this area on Iona. Numbers have diminished significantly on Cowal, and there have been declines in Mid and North Argyll. The full results will be written up in the *Argyll Bird Report*.

Contributors to the Rookery Survey: Irene Boston, Ian Brooke, Tom Callan, Phil Catton, Cherry Cook, Stuart Crutchfield, Drew Dick, Jim Dickson, Neil Hammatt, Mike Harrison, Robin Harvey, James Howe, David James, David Jardine, John Kinross, Rob Lightfoot, Eddie Maguire, Rab Morton, Yvonne McCrone, Louise Muir, Malcom Ogilvie, Mike Peacock, Felicity Pollard, Pete Roberts, Lesley Silcock, John Taylor, Gary Turnbull, Lucy Ward and Emily Wilkins.

## THE BIRDS OF COLONSAY AND ORONSAY

*The Birds of Colonsay and Oronsay* has now been published. This hardback book has been written 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 is available on-line from [bookshop@colonsay.org.uk](mailto:bookshop@colonsay.org.uk) or at Argyll Bird Club's Autumn Meeting (thus saving post and package).

## TRIP TO ESTONIA—EARLY MAY 2017

Are you interested in joining some Argyll Bird Club members and Islay birders on an exciting

birdwatching trip to Estonia? The proposed trip follows on from successful trips to Spain in 2015 and 2016 led by Peter Roberts and a trip to Lesvos, Greece by Jim Dickson this spring. Remaining places will be on a first come basis, so please contact Peter Roberts (phone: 01496 850673, e-mail: [cistico-las4ever@btinternet.com](mailto:cistico-las4ever@btinternet.com)) or Jim Dickson for more details if you are interested.

Estonia is situated in the eastern corner of the Baltic Sea. It is the smallest and least populous of the three 'Baltic States'. It has a wonderful coastline, dotted with hundreds of small low-lying islands and many bays. Inland there are further varied landscapes—extensive natural, mixed forests, bogs, marshes and grasslands, many rivers with associated reed-beds and wetlands, with many areas afforded protection within nature reserves and national parks. This abundance and variety of natural habitats produces an impressive range of birds and mammals, equal to many of the larger countries in northern Europe. There are over 200 regular breeding species, and a huge volume of arctic-bound migrants pass through the country.

In early May, hundreds of thousands of geese, ducks, divers and waders pass through from their local wintering grounds around the North Sea or much further south for their arctic breeding grounds. They can be found streaming along the coast of Estonia, providing one of Europe's great migration spectacles. In amongst the masses of common species there is always a reasonable chance of finding scarcer species



BLACK GROUSE.

such as Red-breasted or Lesser White-fronted Goose or a late Steller's Eider. Further attractions are to be found in the extensive forests with a healthy population of grouse (Capercaillie, Black Grouse and Hazel Grouse) and sought-after woodpeckers such as Black, White-backed, Lesser Spotted and Grey-headed, along with the lure of Ural Owls and maybe rarer species. At this time, some summer migrants will be returning to Estonia and we will be hoping for specialities such as Great Snipe, crakes, Citrine Wagtail and early returning warblers and flycatchers amidst the more resident species such as Hawfinch and Nutcracker.

Accommodation (hotels, all with en-suite rooms) and meals are good throughout. Transport will be in comfortable, spacious, self-drive minibuses. Peter Roberts who has birded in Estonia seven times previously will lead this trip and the excellent birder Antero Topp, who has extensive local knowledge, will co-lead.

**Estimated Cost:** This is calculated at c.£850 per person with a single room supplement of c.£180 (excluding air fares). The cost is provisional, but based on previous tours and fairly accurate estimations. Tour costs are based on a group of ten, plus the two drivers/leaders in two vehicles and may need to be adjusted if we go ahead with a smaller group.

Included are:

- Accommodation for eight nights in Estonia
- Breakfast and evening meal
- All transport and fuel costs in Estonia in comfortable minibuses driven by the leaders
- All guiding and incidentals such as entrance fees

Not included:

- Lunches (these can be a mix of whatever you wish, picked up from local shops, sit-down lunches in cafes and arranged picnic lunches from the hotels). Allow about €5 per day for these.

- Air fares to and from Tallin in Estonia. Not all airlines have published prices yet, but are thought to be about £200 - £250 return from Edinburgh or Glasgow (and probably from other regional UK airports).

Likely flights are:

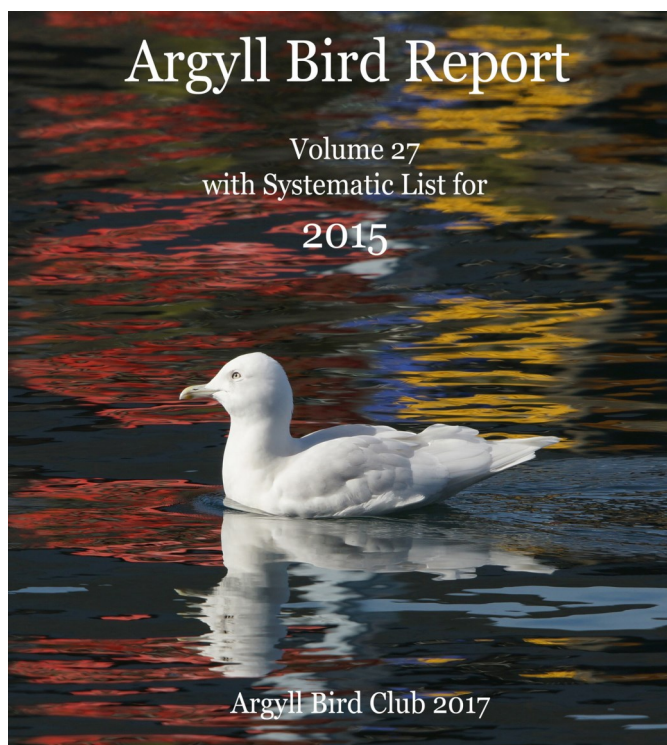
- KLM—Glasgow or Edinburgh to Amsterdam connecting with a direct flight to Tallinn arriving mid-afternoon.
- Easyjet—Glasgow or Edinburgh to Berlin; Berlin to Tallinn
- Easyjet—Glasgow or Edinburgh to Amsterdam connecting to Baltic Air to Tallinn.

Thus, the overall cost is likely to be c.£1080-£1150 for a nine-day tour with eight nights in Estonia and seven full days in country, which is much cheaper than commercial birding tours.

The tour could be modified to be shorter by one day. There is also the option to add a day to include an overnight near to a Brown Bear viewing hide.

## ARGYLL BIRD REPORT 27 (2015)

There are still copies of the latest ABR for sale. These can be purchased from Bob Furness (contact details on back page) 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.



## Papers for the AGM of the Argyll Bird Club

To be held at the Cairnbaan Hotel on Saturday 4 November 2017

Scottish Charity Number SC008782

### ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE PERIOD 15 APRIL 2016-14 APRIL 2017

The Argyll Bird Club is a registered Scottish charity number SC008782. The club can be contacted through the secretary, Mrs Anne Archer, 2 The Meadows, Toward, By Dunoon, Argyll PA237UP. The club is an unincorporated association managed by a committee of members elected by the membership at the annual general meeting. The members of the committee serve as the Trustees of the charity.

The club's annual general meeting was held on 12 November 2016 at which time Neil Brown stepped down from, and Katie Pendreigh was elected to, the committee.

This report was approved by the club's committee on 10 August 2017, at which time the committee members were as follows:

Mike Harrison (Chairman), Nigel Scriven (Vice-chairman), Bob Furness (Hon. Treasurer), Anne Archer (Hon. Secretary), Malcolm Chattwood, Jim Dickson, Gordon Holm, David Jardine, Katie Pendreigh, Steve Petty, Andy Robinson and Blair Urquhart

#### Management and membership

During the year the committee managed the club in accordance with the amended constitution of the club which was adopted at the Annual General Meeting held on 23 October 1999. The committee met in Inveraray on four occasions during the year. The operational focus of the committee continues to be on the club's meetings, field trips, bird report, newsletter and website while ensuring that these activities are underpinned by sound finances and that the club's charitable status is maintained.

Our number of memberships has shown a very small decrease from last year's total, with just under 200 memberships. We have approximately 300 members in the club if we count individuals rather than memberships. The club thanks Sue Furness for her work as membership secretary.

#### Objectives and Activities

The aims of the Argyll Bird Club are to promote interest in and conservation of the birds of Argyll and their habitats. During the year the club held two indoor meetings, at the Cairnbaan Hotel in November 2016 and at the Royal Marine Hotel, Dunoon in March 2017, at which invited speakers gave talks on subjects of ornithological and/or conservation interest. Talks at the November meeting covered the effect of offshore wind farms on seabird populations, habitat restoration on a small west Highland estate, the ecology and identification of diver species, and members' experiences of birding in Nepal and Trinidad and Tobago. In March the topics covered included wildlife crime, the development and use of ever-smaller tags and trackers for studies of bird movements and migration, current conservation issues, and the benefits (and dangers) of creating and maintaining lists of wildlife sightings.

