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# ARGYLL BIRD REPORT

with Systematic List for the year

1996

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Volume 13 (1997)

PUBLISHED BY THE  
ARGYLL BIRD CLUB



*COVER ILLUSTRATION*

*Eiders*

*Drawing by Margaret Staley*

**The Thirteenth**  
**ARGYLL BIRD REPORT**  
**with Systematic List for the year**  
**1996**

Edited by  
**J.C.A. Craik**

Assisted by  
**T. ap Rheinallt**

Systematic List by  
**T. ap Rheinallt**

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## ABOUT THE ARGYLL BIRD CLUB

The Argyll Bird Club was formed in 1985. Its main purpose is to play an active part in the promotion of ornithology in Argyll. It is recognised by the Inland Revenue as a charity in Scotland.

The Club holds two one-day meetings each year, in spring and autumn. The venue of the spring meeting is rotated between different towns (Dunoon, Oban, Lochgilphead and Tarbert) while the autumn meeting and AGM are held in Inveraray, a conveniently central location.

The Club organises field trips for members. It also publishes the annual *Argyll Bird Report* and a quarterly members' newsletter, *The Eider*, which includes details of club activities, reports from meetings and field trips, and feature articles by members and others.

Each year the subscription entitles you to the *Argyll Bird Report*, four issues of *The Eider*, and free admission to the two annual meetings. There are four kinds of membership: current rates (at 1 October 1997) are: Ordinary £10; Junior (under 17) £3; Family £15; Corporate £25. Subscriptions (by cheque or standing order) are due on 1 January. Anyone joining after 1 October is covered until the end of the following year.

*Further information can be obtained from the Membership Secretary: Peter Staley, Lincluden, Blairmore, Dunoon, PA23 8TL.*



## **Argyll Bird Club**

### **Officials and Committee as at 1 October 1997**

**Chairman:** Howard Embleton, Dunstanburgh, Minard, Inveraray PA32 8YB.

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**Membership Secretary:** Peter Staley, Lincluden, Blairmore, Dunoon PA23 8TL.

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**Argyll Bird Records Committee:** Dr Tristan ap Rheinallt, Roger Broad, Paul Daw, David Jardine, Dr Arthur Jennings, Dr Malcolm Ogilvie.

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**Editor of Newsletter (*The Eider*):** Nigel Scriven, 2 Allt na Blathaich, Loch Eck, Dunoon PA23 8SG.

### **Other useful addresses**

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**Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) Organiser for Argyll:** Dr Malcolm Ogilvie, Glencairn, Bruichladdich, Isle of Islay PA49 7UN.

**B.T.O. Representatives for Argyll:** *North Argyll including Mull, Coll and Tiree:* Mike Madders, Carnduncan, Gruinart, Bridgend, Isle of Islay PA44 7PS. *Islay, Jura and Colonsay:* Dr Malcolm Ogilvie (address above).

**R.S.P.B. Conservation Officer, Argyll & Bute:** Roger Broad (address above).

Further copies of this report can be obtained from Nigel Scriven, whose address is given above. Price £5 including postage. Most previous annual *Argyll Bird Reports* are also available at £4 including postage.

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## Editorial

As in previous years, by far the greater part of this year's *Argyll Bird Report* consists of the Systematic List, and the Club is again very grateful to Tristan ap Rheinallt for the huge amount of work that he has put into producing it.

The post of County Bird Recorder involves a heavy workload distributed throughout the year. Having been the Recorder for Argyll for four years, and after producing four annual Systematic Lists of a very high standard, Tristan is now retiring from the post. I am sure that I speak for the whole Club, and for a wider ornithological readership, in thanking Tristan for his meticulous work as Recorder over this considerable period. As editor, I have been particularly grateful for his careful attention to detail in the polished product that arrived reliably on my desk every year, and for his prompt, patient responses to questions and comments. In thanking Tristan for his enormous contribution, I am sure that we all wish him well in his future ornithological undertakings.

We are fortunate in that we have been able to find a new Recorder for Argyll, who took over on 1 September 1997. He is Paul Daw (Tigh-na-Tulloch, Tullochgorm, Minard, Inveraray, PA32 8YQ). On behalf of Argyll Bird Club, I would like to take this opportunity of thanking him and warmly welcoming him to this important post. Please send all records to him in future; for detailed instructions, see the introductory part of the Systematic List in this report (p. 11).

With the Recordership changing hands, this is a suitable moment to ask how, in general, this Report could be improved. We are severely constrained by budget but, within the current 100 or so pages, are you satisfied with the present contents (layout, topics, and so on)? Could the Systematic List be shorter and the other articles more numerous and longer? Should we use more black-and-white illustrations, which would mean correspondingly less text?

Could we get more into the same number of pages by using more lines per page, or would this be unacceptable to some readers? Not so long ago, in *Argyll Bird Reports* of 1990, 1991 and 1992, the lines were closer together than now. In 1987 and 1989, the print was smaller, the same size as in this paragraph, and nobody seemed to mind. It allowed us to publish more articles on a wider range of subjects. Could we perhaps use print of this size again? Please let me know what you think.

Also, it would be good to have articles from more people. There is a lot of ornithological work going on in Argyll, but very little of it ends up as an account, or even as a brief summary, in the *Argyll Bird Report*. If you can contribute something, even if you have nothing on paper at this stage, please get in touch.

Very many thanks to all who have contributed to this year's Report, especially to Ciaràn Cronin, David Jardine, and Tristan ap Rheinallt for the two short papers, to Margaret Staley for giving us the beautiful cover illustrations, both this year and last, to various committee members for critical comments, and to Harlequin Press for again coming up with a very good product against tight deadlines.

## Systematic list for 1996

Tristan ap Rheinallt

3 Y Fron, Aberffraw, Ynys Môn LL63 5EQ

### ORNITHOLOGICAL REVIEW OF 1996

#### Introduction

The systematic list below includes entries for 212 species, not including escapes. Two of these species, Spotted Sandpiper and Little Bunting, were not recorded in 1996 but in 1984 and 1985 respectively. The records in question, which are the only Argyll records of these species, were omitted from previous *Argyll Bird Reports*.

This leaves a total of 210 species recorded in Argyll during 1996 (*cf* 200 in 1995, 212 in 1994 and 213 in 1993), with claimed sightings of a further five currently under consideration by the rarities committees. One of the 210 species, Woodchat Shrike, is an addition to the Argyll list. The rise in the number of species following the rather low 1995 total was associated with a welcome increase in the number of records submitted.

The only significant omissions from the systematic list for 1996 are Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix* and Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*. The former may well be extinct as a breeding species in Argyll, while the status of the latter is uncertain.

Details of two recent deletions from the Argyll list (Eagle Owl and Water Pipit) are included. Following their removal, the list now stands at 309 species.

Please note that all records for 1997 should be sent to the new Argyll bird recorder, Paul Daw, at Tigh-na-Tulloch, Tullochgorm, Minard, Argyll PA32 8YQ.

#### The weather in 1996

The intensely cold conditions which characterised the end of 1995 were replaced at the beginning of January 1996 by gales and rain. The weather during the remainder of the month, and also through February and March, was often cold and rather dry with easterly winds. There were, however, brief interludes of westerlies and wetter conditions.

The dry weather continued into early April, but most of the month was dull and wet. A cold northerly airstream covered the country towards the end of the month. May continued cold, with the wind almost constantly in the northern half of the compass. In Scotland as a whole, it was the coldest May for 50 years. There was ground frost at sea level on Islay as late as the 19th.

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This miserable spring was followed by a very disappointing summer, particularly when compared with the previous year. The weather was unsettled during most of June and July, with plenty of rain, but conditions became drier and sunnier during the latter half of August and most of September. This settled period of weather appears to have been responsible for an algal bloom which led to a high mortality of lugworms *Arenicola* sp and other marine invertebrates along coasts on Islay and elsewhere.

At the end of September, there was a return to the wet, windy conditions more typical of autumn in western Scotland. This theme continued throughout October, which saw a great deal of rain. On Tiree, for example, October was the wettest on record and the second wettest month ever (after January 1993). Following a violent storm on the night of 5th November, conditions became generally calmer and drier. The latter part of December, in particular, was dry and cold, and the ground was frozen hard even in those areas most exposed to the warming influence of the North Atlantic Drift.

### January to March

The usual Snow Goose was still present on *Islay* at the beginning of the year, and others of unknown origin were seen in *Kintyre* and *Islay* during Jan and Feb. Also on *Islay* were 3 possible vagrant Canada Geese. A Green Woodpecker was seen in the Tiroran/Scobull area *Mull* at the beginning of January.

The sighting of 3 Waxwings at Kilmartin *Mid-Argyll* on 17th January heralded a large arrival of this species, with singles and groups of up to 20 birds being widespread in late January and February. A Great Grey Shrike was at Inverinan (Loch Awe) *Mid-Argyll* on 27th January. In February, a Magpie was well outside its normal range at Barcaldine *N. Argyll* on the 14th, while a Red-necked Grebe was at Salum Bay *Tiree* on the 19th. March was a very quiet month as far as scarce species were concerned, but 2 Black Redstarts were seen, one at Campbeltown *Kintyre* on the 1st-3rd, and one at Loch a'Phuill *Tiree* on the 30th.

A coordinated Argyll-wide count of geese at the end of March produced totals of 28,781 Barnacle Geese, 17,347 Greenland White-fronted Geese and 2,198 Greylag Geese.

### April and May

The cold weather and northerly winds in April and May did not appear to be conducive to northward movements of summer migrants. Thus, of 17 species of common passerine migrant, 11 arrived later and only 4 earlier than in 1995. Hirundines and Willow Warblers were notably late in arriving. For the same reason, rarities were thin on the ground, unlike 1995 when late May in particular produced some good records. Nevertheless, a female Surf Scoter was at Lagganulva *Mull* from 21st to 28th April, and a pair of Dotterel at The Reef *Tiree* on 30th April and 1st May. Also in April, numbers of Black-tailed Godwits on *Tiree* peaked at an impressive 141 on the 28th.

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Scarce migrants noted in May included a Pomarine Skua at Scarinish *Tiree* on the 5th (the only spring record), a Little Stint at Loch Gruinart *Islay* on the 18th (again the only spring record), and a Pied Flycatcher at Portnahaven *Islay* on the 20th. Also in May, a Kingfisher apparently took up residence at Toward *Cowal*, and stayed until October. There were at least 2 sightings of Green Woodpecker, also in *Cowal*; these, taken together with additional records at other times of the year, suggest that colonisation may be taking place.

### The breeding season

Several interesting breeding records and counts came from the Treshnish Isles *Mull*, which were visited by an RSPB/SNH survey team looking at Storm Petrels as well as by the Treshnish Isles Auk Ringing Group. Using playback tapes, the former team produced an estimate of 5,040 breeding pairs of Storm Petrels for the Treshnish Isles as a whole, including 1,008 on Lunga. The latter figure compares with the Treshnish Isles Auk Ringing Group's estimate of 1,000-2,500 pairs on Lunga using conventional counting methods. Other estimates of breeding populations were produced for Manx Shearwater (200-700 pairs), Guillemot (7,500-7,800 birds ashore on Lunga), Razorbill (850-1,000 birds ashore on Lunga) and Puffin (1,643 AON on Lunga). Both Guillemots and Razorbills showed large increases by comparison with 1995, while Puffin numbers remained roughly the same. Also, one of a probable pair of Great Skuas on Fladda in late June was strongly territorial, suggesting that breeding may have occurred.

The news from other seabird nesting colonies was largely negative. A large Shag colony in the Sound of Jura *Mid-Argyll* was found to be deserted following several years of intensive predation by mink *Mustela vison*. Poor breeding success at some sites, or continued absence from former colonies, was reported for Cormorant, Black-headed Gull, Common Gull, Herring Gull and Common Tern. Again, mink seemed to be implicated in some instances.

A complete census of Little Terns located about 91 pairs in Argyll, with little or no decline since the last full survey in 1987. Sandwich Terns bred successfully at Machrihanish *Kintyre*, with at least one juvenile reared.

The sighting of a Little Grebe with a chick at Loch Bhasapol may represent the first confirmed breeding record for *Tiree*. Mandarin ducks bred at natural nest sites in *Cowal* for the first time, and this species now seems to be well established in Argyll. Two young Gadwall were seen at Loch Gruinart on 21st May - the first confirmed breeding record for *Islay*. The presence of a male Garganey at the same site in late April raised hopes that this species too would nest, but no female was seen. Also in the Gruinart area, up to 3 singing male Spotted Crakes were present in late May.

Following 3 consecutive years of increase, Corncrake numbers in the islands declined once more. A total of 179 calling males were recorded, the majority being on *Tiree* and *Coll*. Numbers on *Islay* reached their lowest ever level, with records confined to the Loch Gruinart area.

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Several observers commented on a scarcity of breeding songbirds following the cold winter and spring. However, quantitative evidence to back these observations was confined to Wren, Robin, Stonechat and Blackbird. A comprehensive survey of rookeries in *Kintyre* produced a total of 2,514 nests at 41 rookeries, a substantial increase compared to the last survey in 1989. The fortunes of the Corn Bunting, on the other hand, took a considerable turn for the worse, with perhaps no more than one territory on *Tiree* (and thus in Argyll). This species seems to be facing certain extinction in our region.

Scarce species recorded during June included a Yellow Wagtail at Sorobaidh *Tiree* on the 2nd, a female Marsh Harrier at Loch Gruinart on the 6th-11th, a Tree Sparrow on Iona *Mull* on the 12th, a Stock Dove at Kilmartin on the 15th, and a Quail at Moine Mhor *Mid-Argyll* on the 22nd. These were the only records of these 5 species in 1996. A Fieldfare at Port Wemyss *Islay* on the 16th was the first summer record in Argyll for several years.

### July and August

Seabird migration got off to a very early start with 2 Sooty Shearwaters past Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* on 10th July, followed by a Great Shearwater 5 days later off Grass Point *Mull*. Also early were 3 adult Pomarine Skuas seen from the Oban *Mid-Argyll* to Caignure *Mull* ferry on the 14th, and one off Grass Point the following day. An unseasonal first-summer Iceland Gull was at Machrihanish SBO on 11th July, while an early adult Sabine's Gull was seen off Sanda *Kintyre* on the 28th.

Also in July, an extra-limital Magpie was at Aros Moss *Kintyre* on the 13th, while a Rose-coloured Starling (Argyll's only "*British Birds* rarity" of the year) visited a garden at Carradale *Kintyre* for 4 days from the 30th.

An adult Long-tailed Skua flying south past Frenchman's Rocks on 2nd August was the only record of the year. The same seawatch produced the first Mediterranean Shearwater of the autumn; a further 42 birds were seen over a three-month period, the vast majority at Machrihanish SBO and Frenchman's Rocks. With only 2 Argyll records prior to 1992, this species was regarded until recently as a great rarity. However, more intensive seawatching, coupled with a probable increase in the number of birds occurring, has led to its re-categorisation as a regular autumn migrant.

Also on 2nd Aug, a Little Gull at Machrihanish SBO was the first of 7 seen by Argyll seawatchers during the autumn. Eight days later, the same site produced one of the most intriguing records of 1996: 3 Choughs were seen and heard flying south over the observatory, apparently heading towards the Mull of Kintyre. Other interesting August records included a Pied Flycatcher at Balemartine *Tiree* on the 15th and 16th, and the same or another there on the 30th. Also, a Wood Sandpiper was on Luig *Mid-Argyll* on the 17th, and 2 Green Sandpipers were at Easter Ellister *Islay* on the 27th; these were the only records of these 2 species in 1996.

On *Islay*, there was an oil spill into Loch Indaal on 21st August, the cause being a

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ruptured seal on the oil pipeline at Bruichladdich. A small number of birds were lightly oiled, and it is fortunate that the accident did not occur at a different season under different weather conditions. A record count of 3,000 Dunlin at Loch Gruinart the next day was attributed to an abundance of invertebrate food resulting from the algal bloom.

### September and October

On *Tiree*, 2 Buff-breasted Sandpipers were seen at Sandaig on 6th September and relocated nearby on the 13th. On the 8th, no fewer than 3 were together at Ardnave *Islay*, only the second record for the island. A male Velvet Scoter at Loch Indaal in early September was the first of 3 records for the year.

Mid- to late September produced a good run of records of Little Stint and Curlew Sandpiper, with maximum counts of 15 (at Machrihanish on the 25th) and 10 (at Loch Gruinart on the 11th and 29th) respectively. Stragglers of both species stayed into October. The only other scarce wader seen was a Spotted Redshank, the only one of the year, which flew over Port Wemyss on 21st September.

A juvenile Woodchat Shrike found at Port Ellen *Islay* on 16th September was the first record of the species in Argyll. A very skulking Lesser Whitethroat was at Portnahaven on the 21st and 22nd, the first confirmed Argyll record since 1992. Two Red Kites were on *Mull* at the end of the month.

The return to wet weather and westerly winds at the end of September was welcomed by seawatchers, who recorded several Leach's Petrels, Grey Phalaropes and Pomarine Skuas, together with unusually large numbers of migrating Red-throated Divers. Further sightings of all these species followed in October, but the most exciting seabird record of the month was a single Cory's Shearwater flying south past Coul Point *Islay* on the 5th, only the fifth record for Argyll.

There were several other records of local rarities in October. A Red-necked Grebe was at Loch Gorm *Islay* on the 2nd, a Bewick's Swan and 2 Velvet Scoters at Machrihanish on the 5th, and another Velvet Scoter briefly at Port Wemyss on the 18th. A Kingfisher was seen at Connel *Mid-Argyll* on 5th October, and 2 Lapland Buntings were reported from The Reef on the 9th. A Lesser Whitethroat at Portnahaven on the 10th could perhaps have been the same individual as the one seen at the same spot 3 weeks earlier. On the 19th, a female Capercaillie was seen at Doire Darach (Loch Tulla) *N. Argyll*. There were 2 sightings of Black Redstart at the end of the month: one at Campbeltown Airport on the 26th, and one at Ardtalla *Islay* on the 30th.

Also in October, the arriving flocks of Barnacle and White-fronted Geese on *Islay* brought with them the presumed returning Snow Goose and at least 2 Canada Geese. Possible vagrant Canada Geese were also seen in *Kintyre* (one or 2 birds) and on *Tiree* (up to 4 birds) during October to December.



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### November and December

Continuing westerly winds in early November produced some unusually late records of seabirds, including 2 Sooty Shearwaters, several Manx Shearwaters, 2 Mediterranean Shearwaters, 3 Storm Petrels, a Leach's Petrel, 2 Grey Phalaropes, 3 Pomarine Skuas, 5 Arctic Skuas, 3 Great Skuas and an Arctic Tern, all between the 1st and the 6th. Several Little Auks were also seen during this period, with a total of 59 being recorded at Frenchman's Rocks between mid-October and the end of the year.

Other late stayers included 4 Ruff in *Kintyre*, 3 of which were together at Campbeltown on 5th November. Also, a Little Gull was at Portnahaven on the 3rd, and a Whimbrel at Dunstaffnage *Mid-Argyll* on the 13th. A Great Spotted Woodpecker at Bridgend on 15th November was the first record for *Islay* since 1987.

Two species that attracted particular attention in early November were Whooper Swan and Snow Bunting. Substantial numbers of the former species were recorded at the beginning of the month, the largest flock being 119 at Loch Gruinart on the 1st. Snow Buntings were also unusually widespread, though mostly in small numbers. The largest flock reported was one of 76 birds at Ardnave on the 7th.

On 9th November, a group of 40-50 Waxwings turned up at Dunstaffnage, and 2 were seen at Kilchattan *Colonsay*. These were the first of many records, birds being widespread in mainland Argyll and on some of the islands, though the Dunstaffnage flock remained the largest. Most had gone by the end of the month; there were only 3 records in December.

In mid-November, a coordinated count of geese produced a record total of 33,500 Barnacle Geese in Argyll, together with 18,809 Greenland White-fronts and 3,716 Greylags.

During the second half of November and December, sightings of unusual birds were few and far between. However, a very late Sooty Shearwater and an Arctic Skua flew south past Frenchman's Rocks on 16th November, and at least 3 Long-eared Owls roosted at The Laggan *Kintyre* during November and December. In December, a Kingfisher was at Bridgend on the 18th and a Red Kite was seen at Eredine (Loch Awe) *Mid-Argyll* on several occasions in mid-month.

The cold spell at the end of the year drove many waterfowl onto the sea. Passerines became unusually scarce in some localities, while Snipe were forced into less favoured habitats such as garden lawns, where they fed out in the open in broad daylight.

### BIRD RECORDING IN ARGYLL

#### Advice to contributors

When submitting records, sightings should be listed in Voous order (as in this report) and should include the following details: species, EURING code if possible, number of individuals, sex and age if known, date, and location (with grid reference). More

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detailed guidelines can be found in *ABR* 11.

### Rare birds

Details of rarities should be sent in as soon as possible after the sighting, if possible on a standard form. They will be judged locally by the Argyll Bird Records Committee (whose members are listed on p. 3), sent on to the *Scottish Birds* Records Committee (SBRC), or sent on to the *British Birds* Rarities Committee (BBRC), as appropriate.

The list below details rare species whose occurrence in Argyll needs to be fully documented. It is made up of the ABRC list of Argyll rarities (in lower case) and the SBRC list of Scottish rarities (in capitals), but excludes the large number of UK rarities assessed by BBRC. Asterisks in this list indicate that the species have occurred in Argyll.

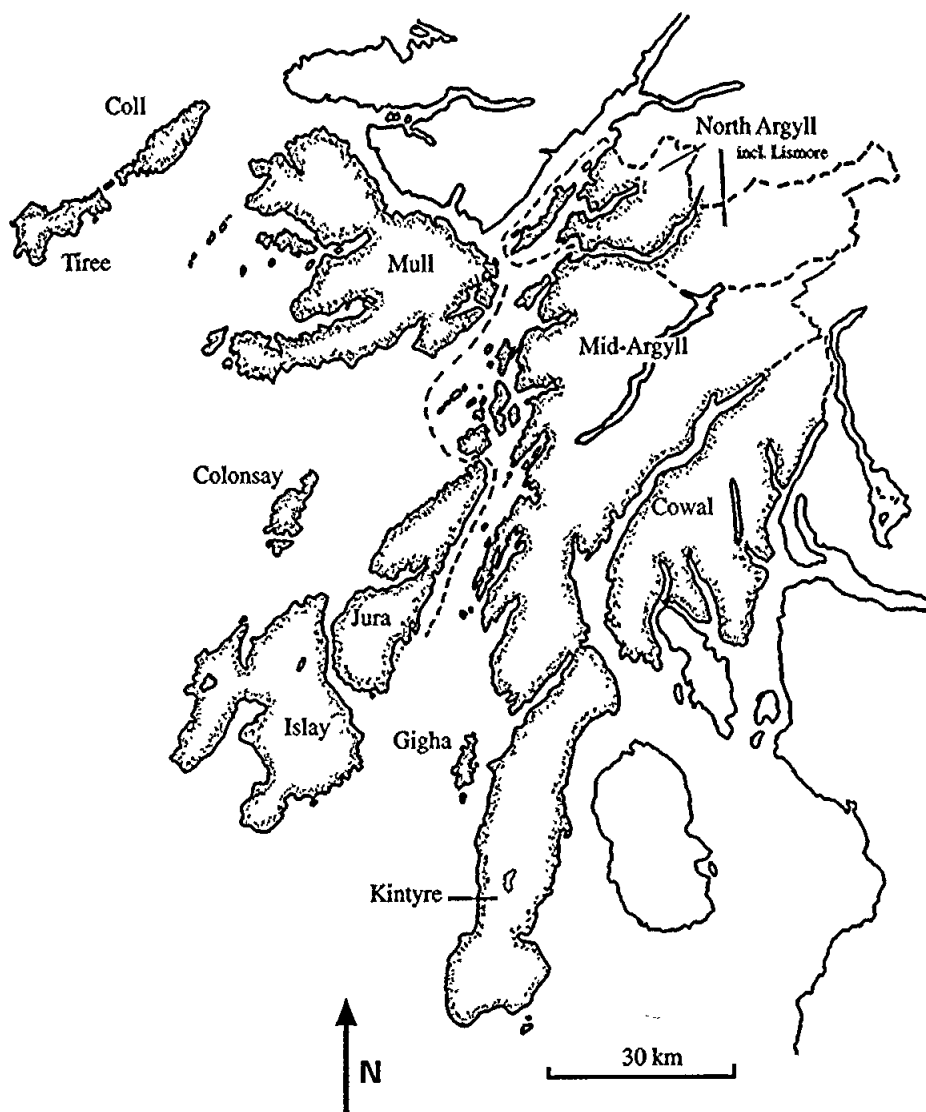
No record of any of the species and plumage phases listed below will be published unless adequate supporting details (including a description) are available. In addition, brief details may be requested for occurrences of scarce species not on the list where the circumstances appear to warrant this.

### List of SBRC and ABRC species and subspecies, 1997

Black-necked Grebe*	CRANE*
CORY'S SHEARWATER*	Avocet*
GREAT SHEARWATER*	STONE CURLEW
MEDITERRANEAN SHEARWATER*	LITTLE RINGED PLOVER*
Bittern*	KENTISH PLOVER
LITTLE EGRET*	Temminck's Stint*
PURPLE HERON	PECTORAL SANDPIPER*
WHITE STORK*	BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER*
SPOONBILL*	Red-necked Phalarope*
Bean Goose*	Long-tailed Skua (except adult)*
European White-fronted Goose*	MEDITERRANEAN GULL*
GREEN-WINGED TEAL*	SABINE'S GULL*
Garganey (except adult male, or female accompanied by adult male)*	RING-BILLED GULL*
Red-crested Pochard*	HERRING GULL (yellow-legged race <i>michahellis</i> )
RING-NECKED DUCK*	Roseate Tern*
FERRUGINOUS DUCK	Black Tern*
SURF SCOTER*	Little Owl
Smew*	BEE-EATER*
Ruddy Duck*	Wryneck*
HONEY BUZZARD*	LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER
MONTAGU'S HARRIER	SHORT-TOED LARK
Goshawk*	WOODLARK
ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD*	Shore Lark*
HOBBY*	RICHARD'S PIPIT*

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TAWNY PIPIT	FIRECREST*
WATER PIPIT	RED-BREASTED FLYCATCHER*
NIGHTINGALE*	BEARDED TIT
Bluethroat*	Marsh Tit
CETTI'S WARBLER	Willow Tit*
SAVI'S WARBLER	Crested Tit*
AQUATIC WARBLER	Nuthatch*
MARSH WARBLER	Red-backed Shrike*
Reed Warbler*	WOODCHAT SHRIKE*
ICTERINE WARBLER*	SERIN
MELODIOUS WARBLER	Scottish Crossbill
DARTFORD WARBLER	COMMON ROSEFINCH*
BARRED WARBLER*	Hawfinch*
Lesser Whitethroat*	CIRL BUNTING*
PALLAS'S WARBLER	ORTOLAN BUNTING
Yellow-browed Warbler*	LITTLE BUNTING*



Map showing the areas of Argyll used in this Report

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### INTERPRETATION OF THE SPECIES ACCOUNTS

In the species accounts below, English and scientific names are as in the latest *Scottish Bird Report*; the sequence of species follows the Voous order as in the same report. Names of species not on the Western Palearctic list follow Howard and Moore (1991).

Each species heading in the report contains the following information:

	Common name	Scientific name	Gaelic name	EURING code
e.g.	<b>RAVEN</b>	<i>Corvus corax</i>	Fitheach	1572

Each heading is followed by a summary of the bird's known status and distribution within Argyll, together with any other relevant information. Significant 1996 records are then listed in approximate chronological order. For scarcer species, records for 1996 may be followed by late records or recent acceptances from earlier years.

For the purposes of this report, Argyll is divided into 11 areas, which are named on the accompanying sketch map (p. 14). Because very few records have been received from Lismore in recent years, it is no longer considered a separate area but has been merged with North Argyll. Note that, for the moment at least, boundaries of the Argyll recording area remain unchanged despite recent local government reorganisation.

Records of rarities in the systematic list are accompanied by the names of the observers, starting with the finder(s)/identifier(s) (or, in the absence of this information, the person who first reported the bird to me), followed by the observer(s) who submitted details of the record, if different. All these records are also accompanied by an asterisk, to indicate acceptance by the relevant rarities committee. Summarised data from many surveys of breeding birds are also accompanied by the initials of the observers or organisations responsible, in order to help readers who are interested in obtaining more detailed information.

I have attempted to ensure that all place names in the systematic list feature on the 1:50,000 (Landranger Series) Ordnance Survey maps. An exception is The Laggan (Kintyre) which refers to the roughly triangular area west of Campbeltown, bordered by the B843, the A83, and Machrihanish Bay. Campbeltown Airport (previously RAF Machrihanish) is in this area. The Machrihanish Seabird Observatory (SBO) is situated at Uisaed Point on the western outskirts of Machrihanish (NR628209). In Mid-Argyll, Kilmichael Glen extends northeastwards from Kilmichael Glassary at NR85/93. On Mull, the Mishnish Lochs are the series of lochs extending from NM46/52 to NM48/53.

On Islay, the term 'Loch Gruinart' may refer to the Royal Society for Protection of Birds (RSPB) reserve at Loch Gruinart, or to parts of the loch lying outside the reserve. No distinction has been made except where presenting counts of breeding pairs within the reserve, when the term 'Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve' is used. The same applies to the use of the terms 'Moine Mhor' and 'Moine Mhor National Nature Reserve

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(NNR)' (Mid-Argyll); I have used the former term to cover an area extending west to the landward edge of Loch Crinan and north to Barsloisnoch.

Figs. 1 to 4 are from Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) goose counts. Figs. 5 to 16 are based principally on data from the Wetland Birds Survey (WeBS), although higher counts have been included where available. It should be noted that the September 1996 WeBS count at Loch Gruinart was in fact carried out on 1st October (and the October count on the 18th).

### Special studies carried out in 1996

Regular monitoring of certain species and groups of species in Argyll continued in 1996; examples are the goose counts carried out by SNH, the monthly wildfowl and wader counts at several sites, and the Common Birds Census (CBC) carried out at Taynish NNR (Mid-Argyll) by John Halliday. Other single-species studies, either new in 1996 or continued from previous years, are referred to in the species accounts.

Three further multi-species studies are summarised here to avoid repetition of details in the species accounts.

#### (1) BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Birds Survey (BBS)

This new nationwide survey, supported by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) and RSPB, commenced in 1994. Its objective is to extend and improve the monitoring of population changes of common breeding birds. The intention is to census birds annually in more than 2,000 randomly chosen one-km squares in the UK, using a line-transect method.

In 1996, 21 such squares were surveyed in Argyll. They were located in *Kintyre* (NR68/29), *Colonsay* (NR35/88, NR38/95), *Cowal* (NN27/06, NR92/75, NS03/92, NS08/84, NS12/80), *Mid-Argyll* (NM82/24, NM83/19, NN01/04, NN06/15, NN19/25, NR77/70), *Mull* (NM30/21, NM44/21), and *N. Argyll* (NN06/31, NN10/35, NN12/34, NN28/35, NN30/35). They include 15 of the 17 squares surveyed in 1995.

In the systematic list below, BBS data are quoted for non-aquatic species which are widely distributed or for which little other information was available.

More volunteers are urgently required locally for this survey (see p. 3 for details of BTO Regional Representatives in Argyll).

#### (2) Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS) study of seabird breeding success [J. C. A. Craik]

As part of a wider study of seabird breeding success, selected species were monitored in a study area along the west coasts of *Kintyre*, *Mid-Argyll*, and *N. Argyll* (including Lismore), and at additional sites in Loch Fyne (*Cowal/Mid-Argyll*) and *Mull*. Further details can be found in *ABR* 11.

