

The *Eider* is the quarterly newsletter of the Argyll Bird Club (<http://www.argyllbirdclub.org>)

March 2019
Number 127

OSCR
Scottish Charity Regulator
www.oscr.org.uk
Charity number
SC 008782

The Eider



Long-eared Owl at Balephuill, Tiree on 5 November 2018 ©John Bowler

To receive the electronic version of *The Eider* in colour, ABC members should send their e-mail address to Dorothy Hogbin (contact details on back page). Past issues (since June 2002) can be downloaded from the club's website.

Inside this issue

Club news	Pages 3-4
ABC field trip report: Loch Gilp and the Add Estuary <i>Jim Dickson</i>	Pages 4-5
ABC field trip report: Bute <i>Steve Petty and Ian Hopkins</i>	Pages 6-7
Moth special <i>John Bowler, Clive Craik, Ron Forrester, David Jardine, Noelle Odling and Steve Petty</i>	Pages 8-10
Birding in Bulgaria <i>Peter Roberts and Jim Dickson</i>	Pages 11-15
Gannets flying overland in Kintyre—2018 update <i>Eddie Maguire</i>	Pages 16-17
Recent bird sightings <i>Jim Dickson</i>	Pages 18-21
Information about the ABC	Pages 22

Editorial

I hope you've booked your place at the joint ABC/SOC/BTO meeting in Oban on 16-17 March. Not long now! There's an excellent programme of talks on the Saturday followed by a choice of six field trips on the Sunday. The conference is taking place at the Corran Halls, Oban (PA34 5AB) with arrival from 09.00hrs. The programme was provided in the December *Eider*. There are lots of parking spaces immediately to the east of the halls, and we are advised that these are free of charge at this time of year. If you find there are no spaces available here, additional parking is available in the Longsdale Car Park, adjacent to the Atlantis Leisure Centre.

Just two field trip have taken place since the last

newsletter, and for both, the weather was excellent, considering it was still winter. Unfortunately the trip to Kerrera in January had to be cancelled due to bad weather. It would be nice to see more folk turning up for field trips, and for members to suggest new venues and to offer to lead these outings. We seem to be re-visiting a small number of sites annually. While these invariably produce the birds, it means just a few folk (mainly committee member) are repeatedly being asked to lead the outings.

This is a rather slim issue of the *Eider* and, once again, I would like to ask you to consider writing something for the next issue. **Please note that the deadline for articles is 10 May**, which is earlier than normal. In addition, the 'recent bird sightings' section that Jim Dickson prepares, is likely to disappear from future issues, as Jim has resigned from the ABC committee, and given up many of the tasks he has so ably undertaken in the past. Thus, it is even more imperative that members contribute more to the *Eider*, otherwise it is going to be even slimmer in the future!

If you regularly view the 'recent reports' page on the club's website you will notice this has not been updated recently. This was another of the tasks that Jim had taken under his wing. We have asked repeatedly for volunteers to help with the website, but no offers have been forthcoming. On the plus side the ABC FaceBook page is taking off. If you've not visited this yet, it's well worthwhile (details on next page).

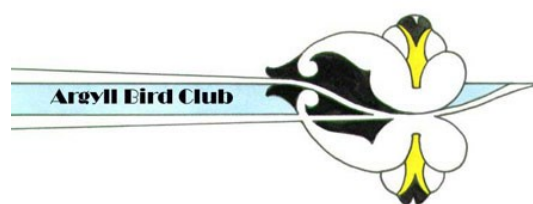
The exceptionally warm weather in late February was most welcome, and has produced some added bonuses. The southerly winds have brought many migrants early to the UK. These include numerous species of insects (moths, butterflies and dragonflies). Painted Lady butterflies have been seen in Dumfries and Galloway and elsewhere in Scotland, as well as numerous species of migrant moths. The most notable of moth has been a Crimson Speckled, a very brightly coloured micro moth, on Islay (see the Atropos Fight Arrivals website:

<http://www.atropos.info/flightarrivals/>

The first Wheatears have arrived in Argyll too. Let's hope they are not in for a shock!

Acknowledgements

Very many thanks to the following for their contributions to this issue—Bill Allan, John Bowler, Roger Broad, Malcolm Chattwood, Clive Craik, Pete Creech, Jim Dickson, Ron Forrester, Peter & Dorothy Hogbin (photocopying & dispatching the *Eider*), Ian Hopkins, David Jardine, Eddie Maguire, Alistair McGregor, Noelle Odling, David Palmar, Mike Peacock, Linda Petty (proof reading), Peter Roberts, Charlie Robertson and Margaret Staley



Club News

FIELD TRIPS 2019

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

Saturday 27 April. Sound of Gigha. Led by Malcolm Chattwood (phone 01546 603389. e-mail abcrecorder@outlook.com). Meet at Ronachan Point Car Park on the A83 (grid ref. NR741548) at 10.00hrs. Lunches will be available at the hotel on Gigha. The trip will include walks of 2-3km on roads and tracks with gentle gradients.

Saturday 25 May. Taynish NNR, Ulva Lagoon & Loch na Cille. Led by Jim Dickson (mobile phone 07985726209. e-mail argyllbird-er@outlook.com). Meet Jim in Tayvallich at the car park (by tennis court beyond the shop/café) at 10:00hrs. The Taynish section involves an 8km (5 mile) walk on relatively level ground. Some folk may prefer to meet at the Taynish carpark beyond (just south of Lochan Taynish) after 10.30hrs to reduce walking distance. Walk at Keills/Keillmore will be approximately 1km. Please bring your own lunch.

Saturday 1 June. Boat trip to count seabirds. Led by David Jardine (phone 01546 510200. e-mail dcjardine@btinternet.com). This will be restricted to 11 members (excluding David). The main purpose of this outing will be to carry out boat-based seabird counts around north-west Jura, Scarba and the Garvellachs for the National Seabird Survey. The boat will depart from Crinan. All participants will be asked to assist by counting particular species, and to contribute £25 each for the day. The boat hire will be part subsidised by the club. **Please contact David before 10 May if you are interested in joining this excursion.**

INDOOR MEETINGS 2019

Saturday 16 March. Spring Meeting (Scottish Birdwatchers' Conference). To be held in the Corran Halls, Oban. This is a joint conference with the Scottish Ornithologists' Club, the British Trust for Ornithology and the Argyll Bird Club. Full details of the conference were given in the December 2018 *Eider*.

Saturday 2 November 2019, Autumn Meeting and AGM. To be held at the Cairnbaan Hotel (www.cairnbaan.com), near Lochgilphead (phone 01546 603668). Lunches will be available in the hotel. The programme will appear in the September issue of the *Eider*.



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

ARGYLL BIRD REPORT 29 (2017)

The report (above) will be posted out to members by end of February. Other copies will be available from the treasurer for £10 + £2 p&p (contact details on back page) or at the ABC/BTO/SOC meeting in Oban for £10.

ABC FACEBOOK PAGE

The club now has a Facebook page. Anyone on Facebook can send a request to Nigel Scriven to join. If you are not on Facebook, you will need to set up a Facebook account first.

FUNDING FOR BIRD CONSERVATION PROJECTS IN ARGYLL

The ABC is willing to fund or part fund worthwhile bird conservation projects in Argyll. For example, this could include helping with the costs of field work for the last year of the Seabird Monitoring Programme (seabird counts 2015-2019). Applications for funding should be submitted to the Secretary (contact details on the back page).

WHY NOT TAKE THE E-EIDER

The club still has to produce around 70 black and white photocopies of each issue of the Eider. This involves a considerable cost for photocopying, postage & packing and time. So, if you are not on the circulation list for the electronic (PDF) version of the Eider, please consider switching, and let our Secretary know. The PDF is in full colour. It can be easily stored in a fold-

er on your computer, from where it can be printed if necessary. Thank you.

THE ARGYLL BIRD CLUB'S WEBSITE

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

ABC field trip to Loch Gilp and the Add Estuary 24 November 2018



A clear sky overnight gave rise to an early morning frost and a chill in the air. Thankfully this didn't put too many folk off from turning up at the Corran Bridge Car Park in Lochgilphead where 12 of us met, including new club member Alun ap Rhisiart.