The club thanks the speakers and organisers for their contribution to the success of these meetings, and the members who write up the talks for publication in subsequent editions of *The Eider*.

The club continued its programme of monthly field trips with visits to Tarbet and Ardkinglass, the Add Estuary and Taynish NNR, Skipness, Holy Loch, Kerrera, Loch Gilp and the Add Estuary, Ormsary, Lismore, the Sound of Gigha, and a seawatching trip on the Islay ferry. Forty members and 9 non-members participated in the field trips over the course of the year. The club thanks the leaders of these trips for contributing their time and effort and the members, often the leaders of the trips, who subsequently prepare reports of the trips for publication in *The Eider*.

The club newsletter, **The Eider**, continues to thrive under the editorship of Steve Petty. Four editions were published during the year containing news, views, articles, reports of club activities, recent birdsightings and much more. The newsletter is published in both paper and

electronic formats; electronic publishing provides substantial savings in copying and postage costs.

The club website provides a contact point for the club and is one of our principal tools for promoting interest in the birds of Argyll. Details of forthcoming field trips and indoor meetings are published here together with information about the club and its publications. The feature which draws most visitors, however, is the 'Sightings' page where the latest reports and images of the bird life of Argyll can be found. The website was re-hosted during the year and a new contact address introduced for submitting reports. The effort put in by Jim Dickson and his helpers to keep the site up to date is much appreciated by users.

The club's activities towards promoting the conservation of the birds of Argyll generally fall into three areas: recording the occurrence of the birds; publishing those records; and supporting fieldwork and conservation activities relating to the birds. For 2015 the recording team led by Jim Dickson received nearly 30,000 individual records from more than 450 contributors for processing and entry into the database. Aside from requests for data extracts from commercial organisations and academic researchers, the main vehicle for publishing this data is the *Argyll Bird Report*, compiled by a small team led by Jim Dickson. Volume 27 of the report, covering 2015, was published in February 2017 and distributed to members either by post or in person at the Spring Meeting in Dunoon. Sales of the report are an important source of revenue for the club and we have had a good year in that regard.

The club thanks all who are involved in ornithological recording in Argyll including the Argyll Bird Records Committee, the Recorder and his team, especially Morag Rea and Ian Brooke who spend countless hours preparing records for entry into the database, the observers and organisations which submit records to the database and the writers who assist in the preparation and publication of the *Argyll Bird Report*.

Fieldwork and conservation activities this year included financial support to allow a long-running breeding bird survey at Taynish National Nature Reserve to be continued. A grant was provided to Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, which is an important source of information regarding

bird migration, especially of seabirds, along the Argyll coast. The club also committed funds to support the future publication of an avifauna and bird atlas of Colonsay and Oronsay.

In March the club began a comprehensive survey of rookeries in Argyll, the last such survey having taken place in 1975. Club members and members of the public were encouraged to report the presence of rookeries in their neighbourhood for subsequent counting of nests. Results of the survey will be published during 2017-18.

## Finance

Our cash balance at the end of the year stood at £12,084.63, an increase of £903.88 from the previous year (see table on next page). Income from subscriptions was about the same as in the previous year. Fluctuations in subscription income arise due to changes in numbers of members, but also from late payments arriving from members who forgot to renew in January; these often arrive around the end of the financial year in early April so may happen to fall in one year or the next. Raffles at the indoor meetings continue to provide useful income, as well as entertainment, and we are grateful to members who contributed items to be raffled. Income from 'raffles and donations' decreased, mainly because the 2015-16 sum had included a one-off donation of £500 in addition to the recurring raffle income. Sales were mostly of the latest *Argyll Bird Report* and we have very few copies of the book remaining to sell. We reclaimed Gift Aid during this year for a period of three years, so this income only appears every few years in the accounts. As anticipated in the previous year's report, income from data provision fell, though perhaps surprisingly to zero in 2016-17.

Expenditure under most headings was similar to that in the previous year. Printing of the *Argyll Bird Report* and associated postage costs represent our main expenditure. The next major expense is indoor meetings. Costs of meetings included room hire, and refunding of speakers' expenses but were less than in 2015-16 because in that year the club subsidised lunch costs at one of the meetings. Insurance costs were third party cover for club activities. We also provided grant funding to support Common Birds Census fieldwork in Taynish, and towards the costs of Machrihanish Seabird Observatory. As in the

previous year, the accounts show a moderate surplus for the year. The Accounts have been audited by Dr Bernie Zonfrillo.

## Declaration

The committee members declare that they have approved the committee's report above.

Signed on behalf of the committee by Mike Harrison (Chairman) and Bob Furness (Treasurer), on 10 August 2017

## MINUTES OF THE 31ST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD AT THE CAIRNBAAN HOTEL ON SATURDAY 12TH NOVEMBER 2016

36 members were present.

### 1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from John and Helen Anderson, Doug Menzies and Lilly Cregeen.

### 2. Minutes of the 2015 Annual General Meeting

The minutes of the 2015 Annual General Meeting held on 14 November 2015 had been published in the September 2016 issue of *The Eider*. Acceptance of the minutes as a true record of the meeting, proposed by Malcolm Chattwood and seconded by Iain Gibson, was unopposed.

### 3. Matters arising not covered in the following items

There were no matters arising from the minutes which would not be covered by the items on the agenda.

### 4. Annual report and accounts

Chairman Mike Harrison explained that the committee, who are the trustees of the charity which is the Argyll Bird Club, had changed the way that the club reports its activities this year in order to meet the requirements of the Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator (OSCR). The annual report and accounts were prepared for the year ending 14 April 2016 and were approved by the committee at their meeting on 11 August before being published in the September edition of *The Eider*. The report and accounts were being offered for adoption by the membership at the AGM before being sent to OSCR.

## Accounts for the 31st year of the Argyll Bird Club 15 April 2016 to 14 April 2017 Scottish Charity Number: SC008782

	2016/2017	2015/2016
<b>INCOME</b>		
Subscriptions	2522.23	2582.23
Sales	933.00	1152.00
Raffles & donations	185.00	750.00
Data fees	0.00	378.00
HMRC Gift Aid	710.71	0.00
Payments for club dinner	0.00	765.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4350.94</b>	<b>5627.23</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
Bird report	1390.00	1365.00
Newsletter photocopying	324.95	338.00
Postage	570.36	629.40
Public meetings	798.75	1085.37
Insurance	113.00	113.00
Licenses/website	0.00	0.00
Envelopes	0.00	64.71
Grants	250.00	450.00
Club dinner	0.00	765.00
Refunded cancelled dinners	0.00	76.50
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3447.06</b>	<b>4886.98</b>
<b>Surplus/deficit for year</b>		
<b>Brought forward</b>	<b>11180.75</b>	<b>10440.50</b>
<b>Assets at end of year</b>	<b>12084.63</b>	<b>11180.75</b>

fore being sent to OSCR.

Mike commented that the report contained a good summary of the activities of the club and thanked a number of people for their work over the year under consideration, but he took the opportunity presented

by the AGM to thank in particular Roger Broad who had recently stood down from the Argyll Bird Records Committee. Roger had been a founder member of that committee and had also served on the club committee for many years. He also thanked Jim Dickson for his work as recorder, editor of the bird report and principal poster of recent sightings on the club website.

No issues were raised by the members present regarding either the annual report or the accounts. Adoption of the annual report and accounts was proposed by Douglas Barker and seconded by Ian Hopkins, unopposed.

### **5. Election of office bearers and committee members**

Neil Brown had decided to step down from the committee due to work commitments and the Chairman thanked him for his contribution to the committee and the club over the last three years. All other office bearers and committee members had indicated that they were willing to stand for re-election.

For the post of Chairman, Mike Harrison was

proposed by David Palmar, seconded by Malcolm Chattwood and elected unopposed.

For the posts of Vice-chairman, Treasurer and Secretary respectively, Nigel Scriven, Bob Furness and Anne Archer were proposed by Mike Harrison, seconded by Ian Hopkins and elected unopposed.

The seven remaining committee members Malcolm Chattwood, Jim Dickson, Gordon Holm, David Jardine, Steve Petty, Andy Robinson and Blair Urquhart were proposed en bloc for election to the committee by Mike Harrison and seconded by Douglas Barker. Katie Pendreigh was willing to stand for the vacant seat, was proposed by Mike Harrison, seconded by Malcolm Chattwood and elected unopposed.