#### (3) Systematic seawatching at Machrihanish SBO (*Kintyre*) [E. J. Maguire] and Frenchman's Rocks (*Islay*) [T. ap Rheinallt]

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Movements of seabirds, wildfowl and waders past these two sites were monitored regularly during certain months of the year. With a few exceptions, all individual birds flying past were identified and logged. Hours of observation during each month were as follows (c = casual observations):

	<i>Jan</i>	<i>Feb</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<i>Apr</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>Jun</i>	<i>Jul</i>	<i>Aug</i>	<i>Sep</i>	<i>Oct</i>	<i>Nov</i>	<i>Dec</i>	<i>Total</i>
Mach. SBO	c	c	c	c	c	c	81	82	80	56	36	c	335
F. Rocks	0	0	0	0	11	13.5	36	26.5	46	21.5	15	4	173.5

This information can be used to convert total counts in the systematic list to hourly rates, and *vice versa*. It should be noted, however, that the validity of directly comparing hourly rates between the two sites is questionable. This is because observations at Frenchman's Rocks were always made during the first few hours of daylight, when seabird movement is normally at a maximum, whereas those at Machrihanish SBO were more evenly spaced throughout the day. Also, counts were not necessarily carried out on the same days. At both sites, the vast majority of birds flew south during all months.

More comprehensive data for Machrihanish SBO can be found in Maguire (1997).

### Symbols and abbreviations

#### Species status categories

R	Resident and sedentary
B	Breeding species; breeding and wintering ranges may differ
S	Summer visitor; breeds unless otherwise stated
P	Passage migrant
W	Winter visitor
I	Introduced species; recorded in Argyll, may or may not breed here
V	Vagrant; fewer than 5 records since 1980

#### Categories of the British list

Category C	Species which, although originally introduced by man, have now established a self-sustaining breeding stock
Category D	Species which do not form part of the full list for one of several reasons, including possible escapes and introduced species whose populations may not be self-sustaining

#### Others

*	Record accepted by relevant rarities committee
ABR	<i>Argyll Bird Report</i>
ABRC	Argyll Bird Records Committee
ARSG	Argyll Raptor Study Group
AON	apparently occupied nest-sites
b/-	brood of...
BBRC	<i>British Birds Rarities Committee</i>
BBS	Breeding Birds Survey

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BOURC	British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee
BTO	British Trust for Ornithology
c/-	clutch of...
CBC	Common Birds Census
JNCC	Joint Nature Conservation Committee
max.	maximum (the highest of 2 or more counts at a given locality during the period being analysed)
NCC	Nature Conservancy Council
NNR	National Nature Reserve
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
SAMS	Scottish Association for Marine Science
SBO	Seabird Observatory
<i>SBR</i>	<i>Scottish Bird Report</i>
SBRC	<i>Scottish Birds Records Committee</i>
SNH	Scottish Natural Heritage



## ARGYLL BIRD RECORDS 1996

**RED-THROATED DIVER** *Gavia stellata* Learga ruadh 0002  
B W P Widely distributed but sparse breeding species. Breeding recorded in 26% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

By far the highest count during the early part of the year was 41 at West Loch Tarbert *Kintyre* on 25th Mar. No other count exceeded 10 birds.

**Breeding.** On *Coll*, adult birds were located on 19 lochs; breeding was confirmed on 7 lochs and was strongly suspected to have occurred on another 5, with a total of 7-19 pairs [RSPB]. In the Ederline/Eredine area *Mid-Argyll*, 4 pairs nested on rafts and 3 of them successfully raised young to fledging; in the remainder of the study area east of Loch Awe, one pair nesting on a small hill lochan without a raft was unsuccessful after 2 attempts, whilst 2 rafts on hill lochs which were not traditional nesting lochs were unused [DM]. On *Islay*, 3 pairs are known to have laid, but only one young is known to have fledged; one pair apparently made three attempts to nest, but failed each time. Pairs were also reported from 4 lochs in *Cowal*, but breeding was confirmed on only one loch, where a single chick was seen. In *N. Argyll*, a pair nested on a raft. Breeding season records were also received from *Colonsay* and *Mull*.

Southward movement past Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* in autumn involved many more birds than in 1993-95, being apparent in Sep (389 in 46 hr), Oct (48 in 21.5 hr), and to a lesser extent Nov (15 in 15 hr); there was a marked peak in late Sep, with 368 (33.5 hr) between the 23rd and the 30th and a highest day-count of 93 (6.5 hr) on the 27th. At Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre*, a total of 85 flew south on 4 dates between 11th and 30th Sep, the highest day-count being 44 (8 hr) on the 30th; only small numbers were seen outside this period. Elsewhere, 10 (2.5 hr) flew south past Coul Point *Islay* on 18th Sep, and 30 (2.5 hr) past the same site on 4th Oct. The highest counts of birds on the water were 40 at Laggan Bay *Islay* on 6th Sep, and max. 20 at the head of Loch Indaal *Islay* on 10th Nov. No other count during the latter part of the year exceeded 10 birds.

**BLACK-THROATED DIVER** *Gavia arctica* Learga dhubh 0003  
B W P Scarce, though probably under-recorded in winter. Breeding now only in *Mid-Argyll* and *N. Argyll*.

The highest count during the early part of the year was 7 at Loch Scridain *Mull* on 5th Apr. Except for 2 at Blairmore (Loch Long) *Cowal* on 11th Feb, 3 at Scarinish *Tiree* on 13th Mar, and 4 at Loch Indaal *Islay* on 20th Mar, all other records were of single birds, in *Islay*, *Colonsay*, *Cowal* and *Tiree*.

**Breeding.** Ten known breeding sites in Argyll held summering pairs, with additional adults associated with one of the sites. Pairs at 3 regular sites apparently did not attempt to breed. Breeding was confirmed at 6 sites, with 4 successful pairs each hatching 2 young, but only one pair succeeding in rearing both chicks. Of the 5 young reared, 4 were from rafts and one from a natural site. One pair that lost its first clutch, probably during flooding, laid a repeat clutch that also failed, probably for the same reason [RSPB, DM].

By far the highest count during the latter part of the year was 9 at Loch Caolisport *Mid-Argyll* in late Dec. There were also several records of 1-3 birds at various sites in *Kintyre* and *Islay*. The only other records were singles at Rubha Chraiginis *Tiree* on 30th Sep, and West Hynish *Tiree* on 7th Dec.

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### **GREAT NORTHERN DIVER** *Gavia immer* Muir bhuachail 0004

*W P The Argyll coast is an important wintering locality. Summer-plumaged birds regularly recorded Apr to early Jun in all areas except Cowal. Pre-migratory gatherings occur off some coasts in late Apr and early May. A few individuals summer.*

The highest counts during Jan-Apr were 15 at Golt Bay *Tiree* on 16th Feb, 22 at Loch Scridain *Mull* on 6th Mar, max. 12 at Loch Indaal *Islay* on 20th Mar, and 14 at Loch na Keal *Mull* on 25th Mar. In May, 13 were off *Nerabus Islay* on the 4th, and a total of 26 were seen from the ferry between *Colonsay* and the *Garvellachs Mid-Argyll* on the 8th. No other site had counts exceeding 10 birds.

In summer, up to 3 immatures were regularly seen off *Machrihanish SBO Kintyre* during Aug-Sep. There were a further 9 records during mid-Jun to mid-Sep, all involving single birds: on *Islay* (5), *Colonsay* (1), *Mull* (1) and *Tiree* (2).

Arrival in autumn appeared to be earlier than usual, with birds being reported widely from mid-Sep. A total of 39 (82.5 hr) flew south past *Frenchman's Rocks Islay* during Sep-Nov, no more than 5 birds being seen on any one day. There was virtually no northward movement at this site, unlike nearby *Coul Point*, where 9 (2 hr) flew north on 5th Oct. The only counts exceeding 10 birds were max. 12 at *Claggain Bay Islay* on 30th Oct, and 12 flying south past *Machrihanish SBO* on 5th Nov.

### **LITTLE GREBE** *Tachybaptus ruficollis* Spagriton 0007

*B W Uncommon. Breeds widely, mainly on small, low-lying eutrophic lochs. Breeding recorded in 18% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Small numbers gather in sheltered coastal waters in winter.*

The only site with counts of more than 5 birds during the early part of the year was *Loch Etive N. Argyll* (max. 10 on 18th Feb).

**Breeding.** Breeding was confirmed at *East Loch Fada Colonsay* (b/1), *Camas Daoine Loch* (N of *Auchindrain Mid-Argyll* (b/3), and *Loch Bhasapol Tiree* (b/1). The last may be the first confirmed breeding record from *Tiree*; neither the 1968-72 Atlas nor the 1988-91 Atlas include any records from the island, although one was seen at *Loch Bhasapol* on 11th Jun 1989 (ABR 6: 10). Other breeding season records came from one loch on *Islay* and 3 in *Mid-Argyll*.

The highest counts during the second winter period were 7 at the *Mishnish Lochs Mull* on 16th Sep, max. 10 at *Loch Etive* on 13th Oct and 17th Nov, and 15 at *Bellanoich Mid-Argyll* from 15th Nov to the end of the year. A presumed migrant was found on the runway at *Campbeltown Airport Kintyre* in heavy rain on the evening of 25th Oct.

### **GREAT CRESTED GREBE** *Podiceps cristatus* Gobhlachan Iaparan 0009

*W P Uncommon, with 2-6 records annually since 1984. Recorded in all months except Jun.*

There were more records than usual. During the early part of the year, singles were reported from *Blairmore (Loch Long) Cowal* on 11th and 22nd Feb, *Loch Indaal Islay* on 14th Feb, *West Loch Tarbert Kintyre* on 25th Mar, *Bunnahabhain Islay* on 7th Apr, and *Loch Gruinart Islay* on 19th Apr.

In autumn, singles were at *Machrihanish Kintyre* on 12th Oct, *Loch Indaal* on 22nd Oct, and *Blairmore (Loch Long)* on 18th Nov.

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**RED-NECKED GREBE** *Podiceps grisegena* Gobhlachan ruadh 0010  
*W P Less than annual. Of 12 records during 1980-95, 10 were during the period Sep-Mar, with one in May and one in Jun.*

There were 2 records during the year: one at Salum Bay Tiree on 19th Feb, and a juvenile at Loch Gorm Islay on 2nd Oct.

**SLAVONIAN GREBE** *Podiceps auritus* Gobhlachan mara 0011  
*W P Regular wintering species in sealochs and sounds, particularly West Loch Tarbert (Kintyre), Sound of Gigha (Kintyre), Loch Indaal (Islay) and Loch na Keal (Mull).*

During the early part of the year, the regular flock at Loch na Keal Mull peaked at 12 on 31st Jan; the Loch Indaal Islay flock peaked at 6 on 20th Mar. Also, one was at Salum Bay Tiree on 19th-24th Feb, up to 3 were off Inverfolla (Loch Creran) N. Argyll during Feb-Apr, and one was found dead on the shore at Ardmucknish Bay N. Argyll on 11th Apr. The great majority of records of this species in Argyll are of birds on the sea; thus 3 at Loch Ba Mull on 5th Apr (and a single or singles on several other dates in Mar and early Apr) were unusual.

The first returning birds were 5 at Loch Indaal Islay on 31st Aug; numbers at this site built up to a peak of 37 on 2nd Oct. Birds were recorded at 3 sites on Mull: one at the head of Loch na Keal on 17th Sep, max. 4 at Loch Buie on 26th Sep, and one at the head of Loch Scridain on 14th Dec. The only other record was 2 flying south past Machrihanish SBO Kintyre on 11th Sep.

**FULMAR** *Fulmarus glacialis* Eun crom 0022  
*B W P Common but localised breeding species in all areas except Cowal and North Argyll. Large numbers on passage off western headlands.*

The average rate of southward movement past Frenchman's Rocks Islay in May (see Table below) was much higher than in the same month in 1993-5. This was associated with an unusually large movement in a southwesterly gale on 31st May, when 1,320 (3 hr) flew south, the highest total count and the highest hourly rate for the year.

**Breeding.** Counts of breeding birds included 641 AON on Lunga (Treshnish Isles) Mull (cf only 435 in 1995 but 677 in 1994), 80 birds at Balephetrish Hill Tiree on 24th Jun, and 166 pairs breeding at Coll RSPB Reserve. On Colonsay, counts at sample census sites in Jun were 611 AON at Urugaig, 58 AON at Kiloran Bay, and 24 AON at Turnigil; the total of 693 is close to the 1994 and 1995 totals at the same sites. There were a few other counts at small colonies (up to 20 AON).

As in 1993-95, southward movement past Frenchman's Rocks in autumn was greatest in Aug. Hourly rates of movement past Machrihanish SBO Kintyre were very much lower (see Table below).

Dark-phase birds passed Frenchman's Rocks on 31st Jul (one) and 27th Oct (2).

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Average numbers of Fulmars flying south per hour past Machrihanish SBO Kintyre and Frenchman's Rocks Islay in 1996

	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Machrihanish SBO	-	-	1	7	5	0	1
Frenchman's Rocks	124	87	92	108	30	42	88

## CORY'S SHEARWATER *Calonectris diomedea* 0036

V Four accepted Argyll records involving a total of six birds, all in Aug or Sep.

One flew south past Coul Point Islay on 5th Oct [CC]\*. This is only the fifth Argyll record.

## GREAT SHEARWATER *Puffinus gravis* 0040

P Rare. Only 6 accepted records during 1980-92: one between Coll and Mull on 19th Jul 1980; 6 between Coll and Mull on 5th Sep 1981, and 5 off Tiree the same day; one off Mull on 13th Aug 1983; one between Mull and Tiree on 22nd Aug 1983; and one between Coll and Tiree on 18th May 1988.

One was in a large aggregation of feeding seabirds off Grass Point Mull on 15th Jul [IR et al.]\*.

1995 A bird found dead in a sprat net on Mallaig pier (Highland Region) on 9th Nov was thought to have become caught up in it on the 7th or 8th, when the boat was fishing in Loch na Keal Mull [SMacD, AMacL, RMcG]\*.

1994 Five flew south past Machrihanish SBO Kintyre on 9th Sep, in association with an exceptionally large movement of Manx and Sooty Shearwaters [EJM]\*.

1993 Two flew south past Machrihanish SBO Kintyre on 21st Sep [EJM]\*.

1984 The record of one at Loch Gruinart Islay on 7th Jul (ABR 2: 8) was not accepted for publication in the SBR and should therefore be deleted.

## SOOTY SHEARWATER *Puffinus griseus* Fachadh dubh 0043

P Large numbers sometimes recorded off headlands during Aug-Sep; very few records outside the period Jul-Oct.

Two early birds flew south past Frenchman's Rocks Islay on 10th Jul; also in Jul, one was off southeast Coll on the 30th. There was a clear peak of movement past Frenchman's Rocks in Sep, with a total of 197 (46.5 hr), the highest day-count being 109 (3.5 hr) flying south on the 26th. In contrast, the total number of birds passing Machrihanish SBO Kintyre during Aug-Oct was only 11 (218 hr). Between late Aug and early Oct, single-figure counts came from Coul Point Islay, the Kennacraig Kintyre - Islay ferry crossing, Hynish Tiree, Rubha Boraige Moire (near Hough Bay) Tiree, and Rubha Chraiginis Tiree. Late singles flew south past Frenchman's Rocks and Machrihanish SBO on 3rd Nov, with a very late bird past the former site on 16th Nov.

1993 The record of one off Frenchman's Rocks Islay on 20th May (ABR 10: 18) was an error and should be deleted. All Argyll records of this species since 1983 have been during the period Jul-Nov.

## MANX SHEARWATER *Puffinus puffinus* Fachadh ban 0046/1

B P Very localised breeding species. Colonies confirmed only on Sanda (Kintyre) and Treshnish Isles (Mull). Another colony may await discovery on or near

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*Garvellachs (Mid-Argyll). Large numbers on passage, especially during Aug-Sep.*

The first record was 2 off Scarinish *Tiree* on 16th Mar, followed by one off Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 28th Mar.

**Breeding.** Numbers nesting on Lunga (Treshnish Isles) *Mull* were estimated at 200-500 pairs [Treshnish Isles Auk Ringing Group] and 400-700 pairs [RSPB/SNH]; there was also evidence of breeding on Dutchman's Cap.

Movement past Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* peaked in Aug as in 1994 and 1995 (see Table below); the highest day-count of birds flying south was 2,788 (4.5 hr) on 1st Aug. Rates of movement past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* were generally lower, apart from Sep (see Table below); the highest day-count was 2,000 (4 hr) on 23rd Aug. These counts were eclipsed by the 2,000 that passed Rubha Boraige Moire (near Hough Bay) *Tiree* in only 15 minutes on 30th Aug. Also in Aug, birds penetrated as far as Blairmore (Loch Long) *Cowal*, where 25 were seen on the 19th. Following a good number of Oct records, a total of 15 was seen at Frenchman's Rocks and 6 at Machrihanish SBO in early Nov, the last singles flying south past both sites on the 6th.

Average numbers of Manx Shearwaters flying south per hour past Machrihanish SBO  
*Kintyre* and Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* in 1996

	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Machrihanish SBO	-	-	32	83	54	2	<1
Frenchman's Rocks	146	257	214	317	49	6	<1

**MEDITERRANEAN SHEARWATER** *Puffinus yelkouan* 0046/2

*P. Extremely rare in the past (only 2 accepted Argyll records prior to 1992), but a recent large increase starting in 1992/93. Recorded in autumn (Aug-Dec), usually with Manx Shearwaters. Records refer to the "Balearic" race P. y. mauretanicus, there being no accepted British records of the nominate race.*

Since the publication of the last ABR, a large number of records from the years 1992-96 have been accepted by SBRC. They are summarised in the Table below. Together with previously accepted sightings, they bring the total number of records for the years in question to: 3 (involving 3 birds) in 1992, 2 (3 birds) in 1993, 6 (12 birds) in 1994, 21 (33 birds) in 1995, and 26 (43 birds) in 1996. A more detailed analysis is in preparation.

1989 No details were provided to support the records of singles off *Gigha* on 19th Aug and Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* on 22nd Aug (ABR 6: 12). These records must therefore be regarded as unproven.

### Recently accepted records of Mediterranean Shearwater in Argyll

Area	Location	Year	Date	No. of birds	Observer(s)
<i>Kintyre</i>	Machrihanish SBO	1992	20/08	1	EJM
			29/08	1	EJM
			11/09	1	EJM



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**STORM PETREL** *Hydrobates pelagicus* Paraig 0052  
*B P Very localised breeding species; large colonies known only on Sanda (Kintyre) and Treshnish Isles (Mull). Breeding birds first come ashore in late May or Jun. Most sightings away from breeding colonies are during Jul-Sep.*

The earliest record of the year was 10 off Staffa *Mull* on 27th May, followed by one flying south past Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* on 31st May, 2 off the north end of Iona *Mull* on 10th Jun, and one again off Iona the following day.

**Breeding.** A survey of the Treshnish Isles *Mull* in Jul, using playback tapes, resulted in an estimate of 5,040 breeding pairs, of which 1,008 were on Lunga (including Sgeir a'Chaisteil) [RSPB/SNH]; this compares with a figure of 1,000-2,500 pairs on Lunga obtained by estimating densities of calling birds in sample breeding areas [Treshnish Isles Auk Ringing Group].

A total of 142 passed Frenchman's Rocks between 28th Jun and 4th Oct, with a clear peak in the first half of Jul, and a record day-count of 60 (4 hr) flying south in fog and drizzle on the 10th. A total of 34 passed Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* between 5th Jul and 25th Sep, the highest day-count being 16 (4 hr) flying south on 11th Jul. The only other site producing a double-figure count was Rubha Boraige Moire (near Hough Bay) *Tiree* (10 on 1st Sep). There were a few records of 1-2 birds elsewhere. Late birds passed Machrihanish SBO on 3rd Nov (one) and Frenchman's Rocks on 6th Nov (2).

**LEACH'S PETREL** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* Gobhlan mara 0055  
*P Scarce, but regular in autumn off western headlands following strong westerlies.*

Because of a lack of westerly winds during late Aug and most of Sep, relatively few were seen. Four flew south past Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* on 30th Sep, singles on 4th, 19th and 21st Oct, and 4 on 27th Oct. Singles flew south past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 29th Sep, 4th Oct and 6th Nov, with 2 on 30th Sep. The only other records were singles passing Coul Point *Islay* on 6th Oct and the west coast of *Tiree* on 9th Oct.

**GANNET** *Morus bassanus* Sulaire 0071

*S P W Does not breed in Argyll; nearest colonies are Ailsa Craig (40 km east of Mull of Kintyre) and the Shiant Isles (140 km north of Mull). Common inshore from May to Sep, and often seen high up sealochs. Scarce in winter.*

An early bird was at Blairmore (Loch Long) *Cowal* on 25th Jan, but no more were seen there until 23rd Mar.

Mean rates of southward movement past Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* were generally comparable to previous years, varying between 188 and 285 birds per hour during May-Sep and then falling off rapidly in Oct and Nov; the peak day-count was 1,802 flying south and 88 flying north (5.5 hr) on 25th Sep. The first juvenile was seen at this site on 23rd Aug.

Of a sample of 3,372 birds passing Machrihanish SBO during Jun-Oct, 88% were adults (cf 89% in 1995); only 0.4% of birds aged during Aug-Oct were juveniles, the same proportion as in 1995.

**CORMORANT** *Phalacrocorax carbo* Sgarbh 0072  
*R W Breeds in Kintyre, Cowal, Mid-Argyll, Mull and N. Argyll. Less numerous than*

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*Shag. Small numbers occur on some inland waters, often moving to the coast in autumn.*

The highest count during the early part of the year was max. 36 at Loch Indaal Islay on 14th Feb. No other site had counts exceeding 10 birds.

**Breeding.** In the SAMS study area, 93 pairs at 4 colonies (one in Cowal, 2 in Mid-Argyll and one in N. Argyll) fledged a total of about 201 young (2.2 young per pair, as in 1995). For the second year running, Corr Eilean (Sound of Jura) Mid-Argyll, formerly home to a large colony, held none.

During the latter part of the year, the only sites with counts exceeding 10 birds were Loch Indaal (max. 23 on 16th Aug), Holy Loch Cowal (max. 14 on 10th Sep and 28th Dec), and Oronsay Colonsay (max. 42 on 25th Oct).

**SHAG** *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* Sgarbh an sgumain 0080  
R W Very common coastal species, but rare inland.

No count during the early part of the year exceeded 50 birds.

**Breeding.** In the SAMS study area, an approximate count showed Corr Eilean (Sound of Jura) Mid-Argyll to hold 100-200 pairs. At 7 other sites (2 in Cowal, 3 in Mid-Argyll, one in Mull and one in N. Argyll), 231 pairs were noted breeding; at 6 of these sites, holding a total of 195 pairs, 305-370 young (1.3-1.6 young per pair) were fledged. For the first time, there were no Shags at the formerly large (several hundred pairs) colony at Eilean nan Coinean and Eilean Fraoich (Sound of Jura) Mid-Argyll; this follows at least four years of intense predation by mink on eggs and young of all seabirds there.

Elsewhere, there were 190 AON on Lunga (Treshnish Isles) Mull (cf 185 in 1995), 31 prs at Coll RSPB Reserve, and 31-40 adults at breeding colonies on Scarba Mid-Argyll (whole-island count). Counts at sample census sites on Colonsay were similar to 1994 and 1995, with 29 nests (average clutch size 2.56) at Port Ban, and 9 nests at Urugaig.

During the latter part of the year, the only sites with counts exceeding 50 birds were Loch Indaal Islay (max. 54 on 17th Oct), and Hynish Bay Tiree (200 on 29th Dec).

The proportion of non-adults in aged samples at Machrihanish SBO Kintyre reached 72% (n = 214) in Sep, indicating a pronounced peak of dispersing juveniles as in 1994.

**GREY HERON** *Ardea cinerea* Corra ghritheach 0122  
R Widespread, breeding in all areas. Breeding recorded in 7% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

During the early part of the year, the only site with counts of more than 10 birds was Loch Don Mull (max. 14 on 21st Jan).

**Breeding.** On Oronsay Colonsay, 6 occupied nests all held young on 20th May; 3 of these nests later fledged a total of 5 young. Elsewhere on Colonsay, 6 pairs at Garvard laid a total of 23 eggs and reared 8 young, a single pair failed at Loch Cholla, and a further pair may have bred at Scalasaig. On Islay, there were 3 nests with young at Loch Allan on 15th May; a pair that nested at Loch Gruinart Islay failed due to interference from Buzzards. At Kilfinichen Mull, 4 nests held young on 25th Mar. Breeding also occurred at Kilmun Arboretum (Holy Loch) Cowal and



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Millhouse (near Tighnabruaich) *Cowal*, but no quantitative data were received from these sites.

Of 73 migrants or dispersing birds recorded at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* during Jul-Oct, 36 (49%) were adults (cf 33% in 1995). The only site with counts of more than 15 birds during the latter part of the year was inner Loch Scridain *Mull* (max. 19 on 15th Sep).

**MUTE SWAN** *Cygnus olor* Eala 0152  
*R* Widespread but uncommon breeding species, both inland and at sheltered coastal locations. Scarce breeder in *Kintyre*; absent from *Colonsay*. Breeding recorded in 25% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Emigration from some breeding localities in winter.

By far the highest count during the first winter period was max. 44 at Oban Bay *Mid-Argyll* on 17th Jan. The only other site with counts of more than 10 birds was Loch Etive *N. Argyll* (max. 14 on 21st Feb). One ringed at *Ardfern Mid-Argyll* on 16th Nov 1995 was seen outside the region at *Ayr* on 24th Jan.

**Breeding.** In the SAMS study area, 19 pairs (one in *Kintyre*, 14 in *Mid-Argyll* and 4 in *N. Argyll*) were seen; of these, 11 pairs had young and 6 pairs had no young when last seen, the outcome for the remaining 2 pairs (which had eggs) being unknown. Elsewhere, 4 of 6 pairs recorded on *Islay* either did not nest or did not rear young, the remaining 2 pairs each having 3 young. Pairs with broods were also reported from *Blairmore* (Loch Long) *Cowal* (b/4), *Gairletter* (Loch Long) *Cowal* (b/4), *Holy Loch Cowal* (b/1), *Ardishaig Mid-Argyll* (b/3; not in SAMS study) and *Loch Don Mull* (b/5). The highest count during the breeding season was 29 at *Loch a'Phuill Tiree* on 26th Jun.

The highest counts during the second half of the year were max. 12 at *Holy Loch* on 25th Aug, max. 35 at *Loch Etive* on 8th Sep, max. 56 at *Loch Craignish Mid-Argyll* on 15th Sep, and 11 in the Sound of *Kerrera Mid-Argyll* on 13th Oct. No other site had counts exceeding 10 birds.

**BEWICK'S SWAN** *Cygnus columbianus* Eala bheag 0153  
*W* Less than annual, with records in 9 of the last 16 years. Twelve of the 14 records during 1980-95 were in *Kintyre* or *Islay*.

The only record of the year was an adult flying in off the sea with 5 Whooper Swans at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 6th Oct.

**WHOOPE SWAN** *Cygnus cygnus* Eala bhan 0154  
*W P* Common passage species; small numbers winter. A few birds summer in most years and breeding has been recorded.

Eight birds wintered at the *Laggan Kintyre*. The only other counts exceeding 5 birds during Jan-Mar were 7 at *Dornoch Point* (Loch Eck) *Cowal* on 23rd Feb, 8 at *Loch Fada Colonsay* on 24th Feb, max. 7 at *Loch Gruinart Islay* on 30th Mar, and up to 8 at *Loch Leathan* (Kilmichael Forest) *Mid-Argyll* in Mar. Northward movement was noted on *Tiree* from 30th Mar to 10th Apr; at least 60 birds were involved. During the same period, flocks were seen flying north over *Mull*, with 25 at *Ardalanish* on 2nd Apr, and 12 at *Loch Don* and 23 at *Loch Assapol* on 3rd Apr. Also, numbers at *Loch Gruinart* reached 11 on 2nd Apr. A few other sites produced single-figure counts.

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Late birds included one at Dunstaffnage *Mid-Argyll* on 12th May, and 2 at Portnahaven *Islay* on 29th May.

The first returning birds were 9 flying south past Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* and one at Loch Gruinart on 30th Sep. Migrants were widespread during Oct and the first half of Nov. The highest count was max. 119 at Loch Gruinart on 1st Nov, with 42 still present on the 11th but only single-figure counts thereafter. Several other sites on *Islay* held more than 20 birds between 15th Oct and 10th Nov, the highest counts being 71 at Portnahaven on 4th Nov, and 51 flying south over Port Wemyss the next day. Elsewhere, numbers were lower on the whole, although 70 were on *Colonsay* on 1st Nov, 67 on *Oronsay Colonsay* on the 4th, and max. 69 at The Laggan on the 6th, and there were a few other double-figure counts. Numbers declined rapidly from mid-Nov, the only double-figure count after the 11th being 15 at The Laggan on the 18th, and a total of 16 on *Islay* on the 18th-19th. Small numbers remained to the end of the year, mostly on *Islay*.

**PINK-FOOTED GOOSE** *Anser brachyrhynchus* Geadh gorm 0158  
*P W* Variable numbers on passage, with occasional large flocks. Relatively few winter.

On *Islay*, up to 11 were present in Jan, up to 16 in Feb and Mar, and up to 23 in Apr. Elsewhere, at least 2 were at The Laggan *Kintyre* during Jan-Apr, with 13 on 24th Feb, and numbers on *Tiree* peaked at 9 on 2nd Apr. The last bird of the spring was at Loch Gruinart *Islay* on 28th Apr.

The first returning bird was in the Balinoe area *Tiree* on 29th Sep. This was followed the next day by 60 flying over Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* (the only migrating flock of the autumn), and 6 at Loch Gruinart. Numbers at Loch Gruinart peaked at 10 on 5th Oct, and up to 10 were also in the Loch Gorm area *Islay* during Oct and Nov. Also, 9 were at Gartmain (near Bowmore) *Islay* throughout Dec, and there were a few reports of 1-2 birds at other sites on the island. Elsewhere, one was at The Laggan from 4th Nov to the end of the year, a single or singles were on *Tiree* during Oct, with 2 there in mid-Nov and one on 25th Dec, and 2 were seen on *Coll* on 20th Nov.

**WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE** *Anser albifrons* Geadh bhlar 0159  
*W1* Birds are of the Greenland race *A. a. flavirostris*. *Argyll* holds about 40% of the world population of this race in winter, mainly on *Islay*. A small introduced population breeds on the Rinns of *Islay*. Birds of the European race *A. a. albifrons* occur as vagrants.

On *Islay*, there were 12,132 birds on 10th-11th Jan (cf 10,417 on 11th Jan 1995), numbers falling off only slightly by early Apr. A coordinated count in late Mar and early Apr produced a total of 17,347 in *Argyll* (Fig. 1). Most of the *Kintyre* birds were at The Laggan (1,033) and Rhunahaorine (1,235), while the *Mid-Argyll* birds were divided between the Tayvallich peninsula (349) and Moine Mhor (29). The *Jura* and *Colonsay* totals were estimates. The main spring departure from *Islay* occurred during the last 10 days of Apr and the first few days of May, with the last 3 at Loch Gruinart on 13th May.

**Breeding.** Up to 3 pairs of introduced birds bred in the southern part of the Rinns of *Islay*, but only one brood of 4 young is believed to have been reared.

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Elsewhere, the only breeding season record was one with Greylags on the Treshnish Isles *Mull* in Jul.

The first 88 returning birds were at Loch Gruinart *Islay* on 1st Oct. Numbers on *Islay* in mid-Nov (Fig. 2) were substantially lower than the record count of 14,495 on 28th Nov 1995. The coordinated count carried out at this time gave a total of 18,809 birds in Argyll (Fig. 2) (cf 19,075 on 12th-16th Nov 1995). As in spring, most of the *Kintyre* birds were at The Laggan (1,256) and Rhunahaorine (1,086), the remainder (184) being at Clachan; 308 of those counted in *Mid-Argyll* were on the Tayvallich peninsula, the remaining 33 being at Moine Mhor.

Ageing of samples on *Islay* in the second winter period showed that breeding success in summer 1996 was poor, with only 6% young birds in the flocks ( $n = 6,540$ ), and a mean brood size of 3.1 ( $n = 105$ ).