As the tide was rising and the amount of exposed mud at the head of Loch Gilp was quickly disappearing we decided to have a brief look at the loch. Visibility was made a bit difficult as we were looking south into a very bright sun and clear blue skies—not often do we complain about a bit of sunshine in winter! As we walked along the riverside a Kingfisher flew by and perched on a rock in mid-stream and gave lovely views with the sunshine reflecting off its metallic blue back. A female Goosander was on the river and was briefly joined by a female Red-breasted Merganser allowing everyone to make a detailed comparison between the two species as they swam side by side. Out on the loch, with the help of some telescopes, we could see a few Dunlin, Ringed Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit, Curlew and lots of Wigeon. A Cormorant flew overhead and on the Lochgilphead front green a very cooperative Grey Wagtail landed by a puddle a few yards away looking for food and gave us great views.

We then headed to Ardrishaig to meet up with

Tom Callan and Yvonne McCrone, who came over on a later ferry across Loch Fyne from Cowal. They had just seen a Little Grebe out on Loch Gilp at Ardrishaig and on our arrival we quickly added Shag, Common and Black Guillemots, Goldeneye and behind us were some House Sparrows, Starlings, Jackdaws, Blackbird and Collared Doves. Both Dunnock and Robin were in full song, presumably spurred on by the day's bright sunshine. We then drove a bit further south in Ardrishaig, over the canal swing bridge, to give us a vantage point to scan out across Loch Fyne. Here we quickly found a group of three Black-throated Divers as well as a flock of Eider, more Common and Black Guillemots, distant Red-throated Divers, Ravens flying above the Lington landfill site, Rock Pipits and a Pied Wagtail on the shore in front of us and Chaffinches and Goldfinch behind us.

Our next stop was at the Add Estuary, by the Islandadd Bridge, with views across the estuary and the Moine Mhor moss. A Pheasant had been spotted flying across the road en-route and at the estuary flocks of Teal and Wigeon were present as well as Grey Heron, Little Grebe, Redshanks, Oystercatchers, Curlews and some Siskin flying overhead. A scan westwards along the river was rewarded with a view of two distant Little Egrets just beyond the bird hide, so we

decided to wander down in that direction for a better look. As we approached the area, where the egrets had been, it appeared they must have been tucked into the bank around the river bend, so the anticipated close views were not possible here. However, better views were to follow.

Next, we drove around to Crinan Ferry, noting several Stonechats on the way. We had our packed lunches here before taking a short walk past the settlements and for views either side of this small peninsula. A scan through the flocks of gulls on the estuary added a few more species and then we were treated to the lovely sight of both of the Little Egrets flying towards us and landing on the mud about 100m or so away and remained there for the next 20mins. At this spot we also had excellent views of a Goldeneye and the village gardens produced Great, Blue and Coal Tits as well as a bright red male Bullfinch.

A drive and then short walks towards the grass fields around Barsloisnoch Farm produced Greylag and Canada Geese but no sign of the rarer White-fronted Geese known to be there. At this point several of our group needed to leave for the day. The last remaining two car loads of folk continued across the Moine Mhor towards Dalvore where we encountered a flock of 100+ Redwings and Fieldfares. Shortly after this a Merlin was spotted zipping fast and low over a field. We then headed back to the head of Loch Gilp where the tide was now falling and we saw two Kingfisher as well as better views of the Bar-tailed Godwits. Everyone appeared to enjoy the outing and the day was notable for the Little Egrets, Kingfishers, Black-throated Divers and the bright sunshine!

Species list: Mute Swan, Greylag Goose, Canada Goose, Mallard, Wigeon, Teal, Common Eider, Goldeneye, Red-breasted Merganser, Goosander, Pheasant, Great Northern Diver, Black-throated Diver, Red-throated Diver, Cormorant, Shag, Grey Heron, Little Egret, Little Grebe, Common Buzzard, Merlin, Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover, Dunlin, Curlew, Bar-tailed Godwit, Turnstone, Common Redshank, Black-headed Gull, Common Gull, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Black Guillemot, Common Guillemot, Collared Dove, Kingfisher, Jackdaw, Rook, Hooded Crow, Carrion Crow, Raven, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Wren, Common Starling, Blackbird, Redwing, Fieldfare, Wren, Robin, Stonechat, Dunnock, House Sparrow, Pied Wagtail, Grey Wagtail, Rock Pipit, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Siskin, Bullfinch (**Total 61 species**)

Jim Dickson, Argyll Bird Recorder

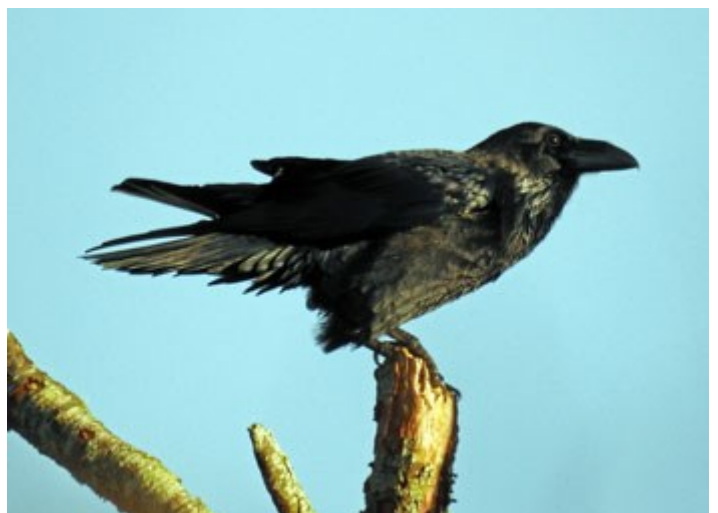


Upper photo. A distant view of a Little Egret on the Add Estuary, framed in Tom Callan's hand!

Middle photo. A close-up view of a Little Egret taken a few days earlier at the same spot

Lower photo. Raven at Moine Mhor

All photos ©Jim Dickson



ABC field trip to Bute—16 February 2019



Eight club members met at 10.00hrs at Colin-traive in time to catch the 10.30hrs ferry to Rhubodach on Bute.

Waiting for the ferry we spotted up to ten Tysties displaying very close to the jetty. All were now in their full black and white summer plumage and made a fine sight with their bright red legs thrashing around in the clear water. Meadow Pipits scurried amongst the seaweed and a Shag was meticulously inspecting the sea, just a few cm from the shore, quite oblivious to the ferry, cars and people. On Bute, we were met by Ian Hopkins, our leader for the day. On our journey along the shore towards Rothesay we spotted a few Wigeon, Goldeneye (photo next page) and Red-breasted Mergansers, while in the fields on the opposite side of the road were numerous flocks of Oyster Catcher and Curlew, presumably foraging for earthworms. We soon spotted our first geese of the day—around 70 Canada Geese and 25 Greylags. We then headed over to the western side of the island.

Our first stop was at the north end of **Ettrick Bay**. Along the shoreline we soon spotted a mixed group of small waders, which included a couple of Turnstone and Ringed Plover, and 15 or so Dunlin, in addition to more Curlew, Oyster Catcher and Redshank. The weather was slowly improving after a very cloudy start, but still with a cool wind. By the time we arrived at the hide at the south end of the bay, we were beginning to see a little blue sky, plus some new birds. From here we had close views of nine Bar-tailed Godwit (photo next page); a pleasant surprise. Large flocks of gleaming white Herring and Common Gull in the bay were highlighted by the emerging sun.

Soon we were on the road again heading for our next bay stop—this time, **St Ninian's Bay**. Ian suggested we walk along the shore to a viewpoint

overlooking an area of salt marsh. A wise decision! Soon after setting off, those in the front of the party spotted a Merlin heading across the bay. Once at the viewpoint, we had a good view of a small group of geese—Canada, Greylag and three Barnacle Geese (photo next page), the latter not a common visitor to Bute. Back at the cars we spotted Blackbird, Song Thrush, Chaffinch and Robin in a nearby clump of gorse and bramble. The weather was even better now, with super views out west to Arran and Inchmarnock.

Scalpsie Bay (header photo) was our next stop, just in time to eat our sandwiches from a newly constructed viewpoint overlooking the bay—and in the sunshine too! The strong wind and waves made it difficult to see any birds out at sea, but we did spot two small groups of Kittiwakes, probably driven into the bay by the strong wind. We also had a Kestrel gliding past the viewpoint. The only other new bird of the day was Great Black-backed Gull, two of which were resting on the shore.

