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The Eider

Adult male Snow Bunting photographed on 29 September at Machrihanish Seabird and Wildlife Observatory ©Jo Goudie

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Inside this issue

Editorial

It's so good to be getting slowly back to something like normal after the latest lockdown and restrictions. In this newsletter we have accounts of three field trips—to Gigha, Toward and Lismore (pages 16-19), and on the next page are details of a further two trips over the winter. We hope you can join some of these. In addition, the Autumn Meeting was successfully held at our usual venue—the Cairnbaan Hotel. Around 35 members attended and we were treated to some very interesting talks. Summaries of these are gived on pages 23-31. In a departure from normal, we are holding the Spring Meeting at the Cairnbaan too. Usually for the Spring Meeting we rotate around various venues in Argyll, but we were so pleased with how the Autumn Meeting was organised that we have decided to return.

You will see on pages 3-4 that Jim Dickson, the Argyll Bird Recorder, has decided to step down from the post. You will all be aware that Jim has done an absolutely superb job as recorder. Not only in streamlining the bird recording process with Malcolm, but also producing the *Argyll Bird Report* in record time. He has a fantastic knowledge of birds and is always willing to help others with identification problems or with anything else bird related. He will be a hard act to follow. Jim will still be around the birding scene in Argyll, and I'm sure we'll be able to twist his arm to lead the occasional field trip. Jim is now looking for someone to take over the recorder's role, and he has provided full details of just what's involved on pages 3-4.

I would like to thank all of you who have contributed articles and photos for the four issues of the *Eider* this year. If you have some spare time over Xmas, and are too full of mince pies etc. to do anything active, then settling down to write and article for the spring issue of the Eider would be a very worthwhile use of your time. The deadline for articles for the next issue is 20 February.

Finally, we wish all our members a very happy Christmas and we hope the New Year brings you a lots of exciting birds. Thank you for continuing to support the club.

Acknowledgements

Very many thanks to the following for their contributions to this issue—Malcolm Chattwood, Jim Dickson, Neil Hammatt, Peter & Dorothy Hogbin (photocopying & dispatching the newsletter), Jo Goudie, David Jardine, Ben Jobson, Lorn Macintyre, Alistair McGregor, David Palmar, Linda Petty (proof reading), Peter Roberts, Nigel Scriven, the late Margaret Staley,

Club News

FIELD TRIPS 2021-2022

The number of people on field trips will be limited to 15. So, it is essential that you contact the leader of a trip beforehand to make sure a place is available and to receive rendezvous details.

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. Please wear suitable footwear and bring waterproof clothing if rain is forecast.

There will be a risk assessment and safety briefing at the start of each field trip.

Saturday 29 January. Clachan (Kintyre). Led by David Jardine (phone 01546 510200. E-mail dcjardine@btinternet.com) who will confirm rendezvous details to those wishing to take part. Please bring your own lunch. The trip will start from Clachan Village Hall, and involve a walk of 5-6km.

Saturday 25 February. Holy Loch Hides (Cowal). Led by Alistair McGregor (e-mail alistaircmcgregor16@outlook.com mobile phone 07754 524240). We plan to visit the new hide on the north shore of Holy Loch (Kilmun), as well as the existing hide on the south shore. Please contact Alistair for rendezvous details. Please bring a packed lunch.

INDOOR MEETINGS 2022

Saturday 5 March, Spring Meeting and Extraordinary General Meeting. The meeting will be held at the Cairnbaan Hotel (www.cairnbaan.com), near Lochgilphead (phone 01546 603668). Lunches will be available in the hotel. Similar to the 2021 autumn meeting, we will probably be restricted to 50 participants, including club officials. So, we need you to e-mail our Membership Secretary (contact details on back page) if you would like to attend, stating how many places are required, and if you require lunch. Dorothy will then confirm to you by email if a place is available. Please see the club website for updates.

The programme for the meeting will be emailed out to members prior to the meeting, and posted on the club's website.

The Extraordinary General Meeting will be about the club becoming a SCIO (Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation).

ARGYLL BIRD REPORT 32 (2020)

Argyll Bird Report 32 can be downloaded (PDF format) from the club's website (under the 'Publications' tab). Previous years' reports can be downloaded from the same place. Jim Dickson is now working on *ABR* 33, which will be available in spring 2022.

Can you please send any of your 2021 bird records to Malcolm or Jim for inclusion in *ABR* 33. Also, good use will be made of members' photographs uploaded to the ABC Facebook Group.

ARGYLL BIRD RECORDER—AN EXCITING OPPORTUNITY AVAILABLE IN 2022

At present, the voluntary role of managing bird records for the Argyll region is carried out by Jim Dickson as recorder and Malcolm Chattwood as assistant. Both Jim and Malcolm have maintained this task since taking over from Paul Daw in July 2013. Jim also took over the rare bird recording aspect in 2004 to help Paul stay on as recorder at that time. Jim has decided now is the time for him to step aside and offer the position to another person or indeed persons who can bring fresh energy and vision for future recording. He intends to complete the 2021 *Argyll Bird Report*, work on this is now underway, and then fully brief his successor during a 'hand-over period' in the new year. Malcolm intends to carry on in his role as assistant to the new Recorder and provide support in the handling and maintenance of the records database."

This is a very exciting and at times a demanding post. It would suit a well organised person/s who ideally should have a good working knowledge, although not essential, of the Argyll regions, a solid understanding of Argyll's birds, and the 'bird watching' scene. The post is very varied and has a lot of scope to develop in new directions. The main aspect is working under the Scottish Ornithologists' Club bird recorder network by collating and verifying bird records from Argyll and providing these to Malcolm for the Argyll Bird Database (more details about the role of an SOC bird recorder are given on pages 5-7), this involves engaging with multiple sources of bird-record providers within Argyll such as bird club members, the general public, the BTO, and from organisations such as the RSPB, Nature Scot, various Facebook groups, as well as more specialised sources such as raptor, auk and ringing study groups. Part of the role is also to engage with various data requests from proposed developments that may have environmental impacts.

A good number of rare bird sightings occur in Argyll. These require processing each year to help with the validation process as does the assessment of records submitted to the BTO Birdtrack system. Occasionally the recorder may be asked to 'check out' a sighting or 'alert others' nearby to do so. Ideally a full or partial role in producing the annual *Argyll Bird Report* would be helpful together with the ability to manage and store bird photographs provided by contributors. Additional interesting aspects could involve giving talks, daily updates to the Argyll Bird Club's website and Facebook page as well as engaging with various bird groups e.g. on Islay and Mull

and on occasion with the media if a bird story emerges.

Should you be interested in this position or would just like more information or details about it, please don't hesitate to contact Jim at:

E-mail argyllbirder@outlook.com

Phone 01546 603 967)

FUNDING FOR BIRD CONSERVATION PROJECTS IN ARGYLL

The ABC is willing to fund or part fund worthwhile bird conservation projects in Argyll. For example, help was given towards the costs of field work for the recent Seabird Monitoring Programme (seabird counts 2015-2019). The club has also helped to fund the provision of nest boxes for Grey Wagtails and Dippers in Kintyre (see article in the June 2021 *Eider*, page 12). More recently, the club has bought ten Swift nest boxes. Seven of these are already in place. If you have a suitable site for one of these boxes please contact David Jardine (contact details on back page). Applications for funding other projects should be submitted to the secretary (contact details on the back page).

MACHRIHANISH SEABIRD OBSERVATORY

If you are planning a visit to the observatory please contact Jo Goudie (jomitzi@yahoo.co.uk) to check if it will be open. Monthly MSBO reports (PDF format) can still be downloaded at:
http://www.machrihanishbirdobservatory.org.uk/reports.htm

ABC COMMITTEE VACANCY

We are looking for two people to join the club's committee. If you are interested, please contact our secretary (contact details on back page) to find out more about the post.

FINANCE REPORT

The accounts for the year ending 30 September 2021 are given below.

We will soon be receiving the 2022 subscriptions by standing order. We are continually updating the club's database and need to know if you have changed your home address or your email. If you have moved, but wish to be kept informed of club activities, it is important that you let us know of any changes. Thank you.

Peter Hogbin (Treasurer)

Argyll Bird Club — Scottish Charity No: SC008782

Income and Expenditure for the year to 30th September 2021

2019/2020	INCOME		2020/2021
2724.23	Subscriptions	2779.23	
115.00	Bird Report Sales	71.00	
256.00	Raffles & donations	0.00	
250.00	Data fees	400.00	
230.57	HMRC Gift Aid	446.59	
117.56	Bank interest	90.85	
3693.36	Total Income		3787.67
	EXPENDITURE		
500.00	Bird report 2021	750.00	
437.94	Newsletter	313.44	
36.24	Postage	4.99	
667.00	Public meetings	143.88	
113.00	Insurance	178.00	
10.00	Committee expenses	27.60	
0.00	Bird boxes	200.00	
550.00	Grants & Donations	250.00	
2314.18	Total Expenditure		1867.91
1379.18	SURPLUS/DEFICIT		1919.76

Balance Sheet as at 30th September 2021

	CURRENT ASSETS	
0.00	Cash on hand	0.00
2021.84	Current Account	3172.17
9000.00	HTB 1 year fixed term @ 1% matured 3rd September 2021	0.00
	HTB 1 year fixed term @ 1.1% matures 3rd September 2022	10000.00
230.57	Debtors	0.00
	CURRENT LIABILITIES	
0.00	Creditors	0.00
11252.41	TOTAL NET ASSETS	13172.17
	REPRESENTED BY	
9873.23	Working Capital at 1st October 2020	11252.41
1379.18	Surplus/Deficit for year 2020-2021	1919.76
11252.41	TOTAL FUNDS as at 30th September 2021	13172.17

All funds are unrestricted

Peter Hogbin
Treasurer

The role of your local bird recorder

Some questions answered

The Scottish Ornithologists' Club (SOC) acts as the coordinating body for ornithological recording in Scotland. Through the branches, it appoints most of the Local Bird Recorders and publishes a number of Local Bird Reports. In addition, the SOC produces the *Online Scottish Bird Report*.

What is a Local Bird Recorder (LBR)?

The LBR (or SOC or county bird recorder or simply bird recorder) is typically a volunteer who is responsible for collating the individual records of birds that birdwatchers send in for a particular area. The LBR enters the records into some form of database (e.g. BirdTrack), answers queries, and acts as the point of contact between observers and the various rarities committees. The records also form part of a wider, national picture.

The SOC is a core partner in the BTO's BirdTrack record gathering scheme, which acts as a repository for millions of records each year. Once entered, individuals can analyse their own sightings and view them within the wider UK and European context, and the total number of entered records for a particular area can be downloaded and analysed or turned into graphs and maps for use in publications, such as the local bird report, by the LBR or report compiler.