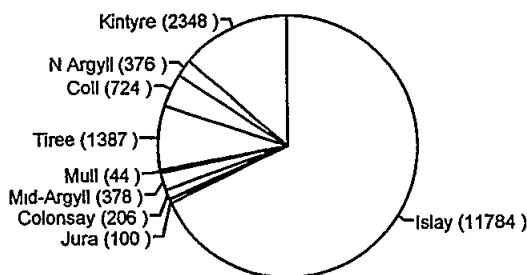


Fig. 1 Numbers of White-fronted Geese in Argyll areas, 29th Mar to 4th Apr 1996

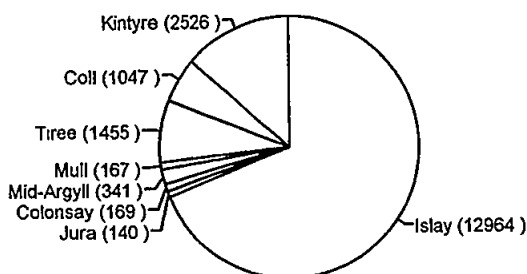


Fig. 2 Numbers of White-fronted Geese in Argyll areas, 16th-20th Nov 1996

**GREYLAG GOOSE** *Anser anser* Geadh glas 0161  
*R W P I* Breeds in increasing numbers on Colonsay, Mull, Tiree and Coll, and also in Mid-Argyll. At least some of the island populations seem to have arisen through natural colonisation from Iceland and/or the Outer Hebrides. Breeding recorded in 6% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

In late Mar and early Apr, a total of 2,198 was counted in Argyll, 59% of these birds being on *Tiree* (Fig. 3). No birds were recorded in some areas which had flocks earlier in the year: 222 at Ardlamont *Cowal* on 3rd Feb, 500 at The Laggan *Kintyre*

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on 24th Feb, up to 58 on *Islay* in Feb, and 40 (probably resident birds) on *Mull* on 13th Mar. Also, the count of 188 at Moine Mhor *Mid-Argyll* was considerably less than the peak of 470 in Feb. Up to 69 in the Loch Gruinart area *Islay* on 16th-19th Apr were presumably on passage. On *Tiree*, a flock of 32 was seen arriving from the south on 16th Apr, with a further 45 the next day.

**Breeding.** Confirmed breeding records came from *Colonsay*, *Mid-Argyll*, *Mull*, *Tiree* and *Coll*. On *Colonsay*, 2 or more broods were seen in Jun, and a flock of 25 non-breeders was reported from Oronsay. In *Mid-Argyll*, 2 clutches were found at Kilmaraonaig (Connel), and a brood of 5 was seen on Eilean an Ruisg (Loch Feochan); birds were also seen during the breeding season at Loch Nant. On *Mull*, 3 pairs with a total of 9 young were reported from the Mishnish Lochs, and a single brood of 5 from Glen Aros; in addition, a flock of one adult and 30 young was seen off Eileanan Glasa (Sound of Mull) on 2nd Jul, and about 40 birds were estimated to be on the Treshnish Isles in Jul. On *Tiree*, there was no count of breeding pairs but a count on 26th Aug found 2,202 birds. On *Coll*, 32 pairs at the RSPB reserve fledged a total of 109 young. The only other breeding season records came from *Islay*, where 2 pairs were at Loch Gorm on 7th Jun, but there was no evidence of breeding.

On *Islay*, passage and/or wintering birds, possibly from no further away than *Colonsay*, were seen from 21st Aug, when 54 were at Loch Gruinart. In mid-Nov, a coordinated count produced a total of 3,716 in Argyll (Fig. 4). Only 15 of the birds seen on *Kintyre* were at The Laggan, the remainder being at Rhunahaorine, but 445 were counted at The Laggan on 4th Nov. As in spring, all the *Mid-Argyll* birds were at Moine Mhor.

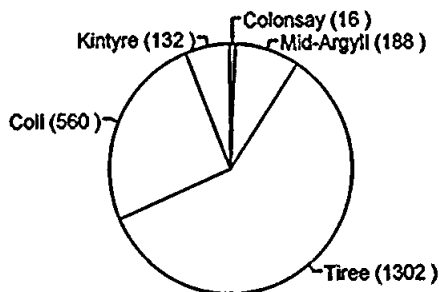


Fig. 3 Numbers of Greylag Geese in Argyll areas, 29th Mar to 4th Apr 1996

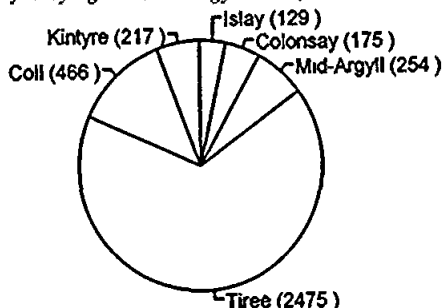


Fig. 4 Numbers of Greylag Geese in Argyll areas, 16th-20th Nov 1996

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**SNOW GOOSE** *Anser caerulescens* Geadh ban 0163

*I W A small introduced population breeds on Mull, wintering mainly on Coll. Stragglers among wintering Greenland Whitefronts on Islay may have a wild origin.*

The usual white-phase adult, possibly a genuine vagrant, was seen on the Rinn of Islay to 6th Apr. The origin of 3 other white-phase birds in the Eorrabus/Skerrols area Islay on 11th and 25th Jan, and presumably the same 3 at The Laggan Kintyre from 10th Feb to 10th Apr, is unknown. Counts of the introduced flock wintering on Coll ranged between 43 and 46 during Jan-Apr. A single white-phase bird, possibly from this flock, was seen on Tiree on 6th Mar and 2nd Apr.

**Breeding.** There was no count at the breeding site on Mull, but 2 pairs bred at Coll RSPB Reserve.

The returning Islay bird appeared at Loch Gruinart on 1st Oct and remained to the end of the year. The Coll flock numbered 49 birds during Nov-Dec.

**CANADA GOOSE** *Branta canadensis* Geadh dubh 0166

*I W Resident population on Colonsay, introduced in 1934. Regular breeding in Mid-Argyll since 1992, and occasional breeding attempts elsewhere. A transatlantic origin seems probable for at least some of the medium-sized and small individuals seen in winter goose flocks on Islay.*

At least one medium-sized and two small birds on Islay during Jan-Apr may have been genuine vagrants. Up to 3 at Loch Leathan (Kilmichael Forest) Mid-Argyll in Mar, and up to 10 in Apr, were perhaps local breeders from Loch Ederline (see below).

**Breeding.** Breeding was confirmed in Kintyre, Colonsay and Mid-Argyll. In Kintyre, about 16-20 birds were resident in the Peninver area, and 2 broods were reared; this small population has been present for many years and originates from wing-clipped captive birds kept locally [EJM]. On Colonsay, 8 pairs with broods totalling 20 young, and a further 31 non-breeders, were found in Jun. Breeding occurred for the fifth year running at Loch Ederline Mid-Argyll, where a flock of 50 adults and juveniles, including 5 very young goslings, was present on 10th Jul. Also in Mid-Argyll, one of a pair at Fincharn Loch (6 km east of Loch Ederline) on 3rd Apr was apparently sitting on a nest, while a flock of 10 birds was at Loch an Droighinn (near Loch Nant) on 11th Jul. Although a single bird was seen at the latter site in May 1995, breeding has not yet been confirmed there. Five at Loch Crinan Mid-Argyll on 21st Jul may well have been local breeders, but 9 briefly at Blairmore (Loch Long) Cowal on 9th Jun were quite far away from any known breeding locations, and could have been moult migrants from elsewhere in Britain.

In the second winter period, possible vagrants accompanying migrant geese of other species included: at least one medium-sized and one small individual on Islay during Oct-Dec; single small-race birds at The Laggan Kintyre on 18th-20th Nov and (presumably a different bird) at Tayinloan Kintyre on 18th and 29th Nov; and 4 individuals (at least one of which was a small-race bird) on Tiree during Nov-Dec. The resident Colonsay population numbered 80 birds in mid-Nov.

Three presumed Canada x Barnacle Goose hybrids were at The Laggan from 24th Feb to 10th Apr.

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### BARNACLE GOOSE *Branta leucopsis* Cathan 0167

*W1 Very large numbers of birds from the Greenland population winter on Islay, with smaller numbers elsewhere. A few birds occasionally summer, and at least some of these are probably injured. A few introduced birds also breed on the Rinns of Islay.*

On *Islay*, there were 31,099 on 10th-11th Jan. Numbers on the island fell to 26,068 by the time of a coordinated count at the end of Mar, but still accounted for over 90% of the Argyll total of 28,781 birds. The remaining birds were mostly on *Tiree* (1,465), *Coll* (544) and *Oronsay Colonsay* (309), with one at *Clachan Kintyre*. A further 104 were on *Inch Kenneth Mull* (not covered by the count) on 3rd Apr. Birds were also seen during Jan-Apr at *Rhunahaorine Point Kintyre* (6 on 3rd Feb), and *The Laggan Kintyre* (2 on 24th Feb). The main spring departure from *Islay* was in the second half of Apr, with 2 stragglers remaining at *Loch Gruinart* to 14th May.

**Breeding.** Up to 3 pairs of introduced birds bred near *Easter Ellister Islay*, but no young were reared. Elsewhere, single birds were seen in summer at *Eileanan Glasa* (Sound of *Mull*) on 2nd Jul, *Oronsay Colonsay* on 21st Jul, and *Dutchman's Cap* (Treshnish Isles) *Mull* in Jul.

The first wintering birds arrived on *Islay* on 22nd Sep, when 19 were at *Loch Gruinart*; other late Sep records came from *Machrihanish SBO Kintyre* (62 flying south on the 30th) and *Holy Loch Cowal* (one, of unknown origin, on 29th Sep). A coordinated count was carried out on 16th-20th Nov: *Islay* accounted for 93% of the Argyll total of 33,500 birds, with the remainder on *Tiree* (1,458), *Coll* (556), *Colonsay* (including *Oronsay*) (429) and *The Laggan* (13). Numbers on *Islay* reached 35,013 on 3rd Dec.

Ageing of samples on *Islay* during the second winter period showed that breeding success in 1996 had been a little below average, with 11% young in the flocks ( $n = 12,715$ ), and a mean brood size of 2.3 ( $n = 222$ ).

### BRENT GOOSE *Branta bernicla* Geadh got 0168

*WP Uncommon passage migrant. Very few winter. Most birds seen in Argyll are of the light-bellied race B. b. hrota, which breeds in Greenland and arctic Canada, wintering mainly in Ireland. Birds of the dark-bellied race B. b. bernicla occur occasionally, and there has been one record of the Black Brant B. b. nigricans.*

The only records during Jan-Mar came from *Islay*, where up to 6 apparently wintered in the *Loch Indaal* area, and one was at *Ardnave* at the beginning of the year. In Apr, numbers at *Loch Indaal* peaked at 8 on the 2nd-4th. Most other records came from *Tiree*, where 24 were at *Gott Bay* on 15th Apr, 50 at *Hynish* on the 18th, and a flock of 150 flew north on the 30th. The only other record during the first half of the year was 6 at *Loch Gilp Mid-Argyll* on 18th May.

As in 1994 and 1995, autumn passage was particularly noticeable on *Islay*, though peak numbers occurred later than in those years. Double-figure counts of birds flying south past *Frenchman's Rocks* were 50 (4 hr) on 28th Sep, 37 (3 hr) on the 29th, and 479 (5.5 hr) on 4th Oct. Also on *Islay*, 126 were at *Loch Gruinart* on 29th-30th Sep, and a further 45 on 4th Oct. At *Machrihanish SBO Kintyre*, 56 (4 hr) flew south on 29th Sep, 40 (8 hr) on 30th Sep, 33 (3 hr) on 5th Oct, and a last single on 11th Oct. Up to 8 remained in the *Loch Indaal* area during Oct-Dec, the only other records being 2 on *Oronsay Colonsay* on 13th Oct, and one at *Kenovay Tiree* on 19th Oct.

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### **SHELDUCK** *Tadorna tadorna* Cra-gheadh

0173

*B W* Widespread breeding species, especially on sandy coasts. Breeding recorded in 39% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). The majority are absent from Aug to Nov when they migrate to moulting grounds.

At Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart *Islay*, numbers peaked at 259 in Mar (Fig. 5). Elsewhere, the highest count was max. 63 at Loch Don Mull on 21st Jan. No other site had counts exceeding 20 birds.

**Breeding.** On *Colonsay*, a total of 24 pairs and 4 single birds were found in May, and 2 broods totalling 7 young were seen in Jun. At Loch Gruinart, 11 pairs fledged a total of only 7 young. No other counts of breeding birds were received.

A total of 36 juveniles (82 hr) flew south past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* in Aug. None were seen at this site after the end of Aug, and birds were also virtually absent from *Islay* during Sep and Oct. However, numbers at Loch Gruinart and Loch Indaal totalled up to 55 during Nov and slightly less in Dec (Fig. 5).

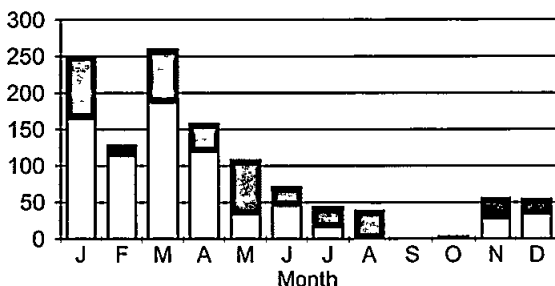


Fig. 5 Maximum monthly counts of Shelduck at two sealochs on *Islay* in 1996  
Black: Loch Indaal White: Loch Gruinart

### **MANDARIN** *Aix galericulata*

0178

*I* Has bred regularly at Loch Eck (*Cowal*) in recent years. The recent expansion of the *Argyll* population (whose origin is unknown) suggests that it is well on the way to becoming self-sustaining.

**Breeding.** At Loch Eck *Cowal*, 4 pairs laid 55 eggs in Tawny Owl nest-boxes and hatched 47 young (cf 17 young from 5 pairs in 1995). For the first time, there was evidence of breeding at natural nest sites, with single broods of newly hatched young seen nearby at Glenbranter *Cowal* (when all pairs in nest-boxes were still incubating) and at Strachur House *Cowal*, well away from the nest-box population (Anderson and Petty 1996).

### **WIGEON** *Anas penelope* Glas lach

0179

*B W P* Scarce and irregular breeding species. Common winter visitor to all areas.

Numbers at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart *Islay* peaked at 484 birds in Mar (Fig. 6) (cf 825 in Jan 1995). The only other sites with counts of more than 100 birds were Loch Laich N. *Argyll* (240 on 28th Jan), and Loch Craignish *Mid-Argyll* (max. 136 on 18th Feb). Flocks of 30 or more were reported from 7 lochs: Holy Loch *Cowal*, Loch Riddon *Cowal*, Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* (Fig. 7), Loch Gilp *Mid-Argyll*,

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**Loch Don Mull, Loch Bhasapol Tìree and Loch Etive N. Argyll.**

**Breeding.** Breeding occurred near Loch Awe *Mid-Argyll*, where 2 females with 5 small young were seen on 11th Jul. Two pairs stayed throughout May and Jun in suitable habitat at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve, but there was no proof of breeding.

Numbers at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart built up from 18 in Aug to a peak of 1,192 in Oct (Fig. 6). Numbers at Loch Crinan also showed a marked Oct peak, reaching a record level of 755 on the 19th (Fig. 7). Other sites with counts of more than 100 birds were Holy Loch (max. 208 on 29th Sep), Loch Don (max. 200 on 17th Oct), Campbeltown *Kintyre* (120 on 30th Nov), and Loch a'Phuill *Tìree* (max. 148 on 23rd Dec).

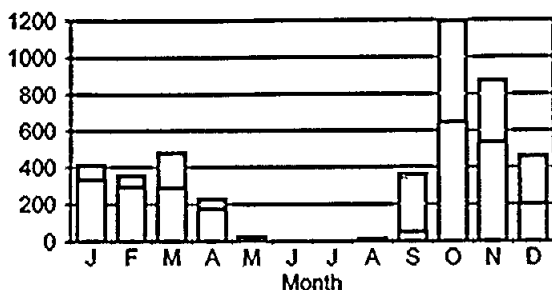


Fig. 6 Maximum monthly counts of Wigeon at two sealochs on Islay in 1996  
Black: Loch Indaal White: Loch Gruinart

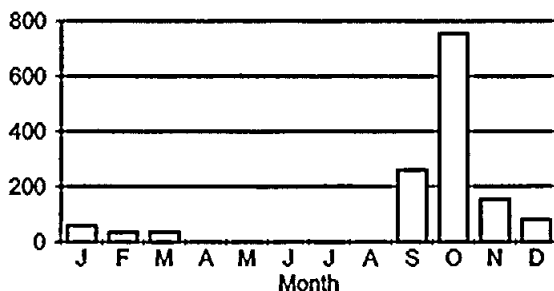


Fig. 7 Maximum monthly counts of Wigeon at Loch Crinan (Mid-Argyll) in 1996

**GADWALL** *Anas strepera* Lach glas

0182

*B W P* Scarce but regular on passage and in winter, with most recent records from *Kintyre, Islay, Mid-Argyll and Tìree*. Breeding confirmed on *Tìree* in 1986, 1987 and 1989, and probable on *Islay* during 1992-94.

There were no records during Jan-Feb, but birds were present at Loch Gruinart *Islay* in Mar and Apr, with max. 6 on 13th Mar. Two at Loch Indaal *Islay* on 15th May were presumably on passage.

**Breeding.** A female with 2 young was at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve on 21st May; this was the first confirmed breeding record for *Islay*.



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The first autumn migrants were 2 flying south past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 28th Sep. On *Islay*, 4 flew south past Coul Point on 6th Oct, 3 were at Loch Gorm on the 9th, and numbers at Loch Gruinart peaked at 10 on the 13th-15th. The only record after the end of Oct was 3 at Loch a'Phuill *Tiree* on 23rd Dec.

**TEAL** *Anas crecca* Crann lach

0184

*BWP Widespread but uncommon breeding species. Common winter visitor. Breeding recorded in 20% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

At Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart *Islay*, numbers peaked at 821 in Jan (Fig. 8). The only other sites with counts of more than 50 birds during the early part of the year were Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* (max. 68 on 13th Jan), Loch Tallant *Islay* (270 on 1st Feb), and Holy Loch *Cowal* (max. 89 on 19th Feb).

**Breeding.** At least 28 pairs were at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve in spring; most of these probably attempted to breed. There were a few other reports of single birds or pairs in suitable breeding habitat, but very few records of successful breeding.

During the latter part of the year, numbers at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart peaked at 1,599 in Oct; of these, 1,483 were at Loch Gruinart, a record count for that site (Fig. 8). Several other sites on *Islay* had counts of more than 50 birds: 75 at Loch Tallant on 24th Oct, 100 at Loch Gearach (near Port Charlotte) on 19th Nov, 80 at Loch Skerrols on 15th Dec, and max. 190 at Easter Ellister on 28th Dec. Elsewhere, the only sites with counts of more than 50 birds were Loch Crinan (max. 177 on 29th Oct), Loch Don *Mull* (max. 80 on 17th Nov), *Coll* RSPB Reserve (up to 100 during Nov-Dec), and Holy Loch (max. 81 on 15th Dec).

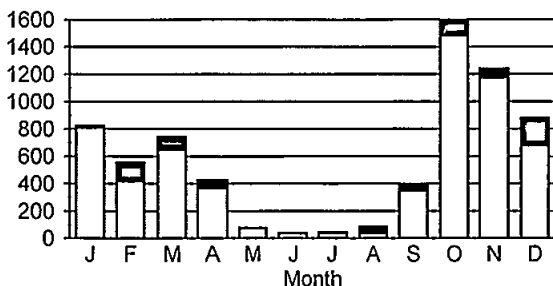


Fig. 8 Maximum monthly counts of Teal at two sealochs on *Islay* in 1996  
Black: Loch Indaal White: Loch Gruinart

**MALLARD** *Anas platyrhynchos* Lach

0186

*BWP Common breeding and wintering species. Breeding recorded in 67% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

Numbers at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart *Islay* peaked at 286 in Jan (Fig. 9), a level comparable to previous years. Other counts exceeding 40 birds came from Kilfinan *Cowal* (100 on 14th Jan), Loch Etive *N. Argyll* (max. 109 on 21st Jan), Loch Gilp *Mid-Argyll* (max. 46 on 22nd Jan), and Holy Loch *Cowal* (max. 67 on 19th Feb).

**Breeding.** There were a few scattered records of confirmed breeding by lone

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pairs. A total of 57 loafing males on flooded fields at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve in Jun perhaps indicates the number of potential breeding pairs there.

Records of moulting or post-breeding flocks included 84 at Holy Loch on 16th Jun, and a total of 182 at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart in Aug. As in several previous autumns, numbers at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart then declined somewhat before rising to a peak of 301 in Dec (Fig. 9). Other sites holding more than 50 birds were Loch Ballygrant *Islay* (80 on 18th Oct), Holy Loch (max. 143 on 26th Oct), Loch na Nigheadaraichd (Laggan Point) *Islay* (59 on 29th Oct), and Loch Caolisport *Mid-Argyll* (135 in late Dec). Numbers at Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* peaked at only 28 (on 19th Oct), a continuation of the decline observed since 1993, when up to 115 were present during the autumn.

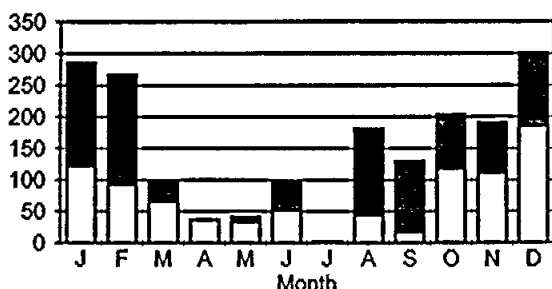


Fig. 9 Maximum monthly counts of Mallard at two sealochs on Islay in 1996  
Black: Loch Indaal White: Loch Gruinart

### PINTAIL *Anas acuta* Lach stiùireach

0189

*B W P* Very scarce breeding species. Localised in winter, with a regular flock on Islay.

By far the highest numbers during the early part of the year were at Loch Gruinart *Islay* (max. 26 on 5th Feb) and Loch Indaal *Islay* (max. 36 on 14th Feb). The only other records came from *Tiree*: max. 4 at Loch an Eilein on 18th Feb, and 5 at An Fhaodhail on 13th Mar.

**Breeding.** On *Tiree*, females were present at 3 locations, and breeding was confirmed at 2 sites (b/3 and b/4). On *Islay*, 2 pairs were at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve until 10th Apr, one male remaining to the 26th, but there was no evidence of breeding. There was also an isolated sighting of a pair at Loch Don Mull on 27th Apr.

During the latter part of the year, numbers at Loch Indaal reached 33 on 2nd Oct and 40 on 1st Dec, while numbers at Loch Gruinart peaked at 35 on 13th Oct. Elsewhere on *Islay*, one flew south past Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* on 27th Sep, and 14 flew south there on the 30th. On *Tiree*, 3 flew over Cornaigmore on 2nd Nov and one south over Balemartine on 6th Nov, while there were 4 at Loch an Eilein on 1st Dec and one at Loch a'Phuill on 23rd Dec. The only other record was one flying south past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 19th Oct.

### GARGANEY *Anas querquedula* Lach crann

0191

*S* Rare. Bred in *Kintyre* in 1994 and may have bred on *Islay* in 1993.

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The only confirmed record was a male at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* on 20th-23rd Apr.

**SHOVELER** *Anas clypeata* Lach a'ghuib leathainn 0194  
*B W P Uncommon. Most records from Islay and Tiree.*

The only records during Jan-Mar came from Loch Gruinart *Islay*, where the peak monthly count varied between 12 (in Feb) and 25 (in Mar).

**Breeding.** On *Islay*, 17 pairs were at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve in May; most of these probably bred, and several broods were seen in Jun. A pair also bred successfully at Carnain (near Bridgend) *Islay*. The presence of 2 or 3 males in the Loch Bhasapol area in May suggests that breeding probably also occurred on *Tiree*.

During the latter part of the year, numbers at Loch Gruinart peaked at 57 on 25th Nov, a record count for *Islay*; the only sighting elsewhere on the island was 2 at Loch Indaal on 20th Dec. On *Tiree*, maximum counts were 4 at Loch Bhasapol on 20th Dec, and 16 at Loch a'Phuill on 23rd Dec. The only other record was 3 at the head of Loch na Keal *Mull* on 14th Sep.

**POCHARD** *Aythya ferina* Lach mhasach 0198  
*W No confirmed breeding in recent years. Wintering flocks generally small.*

By far the highest counts during the early part of the year came from Loch Bhasapol *Tiree* (max. 52 on 24th Feb) and Ardnave Loch *Islay* (max. 36 on 17th Jan and 13th Feb). In *Mid-Argyll*, 16 were at Loch na Druimnean (Kilmelford) on 10th Jan, and 20 nearby at Loch Oude on 28th Feb, while up to 5 were at Loch Leathan (Kilmichael Forest) in Jan and up to 4 in Feb. Single birds were at Loch Eck *Cowal* on 28th Feb and Loch Ederline *Mid-Argyll* on 4th Apr.

An early returning bird was at Loch an Eilein *Tiree* on 13th Aug. On *Islay*, numbers at Loch Skerrols peaked at 105 on 31st Oct, and birds were also seen at Loch Gorm (max. 17 on 16th Oct) and Ardnave Loch (8 on 21st Nov). The only other reports came from Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* (4 flying south on 19th Oct) and Loch Fada *Colonsay* (max. 6 on 8th Dec).

**TUFTED DUCK** *Aythya fuligula* Lach thopach 0203  
*B W Scarce breeding species, with about 50 pairs in Argyll. Breeding recorded in 12% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Common winter visitor.*

By far the highest count during the early part of the year was max. 60 at Loch Bhasapol *Tiree* on 24th Feb. The only other sites with counts of more than 10 birds were Ardnave Loch *Islay* (max. 11 on 13th Feb), and Loch Leathan (Kilmichael Forest) *Mid-Argyll* (up to 13 in Mar).

**Breeding.** The only confirmed breeding record came from Cruach Mhic Fhionnlaidh (Eredine Forest) *Mid-Argyll*. Singles or pairs were reported during the breeding season from another 4 lochs in the Eredine Forest area, from *Colonsay* (a total of 18 birds on 7th May), and from Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* (where a pair probably bred).

During the latter part of the year, peak counts at lochs on *Islay* were 35 at Loch Gorm on 16th Oct, 33 at Ardnave Loch on 18th Oct, 37 at Loch Skerrols on 2nd Nov, and 31 at Easter Ellister on 28th Dec. Elsewhere, 15 were at Dubh Loch (Inveraray) *Mid-Argyll* on 9th Oct, and max. 12 at Lochan Tainish *Mid-Argyll* on 6th

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Dec. No other site had counts exceeding 10 birds.

**SCAUP** *Aythya marila* Lach mhara

0204

*WP Large wintering flock at Loch Indaal (Islay). Scarce elsewhere. Occasionally summers.*

Numbers at Loch Indaal *Islay* peaked at 970 on 2nd Feb, with 240 still present on 1st May (Fig. 10), and the last 2 on 22nd May. The only other records during the early part of the year were one at Ardnave Loch *Islay* on 17th Jan, one at Kennacraig *Kintyre* on 4th Feb, and 3 at Loch a'Phuill *Tiree* on 6th Apr.

A total of 52, most or all of which were males, flew south and east past Frenchman's Rocks and nearby Port Wemyss *Islay* in reduced visibility on 22nd Jul; 6 males flew south past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* the same day, and 2 the next. Presumably these were birds leaving their Icelandic breeding grounds to moult, perhaps in the Netherlands. There were no records from Loch Indaal until 31st Aug, when 29 were recorded; numbers at this site then built up to 800 by 31st Dec (Fig. 10). Elsewhere on *Islay*, a total of 45 (67.5 hr) flew south past Frenchman's Rocks in Sep and Oct. Also, 70 (8 hr) flew south past Machrihanish SBO on 30th Sep, and a further 11 (92 hr) in Oct and Nov. Apart from one in Machrihanish Bay on 15th-18th Oct, the only other record was one at Loch an Eilein *Tiree* on 2nd Nov.

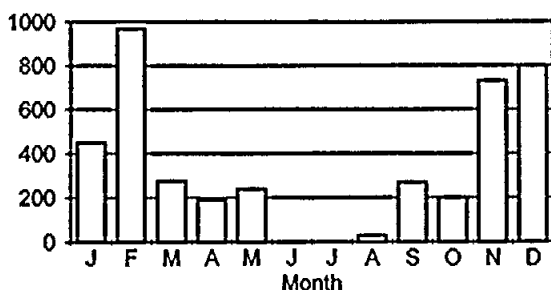


Fig. 10 Maximum monthly counts of Scaup at Loch Indaal (Islay) in 1996

**EIDER** *Somateria mollissima* Lach lochlannach

0206

*B W P Common in all areas. Breeding recorded in 66% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Large flocks of moulting drakes and first-year birds gather at some sites during Jun to Aug. Many Argyll breeding birds winter in the Firth of Clyde.*

During Jan-Apr, flocks of 100 or more birds were reported only from Loch Indaal *Islay* (max. 115 on 20th Mar) and Loch na Keal Mull (max. 153 on 29th Apr).

**Breeding.** On *Colonsay*, a total of 24 females with 54 young in 22 broods/creches, and a further 27 females without young, were found in Jun. The only other counts of breeding birds came from Loch Gruinart *Islay* (where 8 pairs fledged a total of 14 young) and Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* (5 females with a creche of 22 ducklings on 16th Jun).

Flocks of moulting and post-breeding birds during Jun-Aug included 200 at Kilfinan Bay *Cowal* on 13th Jul, max. 279 at Laggan Bay *Islay* on 17th Jul, max. 245 at Loch Indaal on 16th Aug, and max. 297 at Blairmore (Loch Long) *Cowal* on 20th

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Aug. During Sep-Dec, Laggan Bay and Loch Indaal continued to hold more than 100 birds, and additional flock counts came from Holy Loch *Cowal* (max. 134 on 10th Sep), Otter Ferry *Cowal* (at least 500 on 26th Oct), and Loch Gilp *Mid-Argyll* (max. 200 on 16th Dec).

Sexing of samples passing Machrihanish SBO in autumn (n = 585) showed the usual predominance of males, which accounted for 88% of the sample in Sep, and 76% in Oct.

### LONG-TAILED DUCK *Clangula hyemalis* Eun buchainn 0212

*W P Uncommon winter visitor, most numerous in Kintyre, Islay, Tiree and Coll. Usually marine but occasionally seen on inland lochs. Occasional summer records.*

The highest count during the early part of the year came from Balephuil Bay *Tiree*, where there were 14 on 30th Mar, with 6 nearby at Traigh nan Gilean (Barrapol) on 11th Apr. Also, up to 3 were at Loch Indaal *Islay* during Mar-Apr, and one was reported from Bunessan *Mull* in Feb.

There were no records during May-Sep, the first returning bird being at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 12th Oct. The highest count during the second winter period came from *Coll*, where up to 15 were at the RSPB reserve in Dec. Numbers at Loch Indaal *Islay* peaked at 9 on 10th Nov, with singles seen elsewhere on *Islay* at Frenchman's Rocks (one flying south on 15th Nov) and Loch Gruinart (one on the floods from 5th Nov to 3rd Dec). Also, 4 were at Traigh Hough *Tiree* on 2nd Nov, and one was at Machrihanish SBO on 6th Nov.

### COMMON SCOTER *Melanitta nigra* Lach bheag dubh 0213

*B W P Very rare breeding species in Islay and Mid-Argyll. Present throughout the year in the Sound of Gigha (Kintyre) and at Loch Indaal (Islay). Scarce winter visitor elsewhere, although birds may be present well offshore.*

During the early part of the year, the only reports came from Loch Indaal *Islay*, where numbers peaked at 73 on 20th Mar.

**Breeding.** On *Islay*, there was a maximum of 12 pairs, plus an additional 2 males and one female, at the usual breeding site on 7th Jun. In *Mid-Argyll*, a pair was located at the usual site during an extensive survey in May, and seen again on 8th Jun.

A total of 56 (254 hr) flew south past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* during Jul-Nov. Small numbers were also seen flying south past Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* during the same period, the highest monthly total being 23 (30 hr) in Jul. The Loch Indaal flock numbered 72 on 19th Jul, and peaked at 80 on 2nd Oct. The only other records during the latter part of the year came from Killinallan *Islay* (a pair on 12th Aug), Rhunahaorine Point *Kintyre* (12 on 1st Dec), Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* (one on 13th Dec), and Loch Caolisport *Mid-Argyll* (11 in late Dec).