After lunch we headed for **Loch Quien**, a freshwater loch. A short walk across a field brought us to a well-concealed hide, where we added to our bird list. There were numerous flocks of Teal, totalling around 100. We also had some good views of Tufted Duck (5), Coot (1), Little Grebe (5-6) and two female Goosander. But, the highlight of this stop was a Hen Harrier (ringtail), which was first spotted as it flushed a flock of Teal. It soon disappeared out of view, and we thought that was the last we would see of it. But, to everyone's delight it reappeared from the back of the hide and gave us a superb broadside as it flew right in front of the hide. Time was getting on, so we headed over to the east coast, first for a loo stop at **Kilchattan Bay** and a quick view out to sea. No new birds here!

Ian suggested a quick visit to **Greenan Loch**, a

Whooper Swans, Greenan Loch, Bute ©David Palmar www.photoscot.co.uk



freshwater loch in the centre of the island. Again a wise choice. As soon as we approached the loch we had ten Whooper Swans grazing in the field alongside the road (photo above). A flock of at least 100 Wigeon was working its way along the shore, while a few Goldeneye were foraging further out.

Our last port of call was **Loch Fad**, where last year Donald Campbell's Bluebird was given its first test run, when it reached a speed in excess of 100mph. Bluebird had crashed on Coniston Water in 1967, during an attempt to beat the world water speed record, and has been lovingly restored. By now it had clouded over, and the wind was colder and stronger. A hide at the north end of the loch provided views of a small number of waterfowl, but no species we hadn't already seen, apart from a Moorhen skulking in the reeds. Back in the cars we had a chance to warm up, before heading for the ferry and home

Our thanks go to Ian, and Graham Clark, for so ably guiding us around the 'bays and lochs of Bute', and for providing the transport.

Bird list: Little Grebe, Mute Swan, Whooper Swan, Greylag Goose, Barnacle Goose, Canada Goose, Shelduck, Mallard, Teal, Wigeon, Tufted Duck, Goldeneye, Red-breasted Merganser, Goosander, Pheasant, Cormorant, Shag, Grey Heron, Common Buzzard, Hen Harrier, Merlin, Kestrel, Coot, Moorhen, Oystercatcher, Turnstone, Dunlin, Ringed Plover, Curlew, Bar-tailed Godwit, Black-headed Gull, Common Gull, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Kittiwake, Black Guillemot, Wood pigeon, Collared Dove, Jackdaw, Rook, Hooded Crow, Carrion Crow, Raven, Blue Tit, Wren, Starling, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Robin, House Sparrow, Meadow Pipit, Rock Pipit, Chaffinch, Greenfinch (**Total 54 species**)

Steve Petty, with help from Ian Hopkins



Upper photo. Bar-tailed Godwits, Ettrick Bay, Bute

Lower photo. Male Goldeneye displaying, Kyles of Bute

Both photos ©David Palmar www.photoscot.co.uk



Barnacle, Greylag and Canada Geese, St Ninian's Bay, Bute ©Steve Petty





Atlas of Britain & Ireland's Larger Moths

Publisher: Pices Publications.

ISBN: 9781874357827.

Hardback, 480pp, distribution maps. Publication due summer 2019. Pre-publication price of around £27-£29 if ordered before 31st March 2019 (from numerous online book sellers), saving about £10.00 on the publication price of £37.50.

Around 25 million moth records from Butterfly Conservation's National Moth Recording Scheme and Moths Ireland have been combined to produce this landmark publication. This is the first atlas of all macro-moths in Britain, Ireland, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands. The atlas includes accounts for 866 macro-moth species, each with a distribution map showing current and historical occurrence, trends, status, a phenology chart and colour image. A further 25 species, which were former residents, but have not been recorded from 1970 onwards, also have distribution maps.

Brief introductory chapters detail the long-standing tradition of moth recording, and the development of the National Moth Recording Scheme, methods used to collect and analyse the data, an overview of trends since the 1970s and the environmental drivers of change in moth populations and distributions.

Editor's note: To celebrate the forthcoming publication of the *Atlas of Britain and Ireland's Larger Moths* (above), a landmark publication using 25 million moth records, I thought it might be an idea, not only to give details of the publication in the *Eider*, but for 'mothaholics' in the Argyll Bird Club to include a paragraph, plus a photo, about their favourite species of moth caught in Argyll in 2018. There are a surprising number of club members who regularly trap and record moths in Argyll. Earlier this year I e-mailed a few friends about this idea and had an excellent response. Below are their contributions.

This **Manchester Treble-bar**, so named because early records came from near Manchester, was caught in a moth-trap in my garden at Barcaldine (North Argyll) on the night of 10 July 2018. It is the only one I have caught since I resumed trapping there in 2014, although I have two pinned specimens caught at the same site in the 1980s. This Arctic-alpine species inhabits damp moorland in northern parts of the British Isles. It is classified as Nationally Scarce B, meaning that it has been recorded in only 31-100 of the 3,862 10km squares of the British Isles. I believe it is commoner in other parts of Argyll, such as Islay.

I would have liked to have photographed it on a more natural background. However, as all moth photographers know, it's best to play safe and take one or two shots of uncommon species as soon as possible, certainly before trying to persuade them to settle on a photogenic leaf or a piece of bark. Many members of the family Geometridae (including this species) tend to fly at the slightest disturbance, taking any chance of a better photograph with them. Exactly what this one did!

Clive Craik

clive.craik@sams.ac.uk



Manchester Treble-bar *Carsia sororiata* trapped on 10 July 2018 ©Clive Craik

This **Yellow-barred Brindle** was caught in a Heath Trap at Balephuill, Isle of Tiree on 31 May 2018. This was the first island record of this local moth, whose caterpillars require woody species such as Hawthorn, Wild Privet, Holly and Ivy to feed upon. None of these plants occur naturally on Tiree, which is essentially treeless, but a few planted specimens of all these species now occur in more sheltered gardens, such as those at Balephuill, so we may see more of this attractive moth here in the future. Formerly very local in western Scotland, the distribution of Yellow-barred Brindle has been spreading both north and east in Scotland since the 1990s. Within Vice-county (VC) 103, it has been recorded previously on Mull, most recently in 2007, but it has not yet been recorded from Coll.

Yellow-barred Brindle was one of 12 new species of moth to be recorded on Tiree in 2018, including seven species of macro-moths. Moths on Tiree have historically been under-recorded compared to Coll and Mull, but more intense efforts since 2012 have seen the island's moth-list rise from 132 species (105 macros) to 246 species (167 macros) by the end of 2018. Most of the new species recorded were to have been expected, having also been recorded from the adjacent island of Coll. However, they have also included less expected species such as Single-dotted Wave, Barred Rivulet and Bulrush Wainscot, which have not been recorded either on Coll or Mull, and were thus new species for VC 103. No doubt, there are still many more new



Yellow-barred Brindle *Acasis viretata* trapped on 31 May 2018 ©John Bowler

species (particularly micro moths) waiting to be recorded on Tiree!

Many thanks to Alan Skeates (VC103 moth recorder) for all his knowledgeable guidance and ID help.

John Bowler, RSPB Scotland

john.bowler@rspb.org.uk

The **December Moth**. Not many people trap moths through the winter months but, although numbers are much smaller, there are moths around throughout the whole year. I have found that as long as the temperature is 6 degree C or above, with light winds and no heavy rain, it is likely that the trap will contain a few moths in the morning. The December Moth is a striking, medium sized, charcoal coloured moth which belongs to the eggar moth family (Lasiocampidae) and can appear any time from October through to January.

The male has prominent, well feathered antennae (see photo) and is somewhat smaller than the female. I have seen December Moths in a mains Robinson trap at my cottage on Lismore on three dates this winter, 10 October (1), 14 November (3) and 23 November (1). All of these moths were male, as have been most December Moths I have seen in traps, but a female trapped on 26th November 2016 laid some eggs on one of the egg cartons inside the trap. On this occasion, there were 18 males and one female in the trap!

Noelle Odling

noelle.odling@gmail.com



Male December Moth *Poecilocampa populi* trapped on 14 November 2018 ©Noelle Odling

Merveille du Jour *Griposia aprilina* trapped on 3 October 2018 at Mount Stuart Estate, Bute ©Ron Forrester

A species I'd always wanted to see is a very beautiful, charismatic and uniquely marked moth called **Merveille du Jour** (marvel of the day). Although fairly common throughout much of Britain there have only been a few records for the Isle of Bute where I live, and although I'd been regularly trapping for the previous three or four years, I had never seen one. Imagine my delight, when on 3 October last year, when at Mount Stuart Estate with Dougie Menzies, where we set six traps, we caught no less than four of these wonderful moths. Magic!