Who co-ordinates bird recording in Scotland?

Most of the LBR Network in Scotland is co-ordinated by the SOC, often in close co-operation with the local branch. Exceptions are: Shetland where recording is co-ordinated by the Shetland Bird Club, Argyll (Argyll Bird Club) and Fife (Fife Bird Club), and two of Scotland's bird observatories (Fair Isle and the Isle of May).

What happens to the records, and what are they used for?

The LBR's database is clearly a valuable archive of local bird information and has numerous uses. Foremost, the database is the main source of information for the published local bird reports. In the past, these may have been manuscripts that are held in the Waterston Library, but now there is an almost complete network of published local bird reports in Scotland. These reports are further distilled to form the *Online Scottish Bird Report*.

History of bird recording in Scotland

The LBRs' Network was established by the SOC in 1968 to support the newly published *Scottish Bird Report*. Before that, significant Scottish records were collated nationally and published in the *Scottish Naturalist* (1871-1957) and then *Scottish Birds* (1958-1967). Scotland's bird observatories also have a long history of bird recording, and local bird clubs' published records, but such clubs were scarce. Before 1968, the records were grouped and published according to Scotland's faunal regions (essentially drainage basins) rather than the Vice-County system that was (and still is) used to map the distribution of other animals, invertebrates and plants.

What areas do the Local Bird Recorders cover?

The various bird recording areas have evolved over the years, but since 1968 they have been based on administrative boundaries that ideally should be those shown on current Ordnance Survey maps. The old counties formed the basis of the recording areas until 1985, when the SOC adopted the revised Region and District boundaries, but many of these have evolved further. Although these boundaries have not always remained unchanged, for consistency, they have been retained as the key to the current Recording Area boundaries.

Who can send in records?

The Local Bird Recorders welcome records from all birdwatchers, whether they are ama-

Shelduck ®Margaret Staley

teur or professional, beginners or experienced, local or visitor. Don't be put off, all records are potentially valuable.

What sort of records should be sent in?

Local Bird Recorders are interested in receiving many categories of bird sightings within their areas. For example:

- data on breeding birds, such as territory counts, Common Bird Census data, counts of seabird colonies and indications of breeding success
- regular counts throughout the year from your local patch, e.g. monthly peak wildfowl and wader counts
- early and late summer and winter migrants
- counts of seabird passage (preferably over timed periods and including commoner species)
- all records relating to influxes (e.g. Waxwing, Crossbill, Quail, Little Auk etc.)
- all records of uncommon birds and rarities.

In addition to the basic data, it is often of great interest to include general comments relating to some of the records (e.g. that was a record count, the best/poorest year for a particular species).

Bear in mind that over the years, the records that have proved most useful are those that allow comparison between years, that document the importance of local bird populations and that can potentially be used to reveal population changes.

It is very important to send records to the LBR even if they have previously been phoned in to information services such as Rare Bird Alert, BirdGuides or Birdline Scotland. This confirms the record submission, attributes it to a definite source and provides a point of contact should it be required.

When should the records be sent in?

In order that the annual analysis of records can take place promptly, all records should be submitted by the end of January of the following year. Some recorders also welcome periodic submission of records during the year itself in order to spread the task of data entry.

What format should the submission take?

Each LBR will have a preferred format for standard record submissions, so it is always best to check with them (e.g. in the latest Local Bird Report). The most common approach is to sort the records by species, but it may be agreeable to list them by date and locality. All LBRs accept records in digital formats, particularly via BirdTrack or as Excel files—it is worth contacting the respective LBR to find out the preferred form for record submission.

Which species require supporting descriptions?

For most of us, the sight of an unusual or rare species is the spice of birdwatching, and there is nothing more exciting than discovering a rarity oneself. But in order to give an accurate account of the year's sightings in Local Bird Reports, all records of unusual species should be supported by written details of circumstances and observations sufficient to prove identification. All records published must stand the scrutiny not only of readers today but also of those who may refer to these reports in the future. With these aims, Scotland now has a three-tier system of adjudication on records. The 'British Birds' Rarities Committee (BBRC) being responsible for British rarities, the Scottish Birds Records Committee (SBRC) for Scottish rare birds and local records committees (LRC) for lesser rarities and local rarities. Details of the species that each local records committee considers are listed in the respective local bird reports and the local recording pages on the SOC website for each region. A suggested format for a rarities submission is also available on the SOC website (click the 'bird recording' option on the website home page).

Where should I send records of rarities?

The preferred route for submitting descriptions of rarities is to send them to the LBR who will then forward them to the relevant Records Committee (BBRC, SBRC or LRC). Subsequent decisions are then returned along the same route.

Where should I send records of rare breeding species, including the less common raptors?

In the past there was potential for records of rare breeding birds to be lost, as the records were often retained by the individual observers. Since its establishment in 1973, the Rare Breeding Birds Panel (RBBP) has become the recognised repository for all such records. The records are kept in confidence, but can be accessed by the sponsoring organisations (RSPB, BTO etc.) for official use. Similarly, records of the less common raptors are now kept centrally in the archives of the local Raptor Study Groups and breeding records are lodged with the national Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme.

The important issue is that these records are held securely somewhere and that they keep their necessary confidentiality, but they are nevertheless made available for appropriate conservation use by relevant individuals and organisations. Records can be submitted direct to the body concerned, or channelled via the LBR, if preferred. It should be noted that in the cases mentioned above, only summary data is normally fed back to the Local Bird Recorder.

Should results of other surveys (e.g. WeBS, BTO or RSPB) be sent to the Recorder?

Local surveys are often organised by the LBR or local SOC Branch, and hopefully the results will be deposited with the Recorder. However, the only routine feedback from national surveys is likely to be in the final published summary, unless there is a local arrangement with the organiser (e.g. the BTO Regional Rep. or local WeBS organiser). You may decide therefore to send a digital copy of your own results of such surveys to the Local Recorder, and the LBR can amalgamate these, potentially for separate inclusion in the local report, and also submit a copy for the SOC archive. The LBR is also able to make a specific data request should they want information from schemes such as WeBS or BBS for use in their annual report.

Abstracts from the ABC Zoom meeting on 20 May

This evening zoom meeting comprised two talks (summary below). Our thanks go to David Jardine for arranging the talks and Malcolm Chattwood for looking after the technical aspects the meeting.

Twenty years of birding on Tiree by John Bowler (summary Steve Petty)

John has been the RSPB's officer on Tiree for twenty years and gave a fascinating talk about the island and its birds. Tiree is the outermost island of the Inner Hebrides and is ideally situated to attract migrants moving down the Minch. Northwest airflows are particularly good times for watching seabirds from vantage points. Tiree is relatively flat and treeless (photo below). It has a long history of agriculture due to its fertile soils that are continually improved with blown shell sand. It has a well preserved crofting community where sheep and cattle are the main farm animals. Silage production is important for maintaining these animals. The land is hard to drain because it is so flat, but this is excellent for a wide variety of birds. Even in hot summers there are always wet areas. The lochs, being shallow, soon warm up in the spring. The machair in June provides a wonderful spectacle as vast numbers of flowering plants bloom, these in turn are a magnet for a wide variety of insects.

Yellow Iris provide early cover for one of Islay's special migratory birds—the Corncrake. In 1993 there were around 100 calling males, which rose to 400 calling males as agricultural practices were tailored to the birds' needs. Subsequently, the number of calling males has declined to around 300, indicating that new agricultural initiatives need to be implemented. The late cutting of silage and mowing from the centre of the field outwards are two management practices that have been shown to be beneficial to Corncrakes.

The lack of mammalian predators, such as Red Fox, Badger and American Mink, are important for the abundance of ground-nesting waders on Tiree; these include Lapwing, Dunlin, Ringed Plover, Redshank, Snipe and Oystercatcher. In winter, the shoreline, grasslands and lochs provide habitat for large numbers of geese, waders and Whooper Swans. Amongst these can be found some rarities that the island is famous for, which can at times attract large numbers of birders. Sometimes, during the spring and autumn migration, vast numbers of waders can become temporarily grounded on Tiree during adverse weather conditions. Seawatching can be spectacular too, particularly during north-westerly gales. Manx Shearwater is one of the most abundant species seen, but rarer species of shearwater and petrel occur, along with scarcer gulls such as Glaucous, Iceland and occasionally Sabines. Birding from ferries to and from the island can be rewarding too.

There are relatively few songbird species on Tiree. Grassland birds, such as Meadow Pipit, Skylark and Starling are abundant, but due to the almost complete lack of trees, woodland birds are few and far between. Juvenile Starlings on

Tiree is relatively flat and treeless ©Steve Petty

Tiree are a sooty-grey colour, unlike the much browner juveniles found on the mainland. The infrequent patches of scrub that have been planted in recent years provide a haven for scarce migrants, from not only eastern Europe and Asia, but also from North America. A small population (c. 15 pairs) of Common Redpoll breed in these small woodland areas. Elsewhere in Argyll, Lesser Redpoll is the most frequently encountered species.

A really excellent talk, which if you've never visited Tiree will make you wonder why!

Egyptian Vulture migration at Sarimazi, Turkey, by David Wood, RSPB Reserve Manager, The Oa, Islay (summary David Jardine)

Long-serving staff of the RSPB are afforded the opportunity of a sabbatical, which are often used to help international conservation. In 2019 David Wood chose to help with a EU LIFE project on Egyptian Vultures.

Not having any vultures in Argyll (there is only one record of an escaped bird), we perhaps do not appreciate the contribution they make to functioning ecosystems; they 'tidy up' corpses in the countryside and consequently play an important role in limiting the spread of disease. Worldwide all vultures are threatened, with poisoning (61%) (especially Diclofenac), killing tor 'traditional' medicine (29%), and deaths on electrical infrastructure (9%) identified as major causes of mortality.

The Egyptian Vulture is the smallest of the vultures and is one of the few bird species which uses 'tools'. It breaks open thick-shelled eggs with stones (e.g. Ostrich). It has a long place in human history appearing as a specific icon in Egyptian hieroglyphics, leading to one of its other names, 'Pharoah's Chicken'.

Egyptian Vultures are migratory, breeding around the Mediterranean and wintering in sub-Saharan Africa. This means that they are subject to a greater number of threats; on their breeding and wintering grounds and also on migration. In the Balkans, where Bulgarian ornithologists have been doing a lot to conserve the 100 pairs found there, the main issues are accidental poisoning and electrical infrastructure. On migration they are at risk from being shot at, collisions at wind farms and from veterinary products, while in their wintering grounds in Ethiopia they suffer from poorly designed powerlines which has led to electrocutions, also collisions with antennae and poisoning at landfill sites (the poisons had been set for sanitary reasons and targeted feral dogs). Birds wintering in western Africa are subject to persecution for use of vulture body parts in 'traditional' medicine.