### SURF SCOTER *Melanitta perspicillata* 0214

*V Only 5 Argyll records prior to 1996: a male at Ballochroy (Kintyre) on 16th-21st Apr 1977, 5 flying past Frenchman's Rocks (Islay) on 15th May 1977, single males at Loch Indaal (Islay) on 4th Oct 1982 and May-Jun 1990, and a male off Tiree on 22nd-30th Mar 1983.*

A female (possibly a first-year) was at Lagganulva *Mull* on 21st-28th Apr [RE et al.]\*.

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**VELVET SCOTER** *Melanitta fusca* Lach dubh 0215  
*W P Scarce but regular on the west coast of Kintyre and at Loch Indaal (Islay), with birds present during most months at the former location.*

There were 3 records, all during Sep-Oct. A male was at the head of Loch Indaal Islay on 6th and 13th Sep, 2 males were in Machrihanish Bay Kintyre on 5th Oct, and a female or juvenile was briefly at Port Wemyss Islay on 19th Oct.

**GOLDENEYE** *Bucephala clangula* Lach bhreac 0218  
*W Common. Birds regularly present from late Sep or Oct to Apr or early May, with occasional summer records.*

During the early part of the year, the only sites holding more than 20 birds were Holy Loch Cowal (max. 25 on 24th Feb) and Loch Caolisport Mid-Argyll (40 on 31st Mar). Late-staying females were seen on 2nd-3rd May at 3 lochs in the Eredine Forest area Mid-Argyll.

An early returning juvenile was at Loch Indaal Islay on 31st Aug. The only count exceeding 20 birds during the second winter period was 32 at Loch Caolisport in late Dec.

**RED-BREASTED MERGANSER** *Mergus serrator* Siolta dhearg 0221  
*B W Common. Breeding recorded in 52% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Large moulting flocks gather at some sites during Jul-Aug.*

The highest count during the early part of the year was max. 39 at Loch Indaal Islay on 14th Feb. No other site had counts exceeding 30 birds.

**Breeding.** Three pairs were thought to have bred at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve Islay, and 3 pairs were at Loch Tarsan Cowal in late Apr. Two pairs on Gigha lost their clutches to Hooded Crows. A few isolated instances of successful breeding were reported, but there were no other systematic counts of breeding pairs.

Flocks of moulting birds included 125 at Rhunahaorine Point Kintyre on 27th Jun, and 156 at Kintra (Laggan Bay) Islay on 17th Jul. Later in the year, numbers at Loch Indaal peaked at 220 on 13th Sep. The only other site with counts exceeding 50 birds during the latter part of the year was Loch Crinan Mid-Argyll (max. 75 on 15th Sep).

**GOOSANDER** *Mergus merganser* Siolta 0223  
*B W Scarce breeding species, mainly in Mid-Argyll, with an estimated 40-50 pairs. Many (but apparently not all) drakes leave Argyll waters to moult at the end of May, and may gather at Loch Awe (Mid-Argyll) beforehand.*

The only counts of 5 or more birds during Jan to early Apr were 6 at Loch Ciaran Kintyre on 31st Jan and 7th Feb, 5 at Loch Ba Mull on 14th Feb, and up to 6 at Loch Leathan (Kilmichael Forest) Mid-Argyll at the beginning of Apr. Most other records came from Mid-Argyll (1-4 birds at 5 sites), but there were also records from the head of Loch Scridain Mull (regular sightings of 1-2 birds), Loch Etive N. Argyll (regular sightings of 1-2 birds), and Loch Creran N. Argyll (4 on 24th Feb).

**Breeding.** The only confirmed breeding record came from the River Cur (near Loch Eck) Cowal (b/7). There were records of females or pairs during the breeding season at 3 further sites in Cowal, 6 sites in Mid-Argyll, and one site in N. Argyll.

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In contrast to 1995, there were several records during the second winter period, though none involved more than 4 birds. The distribution of records was generally similar to that noted earlier in the year, with records from *Kintyre* (one site), *Cowal* (2 sites), *Mid-Argyll* (2 sites), *Mull* (2 sites) and *N. Argyll* (2 sites). Also, a pair at Ardnahoe Loch *Islay* on 13th Dec was the first record for the island since 1992.

**RED KITE** *Milvus milvus* Clamhan gobhlach 0239  
*I V Genuine vagrants have occurred in the past, but most recent Argyll records refer to birds released in Highland Region as part of a re-introduction project begun in 1989. All records are requested, ideally with details of activity and presence/absence of wing tags.*

A tagged, Scottish-bred juvenile was seen at various locations on *Mull* between 19th Sep and 2nd Oct; a second bird joined it on 28th-30th Sep. Also, one was seen on several occasions at Eredine (Loch Awe) *Mid-Argyll* during 8th-14th Dec.

**WHITE-TAILED EAGLE** *Haliaeetus albicilla* Iolair mhara 0243  
*I Formerly resident breeder in Argyll, but released birds currently placed in Category D of the British list. A total of 82 birds imported from Norway was released on Rum between 1974 and 1985 as part of the NCC's re-establishment programme. An additional 36 chicks, also from Norway, were released in northern Scotland by SNH between 1993 and 1996. All records are requested, ideally with details of age, activity and presence/absence of wing tags.*

**Breeding.** In Scotland, 12 localities were occupied by pairs or trios of territory-holding birds, with 12 clutches known to have been laid; 7 successful pairs reared a total of 9 young, the highest number in any year since the re-introduction project began [RSPB].

A minimum of 10 wandering or dispersing immatures were reported from Argyll during the year, with island records from *Islay*, *Mull* and *Coll*.

**MARSH HARRIER** *Circus aeruginosus* Clamhan Ioin 0260  
*P Scarce but now more or less annual, with records in 9 of the 11 years 1985-95. Most records are in May.*

A female was at Loch Gruinart *Islay* on 6th-11th Jun.

**HEN HARRIER** *Circus cyaneus* Breid air toin 0261  
*B W P Sparse but widespread breeding species. Breeding recorded in forty-eight 10 km squares in Argyll. A total of 471 Argyll chicks was fitted with wing-tags during 1990-93, as part of a national study by RSPB; details of all sightings of these birds are requested, even if the letter/digit on the tag cannot be read.*

At the beginning of the year, 2 roosts continued to be used at Moine Mhor *Mid-Argyll*, holding up to 7 birds in Jan but fewer subsequently. Numbers using the roost at Loch Gruinart *Islay* peaked at 8 in Mar, while up to 2 birds were seen roosting at Aros Moss *Kintyre*. One of the Aros Moss birds was a male that had been ringed as a chick at Strathrore, Easter Ross, in Jun 1995. Away from the usual breeding areas, a male was seen on *Tiree* on 2nd and 6th Mar.

**Breeding.** A total of 30 nests (of which 20 were on *Islay*) were monitored in Argyll. Of these, 20 (67%) were successful, rearing a total of 68 young. Overall

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productivity was 2.27 young per laying pair, which was close to the long-term mean. Median date for the first egg was 1st May (range 28th Apr - 13th May,  $n = 7$ ); mean initial clutch size was 4.52 ( $n = 21$ ); mean number of young hatched was 3.00 ( $n = 19$ ); and mean number of young fledged per successful nest was 3.40 ( $n = 20$ ) [MM on behalf of ARSG]. At Moine Mhor NNR *Mid-Argyll*, a pair (both birds having been reared on the reserve, in 1991 and 1992) bred successfully, fledging 3 young. Another site in *Mid-Argyll* failed at the large chick stage, and persecution was strongly suspected. On *Islay*, uncontrolled muirburn affected several nesting localities.

Apparent passage migrants were seen flying south over the sea off Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 10th Sep (2), 13th Sep (one) and 11th Oct (one). Away from the regular breeding areas, a male was seen regularly on Oronsay *Colonsay* during Jul-Oct, with a ring-tail on 29th Aug; a male was on *Tiree* on 14th Sep and 27th Nov; and up to 2 were at *Coll* RSPB Reserve in Sep, with a single or singles seen during Oct-Dec. The Loch Gruinart roost held up to 11 birds in Oct and 9 in Nov, while the 2 Moine Mhor roosts held a combined total of up to 9 birds in Nov, with fewer in Oct and Dec; up to 3 birds used the Aros Moss roost during Nov-Dec.

In Apr, an adult male was found dead near Bowmore *Islay*, having flown into low overhead wires; also on *Islay*, a juvenile male was taken into care on 13th Sep after flying into a fence and damaging one wing. Data suggest that Hen Harriers are particularly prone to collision with wires, especially fences [MM]. Information on collisions (involving this or any other raptor species) would be welcome.

**SPARROWHAWK** *Accipiter nisus* Speireag 0269  
B W P Widespread. Breeding recorded in 36% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in one of 21 BBS squares (cf one of 17 in 1995). In *Cowal*, 7 occupied sites all successfully fledged young [DA]. On *Islay*, at least one pair nested at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve, while of 2 pairs monitored in part of *Mid-Argyll*, one failed when the female flew into a window and died, and the other reared 4 young.

**BUZZARD** *Buteo buteo* Clamhan 0287  
B W Common in all areas. Breeding recorded in 78% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

At *Tiroran Mull*, one was watched catching and eating an Oystercatcher on 25th Jan.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 4 of 21 BBS squares (cf 7 of 17 in 1995). On *Colonsay*, at least 21 pairs bred, and at least 12 hatched young; the minimum average clutch size of 2.25 ( $n=8$ ) was rather higher than in 1993-5, as was the mean brood size of 1.88 ( $n=8$ ) [DCJ, JJ]. In *Cowal*, 21 pairs reared a total of 21 chicks in the Loch Eck and Glen Branter study area; 36 further nest sites were located outside the study area, 26 successful sites each fledging at least one chick [DA, AF]. On *Coll*, 13 pairs were located, all of which were believed to have nested. Other instances of confirmed breeding came from *Islay* (3 pairs with a total of 5 young), *Mid-Argyll* (7 pairs with a total of 10 young), and *Mull* (2 pairs).



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**GOLDEN EAGLE** *Aquila chrysaetos* Iolairé 0296  
*B W Breeding recorded in 39% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Immatures tend to wander in winter and may be recorded in areas where breeding does not occur.*

**Breeding.** Monitoring information was obtained from 57 home ranges, with improved coverage in *N. Argyll*. Birds were present in all but 3 home ranges, and at least 37 clutches were laid; 25 successful nests fledged a total of 29 young, including a brood of 2 fledged from a tree site (rare in *Argyll*). These figures indicate an improved breeding season, and results could well have been better still: human interference at sites on *Mull* (subsequently the subject of police investigation) resulted in failure of 3 nests at the egg stage [ARSG].

**OSPREY** *Pandion haliaetus* Iolairé iasgach 0301  
*SP Very scarce breeding species; recent re-colonist. Occurs more widely on passage.*

In May, passage migrants were seen at Fishnish *Mull* on the 9th-11th, Garvard *Colonsay* on the 21st, and Campbeltown *Kintyre* on the 26th. Also, 1-2 birds were seen at several sites on *Islay* in late May and Jun.

**Breeding.** The same 3 sites as in 1995 were occupied by pairs. One nest failed due to natural causes, but a single young was reared from each of the others. One or 2 birds were resident at 2 other locations during the summer [ARSG].

In autumn, 2 were at Loch Gruinart *Islay* in mid-Aug, and up to 3 were on the River Add and Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* in Aug and Sep. On *Mull*, there were several records of singles on 5th-15th Sep, all perhaps involving the same bird.

**KESTREL** *Falco tinnunculus* Clamhan ruadh 0304  
*B W P Widespread but uncommon. Breeding recorded in 41% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Marked decrease in breeding population reported from Kintyre in recent years. Population in some other areas appears to fluctuate from year to year. Emigration from some areas in autumn (e.g. Mull).*

Away from known breeding areas, singles were seen on *Tiree* on 19th Feb and 1st Apr.

**Breeding.** Perhaps surprisingly, the species was not recorded in any of the 21 BBS squares surveyed (cf 6 of 17 in 1995). In *Cowal*, 15 occupied sites were located; of these, 7 monitored sites fledged a total of 27 young [DA, AF]. Elsewhere, 2 successful pairs in a study area in *Mid-Argyll* fledged a total of 7 young, a pair bred at Connel *Mid-Argyll*, and a pair bred on *Colonsay* for the second successive year.

Singles were again seen on *Tiree* from Aug to the end of the year.

**MERLIN** *Falco columbarius* Meirneal 0309  
*B W P Scarce breeding species, probably under-recorded.*

Two or 3 birds wintered at The Laggan *Kintyre*. Other records of 1-2 birds during Jan-Apr came from *Islay*, *Mid-Argyll*, *Mull* and *Tiree*.

**Breeding.** Four regular sites (one in *Kintyre*, one on *Islay* destroyed by fire in Mar, and 2 in *Mid-Argyll*) were apparently unoccupied in 1996, and no successful sites were monitored. A nest located at one regular site in *Cowal* contained broken eggshells, indicating that predation had occurred [ARSG]. A pair with 3 fledged young was seen at a site on *Mull* in early Jul. Breeding season records were also

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received from Colonsay.

The first autumn migrant was seen at Machrihanish SBO Kintyre on 20th Aug. Other coastal records of migrants during the second winter period came from Islay, Colonsay, Mull, Tiree and Coll.

**PEREGRINE** *Falco peregrinus* Seabag 0320  
*B W P* Sparsely distributed but widespread breeding species, found in all areas. Breeding recorded in fifty-two 10 km squares in 1991 survey [RSPB et al.].

**Breeding.** Of 20 known sites monitored in Cowal, only 11 were occupied, including one by a single adult; an additional 3 known sites were not checked. Eight sites were successful, fledging a total of at least 14 young, while failure occurred at the other 2 sites [DA, AF]. Elsewhere in Argyll, few sites were monitored but breeding was confirmed on Islay (young reared at one site), Colonsay (2 young fledged at one site, having been fed exclusively on Kittiwakes), Mid-Argyll (2 of 3 monitored sites failed, the third fledging 2 young) and Coll (young reared at one site) [ARSG].

**RED GROUSE** *Lagopus lagopus* Coileach fraoich 0329  
*R* Sparsely distributed. Breeding recorded in 20% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 3 of 21 BBS squares (cf one of 17 in 1995). About 12 pairs bred at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve Islay, and there were a few scattered records of breeding pairs elsewhere.

**PTARMIGAN** *Lagopus mutus* Tarmachan 0330  
*R* Very localised, generally above 800 m. Breeding recorded in 5% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). All records required.

Two were on Creach Bheinn (near the head of Loch Creran) N. Argyll on 13th Jan. Two were seen on Ben More Mull on 14th Sep.

**BLACK GROUSE** *Tetrao tetrix* Caoileach dubh 0332  
*R1* Local. Populations in some areas may derive from released birds. Recent increases as a result of birds colonising forestry plantations may obscure general steep decline in numbers. Breeding recorded in 21% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

**Breeding.** In Cowal, 32 leks (total 71 males) were found in an area of 290 km<sup>2</sup>, 78% being in forestry and 22% on unplanted hill adjacent to forestry. Mean lek size was 2.2 males, and the largest lek contained 7 males; 21 percent of males recorded were the sole occupants of a lek [SHa, Forest Enterprise]. Elsewhere, a lek of 4 males was at Catnish (Glen Orchy) N. Argyll on 19th May. Other May reports, involving 1-2 birds, came from Carradale Kintyre, Octofad Islay, Eredine Forest Mid-Argyll, Kilmichael Glen Mid-Argyll, and Clashgour (near Loch Tulla) N. Argyll.

Later in the year, singles were seen at Loch Staoisha Islay on 4th Nov, Lowlandman's Bay Jura on 21st Nov, and Portnahaven Islay on 31st Dec.

A presumed male Black Grouse x Pheasant hybrid was at Bridgend Islay during Mar-May.

**CAPERCAILLIE** *Tetrao urogallus* Capull coille 0335  
*R* Very rare. Small population Mid-Argyll, and known to have bred Cowal in 1993.

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A female was at Doire Darach (Loch Tulla) *N. Argyll* on 19th Oct, well outside the known range in recent years (1988-91 Atlas).

**RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE** *Alectoris rufa* Cearc thomain dhearg chasach 0358  
*I Birds (some hybrids with Chukar A. chukar) introduced to several areas. Although this species is in Category C of the British list, populations in Argyll do not appear to be self-sustaining.*

The only record was one at Sunderland Islay on 8th May.

**QUAIL** *Coturnix coturnix* Gearradh gort 0370  
*S Rare and irregular visitor.*

The only record was one at Moine Mhor NNR *Mid-Argyll* on 22nd Jun, the first record for the reserve.

**PHEASANT** *Phasianus colchicus* Easag 0394  
*I Long-established, widespread and common resident. Birds also annually reared and released on many estates. Breeding recorded in 41% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 3 of 21 BBS squares (cf 3 of 17 in 1995). On *Colonsay*, a total of 14 calling males were found, rather fewer than in 1994 and 1995. Six territories were located at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll*.

**GOLDEN PHEASANT** *Chrysolophus pictus* 0396  
*I An introduced population exists at Gruline (Mull).*

During the year, the *Mull* population numbered about 12 birds; it is apparently not self-sustaining, requiring winter feeding and periodic reintroduction to maintain numbers [JH].

**WATER RAIL** *Rallus aquaticus* Snagan allt 0407  
*B W P Scarce, but under-recorded.*

The only records during the early part of the year were one at Loch Gruinart Islay on 29th Jan, and at least one regularly at The Laggan *Kintyre* during Jan-Mar.

**Breeding.** Breeding season records came from *Islay* (2 calling birds at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve, and one found dead at Portnahaven on 1st May), and *Colonsay* (2 at Loch Fada on 11th Jun).

During the second winter period, numbers at Loch Gruinart peaked at 8 on 28th Dec; elsewhere on *Islay*, singles were at Bridgend on 4th Oct, and Easter Ellister on 1st Dec. The only other records were 2 at The Reef *Tiree* on 26th Oct, one at Kilchattan *Colonsay* on 5th Dec, one at Hough *Tiree* on 25th Dec, and at least one regularly at The Laggan during Oct-Dec.

**SPOTTED CRAKE** *Porzana porzana* Traon breac 0408  
*S Rare and irregular. First confirmed breeding record for Argyll in 1993.*

On *Islay*, there were up to 3 singing males in the Gruinart area (where breeding occurred in 1993) during May, with one last heard on 1st Jun.

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## CORNCRAKE *Crex crex* Traon

0421

*S Localised distribution. Breeding mainly on Islay, Colonsay, Iona (Mull), Tiree and Coll.*

**Breeding.** Calling males were recorded in thirteen 10 km squares (12 on the islands and one in *Kintyre*, at Southend). After 3 successive years when the number of calling males during the main census period (20th May to 10th Jul) increased, figures for 1996 showed a decrease in the Argyll islands to 179 (see Table below) [RSPB]. The majority of birds were at least partly protected by various positive management schemes. In 1996, the RSPB entered into a limited partnership with the owner of Oronsay, and management for Corncrakes there is being maximised.

Three birds were seen at Machrins *Colonsay* during silage cutting in the third week of Sep.

Numbers of calling Corncrakes in Argyll areas, 20th May to 10th Jul 1996, with 1995 and revised 1994 totals for comparison

Area	1994	1995	1996	Comment
<i>Islay</i>	13	14	7	All on Loch Gruinart flats
<i>Colonsay</i>	6	12	8	3 on Oronsay
<i>Mull</i>	4	5	7	5 on Iona, 2 on Treshnish Isles
<i>Tiree</i>	126	140	117	
<i>Coll</i>	25	37	40	28 on RSPB reserve
<b>Total</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>179</b>	

## MOORHEN *Gallinula chloropus* Cearc uisge

0424

*R Very localised. Breeding recorded in 16% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

**Breeding.** On *Islay*, several pairs bred in the Loch Gruinart area, and breeding also occurred at Easter Ellister (where 2 or 3 pairs were present), Carnain (near Bridgend), and Loch Tallant. Elsewhere, a pair bred at *Coll* RSPB Reserve, and birds were also present at Aros Moss *Kintyre* during the summer.

During the year, birds were also recorded at Loch Ederline *Mid-Argyll* (one on 29th Jan), Aros Park *Mull* (one on 22nd Feb), Balinoc *Tiree* (singles on 21st Feb and 18th Nov), and Cornaigmore *Tiree* (2 from 14th Nov to mid-Dec).

## COOT *Fulica atra* Lach a bhlair

0429

*B W Scarce breeder and uncommon winter visitor. Breeding recorded in only two 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

By far the highest count during the early part of the year was max. 12 at Loch Bhasapol *Tiree* on 10th Mar. The only other records were: one at Connel *Mid-Argyll* on 2nd-3rd Jan, one at Tayvallich *Mid-Argyll* on 23rd Jan, max. 2 at Loch Gruinart *Islay* on 24th-28th Jan, and max. 2 at East Loch Fada *Colonsay* on 25th Feb.

**Breeding.** There were no breeding season records.

One was in Machrihanish Bay *Kintyre* on 29th Oct. The only other records during the second winter period came from *Islay*: one at Loch nan Cadhan on 2nd Nov, and one at Loch Gruinart on 6th-9th Nov.

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**OYSTERCATCHER** *Haematopus ostralegus* Gille brighde 0450  
*B W P Widespread and common. Breeding recorded in 70% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

Numbers at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart *Islay* peaked at 856 in Mar (Fig. 11), rather fewer than in the 3 previous springs. The only other sites with counts of more than 100 birds during the early part of the year were Loch Gilp *Mid-Argyll* (max. 150 on 22nd Jan) and Holy Loch *Cowal* (max. 593 on 24th Feb).

**Breeding.** The only counts of breeding pairs were 65 at *Coll RSPB Reserve* (cf 78 in 1995), and 18 at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve (cf only 9 in 1995). As usual, several hundred non-breeding birds were still present on *Islay* in mid-summer (Fig. 11). Other groups of non-breeders were seen at Ardskenish *Colonsay* (34 on 8th Jun), and Holy Loch (54 on 16th Jun).

As in several previous years, numbers at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart declined following a Jul peak (Fig. 11). Southward passage was observed at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* in Jul (210 in 81 hr) and Aug (1,297 in 82 hr), with a highest day-count of 180 (5 hr) on 8th Aug. Southward movement past Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* also peaked in Aug, with a monthly total of 380 (26.5 hr) and a highest day-count of 176 (2 hr) on the 21st. Other counts exceeding 100 birds came from Loch Riddon *Cowal* (150 on 3rd Aug), Holy Loch (max. 507 on 26th Oct), Campbeltown Loch *Kintyre* (200 on 30th Nov), and Oronsay *Colonsay* (max. 120 on 16th Dec).

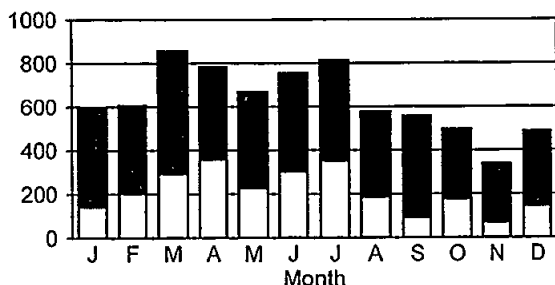


Fig. 11 Maximum monthly counts of Oystercatcher at two sealochs on *Islay* in 1996  
 Black: Loch Indaal White: Loch Gruinart

**RINGED PLOVER** *Charadrius hiaticula* Trilleachan traghaid 0470  
*B W P Widespread and common. Breeding recorded in 55% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

During the early part of the year, numbers at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart *Islay* peaked at 226 in Apr (Fig. 12). No other site had counts exceeding 30 birds.

**Breeding.** On *Colonsay*, 21 breeding pairs were located in Jun (cf 20 in 1995 and 22 in 1994). The only other count of breeding pairs was 13 at *Coll RSPB Reserve* (cf 12 in 1995).

Numbers at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart showed a pronounced early autumn peak, with 335 in Aug (Fig. 12). Southward passage was observed at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* in Jul (122 in 81 hr), Aug (728 in 82 hr) and Sep (60 in 80 hr), the

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highest day-count being a record 400 (7 hr) on 17th Aug. In contrast, very few birds passed Frenchman's Rocks *Islay*. Other sites with counts of more than 40 birds were Ardnave *Islay* (max. 70 on 8th Sep), Traigh Bhaigh *Tiree* (100 on 9th Sep), Ledaig Point *N. Argyll* (max. 80 on 9th Sep), The Strand *Colonsay* (max. 141 on 21st Sep), Camas Cuil an t-Saimh (*Iona Mull* (60 on 25th Sep), and North Connel *N. Argyll* (47 on 27th Oct).

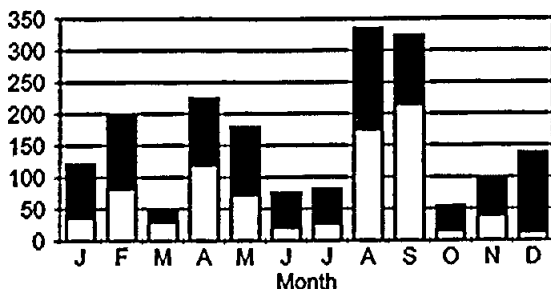


Fig. 12 Maximum monthly counts of Ringed Plover at two sealochs on Islay in 1996  
Black: Loch Indaal White: Loch Gruinart

**DOTTEREL** *Charadrius morinellus* Amadan-mointich 0482  
*P B?* Scarce migrant, mostly in late Apr and May. Has bred in *N. Argyll* in the past (e.g. 1983) and may still do so.

A pair was at The Reef *Tiree* on 30th Apr and 1st May.

**GOLDEN PLOVER** *Pluvialis apricaria* Feadag 0485  
*B W P* Sparse but widespread breeding species. Upland afforestation has greatly reduced available breeding habitat in some areas. Breeding recorded in 28% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

The only sites with counts of more than 50 birds during Jan-Mar were Machrihs Colonsay (max. 200 on 25th Feb) and Loch Gruinart *Islay* (max. 400 on 13th Mar). A flock of 2,500 at The Reef *Tiree* on 16th-26th Apr was by far the largest of the year. Also in Apr, up to 330 birds were still at Loch Gruinart, and up to 250 at Coll RSPB Reserve.

**Breeding.** The only record of birds on territory came from Gleann Seilisdair *Mull*.

In autumn, there were 2 peaks of southward movement past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre*: in late Sep, with a highest day-count of 255 (8 hr) on the 30th; and in early Nov, with a record count of 562 (4 hr) on the 2nd. Southward passage was also observed at Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* in Sep, with a monthly total of 202 (46 hr) and a highest day-count of 108 (6 hr) on the 30th. Numbers in the Loch Gruinart area peaked at 800 on 11th Nov, and numbers at The Laggan *Kintyre* peaked at 475 in Nov. The only other sites with maximum counts exceeding 50 birds were Oronsay Colonsay (103 on 28th Sep), Loch Indaal *Islay* (300 on 29th Oct), and Loch Don *Mull* (80 on 17th Nov).

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### **GREY PLOVER** *Pluvialis squatarola* Trilleachan 0486

*P W Uncommon passage migrant, mostly on islands. A few winter, mainly on Islay.*

During the early part of the year, numbers at Loch Gruinart *Islay* peaked at 30 on 13th Feb, with up to 12 present in Jan, 3 in Mar and 2 in Apr. The only other records were 9 at Loch Indaal *Islay* on 14th Feb, and 2 at Vaul *Tiree* on 19th Feb.

In autumn, the first returning bird was at Loch Don *Mull* on 8th-9th Sep, with 3 there on the 23rd and one on the 24th. One was at Machrihanish *Kintyre* on 12th-13th Sep, and a total of 20 flew south past nearby Machrihanish SBO on 8 dates between 23rd Sep and 30th Oct. Numbers at Loch Gruinart built up from 9 on 28th Sep to max. 20 on 1st Oct, with 4 still present on 21st Nov, while 4 were at Loch Indaal on 17th Oct and 22 on 8th Nov; also on *Islay*, 2 flew south past Coul Point on 17th Sep, and one was at Ardnave on 24th Oct and 10th Nov.

### **LAPWING** *Vanellus vanellus* Carracag 0493

*B W P Localised breeder and widespread wintering species. Breeding recorded in 48% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

During the early part of the year, numbers in the Loch Gruinart area *Islay* peaked at 692 on 27th Feb, with 511 still present on 5th Mar. The only other site with counts exceeding 50 birds was Loch Indaal *Islay* (max. 127 on 20th Mar).

**Breeding.** A total of 221 pairs bred at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* (cf 263 in 1995); the poor weather in Apr probably contributed to the decline. The only other counts involving more than a handful of breeding pairs were 109 at Coll RSPB Reserve (cf 140 in 1995), and 25 at Balnahard *Colonsay*.

In autumn, numbers in the Loch Gruinart area reached 371 on 25th Oct and 480 on 28th Nov. The only other locations with counts of more than 50 birds were The Laggan *Kintyre* (80 on 1st Nov), Tayinloan *Kintyre* (144 on 29th Nov), and Loch Indaal (max. 250 on 17th Dec).

### **KNOT** *Calidris canutus* Luatharan gainmhich 0496

*W P Uncommon passage migrant with main passage Aug-Sep. A few winter.*

During the early part of the year, there were exceptional numbers at Loch Indaal *Islay*, monthly peaks being 140 in Feb (on the 1st), 90 in Mar (31st), 35 in Apr (6th), and 10 in May (15th). Also on *Islay*, one was at Loch Gruinart on 14th Mar, and 2 on 19th May. Unlike the previous 3 years, there were also several records from other areas: 5 at Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* on 13th Jan, max. 15 at Ledaig Point *N. Argyll* on 23rd Jan, one at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 14th-19th Feb, and one at Soa *Tiree* on 30th Mar. The last bird of the spring was at Ardnave *Islay* on 29th May.

The first 5 returning birds flew south past Machrihanish SBO on 6th Aug. A total of 96 (82 hr) flew south past this site in Aug, with a highest day-count of 47 (4 hr) on the 19th; singles were also seen on 24th Sep, 25th Sep and 5th Nov. In contrast, only 7 birds were seen passing Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* during the entire autumn. Numbers at Loch Indaal built up from 13 on 20th Aug to a high total of 300 on 28th Oct, with 50 still present on 24th Dec. The highest count at Loch Gruinart was 48 on 22nd Aug, with 32 remaining to 1st Oct. The only other records during the latter part of the year were 2 at the head of Loch Scridain *Mull* on 15th Sep, 2 at Loch a'Phuill *Tiree* on 20th Sep, one at Ledaig Point on 21st Sep, and one at Loch Gilp *Mid-Argyll* on 16th Nov.

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**SANDERLING** *Calidris alba* Luatharan glas 0497

*W P Uncommon passage migrant, with main passage in May and Aug. A few winter, mainly on Islay and Tiree. Occasionally recorded in summer.*

Small numbers wintered at Loch Gruinart *Islay*, where numbers peaked at 12 on 13th Feb. Birds were not reported from any other location during Jan-Mar. Small groups of passage migrants were seen on *Islay* in Apr and May, with 11 at Ardnave on 11th Apr and 14 on the 26th, 10 at Loch Indaal on 12th Apr, 15 at Killinallan Point on 15th May, and 30 at Ardnave on 29th May. Elsewhere, 61 were at Balephetrish Bay *Tiree* on 29th Apr, and max. 6 on Iona *Mull* on 23rd May.

The first 2 returning birds flew south past Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* on 16th Jul. During Jul-Sep, only 27 birds (108.5 hr) passed this site, a return to low numbers following the high total in 1995. Many more birds were seen at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre*, with a total of 185 (243 hr) during the same months, the highest day-count being 31 (3 hr) on 15th Aug. On *Tiree*, 10 were at Hynish on 6th Aug, and about 100 at Traigh Bhaigh on 9th Sep; the latter was the highest count of the autumn. On *Islay*, 52 were at Ardnave on 16th Aug, max. 17 at Loch Gruinart on 15th Aug, and max. 7 at Loch Indaal on 16th Aug. Elsewhere, numbers on Oronsay *Colonsay* peaked at 21 on 31st Aug, and there were single-figure counts at sites in *Mull* and *N. Argyll*. There were few records after mid-Sep, and the only record during Oct-Dec was 22 at Ardnave on 10th Nov.

**LITTLE STINT** *Calidris minuta* Luatharan beag 0501

*P Scarce but annual, with the majority of records in autumn.*

As in 1995, there was one spring record: a single at Loch Gruinart *Islay* on 18th May.