For the post of Membership Secretary, Sue Furness was proposed by Mike Harrison, seconded by David Jardine and elected unopposed.

### **6. A.O.C.B.**

There was no further business and the meeting closed at 14.33 hours.

## **Agenda for the 32nd AGM of the Argyll Bird Club**

The AGM will be held on Saturday 4th November 2017 at the Cairnbaan Hotel, Lochgilphead.

### **Agenda**

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the 2016 AGM
3. Matters arising not covered in the following items
4. Annual report and accounts
5. Election of office bearers and committee members

The current office bearers and committee members are listed on the back page. A maximum of 12 members can be elected and nominations are invited.

### **6. A.O.C.B.**



Sanderling and Dunlin, Tiree on 26 May ©Jim Dickson



## Recent bird sightings May to July 2017

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:

[abc recorder@outlook.com](mailto:abc recorder@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 Sea-bird Observatory, Kintyre

### Swans, ducks, geese & gamebirds

**BLACK SWAN.** One was at Lochdon, Mull on 7 to 8 May and presumably the same bird there again on 9 Jul.

**PALE-BELLIED BRENT GOOSE.** An un-seasonal bird was at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree during 9-28 Jul.

**GARGANEY.** On Islay, a male was at RSPB Loch Gruinart Reserve on 8, 10 and 22 May. A pair briefly on the small pool at Strath Farm (The Laggan), Kintyre on 25 May was a good mainland find.

**POCHARD.** A pair was at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 3 May and perhaps the same drake remained at Loch an Eilein on 25 May and Heylipol Church Loch on 28 May and Loch na Faing on 29 May.

**RING-NECKED DUCK.** A drake (presumed returning bird from previous years) was back at

Loch Finlaggan, Islay from 16 May until at least 29 Jun (Andrew & Jane Greenwood *et al.*).

**LONG-TAILED DUCK.** A female was at Loch Ederline on 1 May (possibly the same bird as at Loch Ceann a' Chroin (nr. Ford), Mid-Argyll to 7 Mar), three were off Ardrishaig, Mid-Argyll on 14 Jun and one was at Lagganulva, Mull on 30 Jun.

**QUAIL.** One was heard calling at Glenastle, The Oa, Islay on 23 May, one was heard calling at Totronald, Coll on 25 May, two were heard calling at Balloch Farm, The Laggan, Kintyre on 21 Jun and one was heard calling at RSPB Loch Gruinart Reserve, Islay on 11 Jul.

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

**STORM PETREL.** Early birds were off NW Mull with 15 on 23 May, 10 on 24 May and 27 on 31 May. Five were off Balemartine, Tiree on 29 May. The first bird off Machrihanish SBO, Kintyre was on 16 Jun and higher counts there of 31 on 6 Jul and seven on 9 Jul.

**LITTLE EGRET.** Many more sightings than average, but perhaps only a few mobile individuals involved. One was at Ardtun, Mull on 1 May (D Holden) and this or perhaps another at Knock, Mull on 24 May (Paul Worrall/Tommy Davies). One was at the head of Loch Riddon, Cowal on 16 May (Arthur French). One was at RSPB Loch Gruinart Reserve, Islay on 21 May (visitor per Bob Davison). An adult in breeding plumage flew in off the sea at Machrihanish SBO, Kintyre on



**Upper photo.** Little Egret at Machrihanish SBO, Kintyre on 22 May ©Eddie Maguire

**Lower photo.** Great White Egret at Holy Loch, Cowal on 17 May ©Alistair McGregor

22 May (photo above) and came from the direction of Islay/Jura landing briefly in front of the bird hide (Eddie Maguire). One was on the shore at Castleton, nr Lochgilphead, Mid-Argyll on 22 May (Grace Fergusson) and one, perhaps the same, was at the Add Estuary on 24 May (Lynsey Gibson). One was at Ardfarn, Loch Craginish, Mid-Argyll on 19 to 20 Jun (Jan Brown) and perhaps the same nearby at Loch Beag on 28 Jul (Rachael Mackenzie). One was at the Holy Loch, Cowal from 29 Jul (Alistair McGregor).

**GREAT WHITE EGRET.** Two birds arrived together at the Holy Loch, Dunoon, Cowal on 15 May and were seen intermittently until 19 May (Davy Gilmour *et al.*) (photo opposite). This is our first record from Cowal and the first record of more than a single in Argyll.

**GREAT CRESTED GREBE.** One was at Loch Gorm, Islay on 10 May.

**PIED-BILLED GREBE.** The resident male has been seen regularly at Loch Feorlin, Mid-Argyll (see article and photo on pages 14-15).

## Raptors to rails

**HONEY BUZZARD.** One and perhaps a second bird seen distantly at Strachur, Cowal on 30 Jun (Clive McKay).

**MARSH HARRIER.** A male was at RSPB Loch Gruinart Reserve, Islay on 4 May, one (not sexed but possibly an immature) was at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 6 May, and an immature male was at Ardtun Mull on 27 to 28 Jun.

**GOSHAWK.** Single males were reported in Kintyre at Achaglass Forest on 30 Apr and at Largiebaan on 4 May (Chic McSherry).

**GYRFALCON.** A white-phase bird was reported from Tiree Airport by airport staff on the evening of 4 May but not seen subsequently (per John Bowler), awaiting further details.

**HOBBY.** One was seen fleetingly as it chased a Sand Martin near Loch Leathan, Mid-Argyll on 15 Jun (Rob & Christine Blackwell).

## Waders

**GREY PLOVER.** One was at Gott Bay, Tiree on 2 May. A smart breeding-plumaged bird was at Rhunahaorine Point, Kintyre on 9 May.

**CURLEW SANDPIPER.** On Tiree, a red adult was at Gott Bay on 2 Jun with further singles at Loch a' Phuill on 5 and 22 Jun.

**PECTORAL SANDPIPER.** One was at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 1 Jun (John Bowler).

**LITTLE STINT.** An adult was at

Balephetrish Bay, Tiree on 29 May with further singles at Loch a' Phuill on 1 and 5 Jun.

**RUFF.** One was at RSPB Loch Gruinart Reserve, Islay on 10, 13 and 25 May and three were near Gartbreck, Loch Indaal on 23 Jul.

**JACK SNIBE.** One was noted at Fidden, Mull on 11 May.

**WOOD SANDPIPER.** On Tiree, one was at Loch a' Phuill on 3 May, one was on a pool at Kilmoluaig on 10 May and one was on a pool at Milton on 28-30 Jul.

**GREEN SANDPIPER.** One was at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 15 May.

**RED-NECKED PHALAROPE.** One was observed at sea between Staffa and Iona, Mull on 23 Jun (Ashley Saunders *et al.*).

### **Skuas, gulls, terns & auks**

**ARCTIC SKUA.** A dark-phase bird was off Hynish, Tiree on 15 May. A dark-phase was at sea off NW Mull on 23 May and a pale-phase on 25 May with a pale and dark-phase on 27 May and two seen on 29 Jun. One was at Chn Lochanan, Tiree on 16 Jun and one at the Ringing Stone on 6 Jul.

**LITTLE GULL.** A first-summer bird was at Loch Gilp, Mid-Argyll on 24 May and 1 Jun. A first-summer was at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 16 Jun. An adult was at the Add Estuary, Mid-Argyll on 15 Jul.

**ICELAND GULL.** A first-summer (2CY bird) was in the Machrihanish area, Kintyre throughout most of this period.

**GLAUCOUS GULL.** A 2CY bird was at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 5 May and a 3CY bird at Vaul Bay on 19 May. A 2CY was at Rockmountain (nr Sunderland farm), Islay on 9 Jun.

**SOOTY TERN.** A remarkable record of one seen briefly and photographed flying past Machrihanish SBO, Kintyre on 2 Jun by Eddie Maguire. This is only the third occurrence ever in Scotland with the previous records being one found dead at Upper Forth in 1939 and a brief appearance of one on the Isle of May in 1989. The last UK record was in 2005.

### **Doves, cuckoos, owls, swift, kingfisher & woodpeckers**

**TURTLE DOVE.** One was at Kintra, Mull on 11



**Upper photo.** Sooty Tern, Machrihanish SBO, Kintyre on 2 June ©Eddie Maguire

**Lower Photo.** Turtle Dove, Kintra, Mull on 11 May ©Jeremy Roberts

May.

**GREEN WOODPECKER.** One was at Lochbuie, Mull on 22 May.

### **Passerines (larks to buntings)**

**MAGPIE.** On Islay, one was at The Oa on 5 and 8 May and one was at Easter Ellister on 17 May.

**RED-RUMPED SWALLOW.** One was at the west end of Gott Bay on 24 May (Mike & Ann Harrison *et al.*).

**GREENISH WARBLER.** One was initially heard singing then seen at Loch Turraman, Colonsay on 15 Jun (Ian Fisher, David Jardine *et al.*). If accepted will be only the third Argyll record, the previous being in 1983 and 1987.