An international effort to conserve Egyptian Vultures is gathering the solid evidence that is required to ensure conservation action, but there are gaps in knowledge, one of which is information on the population found in Turkey. Satellite tracking of the Balkan population found pinch points in their migration, as they rarely migrate over the sea. A point on the north-east coast of the Mediterranean, in Turkey close to the Syrian border was found to be particularly important. This site also allowed the opportunity to assess and monitor the Turkish population.

David spent a month at Sarimazi with an international team of observers counting raptors in September. They worked in teams (minimum of three individuals) at three different hilltops identifying and counting raptors. The poorest site only had 1000 birds of prey passing in a day! In addition to counting birds of prey, some other migrants such as White and Black Storks and Great White Pelicans were logged. During the 30 days a total of 162,778 birds were counted including 130,00 birds of prey and 892 Egyptian Vultures.

Totals of some of the other raptors were impressive—37,000 Lesser Spotted Eagles, 27,000 Honey Buzzards and 20,000 Levant Sparrowhawks, with a supporting cast of Booted Eagles, Pallid Harrier, Imperial Eagle, Steppe Eagle and Great Spotted Eagle. While the totals may not be as large as other more established raptor migration points, Sarimazi is important as satellite-tagged birds have indicated that 80% of the eastern European population of Egyptian Vultures pass through there. David described how the watchers at Sarimazi were informed of sat-tagged birds as they approached the site, and they checked to see if they logged them. They found them all! The team also aged all the vultures as they passed allowing information on their breeding success to be gathered. Few young were seen in 2019. It is hoped that observations can be continued at Sarimazi to provide vital information on the endangered Egyptian Vulture; unfortunately Covid prevented observations in 2020 and 2021, but it is hoped that further work can be carried out in 2022.

Adult Egyptian Vulture ©Ben Jobson

Golden-winged Sunbird ©Peter Roberts

Think of African wildlife safaris and minds will turn to Elephants, Lions, Giraffe, Zebras, Rhinos, Hippos and antelopes, wide-open grasslands and flat-topped acacia trees. There are a few places to experience this scene in sub-Saharan Africa, but I challenge anyone to come up with a more classic setting with more famous and evocative locations than in northern Tanzania such as the Ngorongoro Crater and the Serengeti?

The Serengeti ecosystem is truly huge—over four times the size of Argyll & Bute! The National Park alone is ten times larger than the Masai Mara Reserve across the border in Kenya. It is a vast unspoiled rolling savannah of grasslands and open acacia woodlands which hosts the most spectacular concentration of animals on our planet. This world-famous area is a remarkable experience at any time of the year, but in February and March there is a phenomenal gathering of over one million Wildebeests (along with a half-million Thomson's Gazelles and a quarter million Common Zebras) in the south of the Serengeti on the short-grass plains, which are their calving grounds. Lions are present in large prides—it is not unusual to see over 20 in a single day! Spotted Hyenas appear in marauding packs, and scavengers such as Jackals and vultures are ever present and easily seen at this time of plenty. Leopards, Cheetahs and smaller predators are also regularly found. We should be in the best areas of the Serengeti at the best time to capture this world-class spectacle.

The Ngorongoro Crater, a UNESCO World Heritage Site is the largest volcanic caldera in the world, ten miles across with crater walls 2,000 feet deep! It embodies classic African ecosystems: savanna, acacia woodland, montane forest

Magnificent African Elephants (left) and a typical safari vehicle (above). Both images ©Peter Roberts

A male Kori Bustard (left) and a Red and Yellow Barbet (right), just two species from the many birds that can be seen in northern Tanzania. Both images ©Peter Roberts

and fresh and soda lakes all within the Crater and its rim.

We also visit Tarangire National Park, which is justly famous for a large Elephant population and a suite of endemic birds. These three locations give plenty of opportunity to savour the big game and find many classic East African birds.

The tour is timed to coincide with one of the world's greatest concentrations of mammals—the unique gathering of a million Wildebeest to calve. To view that endless Serengeti horizon covered with a vast grunting chaos of these bizarre animals is memorable and "sensory overload". If you only make one African safari this is the place! In addition to 40-50 species of iconic mammals regularly seen including huge herds of Zebra, Cape Buffalo and Elephants, Giraffes, Hippos, Lions, Hyenas and "never yet missed" Leopard and Cheetah, the tour is also a phenomenal birding experience with over 600 bird species recorded—c.400 possible/likely on any one tour. The joy of birding in sub-Saharan Africa is that the most spectacular birds can appear in the middle of sensational mammal watching and vice-versa. So many of the birds are easy to see, unbelievably colourful and varied—from the hugely obvious Ostrich through crowned cranes, masses of storks, herons and other waterbirds, 50 species of raptor, bustards, francolins, sandgrouse, hornbills, rollers, kingfishers, bee-eaters, mousebirds and turacos to tiny gems such as sunbirds, weavers, waxbills and whydahs—and a host of less flamboyant "LBJs" if you are interested.

Tanzania offers comfortable lodges, often in superb locations plus great food and service and a friendly, safe environment to travel in on good roads. The tour includes eleven full days in Tanzania covering Tarangire, Ngorongoro and Serengeti National Parks. We travel in purpose-built 4x4 safari vehicles driven by specialist local driver/guides. I will accompany the tour and I have been arranging and guiding Tanzania tours for over 30 years, with 34 visits to Tanzania and over 65 to most countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The tour is very competitively priced at c. £4,500 fully inclusive except for international airfare. It is very much a small group, "at cost" and not-for-profit offer. I work closely with a good friend and ground operator in Tanzania who offers the very best deals with no compromise on quality. With dollar/sterling exchange rates very much in our favour at the moment, this is a particularly good time to travel.

If you are interested in this holiday do get in touch with me and I'd be happy to provide you with a detailed itinerary plus bird and mammal lists. Alternatively, if you'd like to consider your own private safari at another time with an itinerary adapted to suit you, then again, do get in touch to discuss. I've arranged many very cost-effective tours for families through to specialist birding for small groups of four in a single vehicle upwards.

Peter Roberts

E-mail cisticolas4ever@btinternet.com

Recent literature on birds in Argyll

This article is a continuation of the series of articles which appeared in the hard copy versions of the *Argyll Bird Report* and previous issues of the *Eider*. It provides a brief bibliography, in alphabetical order by author name, of recent publications that relate to birds in Argyll (or are studies elsewhere of the ecology of birds of conservation importance in Argyll), with a short description (in italics) where considered appropriate. It adds to previously published bibliographies and includes material not listed previously. It includes material from 2018-2021.

Argyll Raptor Study Group. (2019) Golden Eagles and forestry in Argyll. *Scottish Birds* **39**: 195–199. *An update on the population of Golden Eagles in Kintyre which has risen to around 11 pairs in 2014-2018, following a decline to 4 pairs in 1995 from the 8-10 pairs present in the 1960s. The original decline was considered to have been caused by 'blanket afforestation' the effects of which appear to have been ameliorated by changes in forest structure following felling, along with significant changes in farming in the area.*

Bowler, J. (2019) Greater Yellowlegs, Tiree, 28 April 2019—the third record for Argyll. *Scottish Birds* **29**: 336-337. *Describes the third occurrence of Greater Yellowlegs at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree.*

Bowler, J.M. (2019) Seabird movements off the Isle of Tiree, Argyll. *Scottish Birds* **39**: 235-246. *A review article which summaries seawatching data from Tiree during 2001-18. The largest movements were noted at Aird, on the north coast during and following strong NW winds and at Hynish following SE winds.*

Bowler, J.M. (2019) Gull-billed Tern, Tiree, 17-27 May 2019—the third record for Argyll. *Scottish Birds* **39**: 271-273. *Describes the third occurrence of Gull-billed Tern at various locations on Tiree.*

Bowler, J. (2021) Yellow-bellied flycatcher, Balephuil, Isle of Tiree, Argyll, 15-23 September 2020-the first record for the Western Palearctic. *Scottish Birds* **41**: 78-80. *Describes the first ever European occurrence of a Yellow-bellied flycatcher at Balephuil, Tiree and management of visitors who came to see it during the covid pandemic.*

Bowler, J. (2021) Hume's Warbler, Isle of Tiree, Argyll, 31 October-3 November 2020—first west Scotland record. *Scottish Birds* **41**: 185-186. *Describes the first record of Hume's Warbler in Argyll, at Balephuil, Isle of Tiree.*

Bowler, J., Taylor, B.A. and Stronach, P. (2021) Dusky Warblers in Scotland during the autumn of 2020. *Scottish Birds* **41**: 86-89. *Describes the first record of Dusky Warbler in Argyll, at Balephuil, Tiree, on 14 October 2020.*

Bowler, J.M. and Leitch, A.J. (2020) Wetland Bird Survey counts on the Isle of Tiree, Argyll 1998-2019. *Scottish Birds* **40**: 216–224. *A review paper which summaries counts of wildfowl on the four largest lochs on Tiree (Loch Bhasapol, Loch an Eilean, Loch a' Phuil and Loch Riaghain). Mean peak yearly counts showed significant declines in the numbers of Shelduck, Mallard, Pochard, Red-breasted Merganser and Coot. Numbers of other species were unchanged except Gadwall and Green-winged Teal which had increased.*

Bowler, J. and Todd, G. (2019) Black-winged Stilt, Heylipol, Tiree, 16-18 April 2019—first record for Argyll. *Scottish Birds* **39**: 262-265. *Describes the first record of Black-winged Stilt in Argyll, at Heylipol, Tiree.*

Dickson, J.M. (2019) Great Spotted Cuckoo, Iona, Argyll, 23-26 June 2019—the second Scottish record. *Scottish Birds* **39**: 278-280. *Describes the first record of Great Spotted Cuckoo in Argyll on Iona.*