The first bird of the autumn was at Loch Gruinart on 12th Aug. Unusually large numbers were then seen in late Sep, at a time when record influxes were being reported all over western Europe. Three were at Loch a'Phuill *Tiree* on 21st Sep, and one at Duart Bay *Mull* the same day. At Machrihanish *Kintyre*, at least 4 were present daily during 23rd-28th Sep, numbers peaking at 15 on the 25th; nearby at Machrihanish SBO, 3 flew south on 27th Sep and another on the 29th. On *Islay*, one was at Loch Gruinart on 28th Sep, and 8 on the 29th; also, singles were at Machir Bay and Loch Indaal on 18th Oct. The only other records were one at Lochbuie *Mull* on 26th Sep, and one on Oronsay *Colonsay* on 15th Oct.

**CURLEW SANDPIPER** *Calidris ferruginea* Luatharan crom 0509

*P Scarce but more or less annual, with the majority of records in autumn.*

In spring, one was at Fiddon (Ross of *Mull*) on 5th May.

There were many more records than usual in autumn. Except for 5 at Loch Indaal *Islay* on 16th Aug, all were between 11th Sep and 18th Oct. On *Islay*, 10 were at Loch Gruinart on 11th Sep, 3 on the 12th and 19th, and again 10 on the 29th, with the last 4 on 1st Oct; one was at Bridgend on 14th Sep, with 5 there on the 17th; and 8 flew south past Frenchman's Rocks on 24th Sep, followed by one on the 30th. In *Kintyre*, 2 were at Machrihanish on 23rd Sep, 6 on the 24th, and 3 on the 25th. Other records came from The Strand *Colonsay* (one on 20th-21st Sep) and Loch Don *Mull* (6 on 20th Sep, with 5 still present on the 23rd). A late bird was at Machrihanish SBO on 18th Oct.



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**PURPLE SANDPIPER** *Calidris maritima* Luatharan rioghail 0510  
*W P Widely distributed along rocky coasts from Sep to May.*

During the early part of the year, records were confined to 2 locations: Loch Indaal *Islay* (max. 9 on 14th Feb), and Dunoon *Cowal* (max. 14 on 20th Mar). The last 2 were at Port Charlotte (Loch Indaal) on 4th May.

In autumn, the first returning birds were 2 at Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* on 25th Sep; numbers at this site peaked at 4 on 2nd Nov. Elsewhere on *Islay*, 6 were at Ardnave on 10th Nov, and max. 6 at Port Charlotte on 1st Dec. On *Tiree*, 4 were at Traigh Hough on 2nd Nov, 2 at Sorobaidh Bay on 23rd Nov, and 2 at Hynish on 7th Dec. The only other records were 2 on Oronsay *Colonsay* on 29th Nov, and 3 there the next day.

**DUNLIN** *Calidris alpina* Graillig 0512  
*B W P Very localised breeding species. Breeding recorded in 20% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Numbers highest on passage, except on Islay where several hundred birds winter.*

A total of 996 was at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart *Islay* in Jan, with a steep decline in Mar similar to the 3 previous springs; as in 1993 and 1995, there was a secondary peak in May (Fig. 13). Elsewhere, 400 were at Kirn (Dunoon) *Cowal* on 18th Feb, with a very high count of 1,000 at the same site the following day. Other than 450 at Balephetrish Bay *Tiree* on 29th Apr, no other site had counts exceeding 100 birds during the early part of the year.

**Breeding.** There were very few records of breeding birds: 4 pairs at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve, a pair at Maol Mheadhoin (above Glenegedale) *Islay*, and a pair at Coll RSPB Reserve. Also, 4 at Ardskenish *Colonsay* and one on Oronsay *Colonsay* in early Jun were thought to be local breeders.

A high total of 1,205 (243 hr) flew south past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* during Jul-Sep, the highest day-count being 300 (7 hr) on 17th Aug. Numbers flying south past Frenchman's Rocks *Islay*, on the other hand, were much lower than in 1995, with a total of only 152 (108.5 hr) during the same months. Numbers on *Islay* reached unprecedented levels in Aug, with 3,000 at Loch Gruinart on the 22nd (and up to 307 at Loch Indaal during the same month); these high numbers, which coincided with an algal bloom, did not last into Sep (Fig. 13). The only other site with counts of more than 100 birds during the second winter period was The Strand *Colonsay* (max. 195 on 10th Dec).

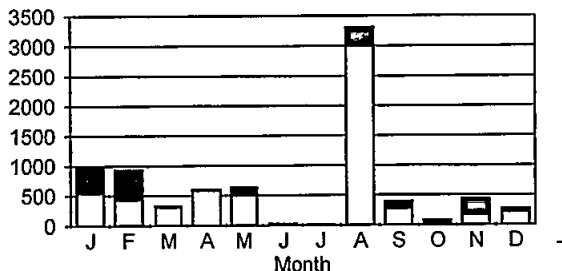


Fig. 13 Maximum monthly counts of Dunlin at two sealochs on Islay in 1996  
**Black:** Loch Indaal **White:** Loch Gruinart

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**BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER** *Tryngites subruficollis* 0516  
*V Only 4 accepted Argyll records since 1980, all involving singles: Coll, 21st May 1983; Fiddin (Mull), 21st-24th Sep 1983; Killean (Kintyre), 20th Jun 1987; and Tíree, 6th Sep 1989.*

Two juveniles were with Golden Plover and a Ruff on the machair near Hough Tíree on 6th Sep, and again nearby on the 13th [JD, MW]\*. Also, 3 juveniles were with Golden Plover and a Ruff at Ardnave Islay on 8th Sep [TapRh]\*.

**RUFF** *Philomachus pugnax* Gibeagan 0517  
*P Scarce but annual passage migrant, more numerous in autumn.*

The only spring records came from Loch Gruinart Islay, where a female was present on 15th-25th May and an immature male on 6th Jun.

The first autumn migrant was at Loch an Eilein Tíree on 14th Aug; numbers at this site peaked at 10 on 27th Aug. Also in Aug, one was at Bridgend Islay on the 18th, 6 flew south past Machrihanish SBO Kintyre on 22nd, 3 flew south past Frenchman's Rocks Islay on the 23rd, 3 flew south past Machrihanish SBO on the 24th, and one was at Loch Gruinart on the 28th. In Sep, 3 were at Barapol Tíree on the 1st, one at Ardnave Islay on the 8th, one at Sandaig Tíree on the 14th, one at Bridgend on the 17th, and 2 at Loch Gruinart on the 28th. Following 7 late birds at Loch Gruinart on 25th-30th Oct, there were, unusually, 2 records in Nov: a single with Golden Plovers at West Parkfergus (The Laggan) Kintyre on the 1st-2nd, and 3 at Campbeltown Loch Kintyre on the 5th.

**JACK SNIBE** *Lymnocyptes minimus* Gobhrag bheag 0518  
*W P Scarce but probably under-recorded.*

There were 2 records of singles during the first winter period: at Kilkenneth Tíree on 30th Jan, and on Soa Tíree on 19th Mar.

During Sep-Nov, singles were at The Reef Tíree on 30th Sep, Sanaigmore Islay on 16th Oct, and Oronsay Colonsay on 8th and 23rd Nov. In Dec, there were 5 records, all of singles: at Rhunahaorine Kintyre on the 1st, Taynult Mid-Argyll on the 15th, Loch Gruinart Islay on the 22nd, Connel Mid-Argyll on the 27th, and Coll RSPB Reserve (date unspecified).

**SNIBE** *Gallinago gallinago* Naosg 0519  
*B W P Widespread and locally common. Breeding recorded in 51% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

No count during the early part of the year exceeded 10 birds.

Breeding. A circuit of the Colonsay road network at dusk on 13th Jun located 52 drumming birds (*cf* 39 in 1995). Elsewhere, there were 73 drumming males at Coll RSPB Reserve, at least 32 pairs (partial count) at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve Islay, and an estimated 8 pairs on the Treshnish Isles Mull.

The highest counts during the latter part of the year were 28 at Aros Moss Kintyre on 23rd Sep, 21 at The Reef Tíree on 26th Oct, and 24 at Balemartine Tíree on 6th Nov.

**WOODCOCK** *Scolopax rusticola* Coileach coille 0529  
*B W P Widespread but under-recorded. Breeding recorded in 35% of 10 km squares*

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(BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

**Breeding.** A circuit of the *Colonsay* road network at dusk on 13th Jun located 10 roding birds, all in the Colonsay House area (cf 5 along the same route in 1995). Roding birds were also reported from *Mid-Argyll* and *Mull*.

**BLACK-TAILED GODWIT** *Limosa limosa* Cearra ghob 0532  
*P Regular in recent years on Islay and Tiree, both in spring and in autumn. Scarce elsewhere.*

An early single was at Loch Gruinart *Islay* on 17th Mar; birds were then present continuously at this site from 16th Apr to 14th May, with a peak count of 52 on 26th Apr. On *Tiree*, 3 were at The Reef on 13th Apr, 21 at Loch an Eilein on the 21st, and an impressive total of 141 in the Loch Bhasapol and Loch Riaghain areas on 28th Apr; numbers then declined rapidly. Elsewhere, there were 8 at Loch Feochan *Mid-Argyll* on 27th Apr, up to 3 at Coll RSPB Reserve in Apr, and 15 on Iona *Mull* on 6th May.

There were 2 Jun records, both from *Tiree*: one at The Reef on 2nd Jun, and 6 at Kirkapol *Tiree* on the 23rd.

In autumn, singles flew south past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 16th and 30th Jul; this was followed by a total of 46 (82 hr) in Aug, the highest day-count being 28 (3 hr) on the 24th, and further singles on 20th Sep and 10th Oct. On *Tiree*, numbers at Loch an Eilein built up from one on 7th Aug to 22 on the 26th, with 20 at Balephuill on 18th Aug, 2 at Crossapol on 15th Sep, and 4 at Loch a'Phuill on 21st Sep. At Loch Gruinart, the first 3 were seen on 9th Aug and the last one on 1st Oct, with numbers peaking at 16 on 21st Aug. Also on *Islay*, up to 2 were in the Bridgend area on 18th-20th Aug, and one flew south past Frenchman's Rocks on 19th Aug. Elsewhere, singles were at Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* on 17th-18th Aug, and Oronsay *Colonsay* on 20th Aug.

**BAR-TAILED GODWIT** *Limosa lapponica* Cearra ghob mhor 0534  
*WP Uncommon passage migrant, with most records in autumn. Wintering birds on Islay and small numbers elsewhere. Regular on Islay in summer.*

Large numbers were present at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart *Islay* at the beginning of the year, with a peak of 342 in Jan (Fig. 14). Other sites with counts of more than 10 birds during Jan-Apr were Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* (max. 14 on 13th Jan, the highest count there in recent years), Loch Don *Mull* (max. 12 on 18th Feb), Ardnave *Islay* (34 on 11th Apr), and Gott Bay *Tiree* (18 on 29th Apr). Smaller numbers were recorded at a few other sites.

Unusually, only 10 birds were at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart in Jun, and none at all were recorded in Jul (Fig. 14). The only other summer records came from The Strand *Colonsay* (4 on 7th Jun, and one on 17th Jul) and *Tiree* (2 at Hynish on 27th Jun, and one at Balephetrish Bay on 5th Jul).

Numbers at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart increased through the autumn to reach 93 in Nov (Fig. 14). In *Kintyre*, a total of 16 (82 hr) flew south past Machrihanish SBO in Aug, and 4 (80 hr) in Sep. Elsewhere, the only sites with counts of more than 10 birds were Gott Bay *Tiree* (max. 20 on 10th Sep) and Ardnave *Islay* (12 on 29th Oct). Single-figure counts came from other sites in *Islay*, *Colonsay*, *Cowal*, *Mid-Argyll*, *Mull* and *Tiree*.

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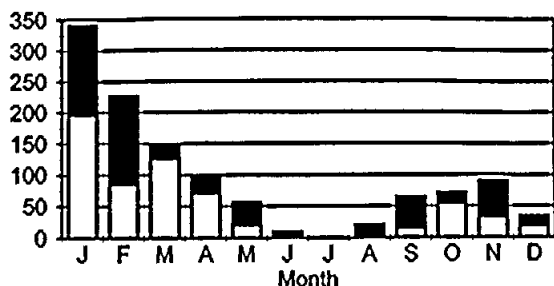


Fig. 14 Maximum monthly counts of Bar-tailed Godwit at two sealochs on Islay in 1996  
Black: Loch Indaal White: Loch Gruinart

**WHIMBREL** *Numenius phaeopus* Eun bealltain 0538

*P* A regular migrant in small numbers, with main passage late Apr to May and late Jul to Aug. Summer records not infrequent.

The first 4 birds of the spring were at Scarinish Tìree on 17th Apr. The largest spring flocks reported were max. 18 at Loch Gruinart Islay on 21st Apr, max. 30 on Iona Mull on 2nd May, max. 40 at the head of Loch Indaal Islay on 3rd and 8th May, up to 30 at Coll RSPB Reserve in May, 11 at Moine Mhor Mid-Argyll on 10th May, and 10 at Bellochantuy Kintyre on 17th May. Elsewhere, singles and small groups were widespread, particularly during the first 3 weeks of May.

Mid-summer records came from Inverfolla (Loch Creran) N. Argyll (2 on 23rd Jun) and Ardnave Islay (one on 11th Jul).

Autumn migration was protracted but involved only small numbers. At Machrihanish SBO Kintyre, the first single flew south on 21st Jul, with a further 7 in Jul and 18 (82 hr) in Aug. One was at Frenchman's Rocks Islay on 17th-19th Jul, and 2 flew south there on 26th Jul. There were no other records in Jul and Aug, but singles were on Oronsay Colonsay on 1st Sep, Hynish Tìree on 2nd Sep, and Rubha Chraiginis Tìree on 4th Sep, with 2 at Ledaig Point N. Argyll on 6th Sep, and 3 at Loch Gruinart on 29th Sep. Late singles were at Machrihanish SBO on 1st Oct and 15th-16th Oct, Frenchman's Rocks on 15th Oct, Loch Indaal on 28th Oct, and Dunstaffnage Mid-Argyll on 13th Nov.

**CURLEW** *Numenius arquata* Guilbneach 0541

*BWP* Common. Breeding recorded in 50% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

At Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart Islay, numbers fell gradually from a peak of 435 in Jan (Fig. 15). The only other site with counts of more than 100 birds during the early part of the year was Holy Loch Cowal (max. 158 on 19th Feb).

**Breeding.** The only count of breeding birds was 37 pairs at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve (cf 42 in 1995).

In autumn, numbers at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart peaked at 826 in Jul, and remained at over 600 until Oct (Fig. 15). Other counts of 100 or more birds were max. 123 at Holy Loch on 10th Sep, 120 at Coul Point Islay on 26th Oct, max. 120 at Lossit Bay Islay on 18th Nov, and 152 at Tayinloan Kintyre on 29th Nov.

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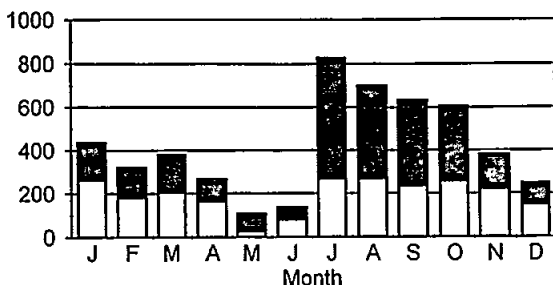


Fig. 15 Maximum monthly counts of Curlew at two sealochs on Islay in 1996  
**Black:** Loch Indaal    **White:** Loch Gruinart

**SPOTTED REDSHANK** *Tringa erythropus* Gearradh bhreac 0545  
*P Rare, with only 6 Argyll records during 1980-95: 2 in May, 3 in Aug and one in Oct.*

One flew east and then north over Port Wemyss Islay on 21st Sep.

**REDSHANK** *Tringa totanus* Cam ghlas 0546  
*B W P Localised breeder. Breeding recorded in 40% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Widespread passage migrant and wintering species.*

The highest count during the early part of the year came from Loch Gruinart Islay, with max. 61 on 19th Apr. The only other sites with counts exceeding 20 birds were Holy Loch Cowal (max. 50 on 28th Jan) and Loch Indaal Islay (max. 56 on 20th Mar).

**Breeding.** A total of 114 pairs bred at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve (cf 107 in 1995), and 33 pairs at Coll RSPB Reserve (cf 56 in 1995). On Colonsay (excluding Oronsay), 13 pairs were found (cf 8 in 1995).

Southward passage was observed in autumn at Machrihanish SBO Kintyre, with 113 (81 hr) in Jul, 120 (82 hr) in Aug, and 70 (80 hr) in Sep; the highest day-count was 64 (4 hr) on 19th Aug. At Frenchman's Rocks Islay, a total of 167 (108.5 hr) flew south during Jul-Sep, with a maximum day-count of 64 (3 hr) on 23rd Sep. Numbers at Loch Indaal peaked at 170 on 16th Aug, with no more than 23 birds counted in any other month; the highest count at Loch Gruinart was 107 on 1st Oct. The only other sites with counts exceeding 20 birds during the latter part of the year were Holy Loch (max. 70 on 29th Sep), West Loch Tarbert Kintyre (max. 22 on 17th Nov), and Loch Crinan Mid-Argyll (max. 23 on 13th Dec).

**GREENSHANK** *Tringa nebularia* Deoch bhuidhe 0548  
*B W P Very scarce breeding species (only in Mull and N. Argyll in recent years). Breeding recorded in 4% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Small numbers on passage with a few birds wintering in some localities.*

During Jan-Mar, birds were regularly sighted on Mull, with max. 2 at Loch Don on 21st Jan, and max. 6 at the head of Loch Scridain on 19th Feb. Also, one was seen regularly at Holy Loch Cowal, and 5 were at Uiskentuie (Loch Indaal) Islay on 31st Mar. Singles were seen in Islay, Mid-Argyll, Mull and Tiree in Apr and early May.

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**Breeding.** Breeding probably occurred at a regular site on *Mull*.

Presumed non-breeders were regularly reported from The Strand *Colonsay* throughout the summer, numbers peaking at 6 on 14th Jun. The only other Jun record was one on the River Add *Mid-Argyll* on the 26th.

Birds were widespread during Jul-Oct and present in unusually large numbers, with several sites having maximum counts of 5 or more birds: 8 at Loch an Eilein *Tiree* on 15th and 22nd Aug, 12 at Bridgend *Islay* on 18th Aug, 7 (4 hr) flying south past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 19th Aug, 11 at Lochdon on 7th-8th Sep, 9 at Loch a'Phuill *Tiree* on 21st Sep, and 13 at The Strand *Colonsay* on 25th Oct. In Nov and Dec, there were several counts of 1-3 birds from *Colonsay*, *Mid-Argyll* and *Mull*.

**GREEN SANDPIPER** *Tringa ochropus* Luatharan uaine 0553  
P Scarce but more or less annual. Majority of records in autumn (mostly mid-Jul to mid-Oct); very rare in spring.

On *Islay*, 2 were at Easter Ellister on 27th Aug.

**WOOD SANDPIPER** *Tringa glareola* Luatharan coille 0554  
P Scarce and less than annual. Recorded in 8 of the 16 years 1980-95, with 6 of the 10 records in spring.

One was at Ardinamir Bay (Luing) *Mid-Argyll* on 17th Aug.

**COMMON SANDPIPER** *Actitis hypoleucos* Luatharan 0556  
S P Widespread and common breeding visitor. Breeding recorded in 68% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

The first confirmed record of the spring was one at Aros Bridge *Mull* on 10th Apr; birds were also seen in *Cowal* and *Mid-Argyll* in Apr, but apparently did not arrive elsewhere until the beginning of May.

**Breeding.** In 26 km<sup>2</sup> of suitable habitat in the vicinity of Eredine Forest *Mid-Argyll*, 16 pairs were located, the equivalent of one pair for every 3 hill lochs; at least 3 of these pairs raised young. On *Colonsay*, a total of 27 pairs was found in Jun, a return to normal population levels after the low count of 13 pairs in 1995.

The highest count of the autumn was 32 at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 1st Aug. The only records after the end of Aug were 2 at Machrihanish SBO on 24th Sep, one remaining to the 25th, and a last single at Loch Indaal *Islay* on 30th Sep.

**SPOTTED SANDPIPER** *Actitis macularia* 0557  
V One *Argyll* record (see below).

1984 A record of one at Loch Indaal *Islay* on 5th Jun, accepted at the time by BBRC (*British Birds* 78: 551), has not previously been published in the ABR.

**TURNSTONE** *Arenaria interpres* Trilleachan beag 0561  
W P Widespread and common, mainly from Aug to May. Summer records not unusual.

As in 1995, numbers at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart *Islay* varied little during Jan-Mar, the peak count being 161 in Jan; there was a sharp drop in Apr (Fig. 16). The only other site with a peak count exceeding 20 birds during the early part of the year was Oban *Mid-Argyll* (max. 31 on 17th Jan).

A non-breeding or returning bird was at Hynish *Tiree* on 8th Jul. A total of

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186 (243 hr) flew south past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* during Jul-Sep, the highest day-count being 93 on 19th Aug. Numbers at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart built up to 91 in Nov (Fig. 16). The only other counts exceeding 20 birds were 45 at Ledaig Point *N. Argyll* on 27th Oct, 30 at Ardnave Point *Islay* on 29th Oct, and max. 31 on Oronsay *Colonsay* on 29th Nov.

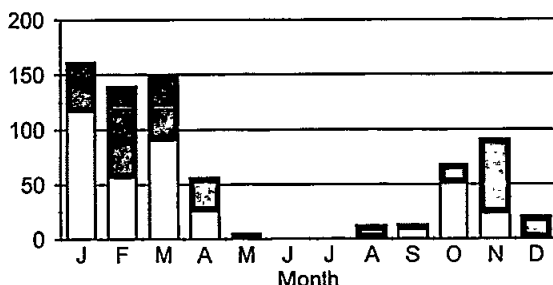


Fig. 16 Maximum monthly counts of Turnstone at two sealochs on Islay in 1996  
Black: Loch Indaal White: Loch Gruinart

**GREY PHALAROPE** *Phalaropus fulicarius* Liathag allt 0565  
*P. Irregular; associated with autumn gales. All but 3 of 26 records during 1980-95 were in the period mid-Sep to mid-Oct.*

As in 1995, there was a good number of autumn records. On *Islay*, singles flew south past Coul Point on 17th Sep and Frenchman's Rocks on 28th Sep, one was at Loch Gruinart on 29th Sep, and 4 flew south past Frenchman's Rocks on 30th Sep, with a last single there on 19th Oct. In *Kintyre*, one flew south past Machrihanish SBO on 27th Sep, followed by 2 on the 28th and a further 2 on 6th Nov. Elsewhere, one was seen off northwest *Mull* (from the *Coll/Tiree* ferry) on 2nd Oct, and one was near the head of Loch Sween at Achnamara *Mid-Argyll* on 16th Oct.

**POMARINE SKUA** *Stercorarius pomarinus* Fasgadair donn 0566  
*P. Scarce but annual, with several records most years. Majority seen in autumn.*

The only spring record was one flying northeast past Scarinish *Tiree* on 5th May.

In autumn, the first 3 were seen on the Oban *Mid-Argyll - Craignure Mull* ferry crossing on 14th Jul, with one off Grass Point *Mull* the following day. Following these unusually early records, a total of 12 flew south past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* between 2nd Aug and 3rd Nov, including a flock of 6 on 19th Oct. On *Islay*, a total of 9 passed Frenchman's Rocks between 19th Aug and 19th Oct, with a last juvenile/first-winter on 6th Nov; also, a juvenile flew south past Coul Point on 5th Oct. The only other records were singles off Rubha nan Cearc (near Fionnphort) *Mull* on 11th Sep, and Hynish *Tiree* on 28th Sep.

**ARCTIC SKUA** *Stercorarius parasiticus* Fasgadair 0567  
*S.P. The commonest skua in Argyll, regularly seen in small numbers near large seabird colonies. Small breeding colonies on Jura and Coll. Passage birds regular and*

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*widespread in spring and especially autumn.*

The only spring records were 3 flying northeast past Scarinish Tìree on 5th May, and one flying south past Frenchman's Rocks Islay on 31st May.

**Breeding.** Thirteen birds were at one of the Jura colonies on 22nd Jun. No counts were received from Coll. However, 2 on Lunga (Treshnish Isles) Mull on 27th May and 12th Jun, and at least 8 regularly there in Jul, were not very far from the Coll breeding sites. Singles seen on Tìree in summer may also have been visitors from Coll. As in 1995, numbers visiting Colonsay in Jun, presumed to be from the Jura population, were low.

In autumn, a low total of 49 (130 hr) passed Frenchman's Rocks during Jul-Oct, the highest day-count being 7 (5.5 hr) flying south on 4th Oct. Southward passage past Machrihanish SBO was also unexceptional, with a total of 39 (299 hr) during the same months. Elsewhere, there were scattered records of 1-2 birds. Unusually, there were several Nov records: 2 flying south past Machrihanish SBO on the 6th, and singles flying south past Frenchman's Rocks on the 3rd, 7th and 16th.

**LONG-TAILED SKUA** *Stercorarius longicaudus* Fasgadair stiuirich 0568  
*P Less than annual. Recorded in both spring and autumn off western coasts and islands.*

An adult flew south past Frenchman's Rocks Islay on 2nd Aug.

1994 An adult flew south past Machrihanish SBO on 28th Aug [EJM]\*, a juvenile on 27th Sep [EJM]\*, and an adult - which caught and ate a Leach's Petrel - on 28th Sep [EJM, CCh, LC]\*.

**GREAT SKUA** *Stercorarius skua* Fasgadair mor 0569  
*S P Uncommon passage migrant and summer visitor. Bred unsuccessfully on Coll in 1989.*

The only spring records were one passing West Hynish Tìree on 19th Apr, and one flying north over Heylipol Tìree on 24th Apr.

**Breeding.** One of a probable pair on Fladda (Treshnish Isles) Mull in late Jun was strongly territorial, suggesting that breeding may have occurred.

Also in Jun, there were 3 records of presumed non-breeding birds elsewhere: one past Frenchman's Rocks Islay on the 1st, one past Scarinish Tìree on the 22nd, and one at Uiskentuie (Loch Indaal) Islay on the 28th. During Jul-Oct, a total of 81 (130 hr) passed Frenchman's Rocks Islay, the highest day-count being 16 (6.5 hr) flying south on 27th Sep. A total of 21 (299 hr) flew south past Machrihanish SBO Kintyre during the same period. Elsewhere, there were scattered records involving 1-3 birds, the only higher counts being 5 off Rubha nan Cearc (near Fionnphort) Mull on 11th Sep, 6 on the Kennacraig Kintyre - Islay ferry crossing on 14th Sep, and 4 off Rubha Chraiginis Tìree on 30th Sep. On 6th Nov, 2 late birds flew south past Frenchman's Rocks and one past Machrihanish SBO.

**LITTLE GULL** *Larus minutus* Crann fhaoileag 0578  
*S W P Irregular, with several records most years but none in others. Typically seen Aug or Sep, but summer records (usually involving first-year birds) and winter records not infrequent.*

There was a total of 11 records during the year, the first being a first-summer



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at Loch Gruinart *Islay* on 19th-20th Apr. On *Tiree*, a first-winter was at Scarinish on 23rd Apr, and a first-summer at Sandaig on 19th Jun and (presumably the same bird) at Cornaigmore on 4th Jul.

In autumn, there was a good sequence of records from Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre*: a first-summer on 2nd Aug, a summer-plumaged adult on 4th Aug, a first-summer on 27th Aug, a juvenile on 30th Sep, and a first-winter on 19th Oct; all but one of these birds were flying south. Elsewhere, a moulting juvenile flew south past Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* on 25th Sep, and a first-winter on 21st Oct. A first-winter was at Portnahaven *Islay* on 3rd Nov.

### SABINE'S GULL *Larus sabini*

0579

*P* Mainly autumn. Formerly irregular but, with recent increased interest in seawatching, recorded annually since 1989.

An early adult was seen off Sanda *Kintyre* on 28th Jul [RM, TS]\*.

### BLACK-HEADED GULL *Larus ridibundus* Faoileag a'chinn duibh

0582

*B W P* Patchily distributed breeder. Breeding recorded in 16% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Scarce in many areas in winter.

During the early part of the year, the only sites with counts of more than 100 birds were Loch Gilp *Mid-Argyll* (max. 200 on 22nd Jan and 17th Feb), and Loch Indaal *Islay* (max. 106 on 15th May).

**Breeding.** In the SAMS study area, 270 pairs were noted breeding at 10 colonies (8 in *Mid-Argyll*, one in *Mull* and one in *N. Argyll*), varying in size from one to 121 pairs; they fledged a total of 94 - 124 or more young. Other counts of breeding birds came from Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* (5 pairs, all of which failed), Ardskenish *Colonsay* (9 pairs), and Coll RSPB Reserve (28 pairs, which fledged no young). There were only 2 records of this species at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* during the year, though it was a common breeder only a few years ago.

During the latter part of the year, the only counts exceeding 100 birds came from Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* (max. 149 on 21st Jul), and Loch Gruinart (max. 153 on 15th Aug). Light southward passage was observed almost daily at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* throughout Aug, with a highest day-count of 97 (4 hr) on the 6th. At Frenchman's Rocks *Islay*, on the other hand, movement was most pronounced in the second half of Oct, with a total of 141 (12.5 hr), the highest day-count being 98 (3 hr) on the 27th.

### COMMON GULL *Larus canus* Faoileag

0590

*B W P* Widespread and common breeding species. Breeding recorded in 45% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

By far the highest count during the early part of the year was max. 1,200 roosting on sandflats at Loch Gruinart *Islay* on 29th Mar. Also on *Islay*, numbers at Loch Indaal peaked at 581 on 14th Feb. No other site had counts exceeding 250 birds.

**Breeding.** In the SAMS study area, 39 colonies (2 in *Kintyre*, 24 in *Mid-Argyll*, 3 in *Mull* and 10 in *N. Argyll*) were noted, varying in size from one to 293 pairs (total 862-911 pairs). Of these, 27 colonies with a total of 753-777 pairs were monitored, and fledged 380-492 young (0.49-0.65 young per pair, rather higher than

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in 1995).

Elsewhere, 28 pairs bred at Loch Gruinart, 52 adults were at breeding colonies on Scarba *Mid-Argyll* in mid-May (whole-island count), 20 were with young at Fincharn Loch (Eredine Forest area) *Mid-Argyll* on 25th Jun, 80 were in a colony at Vaul Bay *Tiree* on 24th Jun, 22 pairs bred at *Coll* RSPB Reserve, and about 10 pairs bred unsuccessfully at Linne Mhuirich *Mid-Argyll*.

In autumn, the highest counts were again at Loch Indaal (max. 403 on 16th Aug) and Loch Gruinart (max. 617 on 1st Oct).

**LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL** *Larus fuscus* Faoileag bheag 0591  
*S P* Widespread breeding species, generally present from Mar to Sep. Breeding recorded in 20% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). A few remain in winter.

The only record during Jan-Feb was one at Loch Indaal *Islay* on 14th Feb. Birds were not widespread until mid-Mar.

**Breeding.** In the SAMS study area, 11 colonies were noted (one in *Kintyre*, one in *Cowal*, 7 in *Mid-Argyll* and 2 in *N. Argyll*), the smallest having 3-5 pairs and the largest 300-500 pairs (total 766-1,120 pairs). At five monitored colonies, 543-795 pairs fledged a total of 100-220 young.

Elsewhere, 200-225 adults were at breeding colonies on Scarba *Mid-Argyll* in mid-May (whole-island count), 2 pairs bred on Lunga and about 30 pairs on Dutchman's Cap (Treshnish Isles) *Mull*, and one pair bred at *Coll* RSPB Reserve.

Southward migration was apparent at Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* in late Sep, with a total of 154 (16.5 hr) on 26th-29th. The only records during Nov-Dec were a first-winter flying south past Frenchman's Rocks on 2nd Nov, another at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 6th Nov, 4 at West Loch Tarbert *Kintyre* on 17th Nov, and one at Loch Indaal on 20th Dec.

**HERRING GULL** *Larus argentatus* Faoileag an sgadain 0592  
*B W P* Widespread and abundant breeding species. Breeding recorded in 33% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Some evidence for immigration into Argyll in winter; colour-ringing studies have shown that these birds are probably from the Clyde and NE England.