**LESSER WHITETHROAT.** One was at Carnan Mor, Tiree on 6 May and a different bird there on 14 May (John Bowler). In Kintyre, one was heard singing near Point Sands caravan park/Rhunahaorine Pont, Kintyre on



**Upper photo.** Red-rumped Swallow, Gott Bay, Tiree on 24 May ©Mike Harrison

**Middle photo.** Greenish Warbler, Loch Turraman, Colonsay on 15 June ©Ian Fisher

**Lower photo.** Lesser Whitethroat, Balephuill, Tiree on 6 May ©John Bowler

6 May and another heard singing and recorded in Hawthorns and Gorse near Southend on 7 Jun (Neil Ham-matt).

**SUBALPINE WARBLER.** A male of the western sub-species was skulking in hawthorns and occasionally singing at Carnan Mor, Tiree on 7 Jun (John Bowler).

**REED WARBLER.** One was seen in *Phragmites* at Ardvergnish, Mull on 31 Jul (Hedley Wright/Pete Hall).

**NUTHATCH.** One was at Craignure, Mull on 4 to 6 May with another nearby at Lochbuie on 4 May. One put in an appearance again at an Ar-drishaig garden on 22 May. A pair bred at Ardkinglass Woodland, Cowal with a juvenile observed being fed by an adult in Jun. A pair nested in a nest box but were unsuccessful at Garbhalt, Cowal in May/Jun. Up to two birds were seen occasionally in a garden at Scotnish, Mid-Argyll in May/Jun.

**ROSE-COLOURED STARLING.** One was in a garden at Hunters Quay, Cowal on 25 May (Paul Thallon) and was seen in this area and at Kirn until at least 30 May. One (a different bird) was at The Green, Tiree on 3 Jun (Iain & Ann MacDonald) and a third individual was at Laphroaig, Islay on 21 until at least 26 Jun (Jack Dunford *et al.*).

**RING OUZEL.** A male was west of Hynish, Tiree on 4 May.

**BLACK REDSTART.** A female was near Heylipol Church, Tiree on 28 May (Mark Mal-lalieu).

**TREE SPARROW.** One was at Balephuill, Tiree on 4 to 12 May and one was at Octomore, Islay on 7 May.

**YELLOW WAGTAIL.** One, a male (race uncertain but possibly Grey or Blue-headed), flew past at close range near Machrihanish SBO, Kintyre on 16 May (Bob Relf).

**BRAMBLING.** One was at Dervaig, Mull on 2 May.

**COMMON REDPOLL.** Up to six birds were at Balephuill/CarnanMor in May and four fledged juvs there from 1 Jul. One was at Treshnish Farm, Mull on 1 Jun (possibly breeding) with different birds there on 3 and 21 Jun (Anand Prasad).

**COMMON ROSEFINCH.** A smart male was seen at very close range near the Crinan Woods entrance by the Crinan Canal, Mid-Argyll on 15 Jun (Robin & Rachel Hamilton).

**HAWFINCH.** Up to four birds were seen in a Peninver garden, Kintyre on 27 May (Christine Russell *et al.*).

## Pied-billed Grebe (*Podilymbus podiceps*) breeding in Argyll



Male Pied-billed Grebe and hybrid chick ©Jim Dickson

During the spring of 2014 a Pied-billed Grebe, a north American species, was discovered on Loch Feorlin, Mid-Argyll in the hills behind Minard by some birdwatchers carrying out survey work (*Argyll Bird Report* 2014). The bird was occasionally 'in song' giving a rather curious repeated pumping call—likened to a steam engine gradually 'running out of steam' and hence was sexed as a male trying to attract a mate. A recording of the song can be heard at <http://www.xeno-canto.org/species/Podilymbus-podiceps?pg=2>

The duration of the bird's stay appeared to be just over a week or so, and with no further sightings the following year, it was assumed the bird had been a brief visitor. Surprisingly, what was assumed to be the same bird was located at the same site by a bird survey worker in the spring of 2016, again by its far carrying call. Due to the nature of the survey work being carried out it was felt best not to widely announce the bird's presence. This was re-enforced when it was discovered that it had made a nest and was paired with a Little Grebe. However, there were no further sightings after early August and it appeared the nesting attempt had failed.

In 2017 David Jardine was carrying out work-related duties in the area when he observed the

male Pied-billed on 21 January. It was then in winter plumage. Jim Dickson visited the area on 28 March and the bird was still present and 'in song'. During this visit Jim discussed with farmer John Paterson the possibility of birders visiting the loch. It was thought there may be a reasonable, but not huge, interest in this bird due to other Scottish records in recent years. Also, provided birders remained on the rough track leading to the loch it was judged that disturbance to any other breeding birds in the area would be minimal. Subsequently, word was put out to the bird information services, with guidelines on where to park and the 2.5km uphill walk to the site. Interest in the bird turned out to be greater than anticipated, presumably as this was the only UK record reported in the last year or so, and the understanding of John Paterson was much appreciated. Interestingly John believed the bird had probably been visiting the loch on and off for quite a few years! There have been two previous Argyll records, both on Mull in 1998 and in 2011. It was possible that the later sighting, if not the first, may have involved the same bird. Some grebes are known to live up to almost 20 years. The oldest recorded Little Grebe is 17.5 years!

On 11 May the bird was giving close attention to the Little Grebe. On 14 June a very small juvenile grebe was noted and again seen with the Pied-billed on 28 June by David and photographed by Jim on 12 July (photo on previous page). Further visits up to 10 August failed to re-locate the juvenile, which had either perished or moved away from the loch. The photograph was taken (c.100m away) when the juvenile was about 70% the size of an adult Pied-billed, but with fully-feathered wings. The bill appeared

about 60% size of adult male and showed mixed juvenile plumage features of Little and Pied-billed Grebe.

This remarkable breeding record is the first known breeding of this species in Scotland. However, it has bred in the UK once before—in England at Stithians Reservoir, Cornwall in 1994 when a male Pied-billed Grebe was also mated with a Little Grebe and three hybrid young were produced.

**Jim Dickson and David Jardine**

## Birdwatching trip to Lesvos, Greece during 21-29 April 2017



Mount Ipsilou ©Jim Dickson

Following two very successful, consecutive trips to Spain in the spring of 2015 (Extremadura and Gredos Mountains) and 2016 (Pyrenees and Spanish steppes), it was decided to venture east in 2017, and visit the Geek island of Lesvos. Although these trips are not 'official' Argyll Bird Club ventures they are something that has evolved with like-minded folk from the mainland and the self-named group called the Islay bird nerds! With many of the previous years' participants already committed to holidaying elsewhere, this spring group had fewer members. We decided to limit numbers to a single car load of five. Unfortunately, due to a last minute health issue one of our group had to cancel.

Lesvos is a well-known birding destination hav-

ing attracted birders over the last 20yrs, particularly from the UK, Holland and Scandinavia, and enhancing its reputation to produce large numbers of species and excellent migration counts, particularly in spring. Having visited the island on seven previous birding trips, in both spring and autumn, I was in a good position to lead this trip and target the key sites and species. The beauty of a small group was having the ability to locate the species that participants wanted to see, and adjust our time and routes accordingly. As it turned out everyone was keen to see as many species as possible. My initial thoughts of realistically finding 130+ species in the week had to be constantly revised upwards!

As direct scheduled flights no longer operate from the UK to Lesvos at the start of the

Kalloni salt pans with mount Olympus in the background ©Jim Dickson



'tourist season', a consequence of the Syrian migrant crisis, we had to fly from Glasgow to Lesvos via London and Athens. This turned out to be less of a hassle than expected. Although there was always concern when making several flight connections. While we were tired on the first day, everyone was keen to keep going as the species list just kept building, starting with three Scopoli's (Cory's) Shearwaters offshore from the airport. The drive to our base for the week, at the Pasiphae Hotel in Skala Kallonis, took just under an hour. En-route we were distracted when we neared the salt pans (photo above) to the east of Kallonis, with notable species such as ten Temminck's Stints together, 70+ Glossy Ibis (photo below), six Squacco and four Purple Herons, a Marsh Sandpiper, a Gull-billed Tern, a Masked Shrike and several Red-rumped Swallows. Arriving at the hotel slightly later than anticipated we had a well-earned breakfast, then checked into our rooms before heading out for more birding, taking in the salt pans, Metochi (Kalloni) inland lake and the lower Potamia Valley. Highlights included a Hobby that flew over our heads at close range, at least 60 Wood Sandpipers on the East River, a female Little Crake at the Kalloni inland lake, several Short-toed Eagles, at least five Montagu's Harriers, a dark-phase Eleanor's Falcon, five Red-footed Falcons, several Olivaceous Warblers, excellent views of

two Marsh Warblers only a few metres away, two Orphean Warblers, a flock of Turtle Doves, several Black-eared Wheatears, Woodchat and Masked Shrikes, four Ruddy Shelducks, eight Collared Pratincoles, more Purple Herons, 10+ Red-throated Pipits, masses of Greater Flamingos, Black-winged Stilts and Avocets on the salt pans and lots more besides. Within just a few hours we had seen 92 species on our first day....phew!