Ewing, S.R., Baxter, A., Wilson, J.D., Hayhow, D.B., Gordon, J., Thompson, D.B.A., Whitfield, D.P. and van der Wal, R. (2020) Clinging on to alpine life: Investigating factors driving the uphill range contraction and population decline of a mountain breeding bird. *Global Change Biology*, **26**: 3771-3787. *Climate change and anthropogenic nitrogen deposition are widely regarded as important drivers of environmental change in alpine habitats. However, due to the difficulties working in high-elevation mountain systems, the impacts of these drivers on alpine breeding species have rarely been investigated. The Eurasian dotterel (Charadrius morinellus) is a migratory wader, which has been the subject of uniquely long-term and spatially widespread monitoring effort in Scotland, where it breeds in alpine areas in dwindling numbers. Here we analyse data sets spanning three decades, to investigate whether key potential drivers of environmental change in Scottish mountains (snow lie, elevated summer temperatures and nitrogen deposition) have contributed to the population decline of dotterel. We also consider the role of rainfall on the species' wintering grounds in North Africa. We found that dotterel declines—in both density and site occupancy of breeding males—primarily occurred on low and intermediate elevation sites. High-elevation sites mostly continued to be occupied, but males occurred at lower densities in years following snow-rich winters, suggesting that high-elevation snow cover displaced dotterel to lower sites. Wintering ground rainfall was positively associated with densities of breeding males two springs later. Dotterel densities were reduced at low and intermediate sites where nitrogen deposition was greatest, but not at high-elevation sites. While climatic factors explained variation in breeding density between years, they did not seem to explain the species' uphill retreat and decline. We cannot rule out the possibility that dotterel have increasingly settled on higher sites previously unavailable due to extensive snow cover, while changes associated with nitrogen deposition may also have rendered lower lying sites less suitable for breeding. Causes of population and range changes in mountain-breeding species are thus liable to be complex, involving multiple anthropogenic drivers of environmental change acting widely across annual and migratory life cycles.*

Fenn, S.R., Bignal, E.M., Trask, A.E., McCracken, D.M., Monaghan, P. and Reid, J.M. (2020) Collateral benefits of targeted supplementary feeding on demography and growth rate of a threatened population. *Journal*

of Applied Ecology **57(11)** 2212-2221. *Supplementary feeding as a short-term emergency conservation measure to increase the first-year survival of Chough on Islay led to an increased survival of adult Chough and breeding success, despite not a priori expectation that the non-target adults were food limited.*

Fielding, A.H., Haworth, P.F., Anderson, D. Benn, S., Dennis, R., Weston, E. and Whitfield, D.P. (2020) A simple topographical model to predict Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* space use during dispersal *Ibis* **162**: 400-415. *Many large raptors exploit or rely on anabatic and orographic winds which provide vertical lift, to supplement or provide the energy fuelling flight. Airspace is therefore a critical habitat for such large raptors and its use is subject to the underlying terrestrial topography, because particular topographical features are more likely to provide wind energetic lift. Accordingly, ridges and/or 'rugged topography' are common preferred features in habitat use by large raptors. Our study aimed to provide a simple model of space use for a large raptor, the Golden Eagle Aquila chrysaetos , based on thousands of GPS telemetry records during juvenile dispersal of 92 birds tagged as nestlings between 2007 and 2016 across upland Scotland. Model development was based on the hypothesis that four topographical variables would be influential: slope, aspect, altitude and distance from ridge. The telemetry dataset was divided into training and two testing components. The first testing set was derived by a temporal split resulting in approximately equal sample size on records and some temporal overlap in individuals' records with training data. The second testing set involved no individuals from the training set. Aspect was removed early in training model development because it was not influential. The model found that young Golden Eagles preferred, or used according to availability, space above slopes greater than 10°, at an altitude of ≥ 300 m, and within 300 m of a ridge. The test data were highly correlated with those from the training data in the model variables, and performance as regard to expected preferences from the model was improved in both test datasets, indicating the model was robust. Given the apparent universal nature of large raptor dependence on topography, that topography is relatively immutable according to time and use, and that topographical data are readily available, we commend our approach to other habitat preference studies of Golden Eagles and other large raptors elsewhere.*

Fielding, A.H., Anderson, D., Benn, S., Dennis, R., Geary, M., Weston, E. and Whitfield, D.P. (2021, on line) Non-territorial GPS-tagged golden eagles *Aquila chrysaetos* at two Scottish wind farms: Avoidance influenced by preferred habitat distribution, wind speed and blade motion status. *PLoS ONE* **16(8)**: *Wind farms can have two broad potential adverse effects on birds via antagonistic processes: displacement from the vicinity of turbines (avoidance), or death through collision with rotating turbine blades. These effects may not be mutually exclusive. Using detailed data from 99 turbines at two wind farms in central Scotland and thousands of GPS-telemetry data from dispersing golden eagles, we tested three hypotheses. Before-and-after-operation analyses supported the hypothesis of avoidance: displacement was reduced at turbine locations in more preferred habitat and with more preferred habitat nearby. After-operation analyses (i.e. from the period when turbines were operational) showed that at higher wind speeds and in highly preferred habitat eagles were less wary of turbines with motionless blades: rejecting our second hypothesis. Our third hypothesis was supported, since at higher wind speeds eagles flew closer to operational turbines; especially–once more–turbines in more preferred habitat. After operation, eagles effectively abandoned inner turbine locations, and flight line records close to rotor blades were rare. While our study indicated that whole-wind farm functional habitat loss through avoidance was the substantial adverse impact, we make recommendations on future wind farm design to minimise collision risk further. These largely entail developers avoiding outer turbine locations which are in and surrounded by swathes of preferred habitat. Our study illustrates the insights which detailed case studies of large raptors at wind farms can bring and emphasises that the balance between avoidance and collision can have several influences.*

Fielding, A.H., Anderson, D., Benn, S., Dennis, D., Geary, M., Weston, E. & Whitfield, D.P. (2021, on line) Responses of dispersing GPS-tagged Golden Eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*) to multiple wind farms across Scotland. *Ibis* (in press). *Wind farms may have two broad potential adverse effects on birds via antagonistic processes: displacement from the vicinity of turbines (avoidance), or death through collision with rotating turbine blades. Large raptors are often shown or presumed to be vulnerable to collision and are demographically sensitive to additional mortality, as exemplified by several studies of the Golden Eagle Aquila chrysaetos. Previous findings from Scottish Eagles, however, have suggested avoidance as the primary response. Our study used data from 59 GPS-tagged Golden Eagles with 28 284 records during natal dispersal before and after turbine operation < 1 km of 569 turbines at 80 wind farms across Scotland. We tested three hypotheses using measurements of tag records' distance from the hub of turbine locations: (1) avoidance should be evident; (2) older birds should show less avoidance (i.e. habituate to turbines); and (3) rotor diameter should have no influence (smaller diameters are correlated with a turbine's age, in examining possible habituation). Four generalized linear mixed models (GLMMs) were constructed with intrinsic habitat preference of a turbine location using Golden Eagle Topography (GET) model, turbine operation status (before/after), bird age and rotor diameter as fixed factors. The best GLMM was subsequently verified by k-fold cross-validation and involved only GET habitat preference and presence of an operational turbine. Eagles were eight times less likely to be within a rotor diameter's distance of a hub location after turbine operation, and modelled displacement distance was 70 m. Our first hypothesis expecting avoidance was supported. Eagles were closer to turbine locations in preferred habitat but at greater distances after turbine operation. Results on bird age (no influence to 5+ years) rejected hypothesis 2, implying no habituation. Support for hypothesis 3 (no influence of rotor diameter) also tentatively inferred no habituation, but data indicated birds went slightly closer to longer rotor blades although not to the turbine tower. We proffer that understanding why avoidance or collision in large raptors may occur can be conceptually envisaged via variation in fear of humans as the 'super predator' with turbines as cues to this life-threatening agent.*

Ford, A.R., Taylor, J. and Jardine, D.C. (2019) Observations on the roosting behaviour of adult male Golden Eagles from satellite telemetry. *Ringing & Migration* **34**: 38-44. *Adult male Golden Eagles were found to have many more roost sites than previously understood. Sites which were*

used more regularly were favoured on windy nights with some suggestion that sites which were sheltered from the wind being used more often.

Furness, R.W. (2021) Native species dependent on introduced species: the example of Siskins and Sitka spruce. *Scottish Birds* **41**: 154–155. *Breeding siskins are highly dependent on the cones of Sitka spruce, the abundance of which varies from year to year. When these crops fail siskins turn to alternative foods, leading to the interesting question of the effect of this on other species which use these food crops.*

Furness, E.N. and Furness, R.W. (2021) Effects of Sitka spruce masting on phenology and demography of siskins Spinus spinus. *Scientific Reports* **11**: 4921. *Siskins bred earlier in years, and young were more numerous, when Sitka spruce had large numbers of cones. Stable isotope ratios suggested young were fed more seed from Sitka spruce in good coning years, but the young were neither heavier or larger, nor was there evidence of their greater survival than in years of low cone abundance. This is an interesting example of a native species, whose population is largely dependent on an introduced tree species.*

Geary, M., Haworth, P.F. and Fielding, A.H. (2018) Hen harrier *Circus cyaneus* nest sites on the Isle of Mull are associated with habitat mosaics and constrained by topography. *Bird Study* **65**: 62-71. *The authors produced a model which is effective in predicting suitable areas for Hen Harrier nest sites and indicates that Hen Harriers on Mull are found in habitat mosaics below 200 m above sea level. Hen Harrier nest intensity is positively associated with increasing proportions of moorland and scrub, open canopy forestry and closed canopy forestry. Nest intensity is negatively associated with increasing proportions of grazed land.*

Gilbert, G., MacGillivray, F.S., McKay, C.R. and Robertson, H.S. (2019) Foraging habitat of a declining Scottish Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* population in the post-breeding period. *Bird Study* **66**: 32-42. *At a large scale, dune pasture was the most preferred foraging habitat. There were indications of a change in preference with time in line with availability of seasonal habitats, such as cut silage and barley stubbles, and preference for foraging in fields with greater livestock density. Within preferred habitats, the most used sources of food at a small patch scale were dung and the soil around rocky outcrops; overall, this had not changed when compared between the declining 2013 population and healthy 1989 population. Soil at chough foraging locations was relatively drier and characterized by short, sparse, vegetation and a slight slope. We found that young birds foraged twice as frequently in dung compared to adults, while adults foraged twice as much in soil.*

Green, R.E., Brekke, P., Ward, H. Slaymaker, M., van der Velde, M., Komdeur, J. and Dugdale, H.L. (2019) Use of microsatellite-based paternity assignment to establish where Corn Crake *Crex crex* chicks are at risk from mechanized mowing. *Ibis* **161**: 890-894. *We used microsatellite DNA to assign probable parentage of young Corn Crakes to adult males and females and used these assignments to estimate the distribution of distances between broods of chicks and juveniles and the night-time singing place of the father at the time of initiation of the clutch. Estimated distances for broods of young chicks were in accord with those estimated previously by radiotracking, but distances were greater for older unfledged independent chicks not studied previously. Our results indicate that modifications of the timing and method of mowing to reduce losses of nests and chicks should be implemented inside an area within about 500 m of the singing places of male Corn Crakes, rather than the 250 m previously considered to be safe.*

Green, R. (2020) Corn Crake conservation. *British Birds* **113**: 671-685. *A review paper which describes issues affecting Corncrakes and the work undertaken to develop conservation solutions which led to a reversal of earlier population declines. Changes in agricultural subsidies were identified as one of the causes of recent declines.*

Hayhow, D.B., Johnstone, I., Moore, A.S., Mucklow, Stratford, A., Šúr, M. and Eaton, M.A. (2018) Breeding status of Red-billed Choughs *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* in the UK and Isle of Man in 2014. *Bird Study* **65**: 458-470. *The UK and Isle of Man population was estimated at 433 pairs, the majority found in Wales (55%) and Isle of Man (31%). Increases in the Isle of Man, Cornwall and south Wales contrasted with declines recorded in Scotland and in parts of north and mid-Wales. Trends differed regionally and between coastal and inland nesting areas.*

Jardine, D.C., McNab, E.M. and Davison, M. (2021) A long-term study of Common Buzzards (*Buteo buteo*) in an area with an increasing eagle population. British Birds **114**: 705-713. Describes a long-term study of Buzzards on Colonsay and Oronsay 1988 – 2019, where the population has declined from around 20 pairs to 10 pairs. This is partly attributed to an increasing eagle population, but also to changes in prey availability. Changes in other members of the guild of rapotrs on the islands are also described.