During the early part of the year, the only count exceeding 250 birds was 340 at Loch Gruinart *Islay* on 16th May.

**Breeding.** In the SAMS study area, 38 colonies (one in *Kintyre*, 3 in *Cowal*, 23 in *Mid-Argyll*, 2 in *Mull* and 9 in *N. Argyll*), varying in size from one to about 500 pairs (total about 3,800-4,400 pairs), were noted. Of these, 28 colonies with a total of 3,044-3,240 pairs were monitored and fledged 1,616-2,083 young (0.50-0.68 young per pair).

The only other counts of breeding birds came from Scarba *Mid-Argyll* (700-750 adults at breeding colonies in mid-May, whole-island count), Lunga (Treshnish Isles) *Mull* (71 nests, cf 83 in 1995), and *Coll* RSPB Reserve (42 pairs).

In autumn, the highest counts were 672 at Loch Gruinart on 1st Oct, 600 in a single field at Lyrabus *Islay* on 15th Oct, and max. 500 at Loch Gilp *Mid-Argyll* on 16th Nov. No other site had counts exceeding 250 birds.

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**ICELAND GULL** *Larus glaucooides* Faoileag liath 0598  
*W Scarce but normally at least 5 records annually, and sometimes many more.*

A total of about 8 birds was recorded during the year. A second-winter was at Oban *Mid-Argyll* on 30th Jan, and apparently at least three birds (a first-year, a second-year and a third-year) on *Tiree* during Mar-Apr. Also, a long-staying second-winter/third-summer bird was at Gartmain (near Bowmore) *Islay* from 13th Mar to 28th May, and a third-year was at Fishnish *Mull* on 2nd-3rd Apr.

In the second half of the year, a first-summer was at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 11th Jul, and a second-winter at Tarbert *Kintyre* on 11th-13th Oct.

**GLAUCOUS GULL** *Larus hyperboreus* Faoileag mhor 0599  
*W Scarce but normally at least 5 records annually, and sometimes many more.*

There was a total of 7 records during the year. An adult was at Ledaig Point *N. Argyll* on 23rd Jan, another at Balephetrish Bay *Tiree* on 22nd Mar, and a second-winter was at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 22nd Feb.

During the latter part of the year, a second-winter was at Kilninian *Mull* on 15th Sep, a first-winter at Machrihanish SBO on 25th Nov, a second-winter at Gott Bay *Tiree* on 14th Dec, and a first-winter at Loch a'Phuill *Tiree* on 23rd Dec.

**GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL** *Larus marinus* Farspag 0600  
*B W Common and widespread. Breeding recorded in 22% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

By far the highest count during the early part of the year was max. 91 at Holy Loch *Cowal* on 5th May.

**Breeding.** In the SAMS study area, 207-247 pairs were noted at 31 sites (one in *Kintyre*, 3 in *Cowal*, 18 in *Mid-Argyll*, 3 in *Mull* and 6 in *N. Argyll*), of which 7 held 11-41 pairs each, 9 held 2-10 pairs each, and 15 held single pairs. At 13 monitored sites with a total of 94-106 pairs, 87-97+ young were fledged.

Other counts of breeding birds came from Scarba *Mid-Argyll* (11-12 adults at colonies in mid-May, whole-island count), Lunga (Treshnish Isles) *Mull* (64 nests, cf 44 in 1995), and Coll RSPB Reserve (5 pairs).

The highest counts during the latter part of the year came from Holy Loch, where 124 were counted on 17th Aug, building up to 211 on 15th Dec.

**KITTIWAKE** *Rissa tridactyla* Ruideag 0602  
*B P Strictly marine. Main colonies are on Islay, Colonsay, Treshnish Isles (Mull) and Tiree.*

Two flocks totalling 45 birds flew south-west down Loch Awe near Kilchrenan *Mid-Argyll* on the evening of 12th Apr; such inland records are rare in Argyll, and usually involve only single birds. In spring, the mean hourly rate of southward movement past Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* was 103 in May, rising to 148 in Jun; the latter value was considerably higher than in previous years.

**Breeding.** There were 710 AON on Lunga (Treshnish Isles) *Mull* (cf 730 in 1995). On *Colonsay*, the Uragaig sample colony totalled 79 pairs (cf 62 in 1994 when last counted). Also on *Colonsay*, the total of 15 nests on a sample ledge at Port Ban was similar to the 1994 and 1995 counts, but the average clutch size of 1.07 was considerably smaller than in the 2 previous years.

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The first fledged juveniles were seen off Frenchman's Rocks on 30th Jul and Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 2nd Aug. In autumn, mean hourly rates of southward movement past Frenchman's Rocks peaked at 616 in Oct; this high value was associated with a large southerly movement totalling 4,922 birds (3 hr) in a strong gale on 27th Oct. A total of 2,140 (6 hr) flew south past Machrihanish SBO on 19th Oct, and over 1,600 (6.5 hr) on 6th Nov.

The proportion of juveniles in aged samples at Machrihanish SBO peaked at 35% in Sep ( $n = 492$ ); this is considerably lower than the 64% in Sep 1994 and Sep 1995, suggesting a poor breeding season.

**SANDWICH TERN** *Sterna sandvicensis* Stearnag mhor 0611  
*B P Very rare and irregular breeding species. Uncommon passage migrant.*

The first bird of the year was at Portnahaven *Islay* on 3rd Apr, followed by 3 flying north past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on the 6th. The only other spring records were 4 at Loch Indaal *Islay* on 18th Apr and 2 on 25th May, one at Crossapol *Tiree* on 23rd Apr, 2 at Blairmore (Loch Long) *Cowal* on 6th May, and 9 at Carry Point *Cowal* on 20th May.

**Breeding.** Of 2 pairs in the Machrihanish Bay tern colony, at least one bred successfully and raised a single young. Up to 2 birds were also regularly seen in the Portnahaven area during Jun-Aug; food-passing was witnessed, raising suspicions that breeding was taking place locally, though it is not inconceivable that the sightings involved wandering birds from Irish colonies. Other summer records were one at Scarinish *Tiree* on 30th Jun, and 2 at Balephetrish Bay *Tiree* on 6th Jul.

Records became more widespread in late Jul and Aug, particularly in *Cowal*, with 2 at Blairmore (Loch Long) on 1st-21st Aug, max. 10 at Portavadie on 10th Aug, and max. 12 in the Kames area on 25th Aug. On *Islay*, 2 were at Killinallan on 12th Aug and one nearby at Ardnave on the 16th. A total of 36 (82 hr) flew south past Machrihanish SBO in Aug, a further 4 flew north on 17th Sep, and 3 flew south on 22nd Sep.

**COMMON TERN** *Sterna hirundo* Stearnag 0615  
*S P Locally common breeding species, considerably more numerous than Arctic Tern, at least on small islands close to the mainland. Breeding recorded in 14% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

The first bird of the year was at Milton *Tiree* on 28th Apr.

**Breeding.** In the SAMS study area, 1,153 pairs were counted breeding at 13 colonies (2 in *Kintyre*, 5 in *Mid-Argyll*, one in *Mull* and 5 in *N. Argyll*). At the largest colony (464 pairs), the birds left early after losing all young, apparently because of heavy predation by otter *Lutra lutra*, although mink may also have been involved. A total of 249 pairs, which appeared shortly afterwards at 3 other colonies within 10 km, probably came from this abandoned colony, and thus the true total was probably 904 pairs (1,153 less 249). Of this revised total, 875 pairs at 11 colonies fledged 291-363 young (0.33-0.41 young per pair, similar to 1995); 29 pairs at 2 colonies were not followed up.

On *Islay*, all sites on the main island which held tern colonies in 1987 were revisited, and 47 birds were found at 4 colonies (cf only one pair during the complete coastal survey in 1987); of these, 5 pairs breeding at Loch Gruinart were washed out

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by the tide. On *Colonsay*, the count was incomplete but 4 pairs were at Port Olmsa and 5 birds were on Oronsay. On Lunga (Treshnish Isles) *Mull*, there were only 2 nests in late Jun (*cf* 50 in 1995). A complete survey of *Tiree* found 84 breeding birds at 3 colonies ranging in size from 4 to 70 birds (*cf* none in 1987). On *Coll*, an incomplete survey found 53 pairs in 6 colonies, including 14 pairs at the RSPB reserve. These data exclude figures for mixed colonies where the relative proportion of the 2 species were not known, including 200-300 birds at Sgeirean na Guisach (Treshnish Isles) *Mull*, and a colony at the Cairns of *Coll* [RSPB *et al.*]. About 17 pairs nested at Machrihanish *Kintyre*, but the colony was largely deserted by 17th Jul, and no young were seen.

A total of 108 adults (4 hr) flew south past Machrihanish SBO on 31st Jul, followed by only 25 birds (82 hr) during the whole of Aug. The last singles of the year flew south past Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* on 27th Sep and Machrihanish SBO on 29th Sep.

**ARCTIC TERN** *Sterna paradisaea* Stearnal 0616  
*S P Locally numerous breeding species. Breeding recorded in 25% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Confusion with the last species has tended to lead to over-recording of Arctic Tern and under-recording of Common Tern at colonies.*

The first bird of the year was at Crossapol Bay *Tiree* on 4th May.

**Breeding.** In the SAMS study area, 13 colonies (one in *Kintyre*, 6 in *Mid-Argyll*, 3 in *Mull* and 3 in *N. Argyll*) between one and 38 pairs in size (total 167-182 pairs) were noted; at 8 colonies with a total of 102-117 pairs, a total of 62-75 young fledged. The outcome was unknown at the other 5 colonies (total 65 pairs).

On *Islay*, all sites on the main island which held tern colonies in 1987 were revisited. One substantial colony (114 incubating adults) and 46 birds at 5 other colonies were found (*cf* about 340 pairs in 1987). On *Colonsay*, an incomplete count found 42 birds at 2 colonies in June; this figure does not include Oronsay, where a complete survey gave a total of 300 nests at 3 colonies, mainly on offshore islets. On Lunga (Treshnish Isles) *Mull*, 18 nests were found in Jun (*cf* 79 in 1995). A complete survey of *Tiree* found 937 breeding birds in 34 colonies, ranging in size from 2 to 130 birds, and an additional 85 non-breeders (*cf* 366-376 pairs in 1987). On *Coll*, an incomplete count gave a total of 18 pairs at 3 colonies, including 7 pairs at the RSPB reserve [RSPB *et al.*]. Four pairs were at the Machrihanish *Kintyre* tern colony, but no young were seen.

A total of 41 adults flew south past Machrihanish SBO on 31st Jul, but only one bird during the whole of Aug (on the 28th). As in 1995, there were several Oct records from Frenchman's Rocks *Islay*, with a total of 8 birds (21.5 hr) during the month, followed by an exceptionally late juvenile flying south on 2nd Nov.

**LITTLE TERN** *Sterna albifrons* Stearnag bheag 0624  
*S P Scarce breeding species confined to Islay, Tiree and Coll. Scarce elsewhere on migration.*

The first 3 birds of the year were at Gott Bay *Tiree* on 17th Apr.

**Breeding.** All known Argyll colonies were surveyed, and a total of about 91 pairs found (*cf* 91-102 pairs in 1987). On *Islay*, 3 colonies held 45 birds, with 10 pairs at one site fledging at least 5 young, and a pair at a second site being washed out

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by the tide. On *Tiree*, 62 nests were found in 10 colonies, all but 3 of these nests being inland on The Reef; in most recent years, a much larger proportion of birds has nested on the coast, close to the high-water mark. On *Coll*, there were 6 pairs at one colony [RSPB].

In autumn, 3 migrants flew north past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 26th Jul, followed by singles flying south on 31st Jul and 10th Aug. One flying south past Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* on 24th Sep was the last of the year and the first record at this site in 4 years of observation.

**GUILLEMOT** *Uria aalge* Eun dubh an sgadain 0634  
*B W P* Highly colonial, locally abundant breeding species. Adults with small young appear on the sea far from colonies in late summer; regularly seen in sealochs in winter.

**Breeding.** A total of 7,500-7,800 birds was ashore on Lunga (Treshnish Isles) *Mull* in late Jun (cf 6,400-6,800 in 1995).

See below for movements of auks (Guillemot/Razorbill) past seawatching sites.

**RAZORBILL** *Alca torda* Falc 0636  
*B W P* Locally common breeding species, although less numerous and with smaller colonies than Guillemot. Regularly seen in sealochs in winter.

**Breeding.** A total of 850-1,000 birds was ashore at Lunga (Treshnish Isles) *Mull* in late Jun. As for Guillemot, this represented a large increase compared to the 1995 total (640 birds).

See below for movements of auks (Guillemot/Razorbill) past seawatching sites.

### AUK sp. (GUILLEMOT/RAZORBILL)

Mean hourly rates of southward movement past Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* (including birds identified to species) were 565 in May and 772 in Jun (both values high compared to previous years), declining to a minimum of 23 in Aug before increasing to a peak of 1,010 in Oct. The exceptionally high Oct value was associated with very heavy movement in mid-month, peaking at 9,548 birds (4 hr) on the 21st, an estimated 54% of these being Razorbills. As usual, mean hourly rates of movement past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* were much lower.

Over the year as a whole, 58% of identified birds at Frenchman's Rocks were Guillemots, a value very close to those obtained in 1994 and 1995.

**BLACK GUILLEMOT** *Cephus grylle* Gearra-breac 0638  
*B W* Common coastal breeding species. Breeding recorded in 38% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

**Breeding.** In the SAMS study area, a total of 67-70 birds were noted at 13 sites (one in *Kintyre*, 8 in *Mid-Argyll*, 2 in *Mull* and 2 in *N. Argyll*). Breeding is known to have failed at 3 sites (7 nests) and is believed to have been successful at 2 sites (a total of at least 2 nests). Elsewhere, at least 30 pairs were estimated to be on the Treshnish Isles *Mull*.

As in previous years, movement past Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* peaked at the beginning of Aug, probably because of feeding movements by parent birds whose large young were close to fledging. Relatively few birds (only 42 in 86.5 hr) passed

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this site during Sep-Dec; in contrast, 72 (6.5 hr) flew south past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 6th Nov alone.

**LITTLE AUK** *Alle alle* Colcach bheag 0647  
*W Irregular, usually seen during seawatches or after severe gales.*

During the first winter period, one was found dead at Craignure *Mull* on 28th Jan, and another at Barcaldine *N. Argyll* on 18th Feb.

A total of 59 passed Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* during Oct-Dec, mostly flying south; the highest day-count was 11 (5 hr) on 6th Nov. Also, 4 (3 hr) flew south past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 29th Oct, followed by singles on 2nd and 6th Nov. The only other records were one at Ardnave *Islay* on 30th Oct, one found dead near Easdale (Seil) *Mid-Argyll* on 1st Nov, one at Port Charlotte *Islay* on 21st Nov, and one found dead at Balemartine *Tiree* on 23rd Nov.

**PUFFIN** *Fratercula arctica* Buthaid 0654  
*B P Very localised breeding species with main colonies on Sanda (Kintyre) and Treshnish Isles (Mull). Occasionally recorded in winter.*

The first record of the year was one flying south past Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* on 7th Apr.

**Breeding.** On Lunga (Treshnish Isles) *Mull*, there were 1,643 AON in late Jun (cf 1,631 in 1995); breeding also occurred on Dutchman's Cap, Fladda and Cairn na Burgh More.

A total of 820 (49.5 hr) passed Frenchman's Rocks during Jun and Jul; the highest day-count of 313 flying south and 2 flying north (4 hr) in fog and drizzle on 10th Jul far exceeded the previous highest count for the site (93 flying south in 2.5 hr on 30th Jun 1994). Other records during Jun-Jul were one at Scarinish *Tiree* on 3rd Jun, one at Balnahard *Colonsay* on 7th Jun, one in the Sound of *Islay* on 11th Jun, and 6 flying south past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 31st Jul. In Aug, a total of 20 (26.5 hr) passed Frenchman's Rocks and 3 (82 hr) passed Machrihanish SBO. The only other autumn record, and the last of the year, was one on the Kennacraig *Kintyre - Islay* ferry crossing on 14th Oct.

**ROCK DOVE** *Columba livia* Calman creige 0665  
*R I Resident breeder except in Cowal, most numerous in the islands. Breeding recorded in 33% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Large flocks often gather on arable fields outwith breeding season. Feral Pigeons recorded from most areas, but no information on population size.*

During the early part of the year, the only count exceeding 50 birds was 80 at Octofad (*Islay*) on 7th Feb.

**Breeding.** No significant records.

During the second winter period, the largest flock reported was 107 at Uragai *Colonsay* on 16th Dec. All other records of flocks exceeding 50 birds came from *Islay*: 100 at Corrary (near Bowmore) on 29th Oct, 80 at Ardlarach (near Bowmore) on 30th Oct, and 78 at Kilchoman on 7th Nov.

Records of Feral Pigeons came only from *Islay* and *Cowal*. Up to 8 were seen regularly in one part of Dunoon *Cowal*, where they were said to have "replaced Collared Doves as residents".

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**STOCK DOVE** *Columba oenas* Calman gorm 0668  
*RP? Recorded in Kintyre, Gigha, Colonsay, Cowal, Mid-Argyll and N. Argyll during 1980-95. Regular during 1991-94 in a small area centred on Kilmartin Mid-Argyll, where breeding was confirmed in 1993. All records required.*

The only record of the year was one at Kilmartin Mid-Argyll on 15th Jun.

**WOODPIGEON** *Columba palumbus* Calman fiadhaich 0670  
*BW Common resident breeding species except on some islands, such as Mull, where more numerous in winter. Breeding recorded in 48% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

Breeding. The species was recorded in 5 of 21 BBS squares (cf 4 of 17 in 1995).

**COLLARED DOVE** *Streptopelia decaocto* Calman a chrios 0684  
*B P Sparse but widespread distribution throughout Argyll. Evidence of continued immigration involving small numbers of birds each spring. Breeding recorded in 23% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

Probable or certain spring migrants were reported from Colonsay (3 sightings of singles on 6th-8th May), inner Loch Scridain Mull (singles on 16th May and 4th Jun), and Tiree (3 at the airport and one at Kenovay on 11th Apr, and 3 at Scarinish on 3rd May). The Tiree birds remained until Jun at least, with 15 at Kenovay on the 2nd, and 2 at the airport on the 26th. Also, the usual spring influx into the Portnahaven area Islay was followed by sightings up to 19th Sep, considerably later than during 1993-95, though no evidence of breeding was found; a flock of 10 at Port Wemyss on 15th Jun was unusually large. Nearby at Easter Ellister, one bird is believed to have summered.

Breeding. No significant records.

Numbers at Bruichladdich Islay, where 15-20 were present most months, peaked at 29 on 5th Jul. The only other count exceeding 20 birds during the year was max. 26 at Loch Gruinart Islay on 16th Nov.

**TURTLE DOVE** *Streptopelia turtur* Calman tuchan 0687  
*P Scarce, but several records annually. Majority recorded during May-Jun.*

There were 3 records of singles in Jun: at Kenovay Tiree on the 1st and 2nd, at Balephetrish Tiree on the 17th, and at North Connel N. Argyll for several days from around the 5th.

In autumn, singles were in the Heylipol/Barrapol area Tiree on 5th-6th Sep, and at Aridhglas (near Fionnphort) Mull on 11th Sep.

**CUCKOO** *Cuculus canorus* Cuthag 0724  
*SP Common. Main host species is Meadow Pipit. Breeding recorded in 41% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

The first bird of the year was at Grass Point Mull on 18th Apr; birds were also reported from Cowal and Mid-Argyll in Apr.

Breeding. The species was recorded in 9 of 21 BBS squares (cf 7 of 17 in 1995). There were 3 territories in CBC plots at Tainish NNR Mid-Argyll. Breeding occurred on Tiree, where there were no records during the period of the 1988-91



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Atlas.

The last record of the year was a juvenile at Lochdon Mull on 9th Sep.

**BARN OWL** *Tyto alba* Comhachag 0735  
*B W Scarce breeding species, but probably under-recorded. Breeding recorded in 11% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). All records required.*

**Breeding.** On *Islay*, 20 of 30 sites checked were occupied by pairs and 4 apparently by single birds, with 6 formerly used sites being empty. Sixteen pairs bred, 15 successfully, rearing a total of at least 45 young; mean clutch size (3.4) and mean brood size at fledging (2.8) were both close to the ten-year average, though the latter was also the highest value since 1991 [MAO]. In *Cowal*, 6 monitored sites fledged 17 young; an additional 11 breeding sites in natural rock crevices were inaccessible, but adults were found dead as road casualties near 2 of these [DA, AF]. In a study area in *Mid-Argyll*, birds at 4 sites were provided with nest boxes; one pair did not nest, one pair failed on eggs, one pair failed on small young, and one pair reared 2 young [JG]. The only other report of successful breeding came from *Kilmartin Mid-Argyll*, where a pair reared 2 young.

Outside the breeding season, birds were reported from additional sites in *Kintyre* (1), *Mid-Argyll* (2) and *Mull* (6).

**EAGLE OWL** *Bubo bubo* 0744  
*Deletion from Argyll list.*

This species has recently been removed from the British list by the BOURC; one of the 3 previously accepted records was at Duntrune *Mid-Argyll* in Feb 1883. Note also that an escaped bird was regularly seen at Arduaine *Mid-Argyll* during 1989-91 (see previous ABRs).

**TAWNY OWL** *Strix aluco* Comhachag dhonn 0761  
*R Widespread and common, but absent from Tiree and Coll. Breeding recorded in 43% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

**Breeding.** Breeding was confirmed at *Carsaig Mull* (b/2) and *Tirolan Mull* (b/3 and c/1).

Other records during the year came from 3 sites on *Islay*, 3 sites in *Cowal*, *Taynish NNR Mid-Argyll* and *Loch Don Mull*.

**LONG-EARED OWL** *Asio otus* Comhachag adharcaiche 0767  
*R P W Very scarce, but almost certainly under-recorded. All records required.*

**Breeding.** As in 1995 and several previous years, successful breeding occurred on *Colonsay*, with at least 3 young reared.

In *Cowal*, the sighting of birds at 3 locations in late summer suggests that this species is more widespread than is generally realised. Also, at least 3 birds used a traditional roost-site at Aros Moss *Kintyre* during Nov-Dec. -

**SHORT-EARED OWL** *Asio flammeus* Comhachag chluassach 0768  
*B W P Widespread breeder. Numbers fluctuate and distribution varies with abundance of small rodents, especially field voles *Microtus agrestis*. Breeding recorded in 30% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Widespread emigration in autumn.*

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The only records during Jan-Mar were singles near Loch Frisa *Mull* on 21st Feb, Port Ellen *Islay* on 1st Mar, and Heylipol *Tiree* during Mar.

**Breeding.** The only report of successful breeding came from Loch Beg (Loch Scridain) *Mull* (a pair with 5 or 6 young). On *Islay*, 1996 was another poor year, with 2-3 pairs in the Rinns forestry, 2 pairs at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve, and a pair near Port Ellen. Most other breeding season records came from *Mull* (4 locations), but birds were also recorded at Loch Tarsan *Cowal* and Scarba *Mid-Argyll*.

Up to 10 birds were seen at Campbeltown Airport *Kintyre* during Aug-Sep, with 2-3 still present in Nov and Dec. The only other record during Sep-Dec was 2 at Loch Don *Mull* on 22nd Sep.

**SWIFT** *Apus apus* Gobhlan mor 0795  
*S P Localised breeding species, mainland only; natural nest sites have been used in Kintyre. Breeding recorded in 4% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Regular passage migrant in all areas.*

The first report came from Connel *Mid-Argyll* on 9th May, with a more widespread arrival 10 days or so later. There were records from *Islay*, *Jura*, *Cowal*, *Mull* and *Tiree* during 18th-22nd May, the highest count being 10 at Ardlamont Point *Cowal* on the 20th.

**Breeding.** Pairs were present in *Cowal* at Blairmore and Dunoon, and in *Mid-Argyll* at Lochgilthead, Cairnbaan and Slockavullin, but there were no instances of confirmed breeding.

There was the usual peak of sightings in the second half of Jun and the first half of Jul, with birds reported from most areas of Argyll at this time. The only double-figure counts were 45 in the Portnahaven area *Islay* on 19th Jun, and 30 at Fearnoch (Kilmichael Forest) *Mid-Argyll* the same day. Departure seemed to occur very early, with no reports later than 18th Jul.

**KINGFISHER** *Alcedo atthis* Biorra cruidein 0831  
*W P Most records are in autumn and winter, and may represent dispersing juveniles.*

One was seen regularly at Toward *Cowal* during May-Oct. The only other records were singles at Connel *Mid-Argyll* on 5th Oct, and at Bridgend *Islay* on 18th Dec.

**GREEN WOODPECKER** *Picus viridis* Snagardach 0856  
*? Status uncertain, but recorded regularly in Cowal during 1992-94. All records required.*

During the first few days of Jan, one was seen by several observers in the Tiroran/Scobull area (Loch Scridain) *Mull*, where a bird was also recorded in May 1994 (see also below).

During the year, there were several records from a relatively restricted area within *Cowal*, with singles reported from Glenbranter on 14th May, Sandbank on 31st May, and Glen Finart on 16th Jun. Also, one was seen on several occasions during the year at Innellan. All these records could perhaps be accounted for by one or two birds, but the existence of a small breeding population cannot be discounted.

1995 One was in the Tiroran/Scobull area (Loch Scridain) *Mull* in late Dec, remaining into 1996.

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**GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER** *Dendrocopos major* Snagan daraich 0876  
*R Widespread on the mainland and Mull. Breeding recorded in 31% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 2 of 21 BBS squares (*cf* 2 of 17 in 1995). As in 1994 and 1995, there were 3 territories in the woodland CBC plot at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll*. Breeding was confirmed at Blairmore (Loch Long) *Cowal*. Also, a drumming bird was at Tioran *Mull* in Mar and Apr.

Other records during the year came from Glenan Bay (near Portavadie) *Cowal*, Glen Shira *Mid-Argyll*, and Moine Mhor *Mid-Argyll*. Also, one was seen and heard independently by two observers at Bridgend *Islay* on 15th Nov, the first record for the island for a decade (see below).

1987 A record of one at Kildalton *Islay* on 14th Oct has not previously been published in the *ABR*.

**SKYLARK** *Alauda arvensis* Uiseag 0976  
*B W P Widespread and common breeding species. Breeding recorded in 79% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Emigration of many birds in winter, with remaining birds mainly in coastal and low-lying localities.*

The only count exceeding 50 birds during the early part of the year was 250 at Killinallan *Islay* on 1st Mar.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in only 11 of 21 BBS squares (*cf* 16 of 17 in 1995), suggesting a decline in numbers.

In autumn, southward movement over the Portnahaven area *Islay* peaked in late Sep, with counts of 50 on the 21st and 100 on the 22nd. The only other counts of 50 or more birds were 50 at Kilchiaran *Islay* on 21st Sep, and 60 at Corrary (near Bowmore) *Islay* on 29th Oct.

An unusually pale (perhaps leucistic) individual was at Balephetrish *Tiree* on 9th-27th Mar.

**SAND MARTIN** *Riparia riparia* Gobhlan gainmhiche 0981  
*S P Uncommon and localised breeding species. Breeding recorded in 24% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). All breeding records required.*

The first bird of the year was a passage migrant at Hynish *Tiree* on 6th Apr, followed by 2 birds at Connel *Mid-Argyll* and 3 at Glenforsa *Mull* on the 9th. Further spring passage migrants were reported from *Tiree* (2 at The Reef on 23rd Apr, and one at Corraigmore on 13th May) and *Colonsay* (3 at Loch Cholla on 4th May, and one at Kiloran Bay on 6th May).

**Breeding.** Numbers showed an increase at some colonies but remained steady at others (see Table below). Birds also bred at Blairmore (Loch Long) *Cowal* (no count), at Glen Aros *Mull* (2 or 3 occupied holes near Crannich, and a probable second colony of 12 or more birds about 2 km further west), and at Gortan (Loch Don) *Mull* (no count).

The last birds of the year were one at Portnahaven *Islay* on 13th Sep, and 2 at Lochdon *Mull* on 17th Sep.

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Numbers of occupied holes at Sand Martin colonies in Argyll, 1996,  
with totals from previous years for comparison

Area	Locality	1993	1994	1995	1996
Islay	Kilchiaran	?	10	5	25
	Laggan Bridge	8	6	?	6
Mid-Argyll	Kilmartin Quarry	35	75	80	100
	Kilmichael Glen woodyard	24	56	58	52
	Kilmartin School	2	4	4	4
Mull	Torosay	?	10	?	20
N. Argyll	North Connel sandpit	?	?	?	173

**SWALLOW** *Hirundo rustica* Gobhlan gaoithe 0992  
S P Widespread and common. Breeding recorded in 76% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

The first bird of the year was near Bridgend Islay on 7th Apr, with further singles at Kilchrenan Mid-Argyll and Ceann a'Mhara Tiree on the 11th.

Breeding. The species was recorded in 3 of 21 BBS squares (cf 4 of 17 in 1995). No counts involving more than a handful of breeding pairs were received.

The last singles were at Carraig Fhada (near Port Ellen) Islay on 15th Oct, Connel Mid-Argyll on 16th Oct, and finally Machrihanish SBO Kintyre on 1st Nov.

A juvenile at Melldalloch (near Tighnabruaich) Cowal in early Jul was reported to be entirely silvery-grey in colour.

**HOUSE MARTIN** *Delichon urbica* Gobhlan taighe 1001  
S P Common breeding species on mainland; less numerous on the islands and no recent breeding records from Colonsay, Tiree and Coll. Breeding recorded in 48% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

The first bird of the year was a passage migrant at Sorobaidh Bay Tiree on 18th Apr; the only other Apr records came from Islay, where birds were present from the 24th. Further spring passage migrants or wandering birds were reported from Tiree (one at Balephetrish on 7th May) and Colonsay (singles at Kiloran Bay on 10th Jun, and Balnahard Bay on 12th Jun).

Breeding. A pair bred on Ulva Mull, outwith the breeding range recorded in the 1988-91 Atlas.

Most birds had apparently left by mid-Sep, the only Oct record being 4 at Port Charlotte Islay on the 2nd.

**TREE PIPIT** *Anthus trivialis* Riabhag 1009  
S P Common breeding species on the mainland. Also widespread on Jura and Mull, but very scarce on Islay. Breeding recorded in 54% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

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A very early bird was at Connel *Mid-Argyll* on 7th Apr; there were no further records until the 19th. A passage migrant was at The Reef *Tiree* on 23rd Apr; 2 singing birds at Ballimony (Rinns of *Islay*) on 4th May were probably also passage migrants.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 6 of 21 BBS squares (*cf* 5 of 17 in 1995). At Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll*, there were 10 territories in the woodland CBC plot (*cf* 9 in 1995 and 10 in 1994).

There were no autumn records.

**MEADOW PIPIT** *Anthus pratensis* Snathag 1011  
*B W P* Abundant breeding species. Breeding recorded in 94% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Emigration of many birds in winter, with remaining birds mainly in coastal and low-lying localities.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 19 of 21 BBS squares (*cf* all of 17 in 1995). At Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll*, there were 5 territories in the coastal CBC plot (*cf* 7 in 1995).

**WATER PIPIT** *Anthus spinoletta* 1014/1  
*Deletion from Argyll list.*

Following circulation around SBRC, the record of one on *Mull* on 19th Feb 1982 is no longer judged to be acceptable. The record of the bird on *Oronsay Colonsay* on 23rd Jul 1984 has been withdrawn by the observer, on the basis that the details available are insufficient to support a claim of a first record for *Argyll*. Thus this species should be deleted from the *Argyll* list.

**ROCK PIPIT** *Anthus petrosus* Gabhagan 1014/2  
*R P W* Common resident breeding species. Breeding recorded in 67% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Scarce passage and winter visitor elsewhere.

No significant records.

**YELLOW WAGTAIL** *Motacilla flava* Breacan buidhe 1017  
*P* Scarce and less than annual; recorded in 10 of the 16 years 1980-95. Birds of the Blue-headed race *M. f. flava* occur from time to time, and there has been at least one record of the Grey-headed race *M. f. thunbergi* (in 1985).

One was at Sorobaidh *Tiree* on 2nd Jun.