Ron Forrester

ronandedith@btinternet.com



Bordered Straw *Heliothis peltigera* trapped on 14 July 2018 at Kilmartin ©David Jardine

Last year was one of the best summers in recent years in Argyll. Such conditions provide ideal opportunities for migrant moths, with a more southerly distribution, to turn up almost anywhere! On the morning of 14 July 2018 I opened my moth trap in Kilmartin and found something which looked familiar, but which I couldn't immediately name. A quick check of the field-guide reminded me it was a **Bordered Straw**. I had only seen this species previously with Steve Petty in the Picos de Europa in northern Spain. The only other record of this species in Argyll is of one found by Clive Craik at Barcaldine.

David Jardine dcjardine@btinternet.com



Male Buff Footman *Eilema depressa* trapped 21 July 2018 at Ardentinnny ©Steve Petty

The **Buff Footman** has rapidly extended its range northwards in the British Isles over the last 40yrs. I caught my first in Tighnabruaich in a light trap on 20 August 2012. At that time it was the first record for vice county 98 (mainland Argyll). Subsequently, I have caught Buff Footman every year since. 2018 proved to be the best so far, with individuals turning up in my moth trap in Ardentinnny on nine dates from 21 July until 1 September, with a maximum of five on 3 August. There are a number of species of footman moths in the British Isles. The larvae of most feed on lichens and green algae growing on trees. Thus, one would expect Argyll to provide many suitable habitats for this species, and other species of footman that are currently extending their range northwards.

Steve Petty stevepetty@btinternet.com



Birding in Bulgaria—22-29 January 2019



The Bulgarian mafia! ©Assen Ignatov

Over the past few years birders from Islay and the Argyll Bird Club have been spreading their wings elsewhere. Last year's flight was to Estonia (see *Eider* June 2018 pages 20-24). This year the group visited Bulgaria.

The group: Roger Broad, Jeff Colombe, Jim Dickson, David Formby, Cynthia James, Roger Lawrence, Peter Roberts, Mark Shields. **Local Guides:** Assen Ignatov, Petar Dilchev. **Driver:** Mario

Tuesday January 22. Arrival in Bulgaria. About half the party had flown from Edinburgh to Sofia, while the rest had flown from Gatwick earlier in the day. We all met at a hotel near the Vitosha Mountain, where the Gatwick group reported a good afternoon birding with excellent views of Eurasian Nutcrackers and Red Crossbills. After a good supper and various welcome drinks we retired to our beds.

Wednesday January 23. Black Sea Coast. After breakfast we departed in a spacious minibus along the motorway to the Black Sea coast at Pomorie. The drive took much of the day. It was grey and dull as we drove through flat arable farmland. We often saw groups of Great Egrets, and Common Buzzards perched on fence

posts and in trees. In amongst the latter were the occasional Rough-legged and Long-legged Buzzard. At one coffee break we saw two perched Long-legged Buzzards, plus Crested Larks wandering around the car park.

Once at the coast our first stop was at Lake Atanasovsko—a huge area developed for the production of salt. Due to its saline content the lake rarely freezes in winter and attracts internationally important numbers of wetland birds. The main interest here was about 100 Dalmatian Pelicans, with a single White Pelican in their midst. There were a few species of ducks too, including Northern Pintail, Eurasian Wigeon, Teal, Mallard and Common Shelduck.

From here we continued to Pomorie overlooking the large seawater lagoon of Lake Pomorie, where our hotel was situated. We spent the remainder of the afternoon here, with plenty of birds to keep us busy. Grebes were a prominent feature, with many Black-necked and Great Crested and a few Slavonian. Diving ducks were particularly abundant. Tufted Duck mainly but with a few Scaup and Red-breasted Merganser, Goldeneye and even 1-2 rare White-headed Ducks far in the distance. A Pygmy Cormorant

was nearby with more Great Cormorants dotted about amongst many Eurasian Coots. Jim, our "seagull specialist", tried hard to inspire us with views of Caspian Gulls of all ages amongst Yellow-legged Gulls. Much easier to pick out was a young Little Gull, but it didn't show for long.

Thursday January 24. The Pomorie/Burgas Area & Lake Atanasovsko. After breakfast we explored the Pomorie/Burgas area with its complex of coastal lagoons, the large saltwater Lake Atanasovsko and various, smaller freshwater lakes. Jim and others had been out prior to breakfast watching the sea in front of the hotel and found a Black-throated Diver. The weather forecast had threatened rain, but for much of the day it remained dry, quite calm and mild, with occasional bright spells breaking through a cloudy sky.

Our first stop was at a reed-fringed freshwater lake, where Water Rails were calling, but could not be enticed out with taped calls. Marsh Harriers were numerous, and across this huge expanse of water were distant flocks of geese. Occasionally small flocks of geese flew towards us. These proved to be our first Red-breasted Geese. On Assen's advice we drove around towards the other side of the lake. Along the way we were pleasantly surprised by a few Ruddy Shelduck. The few turned into a lovely group of 78 birds. While watching these Mark called our attention to our first Common Crane standing alone in a field. Then, in the distance we noticed huge numbers of geese. The field was black with them and we made our way cautiously towards the gathered masses. They were feeding on some sort of brassica/kale, but they were wary and kept well away from the road. Amongst an estimated 20,000 Greater White-fronted Geese were 300+ Red-breasted Geese that we'd seen flying about earlier. These showed quite well, but failed to find any Lesser White-fronted Geese. We repositioned ourselves and made further attempts to scan the flock more closely from the inside of the bus. This gave us glorious views of the Red-breasted Geese

After a welcome lunch we returned to the enormous flocks of geese. We had more super views of this impressive concentration of birds, with the Red-breasted Geese coming even closer. However, after failing to find any Lesser White-fronted Geese, we decided to use the last of the daylight in



Upper photo. Dalmatian Pelicans

Middle photo. Ruddy Shelduck

Lower photo. A flock of White-fronted Geese with a few Red-breasted Geese

All photos ©Jim Dickson

pastures new. Assen hoped to show us some close up pelicans at another shoreline vantage point. Pelicans didn't feature too much, but we were happy (especially Jim) to find some gulls. Common Gulls, a Mediterranean (both new species) and several nice Little Gulls in various plumages. By now it was raining, so we decided to call it a day.

Before supper, Roger Broad was looking through photos he'd

taken of the masses of White-fronted Geese, and to his amazement, after zooming in a little, he found a fine adult Lesser White-fronted Goose. We'd all missed this bird despite a concerted effort peering through telescopes. While it was good to know it was there, the dilemma was whether to count it either on today's list or on a life list!

Friday January 25. The Pomorie/Burgas Area and Lakes Vaya & Poda. We headed to different lakes within the Pomorie/Burgas area. It was difficult to know exactly where we were in this complex wetland area. Assen knew clearly where he was going, and took us to numerous viewpoints overlooking coastlines and freshwater lakes. The weather was colder, with a northerly wind, but the rain held off, despite the grey and dull conditions. New birds continued to appear. Our best find of the day was undoubtedly Pallas's (formerly Great Black-headed) Gull. At one viewpoint we found some easy to identify adults, some with almost full black heads. Amongst them were quite a few young and winter-plumaged birds, giving us some reasonable views of this very special bird. Here too were our first Smew, about 15 or more, all "redheads". At another stop we took a pleasant wander along a quiet road with open wooded hills edged by reed-beds and lakes. Firecrests were a good find, followed by a pair of White-tailed Eagles that were breeding close by. There were plenty of other raptors about—Marsh Harriers were everywhere and groups of Common Buzzards soared over the wooded hills.

Assen found us a warm coastal restaurant for lunch, where some of us tried the local speciality—tripe soup, yum-yum!! In the afternoon we visited an area managed by the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds (BSPB) at Poda. Here a newish visitor centre offered shelter from the cold, with hot drinks and gifts to buy. Another short walk produced more Pallas's Gulls before calling it a day.