Jardine, D., Peacock, M, Vaughan, M. and Fisher, I. 2019. Choughs on Colonsay and Oronsay, 1984-2018. *British Birds* **112**: 390-398. *The results of a long-term study of Chough on Colonsay and Oronsay; the population rose in the early years and is now in decline. As on Islay, poor juvenile survival has been found to be the cause of the decline. Food supplies are believed to be the cause of the poor survival and the changes which have led to this are discussed.*

Jardine, D.C., McNab, E.M. and Davison, M. (2021) Long-term study of Common Buzzards and other raptors on Colonsay and Oronsay, Argyll. *British Birds* **114**: 705-713. *Summarises the results of a study from 1988-2019 which saw a decline in the number of breeding pairs of Buzzards from 18-29 pairs to 8-9 pairs as the population of Golden and White-tailed Eagles increased. During this period Hen Harriers colonised the island and there was a temporary increase in Kestrels. The principal prey of Buzzards changed during the period of the study from Rabbit to Brown Rat in response to a decline in Rabbit numbers. Buzzards bred earlier in response to increasing winter and spring temperatures during 1995-2010.*

Littlewood, S and Jones, M. (2021) *Wild Mull: A Natural History of the Island and its People.* Pelagic Publishing. 300pp. *A new wildlife guide to*

the Island of Mull with detailed chapters on its raptors, seabirds and extraordinary landbirds.

MacGillivray, F.S., Gilbert, G. and McKay, C.R. (2018) The diet of a declining Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* population on Islay, Scotland. *Bird Study* **65**: 422-425. *The authors quantified Red-billed Chough Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax diet from faecal samples collected on Islay. Dung invertebrates formed the majority of prey biomass in dune pasture and Tipulid larvae in mixed pasture but Aphodius larvae were scarce in the diet, whereas they had been a major component in the 1980s. There are management implications from the indication of a reduction in availability of preferred food.*

Maguire, E.J. (2021) An influx of Magpies to West Scotland via South Kintyre in spring 2020. *Scottish Birds* **41**: 202-204. *Description of the phenology and pattern of an influx of Magpies to Argyll thought to have originated in Northern Ireland.*

Murgatroyd, M., Roos, S., Evans, R. Sansom, A., Whitfield, D.P., Sexton D., Reid, R. Grant, J. and Amar, A. (2018). Sex-specific patterns of reproductive senescence in a long-lived reintroduced raptor. *Journal of Animal Ecology* **87**: 1587-1599. *1. For many species there is evidence that breeding performance changes as an individual ages. In iteroparous species, breeding performance often increases through early-life and is expected to level out or even decline (senesce) later in life. Furthermore, an individual's sex and conditions experienced in early-life can affect breeding performance and how this changes with age. 2. Long-term monitoring of individuals from reintroduced populations can provide unique opportunities to explore age-related trends in breeding performance that might otherwise be logistically challenging. 3. We used a unique dataset from a reintroduced population of White-tailed Eagles Haliaeetus albicilla in Scotland, which has been intensively monitored since their initial reintroduction in 1975, to study age- and sex-specific trends in two measures of breeding performance. This monitoring provided data on breeding performance of known individuals ranging in age from 3 to 26 years old. We also explored changes in breeding performance in relation to early-life experience (i.e. whether they were released or fledged in the wild). 4. Breeding performance increased with age in early-life in a similar manner for both sexes. We found stronger evidence for senescence in breeding performance in males than females. However, late-life female breeding success was associated with early-life experience, while male senescent trends were not apparently impacted by conditions experienced during early-life. 5. Sexual differences in senescence mean that older males are less likely to breed successfully compared to older females and this may influence females' mate changes later in life. This difference may suggest a linked sexual difference in survival rates or the possibility of proactive partner change by females in later life in this typically monogamous bi-parental species.*

Percival, S. and Bignal, E. (2018) The Islay Barnacle Goose management strategy: a suggested way forward. *British Wildlife* **30**: 37-44. *Describes changes in the population of Barnacle Geese wintering on Islay along with an historical perspective of their impact on agriculture and the previous management of the population. It also describes the new goose management scheme and problems associated with it, along with suggestions of how it can be improved.*

Percival, S.M., Cabot, D. and Colhoun, K. (2020) Number and distribution of autumn-staging Barnacle Geese on Islay and their exposure to the Islay goose cull. *Scottish Birds* **40**: 225-231. Describes the response of Barnacle Geese to the new goose management scheme (the Islay Goose Management Strategy) introduced in 2015 and calls for its review, because of its effect on non-Islay Special Protection Areas for this species in Donegal, Tiree and potentially other SPAs where no ringing has been undertaken.

Reid, J.M., Bignal, E., Bignal, S., McCracken, D.I., Fenn, S.R., Trask, A.E. and Monaghan, P. (2021, on line) Integrating advances in population and evolutionary ecology with conservation strategy of long-term studies of red-billed choughs. Journal of Animal Ecology (in press) *The authors summarise the key outcomes from long-term studies of a red-billed chough (Pyrrhorcorax pyrrhocorax) population of conservation concern, where they pro-actively aimed to achieve the dual and interacting objectives of advancing population and evolutionary ecology and advancing effective conservation.Estimation of means, variances and covariances in key vital rates from individual-based demographic data identified temporal and spatial variation in sub-adult survival as key constraints on λ, and simultaneously provided new insights into how vital rates can vary as functions of demographic structure, natal conditions and parental life-history.Targeted analyses showed that first-year survival increased with prey abundance, implying that food limitation may constrain λ. First-year survival then decreased dramatically, threatening population viability and prompting emergency supplementary feeding interventions. Detailed evaluations suggested that the interventions successfully increased first-year survival in some years, and additionally increased adult survival and successful reproduction, thereby feeding back to inform intervention refinements and understanding of complex ecological constraints on λ.Genetic analyses revealed novel evidence of expression of a lethal recessive allele, and demonstrated how critically small effective population size can arise, thereby increasing inbreeding and loss of genetic variation. Population viability analyses parameterised with all available demographic and genetic data showed how ecological and genetic constraints can interact to limit population viability, and identified ecological management as of primacy over genetic management to ensure short-term persistence of the focal population.This case study demonstrates a full iteration through the sequence of primary science, evidence-based intervention, quantitative evaluation and feedback that is advocated in conservation science but still infrequently achieved. It thereby illustrates how pure science advances informed conservation actions to ensure (short-term) stability of the target population, and how conservation-motivated analyses fed back to advance fundamental understanding of population processes.*

Summerhayes, A. (2020) Why did the Corncrake cross the road. *Scottish Birds* **40**: 260 – 263. *Description of close encounters with a Corncrake on Colonsay.*

Trask, A.E., Fenn, S.R., Bignal, E.M., McCracken, D.J., Monaghan, P. and Reid, J.M. (2019). Evaluating the efficacy of independent versus simultaneous management strategies to address ecological and genetic threats

to population viability. *Journal of Applied Ecology* **56**: 2264-2273. *A detailed investigation of the potential future for Chough on Islay using population modelling, which found that current demographic parameters indicated that supplementary feeding and genetic re-inforcement will be critical to ensuring the survival of the remaining Chough in Scotland.*

Trask, A.E., Bignal, E., Fenn, S.R., McCracken, D.I., Monaghan, P. and Reid, J.M. (2020) Conservation strategy for red-billed choughs in Scotland: Assessment of the impact of supplementary feeding and evaluation of future management strategies. *Scottish Natural Heritage Research Report No. 1152. A detailed analysis of the impacts of supplementary feeding on the survival of Chough on Islay, the results of which are used in a population viability analysis which indicates the need for both genetic re-inforcement of the population and habitat measures to overcome seasonal food shortages.*

Weston, E. D., Whitfield, D.P., Travis, J.M.J. and Lambin, X. (2018) The contribution of flight capability to the post-fledging dependence period of golden eagles. *Journal of Avian Biology*, **49**:e01265. *The period prior to an individual emigrating from its natal site and initiating dispersal is important for developing the skills that are ultimately required for surviving natal dispersal. Using a novel method to quantify the early movements of 35 juvenile golden eagles fitted with satellite transmitters, we hypothesised that variation in golden eagles' post-fledging dependence period (PFDP) was determined by variation in how quickly movement skills were acquired in order to become independent and disperse. Twenty nine young eagles exhibited an initial increase in mobility ("ontogenic phase") levelling off after a median of 68 days, followed by a period of maintained mobility ("maintained phase") that lasted a median of 99 days (range 24 - 176). Eagles that developed their mobility more quickly during the ontogenic phase had a correspondingly shorter ontogenic phase. Despite this, most of the inter-individual variation in the length of the PFDP resulted from variation in the length of the "maintained phase". In general, females (the larger sex) developed more slowly and had a longer ontogenic phase. Males exhibited dispersal strategies around two modes with some dispersing early (mode 1: 89.5 days) and others late (mode 2: 220 days). In contrast females dispersed around a unimodal distribution of timing (mode 167.5 days). Apart from six individuals (mostly males) which dispersed with no discernible maintained phase, most offspring remained in the parental home range after they were fully mobile, even those that developed mobility quickly, suggesting that the PFDP in golden eagles is not simply a function of physical capacity for independence, but also a period when young eagles decide to remain, and are tolerated by parents, in their parental home range before dispersing. We suggest that delaying dispersal may be a beneficial strategy for young raptors facing a competitive environment after PFDP.*