**GREY WAGTAIL** *Motacilla cinerea* Breacan bain tighearna 1019  
*B W P* Widespread breeding species. Breeding recorded in 61% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Some emigration in winter.

A presumed passage migrant was at Vaul *Tiree* on 6th Apr.

**Breeding.** Pairs were reported during the breeding season from *Islay* (7 pairs), *Cowal* (one pair), *Mid-Argyll* (3 pairs) and *Mull* (4 pairs).

**PIED WAGTAIL** *Motacilla alba yarrellii* Breach an t-sil 1020  
*B W P* Widespread and common breeder. Breeding recorded in 87% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Emigration from most areas in winter. Returning birds generally arrive late Feb to early Mar; departure Aug-Oct.

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**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 7 of 21 BBS squares (cf 7 of 17 in 1995).

## WHITE WAGTAIL *M. a. alba*

*P* Usually recorded in spring. Extent of autumn passage obscured by identification difficulties.

Birds were recorded in spring on *Islay*, *Colonsay* and *Tiree*. The first 7 were at Gartbreck (near Laggan Point) *Islay* on 17th Apr, with 2 nearby at Laggan Bay on the 20th, and max. 6 at Loch Gruinart on 2nd May. Birds were widely distributed on *Colonsay* on 3rd-8th May, with a high count of 48 in the Ardskenish area on the 5th. On *Tiree*, birds were present from 27th Apr to 12th May, the highest count being 3 at Sorobaigh on the former date.

In autumn, small numbers were regular at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* from 6th Aug to 10th Sep, with max. 4 on 27th Aug. On *Islay*, one was at Traigh an Luig (Loch Indaal) on the 20th, at least 10 at Frenchman's Rocks on the 21st (an overnight "fall"), 6 at Traigh an Luig on the 31st, and 5 at the airport on 6th Sep. The only other records were one at Ledaig Point *N. Argyll* on 6th Sep, and 2 at Toward *Cowal* on 12th Sep.

## WAXWING *Bombycilla garrulus* Canarach dearg

1048

*W* Irruptive visitor in varying numbers; not seen every winter.

There was a large arrival in mid-Jan, the first bird being seen on the 17th; most had gone by the end of Feb. The last bird was at Connel *Mid-Argyll* on 31st Mar (see Table below - underlined dates and figures are approximate).

There was again a widespread influx in Nov, with the first birds seen on the 9th. This time, records were concentrated within a three-week period, with only 3 records after the end of Nov. As in Jan and Feb, the majority of records came from *Islay*, *Mid-Argyll* and *Mull* (see Table below).

### Records of Waxwings in Argyll in 1996

Area	Location	Date	No. of birds
<b>Jan-Mar</b>			
<i>Kintyre</i>	Campbeltown	26/01	6
	Drumlemble	26/01	1
	Clachan	31/01	2
<i>Islay</i>	Loch Gruinart	21-26/01	3
	Coultorsay (Bruichladdich)	26/01	3
	Portnahaven	26-28/01	2
	Bowmore	14/03	1
<i>Cowal</i>	Dunoon	21/01-26/02	20 (max.)
	Kames	31/01-03/02	3 (max.)
	Tighnabruaich	24/02	1

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<i>Mid-Argyll</i>	Kilmartin	17/01	3
	Oban	26-31/01	20 (max.)
	Dunstaffnage	27-31/01	<u>16</u> (max.)
	Connel	31/01-31/03	<u>7</u> (max.)
	Portsonachan (Loch Awe)	01/02	<u>19</u>
	Dalavich (Loch Awe)	12/02	1
<i>Mull</i>	Craignure	mid-Jan	1
	Tiroran	22/01	5
	Aros	late Jan	<u>7</u>
	Lochdon	late Jan	2
	Tobermory	late Jan	9
<b>Nov-Dec</b>			
<i>Islay</i>	Port Charlotte	13-??/11	6 (max.)
	Glenmachrie (airport)	15-24/11	17
	Bowmore	20-27/11	6 (max.)
	Easter Ellister	05/12	1
	Loch Gruinart	28/12	1
<i>Colonsay</i>	Kilchattan	09/11	2
<i>Cowal</i>	Allt na Blathaich (Loch Eck)	15/11	10
<i>Mid-Argyll</i>	Dunstaffnage	09-18/11	<u>45</u>
	Kilmichael Glassary	14-17/11	<u>11</u>
	Connel	17/11	5
	Ardrihaig	20-26/11	<u>24</u> (max.)
	Taynuilt	<u>20/11</u>	15
	Lochgilphead	16/12	9
<i>Mull</i>	Bunessan	17/11	2
	Tiroran	20-21/11	2
	Aros Bridge	22/11	2

**DIPPER** *Cinclus cinclus* Gobha uisge 1050

*B W* Widespread, though scarce on Islay and Colonsay; absent from Tiree and Coll. Breeding recorded in 34% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

**Breeding.** The only confirmed breeding record came from the River Sorn (near Bridgend) *Islay*.

Birds were also reported during the year from *Islay* (3 locations in addition to the above), *Mid-Argyll* (2 locations), and *Mull* (4 locations). One at Lower Killeyan (The Oa) on 11th Nov was in a part of *Islay* where there have been few past records.

**WREN** *Troglodytes troglodytes* Dreathann donn 1066

*B W* Very common, although numbers fluctuate. Breeding recorded in 84% of 10 km

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*squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

**Breeding.** Following the cold winter, there was a substantial decline in numbers at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll*, with a total of 28 territories in the CBC plots (*cf* 44 in 1995). Such a decline was not apparent in the BBS data, with records from 12 of 21 squares (*cf* 12 of 17 in 1995).

**DUNNOCK** *Prunella modularis* Gealbhoonn nam preas 1084  
*B W P Widespread and common, except some islands. Breeding recorded in 55% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 3 of 21 BBS squares (*cf* 2 of 17 in 1995).

**ROBIN** *Erithacus rubecula* Bru dhearg 1099  
*B P Common. Breeding recorded in 79% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Heavy autumn passage in some years.*

**Breeding.** At Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll*, there was a total of 10 territories in the CBC plots (*cf* 17 in 1995), the decline being attributed to the effects of the cold winter. As with Wren, BBS data showed little evidence of a decline, with records from 11 of 21 squares (*cf* 10 of 17 in 1995).

**BLACK REDSTART** *Phoenicurus ochrurus* Ceann dubhan 1121  
*P Less than annual. All but 2 of 17 records in Argyll during 1980-95 were in spring (late Mar to May) or late autumn (Oct to mid-Nov).*

There were 4 records of females or first-year males during the year: one at Campbeltown Kintyre on 1st-3rd Mar, one at Loch a'Phuill Tiree on 30th Mar, one at Campbeltown Airport Kintyre on 26th Oct, and one at Ardtalla Islay on 30th Oct.

**REDSTART** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* Ceann dearg 1122  
*S P Common breeding species in relatively open woodland, except Islay where scarce; absent from Colonsay, Tiree and Coll. Breeding recorded in 37% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

The first bird of the year was at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* on 20th Apr.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in one of 21 BBS squares (*cf* one of 17 in 1995). Four pairs using Forestry Commission nest boxes in *N. Argyll* reared a total of 21 young, while a pair at Strone (Loch Sween) *Mid-Argyll* reared 6 young. Also in *Mid-Argyll*, there were 5 territories in the woodland CBC plot at Taynish NNR (*cf* 6 in 1995). Breeding was also reported from Moine Mhor *Mid-Argyll*, Loch Ba Mull, and Bonawe *N. Argyll*.

There were no records of autumn migrants.

**WHINCHAT** *Saxicola rubetra* Gocan 1137  
*S P Widespread and common breeding species. Breeding recorded in 74% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

The first bird of the year was at Fearnoch (Kilmichael Forest) *Mid-Argyll* on 23rd Apr. Other than 2 at Loch Gruinart Islay on 30th Apr, birds were not recorded in any other areas until May.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 8 of 21 BBS squares (*cf* 3 of 17 in



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1995, and only one of 17 in 1994), suggesting an increase in numbers. There were 11 pairs at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* (cf at least 8 in 1995). On *Colonsay*, 5 pairs were located, 2 more than in 1995.

The last singles of the year were at Kilblaan (Glen Shira) *Mid-Argyll* on 8th Oct, and Balemartine *Tiree* on 20th Oct.

**STONECHAT** *Saxicola torquata* Clacharan 1139  
*R P W* Widespread, but resident population can decline dramatically as a consequence of severe winter conditions. Breeding recorded in 70% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Some emigration may take place in winter.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in only 4 of 21 BBS squares (cf 7 of 17 in 1995), suggesting a decline in numbers as a consequence of the hard winter. Similarly, numbers on *Colonsay* declined from 22 pairs in 1995 to only 8 in 1996, while only 3 pairs bred at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* (cf at least 10 in 1995).

**WHEATEAR** *Oenanthe oenanthe* Bru gheal 1146  
*S P* Common breeding species. Breeding recorded in 83% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

The first bird of the year was at Feolin *Jura* on 14th Mar. There was a gap of 11 days before the next record, but birds had been seen on *Islay*, *Colonsay*, *Mull* and *Tiree* by the end of Mar.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 8 of 21 BBS squares (cf 8 of 17 in 1995).

Birds were still widespread in Oct, with the last singles on *Oronsay Colonsay* on 25th Oct, at Loch Gruinart *Islay* on 31st Oct, and at Ceann a'Mhara *Tiree* on 9th Nov.

**GREENLAND WHEATEAR** *O. o. leucorhoa*  
*P* Apparently rare, but probably greatly under-recorded.

In spring, 3 males were seen in the southern part of *Colonsay* on 4th May.

In autumn, an adult male was at Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* on 23rd-28th Sep.

**RING OUZEL** *Turdus torquatus* Dubh chreige 1186  
*S P* Very localised upland breeding species. Breeding recorded in 7% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). More widespread, though scarce, on migration. All records required.

There were no spring records of passage migrants.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 2 of 21 BBS squares (cf none of 17 in 1995). Also, a pair was on territory at Creag na h-Iolair (Glen Aray) *Mid-Argyll* on 12th May.

In autumn, singles were at Port Wemyss and near Smaull (north of Loch Gorm) *Islay* on 16th Oct, and at Kilchiaran *Islay* on 12th Nov.

**BLACKBIRD** *Turdus merula* Lon dubh 1187  
*B W P* Widespread and very common breeding species. Breeding recorded in 77% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 5 of 21 BBS squares (cf 9 of 17 in

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1995), suggesting a decline in numbers.

In autumn, large numbers ("hundreds") were reported with flocks of Fieldfares and Redwings at the Mull of Oa *Islay* on 29th Oct.

### FIELDFARE *Turdus pilaris* Liath thrúisg 1198

*W P Abundant on autumn passage, but relatively few winter.*

During the early part of the year, the only flocks larger than 20 birds were 25 at Fincham (Loch Awe) *Mid-Argyll* on 24th Jan, 25 at Kilbride Bay (= Bagh Osde) Bay Cowal on 3rd Feb, 25 at Connel *Mid-Argyll* on 26th Feb, 50 in Glen Shira *Mid-Argyll* on 14th Mar, and up to 50 at Moine Mhor *Mid-Argyll* in Mar.

One at Port Wemyss *Islay* on 16th Jun was the first summer (Jun/Jul) record in *Argyll* since 1982.

In autumn, one was at Port Wemyss on 22nd Sep, but there was a gap of several weeks until the main arrival in mid-Oct, with 21 on Oronsay *Colonsay* on the 17th, and 25 at Doire Darach (Loch Tulla) *N. Argyll* on the 19th. The highest counts of the autumn came from *Kintyre* and *Islay*. In *Kintyre*, 300 were at The Laggan on 18th Oct, increasing to 800 by 1st Nov. On *Islay*, at least 200 were at Kilnaughton *Islay* on 26th Oct, while 1,000 were at Octofad and 1,000 at Leorin (near Port Ellen) *Islay* on the 28th. Also, "thousands" were reported from the Mull of Oa *Islay* on 29th Oct and Kilmichael Glassary *Mid-Argyll* in mid-Nov. As usual, numbers declined rapidly after the middle of Nov, though 200 were still at North Connel *N. Argyll* on the 17th. The highest count in Dec was 95 at Kilbride Bay (= Bagh Osde) *Cowal* on the 8th.

### SONG THRUSH *Turdus philomelos* Smeorach 1200

*B W P Widespread and common. Breeding recorded in 72% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

Breeding. The species was recorded in 10 of 21 BBS squares (cf 8 of 17 in 1995).

### REDWING *Turdus iliacus* Sgiath dhearg 1201

*W P Abundant on autumn passage, but relatively few winter. Occasional individuals recorded in late spring. Bred on Mull in 1991.*

As usual, only small numbers were seen during Jan-Mar, the highest counts being 25 at Fincham (Loch Awe) *Mid-Argyll* on 24th Jan, and 40 at Connel *Mid-Argyll* on 31st Jan. There was a large arrival on *Tiree* on 15th Apr, with many flocks of 100+ birds being seen; all had left by the 17th. A late single was at Easter Ellister *Islay* on 16th May.

The first record of the autumn was not until 11th Oct, when 21 were at Kilblaán (Glen Shira) *Mid-Argyll*. Large numbers were seen in *Kintyre* and *Islay* between 16th Oct and 1st Nov. In *Kintyre*, 1,000 were at The Laggan on 18th Oct, increasing to 4,000 by the 27th, and 4,000 were in the Southend area on the 24th. On *Islay*, 1,450 were at Portnahaven and 500 at Cattadale on 16th Oct, 400 at Kilmeny on the 18th, 1,500 at Leorin (near Port Ellen) on the 28th, 700 at Neriby (near Bridgend) on the 29th, and 300 at Port Wemyss on 1st Nov; also, "thousands" were said to be on the Mull of Oa on 29th Oct. Elsewhere, the only count exceeding 200 was 400 at Kilmichael Glassary *Mid-Argyll* on 19th Oct. Only small numbers were present during

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most of Nov and all of Dec, the largest flock reported during the latter month being 35 on Iona *Mull* on the 5th.

**MISTLE THRUSH** *Turdus viscivorus* Smeorach mhor 1202  
*B W P Widespread but thinly distributed breeding species. Breeding recorded in 43% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Many birds emigrate in autumn.*

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in one of 21 BBS squares (*cf* 2 of 17 in 1995). The only counts of breeding birds came from Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay*, where there were at least 3 pairs, and *Colonsay*, where there were also at least 3 pairs.

The highest count of the autumn was 14 near Foreland House *Islay* on 6th Oct. Migrants or dispersing birds were seen in the Portnahaven area *Islay* (one on 11th Nov and 2 the following day).

**GRASSHOPPER WARBLER** *Locustella naevia* Ceileiriche leumnach 1236  
*S P Localised breeding species in all areas, good densities occurring in many young conifer plantations. Breeding recorded in 26% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

The first bird of the spring was at Fearnoch (Kilmichael Forest) *Mid-Argyll* on 19th Apr. With the exception of *Islay*, where the first was at Loch Gruinart on 25th Apr, birds were not recorded in any other areas until early May.

**Breeding.** Singing males were recorded in *Islay* (5 birds), *Jura* (2), *Colonsay* (2), *Cowal* (3), *Mid-Argyll* (at least 15), *Coll* (1) and *N. Argyll* (1). Some of these records were early in the season and may relate to birds that later moved on.

There were no records after mid-Jul.

**SEDGE WARBLER** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* Glas eun 1243  
*S P Locally common. Breeding recorded in 41% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

The first singles were at Loch Gruinart *Islay* and Taynish *Mid-Argyll* on 23rd Apr. There were no records from other areas until May.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 2 of 21 BBS squares (*cf* 3 of 17 in 1995). At least 33 pairs were at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve, a much higher total than in 1994 (25 pairs) and 1995 (17 pairs). On *Colonsay*, on the other hand, the total of 31 singing males was less than the high value of 34 in 1995. Numbers at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* also showed a decline to more normal levels (5 territories in the coastal CBC plot) following a record total (11 territories) in 1995. There was also a territory on Iona *Mull*, as in 1995.

The last bird of the year was at Port Wemyss *Islay* on 19th Sep.

**LESSER WHITETHROAT** *Sylvia curruca* Gealan coille beag 1274  
*S P Rare, with only 6 records in Argyll during 1980-95: 2 in May, 2 in Jun and 2 in Aug.*

One was at Wester Ellister *Islay* on 21st and 22nd Sep, and it or another was seen at exactly the same spot on 10th Oct [TapRh]\*. This is the first record of the species in Argyll since 1992.

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**WHITETHROAT** *Sylvia communis* Gealan coille 1275  
*S P Widespread but thinly distributed breeding species. Marked improvement in numbers during the 1980s, with good breeding densities in many young conifer plantations. Breeding recorded in 59% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

The first bird of the year was at Fearnoch (Kilmichael Forest) *Mid-Argyll* on 27th Apr. There were no other records until May.

**Breeding.** The few counts received suggested that 1996 was a better year than 1995. On *Colonsay*, 13 singing males were located (cf a low count of 6 in 1995, but 12 in 1994). At *Taynish NNR Mid-Argyll*, there was a total of 8 territories in the CBC plots (cf 5 in 1995). However, CBC data showed little change, with birds recorded in 3 of 21 squares (cf 2 of 17 in 1995). A total of 8 singing birds was found on *Scarba Mid-Argyll* on 13th-14th May.

The last 2 birds of the year were at *Portnahaven Islay* on 22nd Sep.

**GARDEN WARBLER** *Sylvia borin* Ceileiriche garaidh 1276  
*S P Scarce breeding species. Breeding recorded in 14% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

The first spring record came from *Connel Mid-Argyll* on 15th May.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 2 of 21 BBS squares (cf 2 of 17 in 1995). In *Mid-Argyll*, there were 2 territories at *Taynish NNR* and one at *Moine Mhor NNR*; also, a bird was at *Slockavullin* on 26th May. Other than 3 singing birds in the *Lochdon area Mull*, the only other breeding season record was one at *Ardlamont House Cowal* on 20th May.

In autumn, one was in a garden at *Kames Cowal* on 25th Aug, and a late passage migrant was at *Cornaigmore Tiree* on 20th-25th Sep.

**BLACKCAP** *Sylvia atricapilla* Ceann dubh 1277  
*S W P Scarce breeding species. Breeding recorded in 23% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Increasingly numerous in winter.*

Wintering birds were reported from *Blairmore (Loch Long) Cowal* (one on 8th and 20th Jan), *Dunoon Cowal* (a male on 25th Jan), and *Connel Mid-Argyll* (a female on 1st-15th Feb). In spring, passage migrants were at *Crossapol Tiree* on 3rd May, *Kenovay Tiree* on 4th May, and *Scalasaig Colonsay* on 7th May.

**Breeding.** There were 2 territories in the woodland CBC plot at *Taynish NNR Mid-Argyll*. The only other records of possible breeding birds were up to 4 singing at *Bridgend Islay* in May, and singles at *Holy Loch Cowal* on 5th May, *Dunstaffnage Mid-Argyll* on 7th May, *Kilmartin Mid-Argyll* on 26th May, and *Moine Mhor Mid-Argyll* on 26th Jun.

In late autumn, one was at *Heylipol Tiree* on 11th Nov and another at *Jura House Jura* the next day.

**WOOD WARBLER** *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* Ceileiriche cille 1308  
*S P Common breeding species. Breeding recorded in 49% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

The first record of the year came from *Taynish Mid-Argyll* on 25th Apr. As usual, there was a widespread arrival during the first few days of May.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 2 of 21 BBS squares (cf 3 of 17 in

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1995). In *Mid-Argyll*, there were 10 territories in the woodland CBC plot at Taynish NNR (as in 1994). On *Mull*, birds were widespread, the highest count being 8 along the Croggan to Portfield road on 23rd Jun. Other breeding season records came from *Islay* (5 locations), *Cowal* (one location), and *Mid-Argyll* (2 locations including Taynish).

Departure went unnoticed as usual.

**CHIFFCHAFF** *Phylloscopus collybita* Cailean 1311  
*S P Uncommon breeding species, scarce on islands. Breeding recorded in 25% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Winter records not infrequent.*

In spring, the first record was one at Loch Gruinart *Islay* on 3rd Apr, followed by one at Taynish *Mid-Argyll* the next day. Passage migrants were noted on *Tiree*: one at Sorobaidh on 7th Apr, and one at Hynish on the 8th.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 4 of 21 BBS squares (*cf* 2 of 17 in 1995). Breeding season records were received from *Islay* (5 locations), *Jura* (2 locations) and *Mull* (3 locations). A male holding territory on Iona *Mull* in early Jun was outside the known breeding range in recent years (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). No birds were seen or heard on *Colonsay*, where normally present.

In late autumn, 2 were at Easter Ellister *Islay* on 8th Oct, one near Bruichladdich *Islay* on 20th Oct, and one again at Easter Ellister on 2nd Nov. On *Tiree*, 2 were at Balemartine on 4th and 16th Nov, and one on the 17th, and one was at Heylipol on the 11th.

An individual of one of the two races *P. c. abietinus* or *P. c. tristis* was reported from Oronsay *Colonsay* on 7th Nov.

**WILLOW WARBLER** *Phylloscopus trochilus* Crionag ghiuthais 1312  
*S P Widespread and very common breeding species. Breeding recorded in 81% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

The first 4 birds of the spring were at Loch Gruinart *Islay* on 16th Apr. An influx was noted on *Tiree* on the 18th, with 7 at Hynish and 4 at Sorobaidh. By the 21st, birds had been reported from most areas.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 13 of 21 BBS squares (*cf* 12 of 17 in 1995). There was a record total of 82 territories in CBC plots at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* (*cf* 65 in 1995).

One at Easter Ellister *Islay* and another nearby at Wester Ellister on 21st Sep were the last birds of the year.

**GOLDCREST** *Regulus regulus* Crionag bhuidhe 1314  
*R W P Common breeding species and passage migrant. Breeding recorded in 53% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

The only spring migrant reported was one at Ceann a'Mhara *Tiree* on 31st Mar.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 5 of 21 BBS squares (*cf* 4 of 17 in 1995).

**SPOTTED FLYCATCHER** *Muscicapa striata* Breacan glas sgiobalta 1335  
*S P Widespread but thinly distributed breeding species. Breeding recorded in 53%*

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of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

The first 2 birds of the year were at Bridgend Islay on 12th May.

**Breeding.** The species was not recorded in any of the 21 CBC squares surveyed (cf records from one of 17 squares in 1995, and 2 of 17 in 1994). At Taynish NNR Mid-Argyll, there were only 2 territories in CBC plots (cf 3 in 1995). Records of successful breeding came from Kilnaughton Islay, Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve Islay (2-3 pairs) and Bonawe N. Argyll.

The last bird of the year was on Mull on 16th Sep.

**PIED FLYCATCHER** *Ficedula hypoleuca* Breacan glas 1349  
S P Very localised breeder in oakwoods. Increase in breeding population in recent years is attributable to the Argyll Bird Club nest-box scheme. Breeding recorded in 6% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

In spring, a male was on passage at Portnahaven Islay on 20th May.

**Breeding.** Of 11 nest boxes with full clutches (laid by 8-11 females) at Bonawe N. Argyll, 3 boxes fledged a total of 19 young; failure at the other 8 was due to a mammalian predator, believed to be a pine marten *Martes martes*. Two pairs nested at Ardgenavan (near Inveraray) Mid-Argyll, each pair successfully rearing 5 young, though both broods fledged very late; a chick ringed at this site in 1995 was trapped as a breeding adult at Tarbet (Loch Lomond) in 1996. Forestry Commission nest boxes were used at Glen Nant Mid-Argyll (where one pair reared 4 young), Strone (Glen Lochy) Mid-Argyll (where one pair reared 5 young), and Catnish (Glen Orchy) N. Argyll (where 3 pairs reared a total of 13 young). There were no other confirmed breeding records, but a female was seen at Blairmore (Loch Long) Cowal on 5th Jun, and breeding may have occurred there. Also, a male and a female prospected nest boxes at Malt Land (Inveraray) Mid-Argyll in May, while a male singing near nest boxes at Ford Mid-Argyll, also in May, apparently failed to attract a mate.

In autumn, a passage migrant was at Balemartine Tiree on 15th-16th Aug, and the same or another there on the 30th.

**LONG-TAILED TIT** *Aegithalos caudatus* Ciochan 1437  
B W P Widespread and common on mainland, local on some islands and rare on Colonsay, Tiree and Coll. Breeding recorded in 48% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Parties of wandering birds widespread in autumn.

**Breeding.** No significant records.

Parties of 7 at Easter Ellister Islay on 22nd Sep and 10 nearby at Portnahaven on 22nd Dec were several km away from any known breeding site.

**COAL TIT** *Parus ater* Smutag 1461  
B W P Widespread and common except on Tiree and Coll. Breeding recorded in 62% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Some dispersal noted in autumn.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 8 of 21 BBS squares (cf 6 of 17 in 1995).

The only high count of the year was 42 at Doire Darach (Loch Tulla) N. Argyll on 19th Oct.

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**BLUE TIT** *Parus caeruleus* Cailleachag ceann ghorm 1462  
*R P Widespread and very common breeder, but rare on Tiree and Coll. Breeding recorded in 65% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 6 of 21 BBS squares (*cf* 5 of 17 in 1995). At Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll*, there was a record total of 24 territories in CBC plots (*cf* 18 in 1995).

**GREAT TIT** *Parus major* Currac bhain tighearna 1464  
*R P Widespread and very common breeder, but absent from Tiree and Coll. Breeding recorded in 61% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 7 of 21 BBS squares (*cf* 5 of 17 in 1995). There was a total of 8 territories in CBC plots at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* (*cf* 6 in 1995).

**TREECREEPER** *Certhia familiaris* Snaigear 1486  
*B W Widespread and common except on Tiree and Coll. Breeding recorded in 37% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in one of 21 BBS squares (*cf* 2 of 17 in 1995). At Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll*, there was a total of 5 territories in CBC plots (*cf* 3 in 1995).

**GREAT GREY SHRIKE** *Lanius excubitor* Feoladair glas 1520  
*W P Increasingly rare and irregular; only 3 Argyll records during 1985-95.*  
 One was at Inverinan (Loch Awe) *Mid-Argyll* on 27th Jan.

**WOODCHAT SHRIKE** *Lanius senator* 1523  
*V No previous Argyll records.*

A juvenile was at Kilnaughton Bay (near Port Ellen) *Islay* on 16th Sep [CC, TapRh, FML, MM]\*. This is the first Argyll record of this southern species which, while not infrequently recorded in Shetland and Fair Isle, is a rarity elsewhere in Scotland (see pp. 92-95).

**JAY** *Garrulus glandarius* Sgraicheap 1539  
*R Locally distributed, mainland only. Breeding recorded in 6% of 10 km squares, mostly in Cowal (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). All records required.*

The only record during the early part of the year was one at Braevallich (Loch Awe) on 23rd Jan.

**Breeding.** Two adults and 2 juveniles were seen together at Barcaldine N. Argyll on 22nd Jul.

During the latter part of the year, birds were regularly seen at Dunoon Cowal. Except for one at North Connel N. Argyll on 17th Nov, all the other sightings came from *Mid-Argyll*: 2 near Achnamara (Loch Sween) on 7th Aug, 2 at Glen Shira on 8th Oct, one at Ford on 6th Nov, and 4 at Taynish NNR on 12th Dec.

**MAGPIE** *Pica pica* Cadhag 1549  
*R Local in Cowal, rare elsewhere. Breeding recorded in 2% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). All records required.*

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Very few records were received. In *Cowal*, there were regular sightings at Dunoon throughout the year, and one was seen at Loch Eck on 14th Apr.

Away from known breeding sites, one was at Barcaldine *N. Argyll* on 14th Feb and one at Aros Moss *Kintyre* on 13th Jul.

**CHOUGH** *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* Cathag dhearg chasach 1559  
*R Islay* is the Scottish stronghold, with smaller numbers on *Jura* and *Colonsay* and a recent toehold on *Mull*. All records away from *Islay* required.

No flocks larger than 25 birds were reported during the year.

**Breeding.** A comprehensive survey of *The Oa Islay* showed that this population is in serious decline, and is possibly heading for extinction. Only 6 breeding pairs and one non-breeding bird were located (cf 23 pairs and 15-20 non-breeders in 1986; Monaghan *et al.* 1989). A total of 10 young, in 5 family groups, was present in Jul [MM, FML]. Information for the rest of *Islay* was unavailable. On *Colonsay*, at least 10 breeding pairs and 11 non-breeders were present in Jun, and at least 8 young were reared at 4 monitored sites [DCJ, JJ]. One of the *Colonsay* birds was originally ringed as a chick on *Islay* in 1983 and bred there in 1986, but has bred annually on *Colonsay* since 1991. On *Mull*, a pair bred at the usual location but failed, as it has done each year since the first attempt in 1989.

Away from the breeding areas, 3 were seen and heard flying high over *Machrihanish SBO Kintyre* on 10th Aug, apparently heading towards the *Mull of Kintyre* [EJM].

**JACKDAW** *Corvus monedula* Cathag 1560  
*B W* Common throughout much of *Argyll*, but scarce on *Mull* and does not breed on *Tiree* or *Coll*. Breeding recorded in 40% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Immigration into some areas in winter, e.g. *Tiree*.

No count during the year exceeded 100 birds. Two migrants flew north over *Balevullin Tiree* on 28th Apr.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in one of 21 BBS squares (cf one of 17 in 1995).

A flock of 18 migrants was briefly at *Frenchman's Rocks Islay* on 15th Oct.

**ROOK** *Corvus frugilegus* Rocas 1563  
*B W* Common throughout much of *Argyll*, but scarce on *Mull* and does not breed on *Colonsay*, *Tiree* or *Coll*. Breeding recorded in 25% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Post-breeding influx of juveniles to some islands, e.g. *Mull* and *Tiree*.

**Breeding.** In *Kintyre*, a complete census in Apr gave a total of 2,514 nests at 41 rookeries (cf 1,397 at 24 rookeries in 1989); the largest rookery, at *Glenbarr*, held 500 breeding pairs (cf 363 in 1989) [EJM, LM, JMcG]. No other area of *Argyll* is believed to hold comparable numbers, but a complete count at all 8 currently occupied rookeries on *Islay* gave a total of 316 nests (cf 211 at 12 rookeries in 1985) [MAO]. Other counts came from *Connel Mid-Argyll*, with 11 nests (as in 1995) and *North Connel N. Argyll*, with 21 nests (cf 23 in 1994 and 1995).

In autumn, small flocks of migrants passed through the *Portnahaven area Islay*: 14 on 15th Oct, and 16 on 12th Nov. On *Coll*, up to 50 were at the RSPB reserve in Nov and up to 20 in Dec. No large flocks were reported.



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**HOODED CROW** *Corvus corone cornix* Feannag 1567  
*B W Widespread and common. Breeding recorded in 87% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

As in 1994 and 1995, a spring cull was carried out on *Colonsay*.

**Breeding.** Birds were recorded in 15 of 21 BBS squares (*cf* 13 of 17 in 1995). Of 5 pairs breeding at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay*, 4 reared no young owing to predation by Buzzard and Raven. The population of the Treshnish Isles *Mull* was estimated to be 3 pairs.

**CARRION CROW** *C. c. corone*

*B W Birds are spreading gradually through Cowal into Kintyre and Mid-Argyll. Breeding recorded in 13% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

**Breeding.** Birds were recorded in 2 of 21 BBS squares (*cf* 3 of 17 in 1995).

Away from the main breeding areas, 2 were at Scarinish *Tiree* on 23rd Mar, one on Oronsay *Colonsay* on 12th Oct, and one at Loch an t-Sailein *Islay* on 24th Oct.

**RAVEN** *Corvus corax* Fìtheach

1572

*B W Common. Breeding recorded in 75% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

By far the highest count in the early part of the year was max. 150 roosting at Tobermory *Mull* on 20th Mar. No other count exceeded 20 birds.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 9 of 21 BBS squares (*cf* 9 of 17 in 1995). On *Colonsay*, at least 7 pairs bred; 5 of these reared a total of 14 young, the outcome of the other 2 attempts being unknown [DCJ, JJ]. On *Coll*, 9 breeding pairs were located; all but one were successful, 2 of them fledging a total of 7 young and a further 4 having a total of 17-18 unfledged young in the nest [RSPB]. Breeding was also confirmed in *Cowal* (one pair), *Mid-Argyll* (6 pairs), and *Mull* (4 pairs).