Saturday January 26. Drive To Kavarna. A pre-breakfast venture outside by some of the keener members produced a few birds of interest, including another wintering Sandwich Tern. After breakfast, while packing our bags into the minibus we saw a splendid Black Redstart. We then visited a couple of areas along the edge of Lake Pomorie. It was another drab, cool day and the walk through vineyards and reed-beds to the shoreline was muddy underfoot. If fly-tipping was an Olympic sport, Bulgaria would be winning gold



Upper photo. Long-legged Buzzard ©Roger Broad

Lower photo. Pallas's Gulls (two adults and two juveniles) ©Jim Dickson

medals, as our way to the shore was strewn with huge piles of household waste. However, the birds didn't seem to mind! There were masses of ducks, including the usual Mallard, Teal, Shelduck and Wigeon, plus our first large flock of Gadwall, but waders were conspicuously absent. Marsh Harriers were commonplace, and we found Penduline Tits in the reed-beds, and 60 or so Tree Sparrows at another site.

We then began our journey into the Balkan Mountains and into a thick blanket of fog, which stayed with us for much of the day. We reached the Goritsa area in time to explore of the lovely oak and beech woodlands before lunch. Here can be found a great variety of woodpeckers—Black, Green, Grey-headed, Great, Middle and Lesser Spotted. However, with the thick mist it was difficult to see anything! A Middle Spotted Woodpecker was called in and stayed put for ages while we viewed it through the telescope. Unfortunately, the scope magnified the poor misty view as much as the bird! We also called in a Short-toed Treecreeper before heading into Goritsa for a warming lunch.

After the break we returned to the forest at Goritsa. The fog had cleared a little and we managed to find Green Woodpecker and two more Middle Spotted Woodpeckers along

with Nuthatch, but nothing else. Assen made a final stop in some mixed forest around a hotel and camping complex. Great Tits and a Marsh Tit were seen around some bird feeders, and further playback only revealed a Great Spotted Woodpecker. The drive took us through Varna—the third largest city in Bulgaria. The centre had some interesting historical buildings, but the edges of town were full of run down, drab soviet-style blocks of flats

Assen had one last stop up his sleeve—for Eurasian Eagle-owl. After descending close to sea level along minor roads, we stopped at a limestone cliff with open patches of rock interspersed with scrub and trees where Eagle-owls breed. It seemed like an impossible quest to find the owls as the light was fading. Soon we heard a deep hoot, and Assen managed to pick one out perched on a dead tree only 15mins from our hotel.

Sunday January 27. Kavarna and vicinity.

From the hotel we called in the first Syrian Woodpecker, while others had Black Redstarts on nearby buildings. Thereafter we set off to Kavarna, Kamen Bryag and Kaliakra, birding through the steppe and agricultural areas and the lovely limestone cliffs along the coast. At a limestone gorge, with a small river and reed-beds, we heard Cetti's Warbler but couldn't call it into view. Playback for Syrian Woodpecker worked better, with some decent views of a single bird. Further wanderings produced a few Jays and a lovely group of Hawfinches, but searching the cliffs for Eagle-owl wasn't so productive. Where the gorge emerged into a sandy bay we found large numbers of Coots and Great Crested Grebes, along with a few Black-necked Grebes and Black-throated Divers. From here we drove to another area of flat limestone steppe and took a walk hoping to turn up additional species. Best of the bunch was a lovely Rough-legged Buzzard hovering in classic fashion, showing the white-banded tail and dark belly. A little later we saw a perched Long-legged Buzzard for contrast. Other raptors of note were numerous Common Buzzards a few Hen Harriers and a distant, deceptively large looking Merlin. We also saw more Black Redstarts. Soon it was time for lunch in a local restaurant where we enjoyed a variety of soups.

In the afternoon, calm seas continued to allow excellent views of divers and grebes, plus distant sightings of Bottle-nosed Dolphins and Harbour Porpoises. At the promontories close to Cape Kaliakra we admired the ancient Thracian rock-hewn tombs, cut into the limestone on top of the cliff. We finished the day at Cape Kaliakra in weather we'd been hoping for all week—clear, sunny, crisp and calm. From this vantage point the extensive fortifications provided a lovely backdrop for an orange sunset over the sea.

We set off for the hotel towards dusk, looking for Little Owls. At the first halt we saw a fine male Sparrowhawk followed by a dumpy Little Owl sitting on a chimney pot—our last good bird

of the day.

Monday January 28. Kavarna and vicinity.

After an early start we headed for the Lake Durankulak/Shabla area hoping to find geese, but this turned out to be a "wild goose chase"! A disappointing finale, when we should have encountered large numbers, including Red-breasted Geese. However, the area is vast, with enormous arable fields in which they feed. The crops change from year to year, so their feeding places change accordingly. We just thanked our lucky stars we'd had such good sightings at Pomorie.

We looked at numerous sites around Lake Durankulak and Lake Shabla and saw a few Red-breasted and Greater White-fronted Geese flying over and in fields, but no large flocks despite lots of looking. But, there were plenty of other wildfowl, including large numbers of Tufted Duck, and Marsh Harriers were abundant. We saw several Long-legged Buzzards including some extremely pale examples of this species, which looking more like Rough-legged Buzzards, thus causing a fair amount of confusion.

We eventually found a restaurant for a quick lunch in Shabla. Here we met up with the other birders who confirmed a lack of geese. But they did put us onto a small roost of Long-eared Owls in a nearby village that provided some splendid views, and good photos. Then it was back along the minor roads through steppe habitats towards Kavarna, and our last attempt at finding the Eurasian Eagle-owl. Eight telescopes scanned the cliffs for ages, but with no result. Then a deep hoot was heard. Mark located an owl, but it was far away almost impossible to see. Further brief moments of despondency were quickly interrupted by the fine sight of a huge owl flying along the top of the cliffs, to be joined by a second bird. They perched, and we were able to get some poor, but discernible telescope views of the bird calling, its white throat feathers puffed up and its ears standing erect. This was a very acceptable consolation prize for the lack of geese. Back at the hotel we had supper and packed for our early departure and flight from Varna to Sofia in the morning.

Tuesday January 29. Return to Sofia and homeward.

After an early breakfast we drove to Varna. We arrived in time to a new and empty airport. The flight left on time and arrived in Sofia at 09.35hrs. At this point those of us flying to Edinburgh said cheerio to those flying directly to Gatwick.

The remaining five had an interesting final day in and around Sofia. First, we drove up a snowy, switchback road winding up to around 2000m asl on Vitosha Mountain. Below it was still dry and bright, but up here it was beginning to snow lightly. The whole place was alive with kids learning to ski. But, this didn't stop the almost hand-tame Eurasian Nutcrackers from putting on a great show. The star bird of the day without a doubt. We had a quick lunch here followed by a walk through the snow, avoiding speeding

skiers, and found a few birds such as Coal and Willow Tits, Nuthatch and a flock of Red Crossbills.

By early afternoon we were ready to head back down and were given a whistle-stop cultural tour of old Sofia. This was an additional and unexpected bonus, with Assen obviously very proud of his city, showing us with great authority all the major buildings, churches and his place of work at the Natural Sciences Museum. We visited the large Orthodox Cathedral and went into the Museum where we saw a wonderful array of his superb artwork. We raced along trying to keep up with him as he pointed out huge and impressive government buildings and old ruins below ground, now well-preserved and accessed by pedestrian walkways below street level. By about 15.45hrs we began to make our way to the airport, arriving in plenty of time to change and re-pack. The Easyjet flight left on time and arrived in Edinburgh ahead of schedule

Conclusions. The aim of the tour was to see Red-breasted Geese. While that was achieved, we were hoping to see thousands rather than hundreds, and to see them well on more than just one day. We found most of the other "target" species including Pallas's Gull, Eurasian Eagle-owl, Eurasian Nutcracker and Dalmatian Pelican along with a nice selection of other species. Woodpeckers weren't as prolific as anticipated and the discovery of a Lesser White-fronted Goose in a photo taken of a flock of Greater White-fronted Geese was a cruel twist of fate. The success of any winter trip will be partly governed by the weather, and for us it was almost too mild with no snow.



Eurasian Nutcracker ©Jim Dickson

Perhaps the geese would have been more evident in colder weather?

Bulgaria is an interesting country to visit! What a contrast between the fine old buildings in Sofia, the ghastly and stark buildings of the soviet era and the new "over the top" holiday complexes recently built on the coast. The ugliness of much of the built environment was in contrast to the inspiringly fine countryside. It would have looked so much better in brighter, sunny conditions!