On our second day, Sunday 23 April, we decided to try and seek out some of the Lesvos specialities at sites within 30mins of our base. First we headed for a group of large *Eucalyptus* trees on the outskirts of Kalloni town. After about 10 mins of staring intensely at the twisted bark at close range, our target, a tiny Scops Owl was actually staring down at us! Happy with views and photos taken (photo on next page) we then headed a few

Glossy Ibis on the salt pans ©Jim Dickson



miles SW of Skala Kallonis to the chapel at Aghios Ioannis. This area marks a transition to the almost bare and rocky west of the island. It was the nearest site to our hotel for Cinereous and Cretzschmar's Buntings, Rock Nuthatch and Sombre Tit. Although a pleasant walk up the steep track the main species of note were a pair of Ruddy Shelducks chasing each other and calling during a display flight high in the sky, and an Alpine Swift nearby. Next stop was in the woods and olive groves in the Potamia Valley where we had a good, albeit brief view of a Goshawk, a pair of Middle Spotted Woodpeckers, several Eastern Subalpine Warblers, Common Nightingales and Cirl Buntings being the highlights. To the west of Skala Kallonis we had a picnic lunch in the Achladeri Forest being a notable site for Krüper's Nuthatch. Fortunately, we met other birders who were just leaving the site and they told us where an active nest was, something we in turn passed on to other birders arriving later, such is the friendly nature of Lesvos birding. After a 500m walk we could hear the birds calling and located the nest hole where young were being fed (photo opposite). In the surrounding woods we noted at least six Short-toed Treecreepers and had overhead views of both Common and Long-legged Buzzards. We then headed back in the direction of the Kalloni salt pans (a prime spot on the island) where just about anything in this part of the world can turn up. On the way we found Common and Lesser Whitethroats, Serins, Spanish Sparrows, a Tree Pipit and a Pied Flycatcher to name a few. Around the salt pans we got excellent view of various subspecies of Yellow Wagtails ranging from Blue, Grey and Black-headed with various intergrades mixed in! Little and Temminck's Stints were studied at close range alongside Little Ringed and Kentish Plovers, Wood Sandpipers, Ruff and Curlew Sandpipers. On the salt pans, new arrivals included White-winged Black and Whiskered Terns and the Gull-billed Terns had increased from one to 22 birds. Several White then Black Storks were noted, our only Great White Egret of the week, several Garganey, two Lesser Kestrels and excellent views of many Red-throated Pipits. Our list by the end of the day was now at 113.



**Upper photo.** Scops Owl ©Jim Dickson

**Lower photo.** Krüper's Nuthatch ©Jim Dick-

On day three we headed west and did a large loop around various sites including Mount Ipsilou Monastery, Sigri to Faneromeni areas on the coast and the Meladia Valley, all of which were excellent areas for migrant birds, particularly after a 'fall' when they occur in large numbers. Before reaching Ipsilou we stopped at the Larida Valley, which has a deep rocky gorge and we had views of our first Cretzschmar's Bunting (photo on next page), Golden Oriole and Crag Martin. On higher rocky ground further on we found several Isabelline Wheatears and Stonechats before making the gradual climb up to the monastery where we had excellent views of singing Cinereous Buntings



**Upper photo.** Cretzschmar's Bunting ©Jim Dickson

**Lower photo.** Rüppell's Warbler ©Jim Dickson

and our first Sombre Tits, Blue Rock Thrush and Rock Nuthatches. Before reaching the coast at Faneromeni we saw at least 15 Lesser Kestrels and a very close Little Owl at the roadside before our identification skills were tested trying to sort out female Pied, Semi-collared and Collared Flycatchers—fortunately some 'more easily' identifiable males were found. Just prior to an excellent seafood lunch in Sigri, an Eleanora's Falcon flew by at close range along the shore. Further out to sea we had views of passing Scopoli's and Yelkouan

Shearwaters. Following a rather rough track around to the Meladia Valley we encountered Short-toed Eagles, Marsh Harriers, Rock Doves, more Little Owls, 30+ Bee-eaters, Great Reed Warblers and more Cretzschmar's Buntings. Back near our hotel we saw a single Stone Curlew and had Scops and Tawny Owls calling in the evening. Species total was now at 132.

Day four took us to the north of the island past the picturesque town of Molivos and along the north coast beaches, notable for the recent influx of Syrian refugees, and seen so often on the news. We then looped south again to the saltpans. On the way north out of Kalloni, after briefly seeing a Middle Spotted Woodpecker, we stopped near Molivos and quickly located a Lesvos speciality—a male Rüppell's Warbler (photo left) singing in the open only a few metres away. Offshore we saw several parties of Yelkouan Shearwaters amid masses of Yellow-legged Gulls. Highlights of the day included four Long-legged Buzzards, four Red-footed Falcons, a sub-adult male Pallid Harrier, a Marsh Sandpiper, eight Curlew Sandpipers, 100+ Ruff, 12 Collared Pratincoles, a Mediterranean Gull, five Alpine Swifts, a male Red-backed Shrike, 12 Greater Short-toed Larks, a very close range and obliging Woodlark, an Olive-tree Warbler, two pairs of Orphean Warblers, 120+ Yellow Wagtails, four Tawny Pipits and five Red-throated Pipits. Species total now at 142.

A change to our loose schedule saw us head again around the west loop on day five, this having proved a popular choice. More warblers were noted around Ipsilou with both Wood Warbler and Chiffchaff as new additions. Cinereous Buntings were seen very well again and several Alpine Swifts were whizzing around and above the monastery. At Faneromeni we got better views of at least six male Collared Flycatchers as well as 15 Pied Flycatchers and a very obliging male Citrine Wagtail at the riv-

er ford. On our return journey in the afternoon we had good views of Red-backed Shrikes, Golden Oriole, a nearby Hoopoe, a Rock (Sparrow) Petronia and our first Black-headed Bunting on the trip, bringing the species list to 148.

Thursday 27 April saw us head to the south coast via the Polichintos salt pans, the Agios Fokas headland, the Almiropotamous River, Vatera and then onto the island's highland area at Mt Olympus then back via the Kalloni salt pans. Our stop at Polichintos yielded new wader species with Common Redshank, Ruddy Turnstone and a Grey Plover being noted. On the coast near Vatera we had our only Sardinian Warblers of the trip and good views of a Little Crane. After an excellent lunch we headed up a very rough and steep forest track with stops giving us views of one and probably two Levant Sparrowhawks and a Golden Oriole. Prior to reaching Agiasos at Mount Olympus we had a puncture, but we made a quick wheel change. The wooded, higher elevation at Agiasos has a range of species more akin to northern Europe and here we were able to locate Song Thrush, Wrens and Robins during a very pleasant walk up through the Sweet Chestnut woodland. Another stop at the Kalloni salt pans gave us distant views of a second-year Slender-billed Gull and an impressive flock of 500+ Ruff! Our species list was now at 156.

Friday 28 April was our last full day on the island as the following day involved an early morning drive to the airport. Today we took things easy with less driving but more short walks around the Kalloni inland lake, east and west rivers and around the salt pans. At least four Little Crakes were found at the inland (Metochi) lake and also 22 Bee-eaters were in the area (photo below). Highlights on our last day included four Garganey, four Great Crested Grebes, a male Little Bittern, two Purple Herons, a Stone Curlew, four Spotted Redshanks, a Marsh Sandpiper, White-winged Black, Whiskered and Gull-billed Terns and three newly arrived male Black-headed Buntings.

In summary, this was a very relaxing easy-paced birding week with no shortage of interesting birds. The only drawback was the difficulty in getting there, with direct flights discontinued outwith the main tourist season. Our species total ended on 159, many more than we had predicted—the result of the group being keen to find as much as possible. A big thank you to the group for making this a very successful and enjoyable week. Plans are now underway with Peter Roberts for a trip to Estonia spring 2018 (see pages 4-5).