On *Islay*, the mean number of birds using the roost at Bridgend during Sep-Dec was 252 (range 196-285); a further 28 territories on the island were known to be occupied by pairs during the 1996/97 winter, adding 56 birds to the roost counts [MM, FML]. Elsewhere, the only counts exceeding 20 birds were 30 at Glengorm *Mull* on 16th Jun, and 25 at Loch Nell *Mid-Argyll* on 15th Sep.

**STARLING** *Sturnus vulgaris* Druid

1582

*B W P Common except on Mull, where a localised post-breeding influx of juveniles occurs. Breeding recorded in 65% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

The largest count during the early part of the year was 730 at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* on 27th Mar. No other count exceeded 250 birds.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 3 of 21 BBS squares (*cf* 4 of 17 in 1995).

The only count higher than 250 birds during the second winter period was 800 at Uiskentuie (Loch Indaal) *Islay* on 16th Oct.

**ROSE-COLOURED STARLING** *Sturnus roseus* Druid dhearg

1584

*S A rare visitor, mostly in Jul and Aug, with 7 Argyll records (one possibly involving a returning bird from the previous year) during 1980-95. No records of juveniles during this period.*

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An adult was in a garden at Carradale Kintyre from 30th Jul to 2nd Aug [JP, SP]\*.

**HOUSE SPARROW** *Passer domesticus* Gealbhonn 1591  
*R Commonly associated with human habitation, and distribution therefore rather localised in remote areas. Breeding recorded in 57% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

Breeding. The species was recorded in one of 21 BBS squares (cf one of 17 in 1995).

The largest flocks reported during the year were 42 at Port Wemyss Islay on 14th Aug, and up to 60 at a garden feeding station at Bruichladdich Islay in Oct.

**TREE SPARROW** *Passer montanus* Gealbhonn nan craobh 1598  
*P? Current status uncertain. Although clearly a scarce bird, it may be under-recorded. All records required.*

The only record of the year was one on Iona Mull on 12th Jun.

**CHAFFINCH** *Fringilla coelebs* Breacan beithe 1636  
*B W P Abundant except on Tiree and Coll. Breeding recorded in 80% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Birds commonly forage in cut hay and silage fields outwith breeding season.*

No count during the early part of the year exceeded 100 birds.

Breeding. The species was recorded in 12 of 21 BBS squares (cf 9 of 17 in 1995). At Taynish NNR Mid-Argyll, there was a record total of 35 territories in CBC plots (cf 25 in 1995).

The only count exceeding 100 birds during the second winter period was 300 at Ballygrant Islay on 18th Oct.

**BRAMBLING** *Fringilla montifringilla* Bricein caorainn 1638  
*W P Varying numbers occur between Oct and Apr each year.*

The only records during Jan-Apr were 20 at Bridgend Islay on 5th Jan, and 4 at Benderloch N. Argyll on 25th Jan.

There were many more records during the latter part of the year, the first single being at Kilblaan (Glen Shira) Mid-Argyll on 12th Oct. Birds were also seen at Doire Darach (Loch Tulla) N. Argyll (one on 19th Oct), Balemartine Tiree (2 on 28th-29th Oct), Oronsay Colonsay (one from 29th Oct to 2nd Nov), Kilchoman Islay (3 on 7th Nov), and Ballygrant Islay (max. 6 on 13th Nov). By far the highest counts, however, came from N. Argyll in Dec, where about 120 were with Chaffinches at South Ledaig on the 19th, and about 40 at Benderloch on the 29th.

**GREENFINCH** *Carduelis chloris* Glaisean daraich 1649  
*R W Locally common. Breeding recorded in 31% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

The only count exceeding 20 birds during the year was 30 at Cornaigmore Tiree on 5th Mar.

Breeding. The species was not recorded in any of the 21 BBS squares surveyed (cf one of 17 squares in 1995). The only count of breeding birds was at least 5 pairs

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at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay*. There were several breeding season reports from *Tiree*, where the species is believed to nest in small numbers. Breeding also occurred on *Coll*, where the species appears to have been a regular nester for several years.

**GOLDFINCH** *Carduelis carduelis* Lasair choille 1653  
*B W P Localised distribution. Absent as a breeding species from Colonsay, Tiree and Coll. Breeding recorded in 32% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Some emigration in autumn.*

No count during the early part of the year exceeded 10 birds. On *Tiree*, where the species is not known to breed, one was at Heanish on 20th Feb and 2 at Scarinish on 23rd Mar.

**Breeding.** About 10 pairs bred at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay*.

The highest count during the latter part of the year was 15 at Kilblaán (Glen Shira) *Mid-Argyll* on 8th Oct. On *Tiree*, 2 were at Mannal on 9th Dec.

**SISKIN** *Carduelis spinus* Gealag bhuidhe 1654  
*B W P Numbers fluctuate from year to year, but the breeding population has clearly increased as a consequence of coniferous afforestation. Absent as a breeding species from Tiree and Coll. Breeding recorded in 54% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

No flocks reported during the early part of the year exceeded 20 birds.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 4 of 21 BBS squares (*cf* 6 of 17 in 1995). Otherwise, very few breeding season records were received, though it is difficult to tell whether this reflects genuine scarcity. Most records came from *Jura*, where birds were present at 4 locations. Breeding probably occurred near Easter Ellister *Islay*, suggesting a range expansion into the southern Rinnns, as has recently happened with Redpoll.

In autumn, there was a small influx into the Portnahaven area *Islay* in late Sep (max. 30 on the 21st), and again in the first half of Nov (max. 29 on the 12th). The only other count exceeding 20 birds was 30 at Kilbride Bay (= Bagh Osde) *Cowal* on 8th Dec. One bird reached Balemartine *Tiree* on 4th Nov.

**LINNET** *Carduelis cannabina* Gealan lin 1660  
*B W P Localised distribution. Breeding recorded in 37% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Flocking in autumn and winter.*

No count during the early part of the year exceeded 50 birds.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 3 of 21 BBS squares (*cf* 3 of 17 in 1995).

In late summer and autumn, several flocks of 50 or more birds were reported from the Portnahaven area *Islay* (50 on 17th Jul, 75 on 3rd Aug, and 150 on 29th Aug) and Loch Gruinart *Islay* (max. 62 on 29th Sep). No comparable reports were received from other areas.

**TWITE** *Carduelis flavirostris* Gealan beinne 1662  
*B W P Localised breeding species, found especially on the islands. Breeding recorded in 36% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Flocking in low-lying arable and*

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coastal areas, Aug onwards. Some evidence to suggest emigration from Argyll in autumn, although there may also be an influx of wintering birds to some areas.

The only count of 50 or more birds during the early part of the year was max. 75 at Balephetrish Tìree on 22nd Mar.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 3 of 21 BBS squares (cf one of 17 in 1995). On Colonsay, 40 pairs were located (cf 39 in 1995). There were a few other reports of small numbers (up to 5 pairs) during the breeding season, including 5 around the coast of Scarba Mid-Argyll on 13th-14th May.

In autumn, several flocks of 50 or more birds were reported from Islay: 50 at the mouth of the Machrie River on 6th Sep, 50 at Ardnave on 16th Oct, 60 at Corrary (near Bowmore) on 30th Oct, and 200 at Killinallan on 31st Oct. Similar-sized flocks were also on Mull, with max. 60 on Iona on 7th Sep, 150 at Ardalanish (near Bunessan) on 12th Sep, and 60 at Burg (Loch Scridain) on 19th Sep. The only other locations with counts of more than 50 birds were Oronsay Colonsay (max. 102 on 19th Aug), and Ledaig Point N. Argyll (60 on 22nd Sep). Numbers in Nov and Dec appeared to be lower.

**REDPOLL** *Carduelis flammea* Dearcan seillich 1663

*BWP Localised breeder. Numbers fluctuate from year to year, but breeding population has probably increased as a consequence of coniferous afforestation. Breeding recorded in 41% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Flocking occurs in autumn and winter.*

No count during the early part of the year exceeded 20 birds.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 2 of 21 BBS squares (cf 2 of 17 in 1995). Breeding season records came from Islay (5 locations), Jura (2), Colonsay (2), Cowal (one) and Mull (3).

A widespread influx involving small numbers was witnessed on Islay in mid-Aug, the largest flock being 25 at Portnahaven on the 11th. Two also reached Balemartine Tìree on 25th Aug. Up to 60 were at Portnahaven during most of Sep; the only other counts exceeding 20 birds came from Doire Darach (Loch Tulla) N. Argyll (24 on 19th Oct), and Lochdon Mull (30 on 29th Nov).

**COMMON CROSSBILL** *Loxia curvirostra* Cam ghob 1666

*BW Numbers and distribution vary depending on abundance of conifer cone crops. Highly irruptive species with large flocks sometimes moving to locate a new seed area, usually in summer. Breeding recorded in 16% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

As in 1995, there were relatively few records. The species was recorded in 2 of 21 BBS squares (cf none of 17 in 1995). At least 2 were at Loch Tulla N. Argyll on 3rd May, one was at Tainish NNR Mid-Argyll on 3rd Jul, and 4 were at Fearnoch (Kilmichael Forest) Mid-Argyll on 8th Jul. Also, singles apparently flew in off the sea at Grass Point Mull on 9th and 15th Jul. Later in the autumn, at least 4 were at Loch Tulla on 19th Oct, and at least 25 at Barcaldine N. Argyll on 10th Nov.

**BULLFINCH** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* Corcan-coille 1710

*BW Locally common. Absent from Tìree and Coll and irregular on Gigha and Colonsay. Breeding recorded in 35% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

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No counts during the early part of the year exceeded 10 birds.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 3 of 21 BBS squares (*cf* 2 of 17 in 1995). Successful breeding occurred for the second successive year at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll*, with a total of 3 territories in CBC plots (*cf* one in 1995, the first confirmed breeding for the reserve).

The largest autumn flock was 46 at Doire Darach (Loch Tulla) *N. Argyll* on 19th Oct; some of the birds looked large and bright, and may have belonged to the northern subspecies *P. p. pyrrhula*. The only other count exceeding 10 birds was 12 at Laggan Bridge *Islay* on 28th Oct.

### LAPLAND BUNTING *Calcarius lapponicus*

1847

*P. Less than annual. Most frequent in autumn, less so in spring, and very rarely recorded in winter.*

Two flew over The Reef *Tiree* on 8th Oct. This is the first *Argyll* record since 1993.

### SNOW BUNTING *Plectrophenax nivalis* Gealag an t-sneachda

1850

*B? W P Has bred N. Argyll in recent years. Varying numbers on passage and in winter.*

There were relatively few records during the early part of the year. A first-winter bird at Duich Moss *Islay* on 28th Jan had been colour-ringed on the Norfolk coast in December 1995. Two were on the summit of Beinn an Oir *Jura* on 31st Mar, and 2 on Dun da Ghaoithe (above Craignure) *Mull* on 7th Apr.

The first returning birds were 3 at Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* on 27th Sep, followed by one at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 1st Oct. There were many records on *Islay*, with the largest flock at Ardnave (max. 76 on 7th Nov); another flock at Machir Bay peaked at 25 on 15th Dec, 15 were at Loch Gruinart on 28th Nov, and singles and small parties of up to 4 birds were reported from various other locations. In *Kintyre*, a regular flock at The Laggan during Nov-Dec held up to 28 birds, and one was at Rhunahaorine on 1st Dec. Birds were recorded on Oronsay *Colonsay* from 10th-28th Nov, numbers peaking at 16 on the 19th. On *Tiree*, 20 were at Scarinish on 11th Nov, and there were single-figure counts at several other locations in Nov and Dec, while up to 12 were at Coll RSPB Reserve in Nov and up to 6 in Dec.

### YELLOWHAMMER *Emberiza citrinella* Buidheag bhealaidh

1857

*B W Localised breeding species. Breeding recorded in 46% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Birds forage in cut hay and silage fields outwith breeding season. Population may be in decline and all records are welcome.*

Very few records were received. During the early part of the year, the only record was 3 at Kilmartin *Mid-Argyll* on 4th Mar.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in one of 21 BBS squares (*cf* none of 17 in 1995). Breeding season records were received from *Jura* (3 sites at the head of Loch Tarbert), Scarba *Mid-Argyll* (heard or seen at 5 coastal localities on 13th-14th May), and *Mull* (2 sites).

The only autumn records were 3 at Kilchiaran *Islay* on 17th Aug and 9th Oct, and a juvenile at Wester Ellister *Islay* on 7th Sep.

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### LITTLE BUNTING *Emberiza pusilla*

1874

*V One Argyll record (see below).*

1985 A record of a first-winter bird found dead at Skerryvore Lighthouse (about 15 km southwest of Tiree), on or around 27th Sep, was accepted at the time by BBRC (*British Birds* 79: 582) but has not previously been published in the ABR.

### REED BUNTING *Emberiza schoeniclus* Gealag Ioin

1877

*B W Locally common. Breeding recorded in 56% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Small flocks sometimes gather outwith the breeding season.*

No count during the early part of the year exceeded 10 birds.

Breeding. The species was recorded in 3 of 21 BBS squares (*cf* 3 of 17 in 1995). On Colonsay, 15 pairs were located (*cf* 10 in 1995), indicating that the population recovery continues. The only other count of breeding birds was 4 pairs at Coll RSPB Reserve.

In the second winter period, the largest flocks were max. 60 at Loch Gruinart Islay on 9th Nov, and max. 55 at Portnahaven Islay on 24th Dec. No other locality had counts exceeding 10 birds.

### CORN BUNTING *Miliaria calandra* Gealag bhuathair

1882

*R Declining resident species which is facing extinction in Argyll. Recent breeding on Tiree only.*

On Tiree, a singing male was at Ruaig on 15th Jun and 11th Jul; this may well have been the only one on the island, several of the territories recorded in 1995 apparently being unoccupied. There were no other records.

## CATEGORY D SPECIES AND ESCAPES

Category D of the British List consists partly of species with introduced populations that are not known to be self-sustaining. There were no reports of these species or of escapes in 1996.

In the case of several other species, however, individuals occurring in Argyll come from introduced populations that are not self-sustaining or that seem unlikely to be self-sustaining. These species include White-fronted Goose, Snow Goose, Barnacle Goose, White-tailed Eagle, Red-legged Partridge, Grey Partridge and Golden Pheasant. In the case of some of them (*e.g.* White-fronted Goose, Barnacle Goose), birds from wild populations also occur in Argyll. All are dealt with in the main systematic list.

## LIST OF REJECTED RECORDS, PENDING RECORDS AND RECORDS FOR WHICH DETAILS ARE STILL AWAITED

Please note that the records below are listed for information purposes only, and do not form part of the data set for the years in question. If a record involves more than one bird, the number of individuals is given in parentheses.

The following records of species on the ABRC, SBRC or BBRC lists have been

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rejected since the publication of *ABR* 12.

Purple Heron	<i>Colonsay</i>	16/05/96	SBRC
Rough-legged Buzzard	<i>Mid-Argyll</i>	03&18/02/95	SBRC
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	<i>N. Argyll</i>	06/08/94	SBRC
Arctic Redpoll (16)	<i>Mid-Argyll</i>	18/12/95	BBRC

It should be noted that the majority of records are rejected not because the committee in question is convinced that a mistake has been made, but because the evidence provided is insufficient to fully establish the identification.

The following records of species on the BBRC, SBRC or ABRC lists are currently in circulation around the relevant committees. In some instances, circulation has been delayed pending the receipt of additional details.

Green-winged Teal	<i>Islay</i>	15/10/96	ABRC
Green-winged Teal	<i>Islay</i>	01/12/96	ABRC
Green-winged Teal	<i>Tiree</i>	20/12/96	ABRC
King Eider	<i>Kintyre</i>	26/03-01/04/95	BBRC
Red-necked Phalarope	<i>Kintyre</i>	09/09/95	ABRC
Long-tailed Skua (4)	<i>Kintyre</i>	28-29/09/94	ABRC
Sabine's Gull	<i>Islay</i>	10/08/95	ABRC
Sabine's Gull (5)	<i>Islay</i>	24-30/09/96	ABRC
Ring-billed Gull	<i>Islay</i>	17/02-16/03/96	SBRC
Kumlien's (Iceland) Gull	<i>Islay</i>	18-23/02/95	BBRC
Roseate Tern	<i>Kintyre</i>	27/07/94	ABRC
Roseate Tern	<i>Kintyre</i>	22/07/95	ABRC
Black Tern	<i>Islay</i>	27/09/96	ABRC
Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Tiree</i>	09&12/11/96	ABRC
Yellow-browed Warbler	<i>Tiree</i>	02-03/11/96	ABRC
Red-backed Shrike	<i>Islay</i>	31/10/87	ABRC
Common Rosefinch	<i>Tiree</i>	21-22/09/96	ABRC
Common Rosefinch	<i>Colonsay</i>	07/11/96	ABRC
Hawfinch	<i>Cowal</i>	08-09/96	ABRC

Details of the following 1996 records of species on the BBRC, SBRC and ABRC lists have not been received.

Little Egret	Balvicar	<i>Mid-Argyll</i>	13/06/96
Bean Goose (6)	Loch Gruinart	<i>Islay</i>	10/10/96
Green-winged Teal	Loch Gruinart	<i>Islay</i>	11/03/96
Green-winged Teal	An Fhaodhail	<i>Tiree</i>	13/03/96
Garganey (2 females)	The Reef	<i>Tiree</i>	17/05/96
Garganey (female)	Oronsay	<i>Colonsay</i>	16/06/96
Sabine's Gull (2)	Machrihanish	<i>Kintyre</i>	30/09 -01/10/96
Sabine's Gull	Frenchman's Rocks	<i>Islay</i>	19/10/96

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Ring-billed Gull	Kilkenneth	Tiree	15/06/96
Yellow-legged (Herring) Gull	Soa	Tiree	19/03/96
Black Tern (2)	Hynish	Tiree	18/04/96

Anyone who saw any of these birds is encouraged to send in details. The records will not be referred to again in future reports unless details have by then been forwarded to ABRC, BBRC or SBRC.

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## Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* on Islay, 16 September 1996 - the first Argyll record

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### INTRODUCTION

There are currently seven species of shrike on the British list. Of these, three had been recorded in Argyll up to the end of 1995: Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*, Great Grey Shrike *L. excubitor*, and Lesser Grey Shrike *L. minor*. Of the remainder, two (Brown Shrike *L. cristatus* and the newly "split" Southern Grey Shrike *L. meridionalis*) are major rarities in the UK, with a third (Isabelline Shrike *L. isabellinus*) being marginally less rare and averaging about one British record per year.

The fourth species, Woodchat Shrike *L. senator*, is probably best classified as a scarce migrant, with up to 20 or more records annually in the UK. It breeds in southern Europe, extending northwards to northern France, eastern Germany and Poland. The wintering range is in sub-Saharan Africa (Cramp and Perrins 1993).

This note gives details of the first occurrence of Woodchat Shrike in Argyll.

### CIRCUMSTANCES OF OBSERVATION

The following notes have been adapted from CC's submission to SBRC:

Having spent the morning of 16 September assisting with a local research project by counting Choughs along a lengthy transect on The Oa, Islay, I arrived back at my rendezvous point at Kilnaughton Bay, near Port Ellen (NR344456), at around 3.30p.m. As I had about half an hour to spare before I was due to be collected, I decided to sit on a nearby bridge and watch the finches that were gathering to bathe in the stream below. Within a few seconds of sitting down, I noticed a movement about 50 m upstream from where I was, but the bird responsible was more or less hidden from view on the lowest strand of a barbed wire fence, behind a small clump of gorse. I kept watching and after a short time the bird flew to the top wire of the fence, in full view. I was stunned - it was obviously a shrike, when I had been expecting a Goldfinch!

Its bulky body, large flat head, long tail, and short hook-tipped beak revealed that it was a shrike, but which one? The brownish, heavily scaled upperparts meant that it had to be a juvenile, and the only two realistic candidates were Red-backed and Woodchat. At this point I realised that I had absolutely no idea how to tell the two

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species apart in this plumage. I watched the bird at ranges down to 20 m over the next 20 minutes. However, the light was poor, with the sun behind the bird. Even so, it did not feel like a Red-backed, having a very contrasting wing pattern and mostly white scapulars with black edges. As I knew that adult Woodchat Shrikes are characterised by white patches on the scapulars, this seemed the more likely of the two. When Mike Madders and Fiona Leckie arrived, they too saw the bird, and MM was in agreement with my tentative identification. On the way home we phoned TapRh in his capacity as local recorder, leaving directions. On arriving at the house I consulted a field guide and it became immediately apparent that our identification was correct.

TapRh adds:

I was drying the supper dishes on the evening of 16 September when my wife mentioned, very casually, that CC had earlier left a message on the answerphone saying something about a "Wingchat Shrike". Following a brief but animated discussion concerning the future of our marriage, I rang CC for directions, leapt into the car, and covered the distance to Kilnaughton Bay in record time. When I arrived there, however, it was 7.20 p.m. and the light was already starting to fade. A rather chilly southeasterly was blowing, and there seemed to be no birds anywhere. My heart sank, but I dutifully followed the directions I had been given and started to walk upstream. Within a couple of minutes I had flushed the shrike onto a nearby fence, apparently from a small reed-bed.

A quick look at the salient features was enough to confirm its identity, and I was then able to watch it for 25 minutes, mostly through the telescope at close range. I last saw it perched on the cemetery fence at 7.45 p.m, by which time there was little light left. Several local observers were informed of its presence that evening, but as far as I am aware it was not searched for the following day. I checked the spot again on 20 September but saw nothing.

### DESCRIPTION

The following description has been compiled from notes taken on the spot by CC and TapRh.

**Size and structure:** Size estimated as about twice the size of a Goldfinch (CC) or approximately the size of a Starling (TapRh). Obviously a passerine, with short, thick neck; large, flat-crowned head; and heavy-chested appearance. These features combined to make it look front-heavy, though this was balanced to some extent by fairly long tail. Wing tip not reaching much beyond base of tail.

**Plumage:** General impression was of a black, brown and white bird with cold plumage tones, richer colour being confined to nape and edges of greater coverts. Upperparts dull mid-brown, all feathers having obvious darker, narrow edges, creating prominent scaled pattern. Scaling especially obvious on the crown, with forehead slightly paler (CC); crown and forehead showing whitish flecking (TapRh). Nape showing slightly warmer tone. White eye-ring, appearing to extend backwards along upper edge of ear coverts. Ear coverts darker brown than remainder of head, forming mask. Most

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conspicuous facial feature (CC) a broad, brilliant white lower border to ear coverts, separating darker areas of head from pale, off-white chin and throat. Scapulars white centrally, with prominent black subterminal bands and very narrow white edges. Wings darker than remainder of upperparts. Median coverts similar to scapulars but with more black and less white. Greater coverts looking distinctly rusty, due to orange-buff edges (but white tips); innermost also with pale internal markings. Tertiaries with broader white/buff edges, and secondaries similar, the latter forming an obvious pale wing panel. Primaries black with white edges (CC) or white tips (TapRh), projecting well beyond tertiaries; primary coverts also white-tipped. White bases to primaries forming small but conspicuous pale patch.

Underparts dirty white, with pale grey-brown barring on flanks and breast-sides formed by fringes or sub-terminal marks on feathers; barring more extensive on upper breast, nearly reaching centre. Tail dark brown or black, with white outer feathers.

**Bare parts:** Bill short and yellowish/straw (CC) or pale pink (TapRh) in colour, with an obviously hooked, darker tip. Legs and eyes dark.

**Behaviour:** In the evening, spent most of time perched on fence above stream-bank, perching occasionally on bramble stems and twigs, almost always in full view. Made occasional forays into the air, and once seen to capture and consume a bumble-bee *Bombus* sp. (TapRh). Not seen to fly far, and rather difficult to follow when it flew, so details of appearance in flight not seen clearly by either observer.

### DISCUSSION

Most British records of Woodchat Shrike have been in southern England (as far north as Yorkshire), in Wales and in Shetland (including Fair Isle). Analysis of past British records shows a clear peak in late May and early June, and another in late August and early September, although birds have been recorded from April to early November (Dymond *et al.* 1989). As with many other southern species, more birds occur in spring than in autumn.

The species now turns up more or less annually in Scotland, with a total of 11 records away from the Northern Isles during the period 1980-95 (*Scottish Bird Reports*). A bird at Gartocham (Loch Lomond) on 7th June 1985 was only about 20 km outside the boundary of the Argyll recording area. Thus a record within Argyll was not unexpected.

It is interesting to note that, of the species and subspecies on the list of Scottish rarities published by the *Scottish Birds Records Committee* (SBRC), the majority (29 out of 51) had been recorded in Argyll up to the end of 1995 (see p. 12). Taking only the passerines, however, the proportion was much lower (9 out of 24), with several species regularly recorded in England, eastern Scotland or the Northern Isles being absent from the Argyll list. Woodchat Shrike was one of these "missing" passerines. Others will no doubt be found during the years to come.

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## The Status of the Scottish Crossbill *Loxia scotica* in Argyll

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### INTRODUCTION

A recent review carried out by the Argyll Bird Records Committee (ABRC) concluded that no past record of the Scottish Crossbill *Loxia scotica* in the current Argyll recording area is fully acceptable (Argyll Bird Report 12: 76). This short paper explains the background to the ABRC decision. No attempt is made to enter into the taxonomic debate over the validity of the species; the aim is rather to establish whether birds with the characteristics of this form have occurred in Argyll.

The taxonomic position of the Scottish Crossbill has undergone numerous changes. Originally, it was treated as a subspecies of the Common Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*, then as a subspecies of the large-billed Parrot Crossbill *L. pytyosittacus*, before reverting once again to Common Crossbill (Meinertzhagen and Williamson 1953; British Ornithologists' Union 1956). Nethersole-Thompson (1975), who referred to the Parrot Crossbill as the "Pine Crossbill", treated the Scottish Crossbill as a subspecies of this species. Around this time, Knox (1990a) first noted that Scottish Crossbills and Common Crossbills occurred in the same area without hybridising. This led to the suggestion that the Scottish Crossbill was a distinct endemic species (Knox 1976, Voous 1977), although it was recognised that its identification presented considerable difficulties (Knox 1990b). Unlike the usual situation when a subspecies is elevated to species level, recognition of the Scottish Crossbill as a species in its own right has not resulted in any clarification of the identification criteria (Proctor and Fairhurst 1993).

### AVAILABLE HABITAT

Within Argyll, there is one significant remnant of Caledonian pinewood, at Loch Tulla (North Argyll), with smaller fragments at Glen Creran and Glen Orchy (also North Argyll). This type of woodland, together with mature Scots pine *Pinus sylvestris* and European larch *Larix decidua* woodlands (which are rare in Argyll), is considered to be the favoured habitat of the Scottish Crossbill (Batten *et al.* 1990). Common Crossbills also feed in native pinewoods, particularly during the spring and early summer when the pine cones open naturally and the seed can be easily obtained. At other times of year, it appears that they are unable to feed on the cones of Scots pine (Marquiss and Rae 1994). The extent of coniferous forests in Argyll has increased

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very significantly during the last half century or so. Sitka spruce *Picea sitchensis* is the main species planted, but there are also significant areas of lodgepole pine *Pinus contorta*. Scottish Crossbills are known to occur in these conifers, and have even been recorded as breeding in the latter (D. Whittaker pers. comm.). However, the literature suggests that their use of habitats other than native pinewoods is only occasional (Nethersole-Thompson 1975, Batten *et al.* 1990).

### EVIDENCE IN THE LITERATURE

Of the major ornithological texts that have covered Argyll, Gray (1871) includes no significant records of crossbills, while Harvie-Brown and Buckley (1892) note only recent occurrences on Jura and at Loch Scridain on Mull.

Nethersole-Thompson (1971) notes that: "In Knapdale . . . Crossbills are nesting, but we do not yet know whether these are immigrants from the last irruption. But these birds may form breeding groups here as in Dumfries. Carefully compare their calls with any crossbills nesting in the old pines around Loch Tulla. Argyll could help us to understand the complex relationships between native and colonising crossbills."

Later, the same author (Nethersole-Thompson 1975) summarises his knowledge of the status of crossbills in Argyll as: "In March 1971, a pair nested in new conifer forest in Knapdale. This is likely to have been Common Crossbill, but there is no evidence. In that year Tim Sharrock also found broods in Glenbranter Forest where they were probably fairly common." Significantly Glenbranter Forest consists largely of mature sitka spruce, typical of *curvirostra* groups in southern Scotland. Relict pines around Loch Tulla are . . . probable Pine Crossbill haunts in Argyll".

According to this author (p. 173), the nearest confirmed records of Pine Crossbill to Argyll are in the 10-km squares NN17 (Fort William) and NN55 (Loch Rannoch), which are some 15-25 km outside the boundary of the Argyll recording area.

In the "Breeding Atlas", Sharrock (1976) does not distinguish between the two forms, and shows only a few scattered records of crossbills in Argyll. Lack (1986), in the "Winter Atlas", shows two maps, one for both species combined and one for Scottish Crossbill alone. The former map features several records from Mid-Argyll, Cowal and Mull. However, the latter shows no Argyll records, the nearest being approximately 15 km away, in NN36 and NN46 (north of Rannoch Station).

Thom (1986), summarising the status of crossbills in Scotland, lumps the species accounts for the two forms, stating in the introductory section that: "The Scottish Crossbill breeds from Argyll, Perth and probably Kincardine north to Sutherland, and the Common Crossbill locally from Sutherland to the Borders and Kirkcudbright". However, in the accompanying map the only form shown as occurring in Argyll is the common one (in Mid-Argyll and Cowal), with North Argyll being blank, although adjoining Perthshire has "both forms possibly present".

In the "New Atlas", Gibbons *et al.* (1993) follow the example of Lack (1986) by having two maps. In this instance, the map for both species shows crossbills to be

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widely distributed in Kintyre, Cowal, Mid-Argyll and Mull, but none of the records featured on the Scottish Crossbill map are close to Argyll.

### RECORDS IN THE ARGYLL BIRD REPORT

Two published records from Argyll during 1980-95 refer to Scottish Crossbill. The first is from 1983: "Mull - two adults and 3-4 young seen on a number of dates in late August and September in the Fishnish Plantation. They could easily be located by a deeper call and heavier bill but not as heavy as Parrot Crossbill" (*Argyll Bird Report* 1: 73). The observer was R. F. Coomber.

The second record, in 1986, involved "A possible Scottish Crossbill *L. scotica*, noted at Doire Darroch L. Tulla, 5 Jun (DJ)" (*Argyll Bird Report* 4: 38). The observer in this instance was D. C. Jardine, and the identification was based largely on call.

Both records were reviewed in 1995 by ABRC. It was unanimously agreed that, in the absence of further details and in view of the known identification difficulties (Knox 1990b, Proctor and Fairhurst 1993), the information provided was insufficient for either of these records to be acceptable as a first and/or second record for Argyll.

### DISCUSSION

There is no conclusive evidence in the literature for the occurrence of Scottish Crossbill in Argyll in the past, and there are no fully acceptable records during the post-1980 period.

However, there does exist in Argyll a limited amount of habitat which is suitable for this species. Recent evidence of a colour-ringed Scottish Crossbill moving a distance of 40 km between Deeside and Speyside (Marquiss *et al.* 1995) suggests that individuals would be able in principle to move into Argyll from traditional Scottish Crossbill sites such as the Black Wood of Rannoch (NN55 - see above). However, relatively little is known about population levels and frequency of movements, and it is not known whether Scottish Crossbills move independently of Common Crossbills. Recent observations and biometric data indicate that Parrot Crossbills also occur in pinewoods in Scotland (Proctor and Fairhurst 1993), further complicating the identification of any potential extra-limital birds.

In addition, there is a recent confirmed record of Common Crossbill from the key pinewood area at Doire Darach, Loch Tulla. On 19 March 1997, the calls of a group of crossbills at this location were recorded on tape. Sonograms of the calls were consistent with those of Common Crossbill (R. Summers, pers. comm.).

Nevertheless, crossbills seen feeding in mature pines or larches in North Argyll between September and February, when Common Crossbills are unlikely to be feeding in Scots pine, should be closely examined. A detailed description should be taken, and accompanied if possible by photographs, but biometrics or other specialised techniques may well be required to distinguish conclusively between the different forms.



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