Peter Roberts, with help from Jim Dickson



The group in search of Nutcrackers in the snow ©Jim Dickson

Northern Gannets crossing overland in south Kintyre in 2018

Observations of Northern Gannets *Morus bas-sanus* at Campbeltown Harbour (Clyde waters) by Charlie Robertson and at Machrihanish Sea-bird Observatory (MSBO) from March to October 2018 produced further evidence of exceptional numbers of adults making the 8km overland foraging trip to Machrihanish Bay (Atlantic) (see map below). During 2018, daily surveillance ceased on 25 October, 10 days after the last adult was logged.

Young Gannets on Ailsa Craig fledge mainly during mid to late September. This period coincides with a decline in the number of overland crossings. This indicates that adults crossing west over Kintyre during the breeding season are probably from the Ailsa colony.

During March to October 2018 a total of 1,221 adult Gannets were observed crossing overland to the west on 161 out of 239 observation days (see Table, next page), this is slightly fewer than in 2017 (Table). Note the high total of 336 in June 2018 compared to only 126 in June 2017 and the rather low totals from July to September in 2018 (740 birds) compared to 2017 (1,173 birds).

Surprisingly, during the prolonged period of exceptional weather in July 2018, far fewer

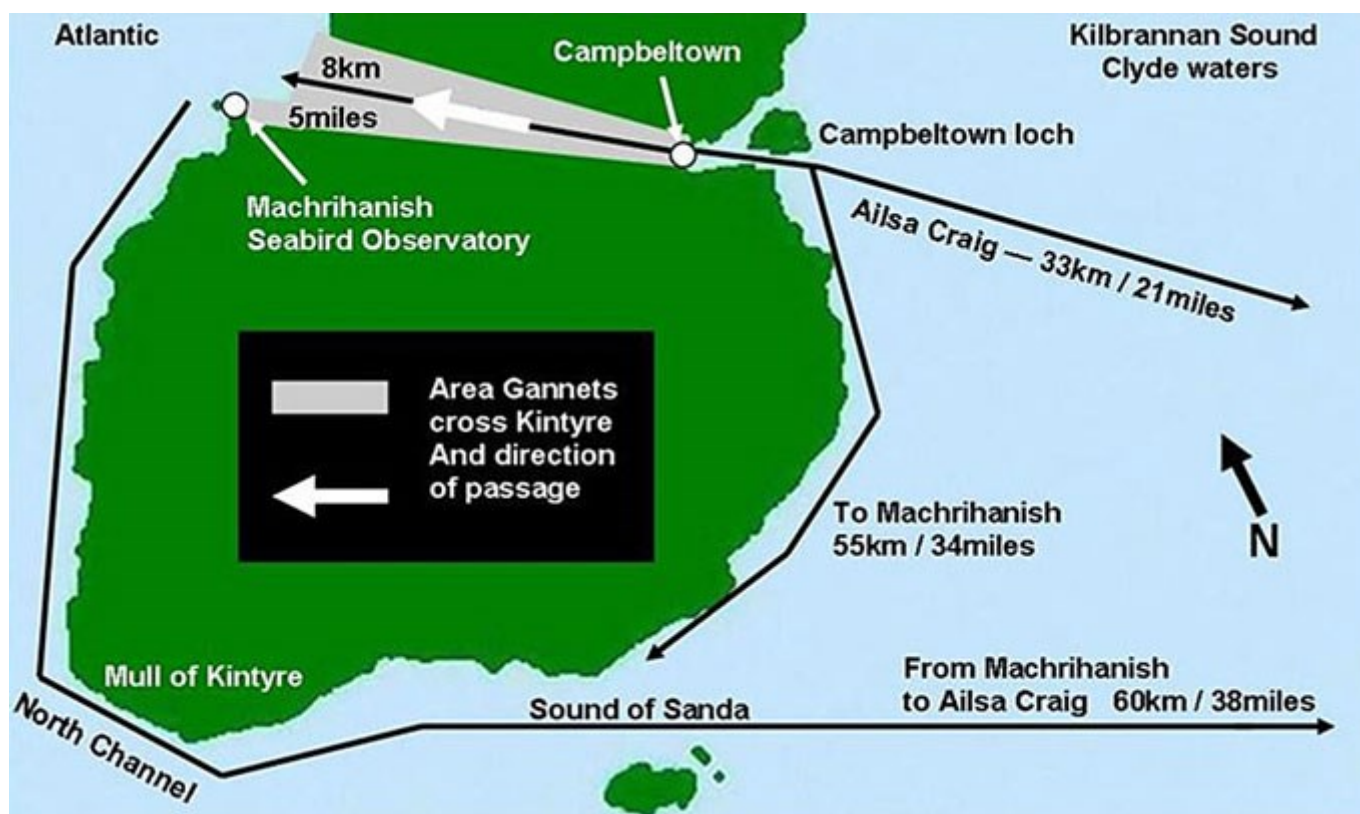
birds were visiting Campbeltown Loch and a rather meagre total of 121 crossed on 20 out of 31 days (compare with July 2017).

The combined total of Gannets observed crossing west over the peninsula during March-October in both years amounted to 2,682.

Eddie Maguire and Charlie Robertson
(Warden and Assistant Warden,
MSBO)



Diving Gannet
©Eddie Maguire



Map. South Kintyre, Argyll showing the westerly overland route (8km/9mins flight) taken by adult Northern Gannets from Campbeltown Loch (Clyde waters) to Machrihanish Bay (Atlantic). Also shown are marine routes with approximate distances from Campbeltown Loch to Machrihanish, and to the Ailsa Craig colony.

Table. Number of adult Gannets crossing west over Kintyre during March to October 2017 compared with the same period in 2018.

	Year	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Number of observation days	2017	27	29	22	24	31	24	30	20
Total birds	2017	2	23	131	126	274	408	491	6
Cumulative total	2017	2	25	156	282	556	964	1455	1461
Number of observation days	2018	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	25
Total birds	2018	6	45	78	36	121	247	372	16
Cumulative total	2018	6	51	129	465	586	833	1205	1221

Northern Gannet factfile

- ◆ South Kintyre is the only known location in the UK where Gannets routinely cross overland during the breeding season, often in significant numbers, presumably to gain rapid access to foraging grounds.
- ◆ Only adults have been observed crossing the 8km overland route from Campbeltown to Machrihanish Bay, and only from east to west.
- ◆ Gannets starting the crossing look sleek, and are probably near minimum weight; an advantage when flying overland.
- ◆ Gannets employ powered flight to make the 8km crossing at around 35 mph, which takes a fairly constant 9mins.
- ◆ We have no observations of Gannets undertaking the reverse crossing (from west to east) This is probably because the birds are carrying a substantial fish load. The return journey to the Ailsa colony from Machrihanish is by sea via the Mull of Kintyre, which relies more on dynamic soaring (wave power).
- ◆ More Gannets undertake the overland crossing during July to September (Table). This period coincides with the final stages of the breeding season at the Ailsa colony, when food demands of large chicks reach their peak and adults need to access foraging ground rapidly.
- ◆ The largest flock recorded making the overland crossing was 16 in September 2017.
- ◆ Wind direction appears to have little or no influence on the numbers embarking on this overland shortcut to the Atlantic.
- ◆ Wind strength appears to have little influence on crossing rates. For example, 50 birds flew west on 19 August 2017 in a WNW wind force 6.
- ◆ The number of adults making the overland crossing diminishes rapidly during early October. Most Gannet chicks on Ailsa Craig fledge during mid to late September. Thus, it appears that adult Gannets abandon the overland route once the urgency to feed chicks declines.



Gannets by
Margaret Staley

Recent bird sightings

**November 2018 to
January 2019**



Female Blackcap, Cairnbaan on 21 November ©Jim Dickson

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

abc recorder@outlook.com

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

Notes: MSBO = Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, Kintyre. Some records are pending acceptance by the various rare bird committees (Argyll, Scottish & British).

Swans, ducks, geese & game-birds

WHOOPEE SWAN. Higher counts included: Islay, 394 at Gruinart on 2 Nov and 438 at Mulindry on 3 Nov.

PINK-FOOTED GOOSE. Kintyre; a peak count of seven at the Laggan on 8 Nov.