**Jim Dickson**

Bee-eaters ©Jim Dickson



## Crow observations in Vancouver



Northwestern Crow at nest ©Malcolm Chattwood

For the June 2013 edition of *The Eider* I penned an article debating the birding benefits of paying a premium when renting a top floor apartment with a rear deck, when visiting our elder son who lives in Vancouver. My conclusion was that yes, it was. Our visits have continued on an annual basis and the policy of staying in the same apartment and paying the premium has remained. Despite not being able to use the deck for the first few days due to the unwanted attentions of a Raccoon, in May this year the star sighting from the deck was a colourful male Western Tanager. Although the accommodation fronts a tree-lined street there isn't usually much to see from the front windows other than the odd Black-capped Chickadee which is very similar to our Willow Tit. Upon arriving in May it wasn't long before I looked out of the front window and noticed that a ragged nest had been constructed in the fork of a tree at about eye level and about 10m away. It also wasn't long before the owners of the nest returned to continue their efforts to raise a family. Unsurprisingly the occupants of the nest turned out to be a pair of Northwestern Crows *corvus caurinus*—very common and similar in appearance and habits to our Hooded/Carrion

### Crows.

Over the next couple of weeks upon our return from daily wanderings around Vancouver and even before opening a bottle of craft beer and heading out to the rear deck to relax, it was compulsory to have a look at the comings and goings in the nest opposite. Although my preference would be to have an opportunity to observe activity in the nest of a species a touch more exotic than a crow it was still fascinating and genuinely felt like a privilege. I feel a bit guilty when writing this that I didn't make detailed notes, but I was on holiday with other distractions and things like that fell by the wayside. However, during our time there we were able to observe the dedication that the parents showed, first whilst incubating the eggs and then tending to the demands of the three rapidly growing chicks. Rarely was the nest unattended as there were obvious potential predators in the shape of Grey or Black Squirrels and possibly other crows. As one adult returned with food the other would fill its crop with a faecal sac and fly off to dispose of it prior to foraging for yet more food to feed the three gaping mouths, which could now be seen wavering in anticipation over

the top of the nest.

We assume the eggs had hatched within three or four days of us arriving and by the time we left, after 16 days, one or more chicks were visible for most of the time. Feathers were developing well and the chicks were certainly active. The weather on the day before we left would best be described as "west coast" with incessant rain. One adult adopted an umbrella position over the nest to protect its offspring from the deluge whilst the other sheltered on a wire underneath the eaves of an adjacent house. Feeding activity was very limited but fortunately the rain ceased

late in the day allowing the adults to dry out and head out to find supper. As we left the following morning it was reassuring to see that normal service had resumed and the adults were doing their best to feed three ravenous youngsters. We'll be back to visit next May and it'll be interesting to see whether the nest site is in use for a second year. I've no doubt that as we walk along the Kitsilano shore and see a pair of foraging crows we'll wonder whether one was raised in a nest at the corner of West 6th Avenue and Stephens Street during May-June 2017.

**Malcolm Chattwood**

### Belated news Item!

Jim Dickson, the Argyll Bird Recorder recently received this e-mail from Mike Duckham in North Wales.

Dear Mr Dickson,

I thought you might be interested to hear of a belated report of a Harlequin Duck in Argyll, albeit 59 years ago! You may, of course, already be aware of the claimed sighting.

I have always loved the author 'BB' (Denys Watkins-Pitchford) and recently bought a book "*The Autumn Road to the Isles*". The descriptions and illustrations are incredibly evocative, and in one passage the author mentions seeing a Harlequin Duck near Inveraray through his telescope.

Here is the relevant passage:

*Not far offshore I identified with the telescope a Harlequin Duck which was swimming near some Eiders. This bird is described in Witherby's Handbook as a 'very rare migrant' but it has been seen before off the western coast of Scotland, notably in the Shetlands and the Outer Hebrides. It's richly coloured plumage was distinctive. So many collectors now breed ornamental ducks it is difficult to say whether the bird was truly a visitor or an escapee.*

He describes his sighting as on the south shore of Loch Fyne with a view of Inveraray on either the 10th or 11th November 1958.

I don't know if you are familiar with the author;

he was an old-fashioned countryman, a wildfowler for the pot and a keen self-taught naturalist who was steeped in native British wildlife, and being an author and artist had a sharp eye for detail. There is little doubt in my mind that he saw a Harlequin Duck, and no doubt that on balance the escape potential is outweighed by the likelihood of genuine vagrancy, and equally no doubt that this record will not satisfy regional or national rarities committees. I just thought it worth "flagging up" as something of interest.

Best wishes, Mike Duckham (North Wales).

### Editor's note

The only accepted record of a Harlequin Duck in Argyll was of a female at Claggain Bay on Islay during 20-30 October 1987 (in *Birds of Argyll*, Argyll Bird Club 2007).

The Argyll Bird Recorder has no previous knowledge of this apparent record, but as Mr Duckham states, 'this record will not satisfy regional or national rarities committees', due to a lack of supporting information. Nevertheless, as Denys Watkins-Pitchford was a knowledgeable countryman this record may well be genuine. Although not actually stated, this was presumably a male Harlequin due to its 'richly coloured plumage', and therefore unlikely to be confused with any other sea duck.

The book by 'BB' (*The Autumn Road to the Isles*) was first published by Kaye Books in 1959.

## ABC field trip to the RSPB's Loch Lomond Reserve on 10 June



View across Loch Lomond  
©David Palmer [www.photoscot.co.uk](http://www.photoscot.co.uk)

A delayed start for the field trip to the RSPB Loch Lomond Reserve meant that the rain had stopped by the time we mustered at the reserve's visitor hub. Six members were welcomed to the reserve by site manager Paula Baker and volunteer Lesley McCue.

While Chaffinches, Great Tits, Coal Tits and House Sparrows flitted round the feeders at the hub and a Great Spotted Woodpecker called from the woods, Paula outlined the history of the reserve and the route we were to follow through the many different habitats on the site. We set off along a new path which has been constructed through the alder woodland next to the hub. The woodland floor was carpeted with blue-bells but, alas, the flowers were finished. It must have been quite a sight when they were in full bloom. Blue Tits could be heard in the branches above us and a Chiffchaff was calling in the distance. Several Wrens were singing loudly and a couple of Robins were singing more discreetly. A distant Blackbird could be heard as we emerged from the wood and crossed an open meadow, taking care not to tread on any of the numerous flowering orchids. This open habitat with hedges and scattered bushes held a different set of birds and Blackcap and Willow Warbler were noted here. Several trees were seen with their leaves encased in silk cocoons. Paula explained that the cocoons were those of the

Bird-cherry Ermine moth *Yponomeuta evonymella* whose eggs had been laid on the cherry trees in September last year. The caterpillars had hatched, eaten most of the leaves of the tree and spun their cocoons for protection while pupating. Meanwhile, the trees would recover in time to host the next generation of moths.

We had now reached one of the low-lying areas of the reserve and the path followed a bund alongside the Aber Bog. Sedge Warblers were visible flitting about in the vegetation, stopping to sing from time to time, and Reed Buntings could be seen further across the bog. A 'chip-chop' call drew attention to a Snipe which had started to display above the bog and was soon joined by a second bird. Swift, Swallow and House Martin were feeding overhead. A Pheasant called in the distance and several Woodpigeons were seen over the trees beyond the reserve. After crossing the bog we entered an old beech wood. The open clearings in the wood were ideal habitat for Spotted Flycatchers and, eventually, we found one. From the beech wood we crossed a wet flush where Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary butterflies were flitting about and feeding from thistle flowers. A Tree Pipit was singing from one of the tall bushes further down the hedgerow between the flush and the pasture of Limehill. This is one of the higher parts of the reserve and our route took us over the hill



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary ©David Palmar  
[www.photoscot.co.uk](http://www.photoscot.co.uk)

and down to the narrow strip of oak woodland which separates it from the waters of Loch Lomond. A made-up public footpath runs through Shore Wood and leads to Net Bay viewpoint overlooking a corner of the loch. A Treecreeper was spotted as we walked along towards the viewpoint. Two Great Crested Grebes were quite close in to the viewpoint and easily visible (photo below). Further out was a group of eight Red-breasted Mergansers and further out again were several flocks of Canada Geese. In a small bay on the far shore were two Shelduck and a male Goosander. Beyond the birds stretched Loch Lomond with its islands and surrounding hills. A Grey Heron stood motionless on the bank as we savoured the view and a Skylark started singing as we turned away from the loch and headed inland again across some grazed pasture.