Wilkinson, N. I., Eaton, M.A. Colhoun, K. and Drewitt, A.L. (2018). The population status of breeding Twite *Linaria flavirostris* in the UK in 2013. *Bird Study* **65**: 174-188. *The UK population of Twite was estimated at 7831 pairs (95% CL: 5829–10 137). This was 21% lower but not significantly different from the 1999 survey estimate. Scotland held 98% of the UK population (7640, 95% CL: 5629–9954). There were an estimated 164 pairs (95% CL: 76–297) in England, a significant decline of 72% from 1999. Estimated totals for Wales and Northern Ireland were 16 (95% CL: 10–24) and 18 pairs respectively.*

Wilson, M.W., Balmer, D.E., Jones, K., King, V.A., Raw, D., Rollie, C.J., Rooney, E., Ruddock, M., Smith, G.D., Stevenson, A., Stirling-Aird, P.K. Wernham, C.V. Weston, J.M. and Noble, D.J. (2018) The breeding population of Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* in the United Kingdom, Isle of Man and Channel Islands in 2014. *Bird Study* **65**: 1-19. *In 2014, the breeding population of Peregrines in the UK, Isle of Man and Channel Islands was estimated at 1769 pairs. This is 22% larger than the population estimate from the previous survey in 2002. Most of this increase is accounted for by increases in lowland England. Populations in some upland areas have declined.*

Wood, B. (2020). White-crowned Sparrow, the Oa, Islay, 12 June 2019—the first record for Argyll. *Scottish Birds* **40**: 79–80. *Describes the first record of White-crowned Sparrow in Argyll, at the Oa, Islay.*

Wood, D. and How, J. (2021). RSPB Loch Gruinart and The Oa, Islay. *British Birds* **114**: 267-279. *An article in the great bird reserves series which describes the management of these reserves for Barnacle and Greenland White-fronted Geese, Chough, Corncrake, birds of prey and waders.*

Wotton, S. R., Bladwell, S., Mattingley, W., Morris, N.G., Raw, D., Ruddock, M., Stevenson, A. and Eaton, M.A. (2018) Status of the Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* in the UK and Isle of Man in 2016. *Bird Study* **65**: 145-160. *The UK and Isle of Man Hen Harrier population was estimated at 575 territorial pairs (95% confidence limits, 477–694), a non-significant decline of 13% since 2010 but a significant decline of 24% since 2004. Scotland held the majority (80%) of the population with 460 (359–573) territorial pairs. Elsewhere, 46 territorial pairs were recorded in Northern Ireland, 35 in Wales, 30 in the Isle of Man and four in England. Significant decreases were recorded in the number of pairs in Scotland using grouse moor (–57%) and young forest (–54%).*

Obituaries

Sandy Gordon 1931-2020. *Scottish Birds* **41**: 48-49.

Paul Haworth 1951 – 2018. *Scottish Birds* **39**: 140–141.

Eddie Maguire 1946-2021 *Scottish Birds* **41**: 343-344.

Mike Peacock 1953 – 2019. *Scottish Birds* **40**: 50–51.

David C Jardine (November 2021)

ABC field trip to Gigha
on 28 August 2021

ABC members having lunch on the South Pier, Gigha ©David Jardine

A small group of members met at Tayinloan for the August outing, crossing over to Gigha on the 10.00hrs ferry. Before boarding, a Sparrowhawk was seen by some members as it hunted the House Sparrows and Greenfinch around the farm buildings.

By 'winter standards' the ferry crossing was quiet, with ideal viewing conditions on the flat calm sea. Along with a steady procession of Gannets returning to Ailsa Craig, there were a few Guillemots and seven Black Guillemots, now looking grey as their heads turned white into their non-breeding plumage. There were few sea-ducks and no divers on our way to Gigha. However, around five distant divers were seen on the return visit in the afternoon. Despite the awkward light at least one Red-throated and one Black-throated Diver were identified with the help of digital cameras, which gave magnified views of their head shape, bill size and angle.

Walking up through the village there were still plenty of Swallows around, and a few Sand Martins were found perched amongst them. Also in the village, it was nice to see a flock of around 90 Starlings; this species is becoming scarcer in Argyll, but good numbers remain in areas with cattle and pasture, particularly on the islands.

As the tide was falling, a short detour was made round to Gallachoile for a closer view of the waders in Ardminish Bay, where two Curlew, four Redshank, 25 Dunlin and 65 Ringed Plover were feeding. After a short coffee/tea break we returned to the road and saw a group of 15 Collared Doves at North Druimachro.

On the walk down to the South Pier there were around 100 House Sparrows in the field margins near the airstrip, 74 Linnets on the wires along with more Swallows, but no signs of a Stonechat. Lunch was had at the South Pier, looking across to Cara where over 100 Shags and a few Cormorants were roosting on rocks by the shore. A Kittiwake fed close inshore and a Whimbrel was heard and seen in the distance to the north. A Greenshank flew south after lunch, but the shore to the south was quiet. Five Canada Geese were in the fields inland, but surprisingly these were the only geese seen on the outing.

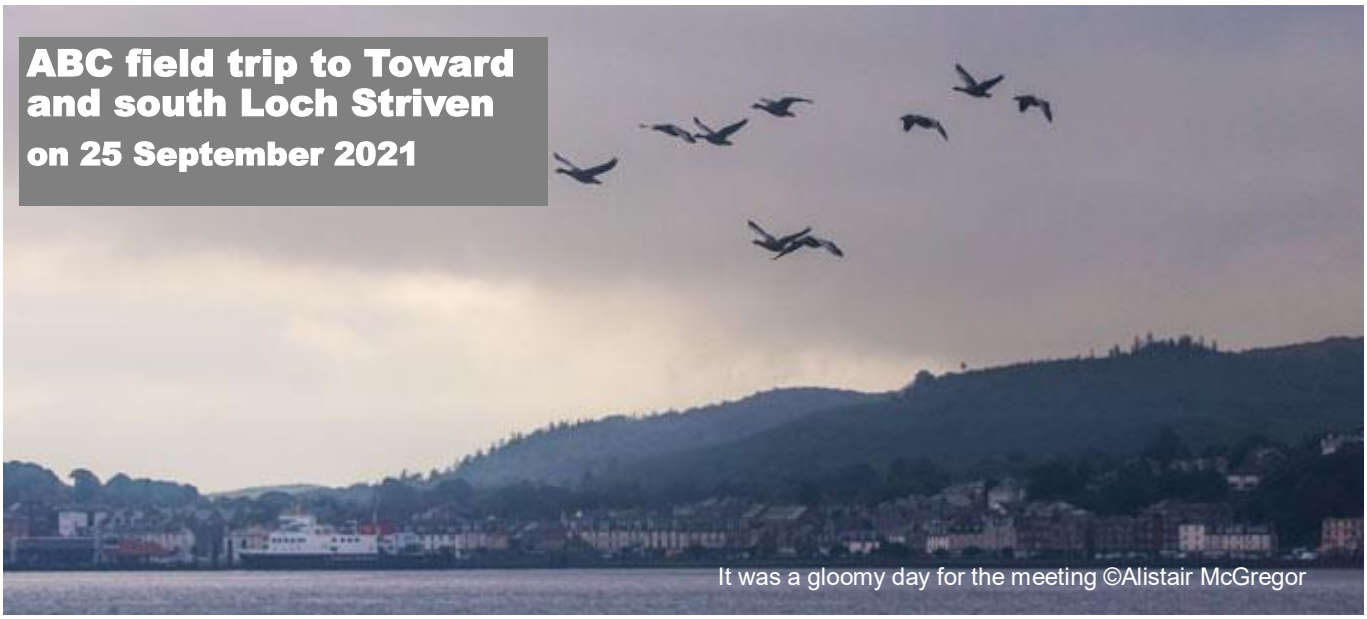
On our return journey, at least three Stonechats were seen near the airstrip. Where had they been hiding earlier? A Reed Bunting, perched on the wire nearby, caused quite a discussion over identification, until it was realised that the 'two bird theory' applied with observers viewing and describing different birds. A Whitethroat in the brambles to the north of the shop (which provided good samples of Wee Island Dairy Ice Cream) was the last species added to the list before boarding the ferry on the way home.

Species list. Canada Goose, Eider, Red-throated Diver, Black-throated Diver, Gannet, Cormorant, Shag, Heron, Sparrowhawk*, Buzzard, Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover, Dunlin, Whimbrel, Curlew, Redshank, Greenshank, Black-headed Gull, Common Gull, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Kittiwake, Guillemot, Black Guillemot, Rock Dove, Woodpigeon, Collared Dove, Sand Martin, Swallow, House Martin, Meadow Pipit, Rock Pipit, Pied Wagtail, Wren, Dunnock, Robin, Stonechat, Wheatear, Blackbird, Blackcap, Whitethroat, Willow Warbler, Goldcrest, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Treecreeper, Rook*, Hooded Crow, Starling, House Sparrow, Chaffinch, Greenfinch*, Goldfinch, Linnet, Lesser Redpoll, Bullfinch, Reed Bunting (* mainland only) (58 species)

David Jardine

ABC field trip to Toward and south Loch Striven

on 25 September 2021



It was a gloomy day for the meeting ©Alistair McGregor

The weather report for the area wasn't good, with heavy showers, but with some dry spells. As I travelled to the meeting point at Toward Primary School, I drove through a really heavy down pour and I thought that no one would venture out in this weather.

When I arrived at Toward at 09.35hrs it was still raining, but mild with temperature about 14 degrees. By 10.00hrs, ten people had arrived. I gave a safety briefing and explained what the plan for the day was.

Before we left the car park we had toted up 12 species, mostly seabirds, including Common Guillemot. We walked up the road towards a footpath that leads to the beach and a small bay. Passing some houses on our left gave us House Sparrow and Chaffinch on bird feeders in a garden. Heading down the path to the beach there was a ditch full of rushes—Goldfinch, Dunnock and Wren where all seen and heard there.

On arriving at the beach, a dog walker was seen. Unfortunately the dog was running around and had chased any birds further away towards Toward Lighthouse. The weather had turned increasingly to heavy rain, which led to binoculars, cameras and spectacles all becaming fogged up, and visibility became even poorer.

But, by walking further along the foreshore than we had intended we managed to pick up Snipe, Turnstone, Wheatear, Dunlin, Curlew, Greenfinch and House Martin. Lily, the youngest member on today's field trip found and identified a dead Oystercatcher. We had a wee look for rings on its leg, but none were present.