EUROPEAN WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE. Kintyre; one was at Cuddypool Bay, Gigha on 19 Jan (David Jardine).

BEAN GOOSE sp. Kintyre; a report of five seen and photographed at The Laggan on 11 Nov (description details still awaited).

CAKCLING GOOSE. Colonsay; one was on Oronsay on 29 Oct to 8 Dec.

TODD'S (LESSER) CANADA GOOSE. Tiree; one was at Caoles from 10 Nov to at least 20 Jan.

DARK-BELLIED BRENT GOOSE. Islay; a single bird of this less than annual visitor was seen and photographed at Rockside on 21 Nov.

GADWALL. Kintyre; three were at Machrihanish on 20 Dec. A good record outwith the usual outer island reports.

TEAL. Islay; a high count of 2,150 at Gruinart floods on 8 Nov.

GREEN-WINGED TEAL. Islay; a male was at Gruinart floods on 3-6 Dec. Tiree; a male was at Loch a' Phuill on 23 Dec and again on 2 and 17 Jan. (John Bowler).

PINTAIL. Islay; a count of 43 at Gruinart floods on 5 Nov peaking at 72 there on 6 Dec.

SHOVELER. Islay; a high count of 39 at Gruinart on 9 Nov. Kintyre; two-three birds around the Laggan and Campbeltown Loch in Nov-Dec and an unexpected peak of six at Campbeltown Loch on 19-21 Dec, also a female at West Tarbert on 1 Dec and one on Gigha on 19 Jan. Tiree; an island count of 24 birds on 9 Dec.

POCHARD. Islay; a male and female were on Loch Skerrols on 8 Nov and three at Gruinart on 10 Dec. Tiree; a male was at Loch a' Phuill from Oct to at least 2 Jan.

RING-NECKED DUCK. Tiree; a group of

three—an adult male, a female and an immature male were at Loch Bhasapol on 12 Nov to at least 28 Jan. (John Bowler).

GREATER SCAUP. Islay; a count of 34 on Loch Indaal on 9 Nov. Tiree; a female was at Loch a' Phuill during 1 Nov-31 Dec.

VELVET SCOTER. Mull; one was at Loch na Keal on 6 Jan.

LONG-TAILED DUCK. Islay; up to seven birds in Loch Indaal during Nov-Dec and a remarkable count of 30 there on 17 Jan. Tiree; a female/immature at Loch Riaghan on 4 Dec was an unusual freshwater record for the island.

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

BLACK-THROATED DIVER. Mid-Argyll; a peak count of 18 at Loch Caolisport on 28 Dec.

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER. Islay; a high count of 79 at Loch Indaal on 10 Dec.

GREY HERON. Kintyre; a high count of 16 together at Campbeltown Loch on 9 Jan.

GREAT WHITE EGRET. Islay; one was seen briefly at Laphroaig and then The Oa, both on 21 Nov before it flew off SE (David Wood). Kintyre; one was seen and photographed at Aros Farm (Campbeltown Airport) on 23 Nov (Kevin Hamilton). Mid-Argyll; one was briefly at Loch Ederline on 5 Nov before flying off west (Sue Creech, photo opposite). It is possible that all these reports relate to one wandering bird.

CATTLE EGRET. Mull; the bird from Oct remained at Calgary until 13 Nov at least.

LITTLE EGRET. Cowal; one was at the Holy Loch from Oct and was joined by a second bird on 17 Dec at least. Islay; two were at Loch Gruinart on 9 Nov with one seen occasionally to at least the end of Jan. Kintyre; one (from Oct) still at Waterfoot, Carradale on 1 Nov and one was at the head of West Loch Tarbert from 6-12 Dec and 2-4 Jan then two at Kennacraig on 14 Jan. Mid-Argyll; one remained at the Add Estuary from Oct until 11 Nov, then two appeared together on 18 Nov until 24 Nov, then one at Ulva Lagoon from 16 Dec until end Jan



Upper photo. Mandarin Ducks, Cowal on 18 January ©Alistair McGregor

Lower photo. Great White Egret, Loch Ederline on 5 November ©Pete Creech

and one was at Taynuilt on 15 Nov for at least a few days. Tiree; one was seen in the Balephetrish/Loch Aulaig areas on 12 Nov.

GREAT CRESTED GREBE. Colonsay; one was off Oronsay on 2 Dec. Islay; one was at Loch Indaal on 10 Dec.

SLAVONIAN GREBE. Islay; up to 34 were present at Loch Indaal Nov-Dec and 38 were there on 18 Jan. Mull; a peak count of 21 at Loch na Keal on 19 Jan.

Raptors to rails

COOT. Islay; one was at Loch Skerrols on 12 Nov. Mid-Argyll; one was at lochs near Ford during Jan. Tiree; two were at Loch Bhasapol on 1 Nov-22 Jan at least, and one was at Loch a' Phuill on 18 Dec and 2 Jan.

Waders

GOLDEN PLOVER. Higher counts as follows. Islay; 1,550 were at Gruinart floods on 8 Nov and 2,000 on 20 Jan. Kintyre; a peak count of 1,100 at Westport Marsh on 12 Nov. Tiree; a peak count of 2,935 on 15-16 Nov.

GREY PLOVER. Islay; one was at Loch Gruinart on 5 Nov with two there on 14 Dec. Tiree; two were west of Mi-odhar on 1 Nov.

DOTTEREL. Tiree; the 1CY bird from Oct remained at Scarinish until 19 Nov at least.

RED KNOT. Kintyre; one was at Campbeltown Loch on 28-29 Nov (rare there in winter).

JACK SNIFE. Islay; one was at Octomore on 4 Nov, one at Gruinart on 28 Jan and one at Carnain on 29 Jan. Mull; one was at Calgary on 8 Jan. Tiree; singles were at The Reef on 1 Nov, Heylipol on 10 Jan and Balephuill on 10 Jan.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT. Islay; 119 were at Loch Gruinart on 2 Nov.

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT. Islay; up to nine were still at Gruinart in early Nov with two still on 14 Dec. Tiree; five late birds at Loch a' Phuill on 12 Nov.

WHIMBREL. Mull; one was at Garmony on 6 Nov.

GREENSHANK. Islay; a peak of four at Loch Gruinart on 8 Nov.

Skuas, gulls, terns and auks

POMARINE SKUA. Mid-Argyll; one was seen close off shore at Ardrishaig during high winds on 9 Nov.

LITTLE GULL. Islay; a first-winter (1CY) was at Gortan on 19 Dec. Mid-Argyll; an adult was at the head of Loch Gilp on 9 Nov and also an adult (same?) there on 18 Dec and two adults there on 7-10 Jan and presumably one of the same at Otter Ferry (Cowal) on 24 Jan.

MEDITERRANEAN GULL. Kintyre; an adult was near Machrihanish Village on 9 Nov and a 1CY was at Carradale Bay on 12 Nov.

RING-BILLED GULL. Tiree; a 2CY bird was at Sandaig on 11 and 16 Nov, and also 11 Dec, then as a 3CY on 11-20 Jan at least. This was thought to be the same individual that was there Jan -Feb 2018 (John Bowler).

ICELAND GULL. Islay; a 2CY bird was at The Oa on 15 Nov, one was at Gruinart on 21 Nov and a juvenile (1CY) passed south-west off Port Charlotte on 10 Dec. Kintyre; a 1CY was at Campbeltown Harbour on 20 Dec. Mid-Argyll; a juvenile was at Loch Gilp on 1 Jan.

KUMLIEN'S (ICELAND) GULL. Tiree; a juvenile (1CY) passed West Hynish on



Upper photo. Purple Sandpiper, MSBO on 4 November ©Eddie Maguire

Lower photo. Ring-billed Gull, Tiree on 15 January ©John Bowler

11 Dec (John Bowler).

GLAUCOUS GULL. Islay; one was at Singing Sands, Kilnaughton Bay on 6 Dec. Tiree; a juvenile was at Loch a' Phuill on 11 Jan.

COMMON TERN/ARCTIC TERN. Islay; a 'commic' tern was noted off Ardnave Point on 5 Nov.

LITTLE AUK. Mid-Argyll; three were off Inverneil on 29 Nov following a southerly storm the previous day. Tiree; three flew past Aird on 7 Jan.

Doves, cuckoos, owls, swift, kingfisher and woodpeckers

WOOD PIGEON. Islay; a high count of 180 at Bridgend woods on 8 Nov.