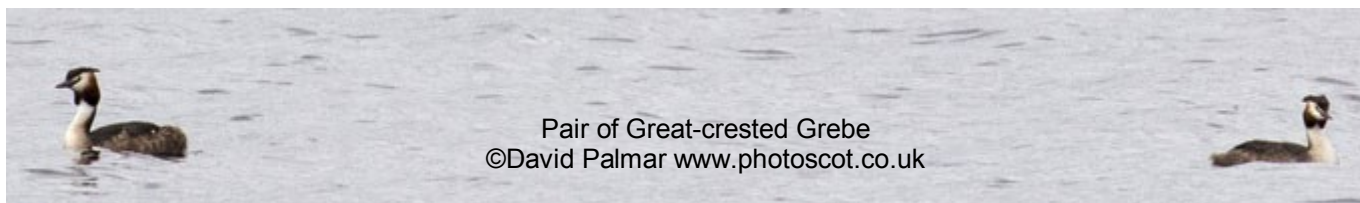
Approaching the remnants of an old hawthorn hedge we could hear a male Redstart singing and eventually spotted it on a fence post at the side of the field. A female was a few bushes further along. The first Meadow Pipit of the day soon followed as we descended once more towards the mire and walked along the bund between the mire and some woodland. A Cuckoo called and Sand

Martins were feeding over the mire as we walked through waist-high vegetation along the bund. The group came to a sudden halt as a newly-emerged froglet, complete with tail, was found on a grass stalk. We carefully filed past and continued on our way. A Snipe rose from the fen giving its 'chip-chop' call and then, to our delight, began its undulating, drumming display flight. A drier section of rough grassland beyond the drain which we were following provided good habitat for Lapwing and Redshank, both of which had bred; indeed, one of the Lapwing chicks was wandering about in the open. After crossing the drain and cutting through a small wood we found ourselves at the bottom of the sloping field below the visitor hub. After a pause to let the cattle clear from our path we picked our way over the broken ground and out on to the track back to the hub.

The weather had slowly improved through the afternoon from dull and calm to sunny and breezy which, together with a very varied and interesting reserve, resulted in a most enjoyable trip. We finished with 43 species on the bird list, some butterflies, moths and bumble bees, and far more plants than your correspondent could cope with. Our thanks go to Paula and Lesley for guiding us so expertly round the reserve.

### Mike Harrison

**Species List.** Canada Goose, Common Shelduck, Mallard, Red-breasted Merganser, Goosander, Common Pheasant, Grey Heron, Great Crested Grebe, Common Buzzard, Eurasian Oystercatcher, Northern Lapwing, Eurasian Curlew, Common Redshank, Common Snipe, Woodpigeon, Common Cuckoo, Common Swift, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Carrion Crow, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Eurasian Skylark, Sand Martin, Barn Swallow, House Martin, Common Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Eurasian Blackcap, Sedge Warbler, Eurasian Treecreeper, Wren, Common Starling, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Spotted Flycatcher, European Robin, Common Redstart, House Sparrow, Tree Pipit, Meadow Pipit, Chaffinch, European Goldfinch.



Pair of Great-crested Grebe  
©David Palmar [www.photoscot.co.uk](http://www.photoscot.co.uk)

## ABC field trip to Clachan on 29 July



Folks all geared up to enjoy a high-summer weather! ©Nigel Scriven

As the seven members assembled at Clachan Village Hall for the club's high summer field trip, discussion centred on whether gloves and woolly hats were to be worn or carried. Waterproofs had already been donned in anticipation of the forecast of showers, but spirits were high, not least because one of our party had elected to come some distance and join us as a birthday treat. The pressure was therefore on us to ensure that bird sightings lived up to expectations, and to avoid the unlikely thought that time might have been better spent closer to home watching St Mirren playing Airdrieonians (for the record St Mirren won 5-0).

Rooks were tumbling above the village in the fresh breeze as we set off and a wren was singing from deep in nearby cover. A pair of Ravens announced their presence before flying towards the east and House Martins were zipping round above nearby houses. Before heading across the fields towards the shore, a check of the Clachan Burn from the bridge for a Dipper or Grey Wagtail proved negative, but did provide excellent but unexpected views of Killer Whale and Crocodile! Although the relevant field guides were not carried, the party pooled their vast experience and rapidly concluded that the varied selection were actually inflatables tethered to the banks

of the burn for reasons that could only be guessed at. The presence of exotic species didn't break our concentration and Collared Dove, House Sparrow, Starling and Great Tit were added to the list as we headed out of the village where an adult and juvenile Song Thrush were foraging under a large tree.

Once into the open fields a Buzzard was seen flapping valiantly to maintain station in the fresh breeze and Sand Martins were coursing up and down the tree-lined burn. Greylag Geese were spotted resting in the field above and a vehicle on the farm track caused them to take flight revealing a flock of 28 or 29—or was it 31? A Grey Heron called, flew over and landed in some conifers and a couple of minutes later was seen flying away, indicating a nesting site might be close by. The chattering of juveniles' bills seemed to confirm the theory, but the trees prevented further observation. Linnets were spotted perching on a wire fence and the high pitched calls of Goldcrests revealed the presence of a party moving through the trees adjacent to the burn. In the same area a number of Willow Warblers were flitting about, whilst a Whinchat was a particularly pleasing sighting.

As we neared the shore the holes associated with the Sand Martin colony could be seen in the

banks of the burn. Upon reaching the shore we saw Gannet, Eider, Great Black-backed Gull, Cormorant and Shag. The wind-blown, light rain was more of nuisance value and didn't stop us setting up the club's telescope in the hope of seeing small waders on the beach. Any present were obviously keeping their heads down, but a pair of Common Sandpipers were seen on rocks near Battery Cottage, rendering the use of the 'scope worthwhile. We headed back and followed the track parallel to the shore with the prominent Dun Skeig up to our right. A previous trip had provided a sighting of a Peregrine here, but all we found was an unoccupied nest (probably Raven's) on the crag. Oystercatcher, Curlew, Grey Wagtail, Lesser Redpoll, Dunnock and Stonechat were amongst the species seen along this stretch. After negotiating a particularly boggy patch thoughts were turning to lunch and the prospect of finding a sheltered spot with a view. Hilary came up trumps with the suggestion of the boathouse at Portaschoillan where Rock Pipit, Black Guillemot, Black-headed Gull, a pair of Sandwich Terns and a splendid Great Northern Diver in summer plumage added to the pleasure of a sheltered sit-down and a bite to eat.

As we neared the top of the hill beyond Corran Farm we saw a kestrel, which at first sight was being harassed by Rooks and Hooded Crows. The Kestrel was making no attempt to fly off and actually gave the distinct impression that it was enjoying itself by taunting the corvids. It then appeared to become bored with the sport and flew off. At this stage of a field trip the question is often asked "How many species"? A large

nearby flock of Jackdaws raised the count to 48 resulting in a discussion about which elusive common species would raise the number to a round 50. Greenfinch and Wood Pigeon were favourites, but in the event we saw neither. However, vigilance was still very much in evidence as we headed back up the track to the village hall. Persistence was rewarded with a Spotted Flycatcher in the wood and a Coal Tit in a tree above us as boots were replaced by lighter footwear. That brought a satisfying conclusion to a field trip in blustery and showery conditions which didn't dampen spirits and produced some good sightings amongst the creditable 50 species. But actually, not quite! The compiler of the list had obviously been concentrating on his lunch and had omitted to record the pair of Sandwich Terns, so the grand total was 51.

**Species list in the order they were seen.** Rook, Wren, House Martin, Raven, Collared Dove, Great Tit, House Sparrow, Starling, Swallow, Hooded Crow, Lesser Back-backed Gull, Robin, Chaffinch, Buzzard, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Goldfinch, Herring Gull, Sand Martin, Pied Wagtail, Grey Heron, Greylag Goose, Linnet, Goldcrest, Willow Warbler, Blue Tit, Whinchat, Siskin, Gannet, Eider, Great Back-backed Gull, Common Sandpiper, Cormorant, Shag, Oystercatcher, Curlew, Stonechat, Grey Wagtail, Dunnock, Redpoll, Meadow Pipit, Great Northern Diver, Mallard, Rock Pipit, Black Guillemot, Sandwich Tern, Black-headed Gull, Kestrel, Jackdaw, Spotted Flycatcher and Coal Tit

**Malcolm Chattwood**



Sand Martin colony in the bank of the burn ©Nigel Scriven

## ABC field trip to Skipness on 25 June



Some of the party admiring a tame Red Deer at the Seafood Cabin ©Hilary Lord

We were lucky with the weather again this year and, with lunch already organised at the Seafood Cabin, we proceeded to check the bird life in the woods surrounding our meeting place, in the car park. Robins were very much in evidence—both adults and juveniles, as well as healthy numbers of Chaffinches of mixed ages. Great Tits were heard as well as seen, and two very busy Duncocks acted as if there was a nest nearby. We hastily moved on to avoid disturbance. Meanwhile, accompanied by the melodious song of a Wren singing lustily from amongst the undergrowth, we saw a solitary Coal Tit flitting about in the tree canopy as well as a Blue Tit. Although we were unsuccessful in finding a Tree Creeper in this area as in previous years, we were rewarded with sightings of a Spotted Flycatcher darting out and back from a fence post to catch insects. Also absent was sight or sound of Great Spotted Woodpecker.