We returned to the vehicles, rather wet and bedraggled, but Frauke Thornton brightened the mood with some delightful homemade biscuits. We then headed off for our second stop and walk.

We parked at the Ardyne Shore Car Park and walked to the mouth of the Ardyne Burn, along a track running adjacent to the shore.

This gave good views out across to the island of Bute, numerous Eiders were seen out on the sea, and good numbers of Mallard, Wigeon, Teal, Red-breasted Merganser and Goosander were observed.

Numerous Ringed Plover, Turnstone and Redshank were among a large group of mixed gulls roosting out on a gravel bar. A small group of Sandwich Terns gave a fly past. Then, a large, mixed group of geese, (Graylag and Canada) flew past, some landing beside the gulls and the rest landing in the fields behind us.

At the bridge over the Ardyne Burn it was unusually quiet with nothing moving, probably due to the inclement weather.

On returning to the vehicles our numbers had dropped to seven. The young ones were so wet that it was no longer enjoyable, but they had enjoyed their time with us.

We then travelled to Loch Striven clocking up numerous species including Stonechat, Swallow and House Martin to name but a few.

At last the weather improved as we were on our final short walk of the day around Inverchaolian Church. We heard Tree Creeper in the trees around the church yard but were unable to spot it, but we had good views of Long-tailed, Coal, Great and Blue Tits.

Siskin and Greenfinch were feeding around a small group of Scots Pine close to the farm and a Mistle Thrush was seen in a dead elm tree at the bottom corner of a grass field.

Many thanks to everyone that turned out on the day, with special thanks to Neil Hammett and George Newell for helping with spotting and identification. In spite of the weather we saw a respectable number of species.

Species list. Little Grebe, Gannet, Grey Heron, Cormorant, Shag, Mute Swan, Greylag Goose, Canada Goose, Mallard, Wigeon, Teal, Eider, Red-breasted Merganser, Goosander, Kestrel,

Pheasant, Moorhen, Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover, Sanderling, Turnstone, Dunlin, Redshank, Curlew, Snipe, Black-headed Gull, Common Gull, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Sandwich Tern, Common Guillemot, Feral Pigeon, Wood Pigeon, Swallow, House Martin, Meadow Pipit, Rock Pipit, Pied Wagtail, Wren, Robin, Dunnock, Wheatear, Stonechat, Mistle Thrush, Willow Warbler, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Blue Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Jackdaw, Carrion Crow, Hooded Crow, Rook, Raven, Starling, House Sparrow, Chaffinch, Siskin, Greenfinch (heard but not seen, Treecreeper) (total of 61 species).

Alistair McGregor

ABC field trip to Lismore
on 30 October 2021

The group at a good vantage point ©Malcolm Chattwood

Most of the nine participants on the outing to Lismore travelled through rain to get to the rendezvous point in Appin, but fortunately the forecast was for it to clear. And clear it did; with the group experiencing only a few showers, which provided wonderful autumn rainbows looking up the Great Glen.

A young Black Guillemot, feeding within metres of the pier at Port Appin allowed close scrutiny, showing the dark feather tips on the white wing patch which distinguished it from an adult bird (photo opposite). However, its constant diving did frustrate the photographers! Then the first of around half a dozen Great Northern Divers seen during the day surfaced just as the skipper was trying to get us all on board—the trip had started well!

Once over on Lismore the group walked south from Point, where several Red-breasted Mergansers were feeding offshore (17 were present on our return journey). The feeders at the roadside cottages meant that the trip (and island) list was ticking over as all the commoner garden birds were noted, including Coal Tits; a nice record for Lismore which has limited areas of its preferred habitat (coniferous woodland).

The route took us south to Stronacroibh, before heading west over to Port Ramsay. Looking south, distant views were had of Canada Geese and Rooks nearer Achuaran, where the latter breed. A male Stonechat sat up nicely on the wires eventually allowing good views for all as it came closer.

The tide was rising and by the time the group reached Port Ramsay much of the shore had been covered, but a restless Little Egret was found immediately on arrival (photo next page). Later it became clear that there was also another present, which along with several tideline Grey Herons suggested the feeding was good. A few more mergansers were in the bay along

Juvenile Black Guillemot ©David Jardine

Little Egret with Grey Heron (above) and male Kestrel (left). Both images ©David Jardine

with Teal and Mallard. Fewer waders were visible because of the high tide, but Curlew, Oystercatcher and a single Redshank were found.

Before leaving the village 'eagle-eye' Mary picked out a possible raptor perched on the summit Glas Dhruim at a distance of over a kilometre. The tripods and telescopes were scrambled into action in case it flew, but the adult Peregrine gave good views and was still perched there 20 minutes later, only moving when a short shower came in.

Moving round on the track to Fennachrochan a group of 12 (migrant?) Blackbirds were seen feeding in a group of Rowans and Blackthorn along with a Song Thrush. Earlier, the same area held a small flock of Redwings, and around 30 Goldfinches were feeding on seeds from cones of a Sitka Spruce nearby.

Round the corner at Fennachrochan a strangely silent Greenshank gave good views in the channel as the tide rose. Nearby, a male Kestrel was hovering (photo above). It flew off south and was promptly joined by another providing the now rare opportunity (in Argyll) of seeing two hovering in the same field of view, before returning to feed close to where the group stopped for lunch.

A male Red-breasted Merganser. A number were seen during the visit ©David Jardine

After lunch, with gathering clouds, the group, not wanting to push its luck with the weather, made its way back for the early afternoon ferry. Few new birds were seen on the return trip, other than a nice group of 12 Long-tailed Tits, which flew over at Port Ramsay, which fortunately everyone was able to get on to thanks to Neil's shout from the rear.

A short stop at Loch Laich, where the tide was almost full, added Wigeon, Goldeneye and Little Grebe to the day's total.

Species list (those in italics not seen on Lismore). Greylag, Canada Goose, *Wigeon*, Teal, Mallard, Eider, *Goldeneye*, Red-breasted Merganser, Great Northern Diver, *Little Grebe*, Cormorant, Shag, Little Egret, Heron, Buzzard, Kestrel, Peregrine, Oystercatcher, Curlew, Redshank, Greenshank, Black-headed Gull, Common Gull, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Guillemot, Black Guillemot, Rock Dove, Woodpigeon, Meadow Pipit, Rock Pipit, Wren, Dunnock, Robin, Stonechat, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Redwing, Goldcrest, Long-tailed Tit, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Rook, Carrion Crow, Hooded Crow, Raven, Starling, House Sparrow, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Redpoll, Reed Bunting (56 species)

David Jardine

The walk above the spectacular cliffs of Fowlsheugh RSPB Nature Reserve ©Malcolm Chattwood

The RSPB Nature Reserve at Fowlsheugh is adjacent to the hamlet of Crawton about 5km south of Stonehaven in Aberdeenshire. The RSPB's website describes it thus:

"The spectacular cliffs at Fowlsheugh are packed with more than 130,000 breeding seabirds during the spring and summer months. These include Guillemots, Razorbills and Kittiwakes, along with some Puffins and Fulmars too. If you're lucky, you might also spot Grey Seals and dolphins in the water here."

You would therefore be justified in thinking why on earth a member of the Argyll Bird Club would be foolish enough to visit in the last week of September when all those species have dispersed to take their chances on the high seas until the next breeding season.

The decision to visit was not made in ignorance but was more of an opportunity to take advantage of good weather at the end of an enjoyable week based in Stonehaven and, to be honest, to delay our return to the West Coast where the weather forecast was predictably poor.

Never having visited the reserve before we were unsure of what to expect as we turned off the A92 down an unclassified road to Crawton. The range of species nesting in the reserve gave a good indication of the land features we might expect and so it proved—dramatic tall cliffs with good access along a cliff-top path. Between the car parking area on the road and the start of the cliff path there is a little gully with lots of good cover which, had the recent weather been favourable, might have held the odd migrant passerine to test the identification skills. Nevertheless, Skylark and Yellowhammer were soon added to the week's casual list, which added to the satisfaction of a short, bracing walk with spectacular views—although the odd auk or Fulmar would have been very welcome too. A spring visit next time, perhaps?

Upon retuning to the road there were a few small birds taking advantage of the cover provided by the shrubs in residents' gardens. A quick scan with binoculars produced, strangely, the first Great Tit of the week and sparrows could be heard chirping away too. Note I haven't said House Sparrows as the chirping didn't sound quite right, so a minute's further observation confirmed my hope that we were amongst a

Another view of Fowlsheugh Nature Reserve ©Malcolm Chattwood

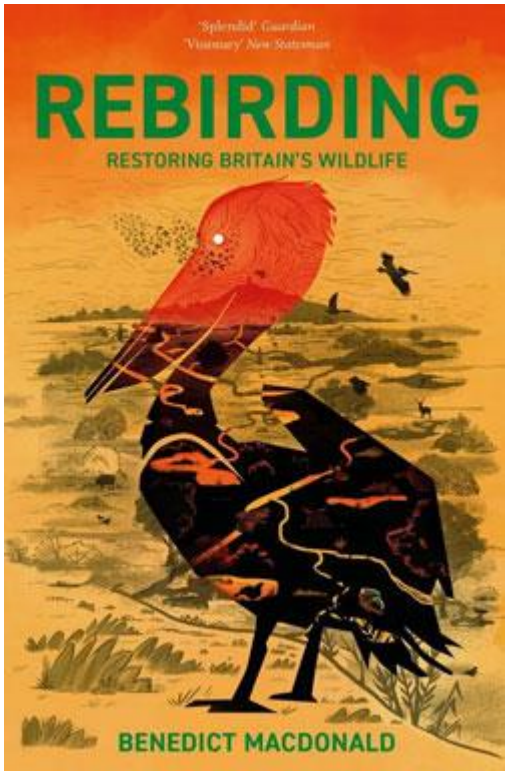
colony of Tree Sparrows. I can't recall the last time I saw a Tree Sparrow, but it was certainly years ago and took me back to our first house in Cheshire where we had both species regularly visiting our garden. I didn't realise at the time what a real treat that was.

Did the Tree Sparrow compete with late White-throat and singing (!) Chiffchaff for the most pleasing sighting of the week? In terms of the pleasure experienced with such an unanticipated sighting in an unexpected environment then yes, I think it certainly came out on top and shows that out of season birding can sometimes be rewarding.