LONG-EARED OWL. Tiree; two roosted in a Balephuill garden on 5 Nov, with one still there on 6 Nov.

SHORT-EARED OWL. Kintyre; one was over Carradale golf course on 15 Dec.

KINGFISHER. Cowal; one was noted regularly at the Holy Loch during this period. Mid-Argyll; one was at Loch Gilp on several dates in Nov with two there on 24 Nov and one on 1-2 Jan.

Passerines (larks to buntings)

CHIFFCHAFF. Tiree; single *abietinus* type birds at Balephuill on 2 and 10 Nov and a *tristis* 'Siberian' bird at Balephuill on 2 Nov.

BLACKCAP. Colonsay; two were at Kilchattan on 16 Nov. Cowal; a male was at Bishop's Glen, Dunoon on 16 Jan. Mid-Argyll; several reports of singles with last noted on 20 Nov. Tiree; two were at Balephuill on 1-8 Nov and one to 18 Nov, also one at Meningie on 2 Nov.

NUTHATCH. Several reports of singles from mainland Argyll.

WAXWING. Mid-Argyll; a party of five was near the Oban Tesco store car park on 8 Nov with one still there on 12 Nov (photo opposite), and 16 were in the grounds of Inveraray Castle on 23 Dec.

SONG THRUSH. Tiree; some 60+ were around the island after a 'fall' of thrush species on 17 Nov.

BLACKBIRD. Tiree; some 120-200 around the island on 17 Nov when a 'fall' of other thrushes noted.

REDWING. Kintyre; a count of 250 at Machrihanish on 1 Nov. Tiree; numbers after a 'fall' of thrushes peaked at 1,200 on 17 Nov, also 250 noted around the island on 14-15 Jan.

TREE SPARROW. Kintyre; two were briefly at a garden bird feeder in Port Righ, Carradale on 16 Nov.

CHAFFINCH. Higher counts on Islay included 230 near Loch Gorm on 1 Nov and 450 near Bridgend Woods on 8 Nov.

BRAMBLING. Higher count. Islay; six were at Gruinart on 1 Dec.

LINNET. Islay; a count of 240 at Gruinart on 2 Dec.

TWITE. Islay; a count of 384 at Upper Killeyan, The Oa on 28 Dec (photo opposite).

YELLOWHAMMER. Islay; highest count was of ten at Bunnahabhain on 19 Nov.

SNOW BUNTING. Islay; one was at Kilchiaran on 29 Nov. Tiree; eight were at Gott Bay on 10 Nov and two at Rubha Chraignis on 18 Nov.

Jim Dickson

Argyll Bird Recorder



Upper photo. Waxwing, Oban on 12 November ©Jim Dickson

Middle photo. Jay, Scammadale on 10 December ©Bill Allan

Lower photo. A large flock of Twite on wires, Upper Killeyan, Islay on 28 December ©Mike Peacock

Articles for the June issue of the *Eider* should with the editor before the 10th May 2019

Officials and Committee of the Argyll Bird Club (2018/2019)

Chairman: Nigel Scriven, 14 Taylor Avenue, Kilbarchan, Johnstone PA10 2LS (*phone* 01505 706652 *email* chairman@argyllbirdclub.org)

Vice Chairman: David Jardine, The Old Schoolhouse, 26 Kilmartin, Lochgilphead, Argyll (*phone* 01546 510200)

Secretary: Anne Archer, 2 The Meadows, Toward, by Dunoon, Argyll PA23 7UP (*phone* 01369 870273 *e-mail* secretary@argyllbirdclub.org)

Treasurer: Peter Hogbin, South Craleckan, Furnace, Inveraray, Argyll PA32 8XN (*phone* 01499 500665 *e-mail* treasurer@argyllbirdclub.org)

Membership Secretary: Dorothy Hogbin, South Craleckan, Furnace, Inveraray, Argyll PA32 8XN (*e-mail* membership@argyllbirdclub.org *phone* 01499 500665)

Committee: Malcolm Chattwood (Lochgilphead), Jim Dickson (Cairnbaan), Gordon Holm (Strone), Alistair McGregor (Dunoon), Steve Petty (Ardentinny), Andy Robinson (Stirling) & Blair Urquhart (Kilmichael Glen)

Editor of the Argyll Bird Report: Position vacant.

Editor of the Eider: Steve Petty, Cluaran Cottage, Ardentinny, Dunoon, Argyll PA23 8TR (*phone* 01369 810024 *email* eider@argyllbirdclub.org)

ABC Website: <http://www.argyllbirdclub.org>

Argyll Bird Records Committee

Jim Dickson (Secretary, contact details below), John Bowler, Stuart Crutchfield, David Jardine, Malcolm Ogilvie & Andy Robinson

Argyll Bird Recorder

Jim Dickson, 11 Pipers Road, Cairnbaan, Lochgilphead, Argyll PA31 8UF

phone 01546 603967

e-mail argyllbirder@outlook.com

Assistant Bird Recorder

Malcolm Chattwood, 1 The Stances, Kilmichael Glassary, Lochgilphead, Argyll PA31 8QA

phone 01546 603389

e-mail abcrcorder@outlook.com

BTO Regional Representatives in Argyll

Argyll Mainland, Bute & Gigha: Nigel Scriven

phone 01505 706652 *mobile* 07901 636353

e-mail njscriven@gmail.com

Argyll North—Mull, Coll, Tiree & Morvern: Ewan Miles

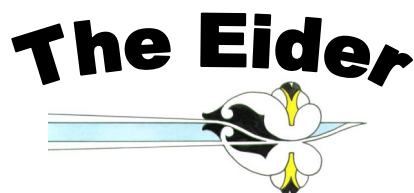
e-mail ebm.gww@gmail.com

Islay, Jura & Colonsay: David Wood

phone 01496 300118

e-mail david.wood@rspb.org.uk

WeBs Count Organiser, Mainland Argyll & Mull: Nigel Scriven, 14 Taylor Avenue, Kilbarchan, Johnstone PA10 2LS (*phone numbers & e-mail* above)



The *Eider* is the quarterly newsletter of the **Argyll Bird Club**. The editor welcomes articles about birds, wildlife conservation and ecology in Argyll, including articles of a wider natural history interest, notices of forthcoming events, book reviews, press releases and letters. Whenever possible, contributions should be submitted to the editor as e-mail attachments in Microsoft Word or rtf format. But, this should not deter potential contributors, as hand-written scripts are also acceptable. If in doubt about whether an article is suitable, please contact the editor for advice.

Suitable illustrations greatly enhance the attractiveness of the *Eider*, and artists and photographers are encouraged to submit artwork and unedited digital photographs (jpeg files preferred) of birds and their habitats to the editor. Please do not embed digital images in word files. Digital photographs of Schedule 1 species taken at or near the nest will not be accepted for publication unless the photographer was covered by an appropriate SNH licence.

The *Eider* is published during the first week of March, June, September and December. Articles for each issue must be with the editor **before** the 20th day of the month prior to publication. However, it greatly helps if material can be submitted well before these deadline dates. Contributions are accepted in the order they are received, which may result in some late submissions being held over until the next issue.

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

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

More about the Argyll Bird Club

The club was established in 1985 and has around 400 members. Its main role is to encourage an interest in wild birds and their habitats in Argyll; an area of outstanding natural beauty and biological diversity.

The club endeavours to provide a friendly and sociable forum for members of all ages, to meet and enjoy their common interest. This in itself provides a challenge as the human population of Argyll is relatively small and widely dispersed. The club hosts two one-day meetings each year, in spring and autumn. The venue of the spring meeting is rotated between different towns, including Dunoon, Inveraray, Lochgilphead and Oban. The autumn meeting/AGM is held in a convenient central location, usually near Lochgilphead. The club organises field trips for members. It publishes the *Argyll Bird Report*. Additional or past copies can be purchased from the Treasurer. Your annual subscription entitles you to one copy of the *Argyll Bird Report*, four issues of the *Eider* and free admission to the two indoor meetings. New members are always welcome, whether you live in Argyll or not. Membership categories and rates are:

Ordinary	£10
Age 25 and under	free
Family	£15
Corporate	£25

Subscriptions are due on 1st January and can be paid by cheque or standing order. New members joining after 1st October are covered until the end of the following year. Further information can be obtained from the Membership Secretary (see the box opposite).