Having exhausted this area, we proceeded along Campbell's Glen adding Blackbird and Song Thrush to the list, as well as Pied Wagtail, Siskin, Goldcrest, Starling, Chiffchaff. Further along the path we saw Willow Warbler and Blackcap, and at last a Tree Creeper.

On the path down towards the shore several Mistle Thrushes and Wood Pigeons were feeding

in the adjoining fields, while Linnet and Lesser Redpoll were spotted amongst the trees, as were Collared Dove and Hooded Crows. Barn Swallows and House Martins hawked the air for insects of which there was a good supply—noticeable on any exposed human flesh! As the shore came into view a Raven had a look at this group of humans walking through his territory with binoculars trained on the sea. A Black Guillemot was spotted not too far out to sea, which was seen easily with binoculars, as well as small groups of Mallard and Red-breasted Merganser. A Common Buzzard soared overhead and a Grey Heron took off on our approach. As we headed along the shore towards Skipness (and lunch at the cabin) we saw Northern Gannets diving into the sea, and Cormorants, Great and Lesser Black-backed Gulls together with Herring Gulls flying overhead. Around the rocks and tide line were Ringed Plover, Common Sandpiper and Oystercatchers. Several House Sparrows and Starlings were perched on the fence surrounding the Seafood Cabin hoping for a few crumbs once we settled down for lunch.

**Katie Pendreigh**

## Treshnish Isles Auk Ringing Group (TIARG)



Adult Puffin ©Andrew Carter

In 1971, Barry Lawson organised the first expedition to the Treshnish Isles by newly-formed Treshnish Isles Auk Ringing Group (TIARG). Subsequently this became an annual pilgrimage. This group of eight terraced, basalt islands (c.128ha), together with three smaller vegetated islets and numerous skerries, are approximately 3km west of Mull. Uninhabited by humans since 1834 and livestock since the early 1990s, the isles are the property of the Hebridean Trust. They are designated a Special Protection Area (European Community directive) for their breeding seabirds (over 16,900 pairs), which include Storm Petrels (5,050+ pairs), a large numbers of auks (predominately Common Guillemot at 8,650+ pairs), Manx Shearwaters (1,280 pairs) and other common breeding seabirds.

To coincide with the most profitable period for seabird monitoring and optimum weather conditions and day lengths, TIARG generally visits the Treshnish in the last week of June. The expedition's base is around a ruined village at the northern end of Lunga. The majority of fieldwork is centred upon Lunga and neighbouring Sgeir a Chaisteil, where a full annual seabird census is undertaken. The work on Lunga, the only island regularly frequented by people, has provided TIARG with the opportunity to monitor

the effect of disturbance by ecotourism on breeding seabird distribution. With much logistical help from Turus Mara and the Hebridean Trust, expedition members have also been able to census seabird colonies on the other islands. All data are submitted annually to the Seabird Monitoring Programme, led and co-ordinated by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

Once the annual census is largely complete, the TIARG team redirect their efforts during the day to ringing at specific seabird colonies. This includes ringing pulli (chicks) and retrapping breeding adult Storm Petrel, Shag, Kittiwake, Guillemot, Razorbill and Puffin in specific parts of the colonies. During 1971-2017, TIARG has ringed over 36,000 seabirds (of 16 species).

Though visits to the Treshnish Isles are unavoidably brief, we still contribute to the British Trust for Ornithology's (BTO) Retrapping Adults for Survival (RAS) scheme, for Storm Petrel and Shag. RAS aims to provide information on adult survival for a range of species, particularly those of conservation concern and those not well monitored by other BTO schemes. RAS uses captures (or resightings of colour-marked individuals) of adult birds to calculate what proportion survive each year. Targeted recaptures generally give a much higher quality of information for adult sur-

vival estimates than recoveries of dead birds.

All Shags (adults and pulli) are caught by hand, usually at the nest. A single engraved darvic colour-ring is placed on the left leg of adults (photo below). In 2016, out of 292 adult birds marked during 2006-2015 on Lunga, 85 were re-sighted by TIARG. In contrast, the estimated 12,000 day visitors to Lunga per annum, including many birdwatchers, reported a total of only nine colour-ringed Shags!

For the last three or four hours of daylight, most expedition members can be found at the principal auk colony of the islands at Harp Rock on Lunga (photo on next page) fleyging (or "dip netting") adult auks. This technique involves the use of a long handled net that is raised suddenly to intercept the bird in flight (photo below). This method was developed by sea fowlers, and has been adopted by ringers in the UK since the 1960s as a safe method of catching seabirds. When fleyging auks in late June, catches are highest in the evening, when there is a greater colony attendance by breeding and immature birds. In some years, this has resulted in catches of over 800 Common Guillemots, 300 Puffins and 100 Razorbills in a week. Other species successfully caught with fleygs includes Fulmar, Kittiwake and a Great Skua. The latter a recent breeding species.

Fleyging auks is done on a cliff edge within a seabird colony. For safety, a climbing harness is worn, which is roped to a secure cliff top anchor point. On catching a bird, the net is swung inland

to others in the ringing team to extract, ring and process the bird, so allowing the person fleyging to continue catching.

On days when conditions are less favourable for fleyging, catches of auks, and in particular Puffins, are bolstered by erecting a line of wader nets across flight lines in a colony. The less foolhardy TIARG members extract puffins with one hand, gloved to avoid the unforgiving bite from the bill and their needle sharp claws.

The inaccessibility of most breeding ledges of Guillemot and Kittiwake has meant few pulli of these species are ringed. Small numbers of adult Kittiwakes are carefully noosed from their nests when they have chicks. The parents immediately return when released. A high rate of Kittiwake recapture is achieved year on year. On top of the islands, the opportunity to ring gull pulli has recently declined due to a marked reduction in the breeding populations of the three common large gull species, as elsewhere in the UK. However, the advancement of Arctic Tern hatching dates into late June over the previous two years has provided a novel monitoring opportunity for TIARG.

For two or three nights when suitably calm weather occurs, we mist net Storm Petrels at one of several colonies monitored. We often catch one or two Manx Shearwaters as a welcome addition.

TIARG operate two Storm Petrel RAS schemes on the north-east corner of Lunga. Here the same lengths of net are erected in the same po-



Shag with a darvic coloured ©Andrew Carter



Fleyging adult auks ©Andrew Carter

sitions each session. One night of mist netting at each netting location is attempted annually, though bad weather may occasionally prevent this. As Storm Petrels are comparatively long-lived birds (BTO longevity record is over 31 years old), the impact of a missed year on survival trends is minimal.

Almost all 514 Storm Petrels which show connectivity with the Treshnish Isles (i.e. were originally ringed or were controlled there) and sites elsewhere, were at the latter locations attracted to mist nets by recordings of singing Storm Petrels, a technique biased to attracting non-breeding immatures. The distribution of the immature birds, later to be recruited into the Treshnish Isles population, show a wide dispersal during July-September across most of the known breeding range within northwest European waters. Mist netting on the Treshnish Isles targets predominantly breeding individuals. Although non-breeding immatures do frequent breeding colonies, the main influx of wandering immatures into northwest European waters does not occur until our ringing activities have ceased.

Whilst TIARG's activities focus on seabirds, a daily log is kept of all bird observations during our

visits to the islands. Eighty-five bird species have been recorded on the Treshnish Isles on one or more occasions. Only 26 of these species are passerines, a reflection of the absence of any trees or shrubs on the islands. Thirty-five species of bird (including 16 seabird species) regularly breed on the Treshnish Isles, with a further six species having been recorded breeding on one or two occasions. The absence of any mega rarities recorded by TIARG during these late June trips is no huge surprise, with team members resigned to imagining what unrecorded rarities are passing through Lunga when only 30km due west, John Bowler notches up his fantastic 'garden' list on Tiree!

We express our appreciation to the owners of the Treshnish Isles, the Hebridean Trust ([www.hebrideantrust.org](http://www.hebrideantrust.org)) for permission and funding to allow our continuing studies on these fascinating islands.

Further information and results on the monitoring by TIARG of seabirds and other bird species on the Treshnish Isles have been published annually since 1998 in reports to stakeholders. These are available online at [www.tiarg.org](http://www.tiarg.org)

**Robin Ward**



Articles for the December issue of the *Eider* should with the editor before the 20th November 2017

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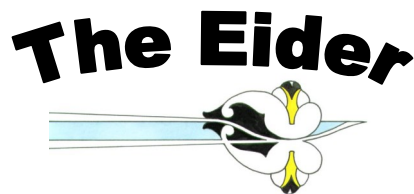
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The *Eider* is the quarterly newsletter of the **Argyll Bird Club**. The editor welcomes articles about birds, wildlife conservation and ecology in Argyll, including articles of a wider natural history interest, notices of forthcoming events, book 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).