Malcolm Chattwood

Book reviews

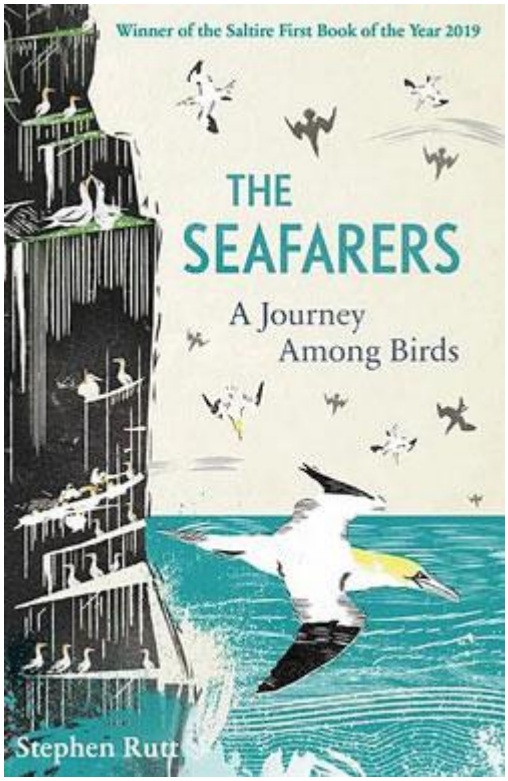
Rebirding by Ben Macdonald. Pelagic Publishing, £9.99 pbk, 335 pages, ISBN 9781784272197



While the title might be designed to catch the eye of birders, the subtitle "Restoring Britain's Wildlife" is probably a more accurate reflection of what the book is all about. Books on rewilding are not yet epidemic, but there have been a rash of them in the last few years. What makes this one different? If you want a primer on the story of the wildlife of Britain starting at the beginning, going back 900,000 years and tracing changes up to the present day, this is the one to read. It paints a vision of what the landscape, and its flora and fauna would have looked like at a time before humans had much detectable impact. It then follows the range of changes since then, especially post ice-age when man has increasingly modified the world we have inherited today.

While a great deal of this narrative is about taming the wild and the loss of diversity and abundance, it also has positive glimpses of what the future could look like through numerous examples of rewilding and reintroductions. More than this, it looks at how landscapes could be managed differently, so that wildlife can flourish. With climate change and biodiversity loss, we urgently need to restore natural ecological processes. It indicates that there is a lot to be hopeful for, if only we can implement the appropriate management sustems. I felt a lot better for having read this book,

The Seafarers by Stephen Rutt. Elliot & Thompson Limited, £9.99 pbk, 280 pages, ISBN 9781783965045



This book is about seabirds, a particular interest of mine, and is subtitled "A journey among birds." It is not a monograph or a textbook in style, but more of a narrative travelogue focussing on selected species while documenting visits to various parts of Britain, mostly seabird islands. It is easy to read, and has some beautiful prose describing experiences with birds in the special places that they choose to spend their time on land. It is informative, both with anecdotes and historical references, and with the biological intricacies of the private lives of the species covered. It is up to date with the recent conservation issues and research findings, but is also peppered with references to historical events and some of the personalities who pioneered the study of seabirds. Ronald Lockley is a name that keeps cropping up. It is not comprehensive, but it is an informative and interesting personal account of the author's journeys among birds, and very enjoyable to read.

Nigel Scriven

News from the BTO

BTO Youth Panel and Youth Reps

The BTO Youth Representatives are part of BTO's wider Youth Engagement Strategy, which has been developed by the Youth Advisory Panel. The Panel are young volunteers who help steer BTO to better serve younger supporters. It has developed an inclusive and extensive Youth Engagement Strategy, helping BTO inspire the next generation of birdwatchers. They fulfil a strategic function, implementing their ideas in BTO's wider work, and supporting our network of Youth Representatives. The vision the panel has for BTO's engagement with young people is:

A diverse, vibrant community of young birders supported by the BTO, with accessible, youth-led opportunities inspiring young people to engage with nature and science.

The Youth Representatives work on engaging more young people in nature and science in their regions through organising events and working with local communities and stakeholders. The BTO hope to expand the Youth Representative network to include more of the UK as the project grows. The Youth Representative scheme is open to young people aged 16–24 across the UK to help us engage local young people with nature, birds and science. It would be great to see more young people in Scotland represented! You can find out more about the role and what's involved at the link here: https://www.bto.org/about-bto/job-opportunities

BTO Scotland are also working closely with the Scottish Ornithologists' Club (SOC) on a new Youth Events Programme. These are free, monthly, online talks and workshops covering a wide range of topics. The first one took place on October 27th and was focussed on careers in conservation. Attendees heard the first-hand experiences of a panel representing a number of organisations and career paths and some invaluable advice was passed on! The next one is on December 15th at 7.30pm on seabird identification. Details here: https://www.the-soc.org.uk/support-us/events/events/soc-bto-scotland-youth-events-programme-seabird-identification

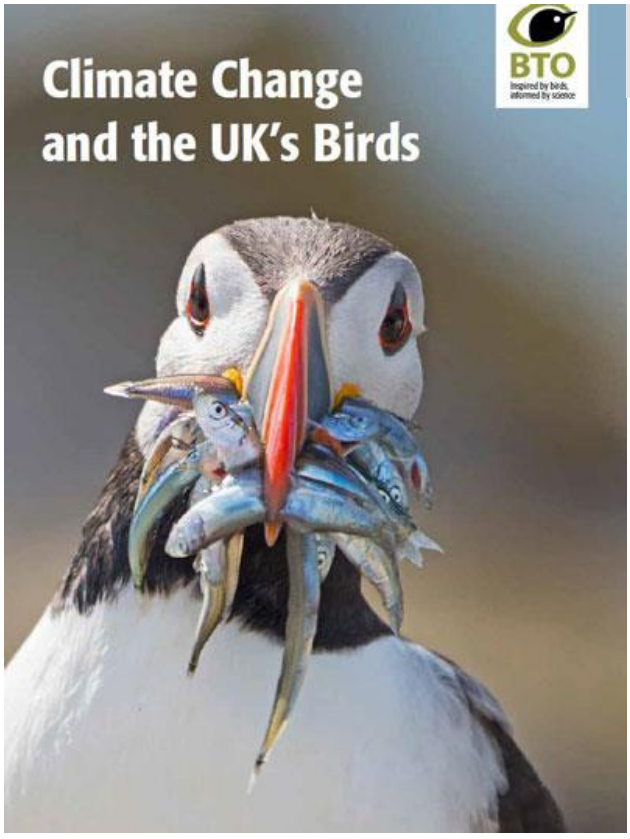
BTO have a series of youth events which include outdoor birding walks and online Youth Birding 101, details of which can be found here: https://www.bto.org/community/events/youth-events

BTO Annual Conference 29 Nov—4th December 2021

Following last year's format the conference is spread over a week and is entirely on-line. Sessions have to be booked here: https://www.bto.org/community/events/bto-conference-2021

If you want a flavour of what it might be like then look at last year's conference, which is still available online on the BTO YouTube Channel. Open YouTube and search for BTO conference 2020.

Nigel Scriven



A new publication from the BTO

This timely report assesses the impact that climate change has already had on UK bird populations by relating their long-term trends to separately published species' responses to climate change, temperature and rainfall.

Within the UK, breeding seabirds and upland breeding birds are the two groups most vulnerable to climate change. Fourteen seabird species are regarded as being at risk of negative climate change impacts. These include Puffin, for which a population decline across Britain and Ireland of 89% is projected by 2050.

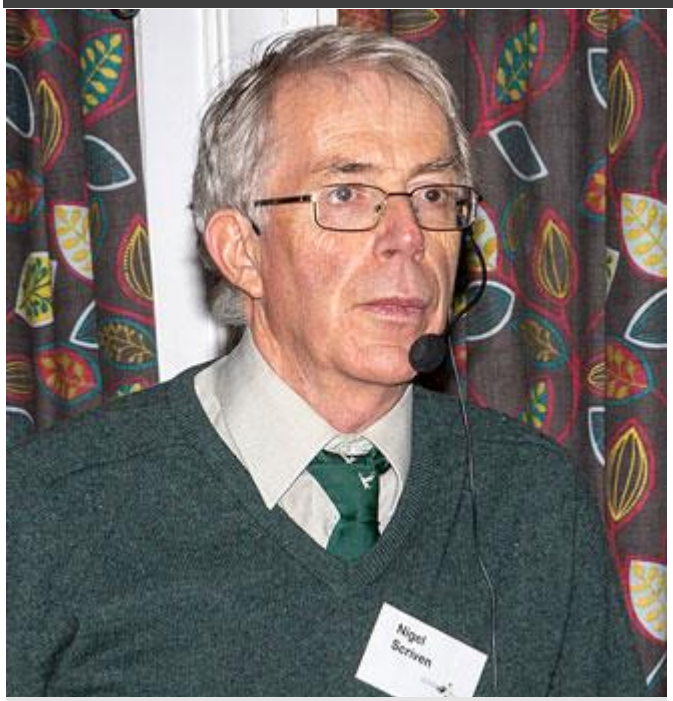
Conversely, climate change appears to be contributing to population increases and expansion in breeding waterbirds, including species colonising from continental Europe. Southerly-distributed waterbirds, coastal species and heathland species are those most likely to benefit from climate change.

The full report can be downloaded from the BTO's website. It is well worth reading.

https://www.bto.org/our-science/publications

Editor

Abstracts of talks from the autumn meeting of the ABC at the Cairnbaan Hotel on Saturday 6 November



Chairman of the ABC, Nigel Sciven
©David Palmar www.photoscot.co.uk

Our chairman welcomed around 35 members to the autumn meeting. It was great to have the opportunity to meet members again at Cairnbaan after so long. After a brief introduction by Nigel, our treasurer (Peter Hogbin) explained why it was proposed that the club should become an SCIO (Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation).

An exception to the rule—Alistair McGregor (summary Alistair McGregor)

For those of you who don't know me, I have been working with the charity HELP in Argyll and Bute for four and a half years. This entails working with young people between the ages of 16 and 29 to get them ready for full-time employment by helping and encouraging them. I have worked with a number of local schools in the Dunoon area, and helped them, along with my team of lads on numerous environmental projects. Nigel had asked me about how we encourage youngsters into bird watching and hopefully membership of the club. So, I embarked on this perilous journey to try out some of the tried and tested methods I have used on my lads in the HELP project. This account follows my article in the September Eider (pages 12-13). Once in a while we come across a natural nature lover, which nowadays is quite rare.

Lily is a colleague's eight-year-old daughter who has always had an affinity with animals, showing no fear, just love. As she grows, so does her interest in the natural world, from the smallest creepy crawly to horses and other large animals. During walks with her family, Lily can usually be found out in front catching voles and small birds or in ditches finding Slow Worms, Common Frogs, and small pond insects. This became challenging for her mother as Lily wanted to know the names of all the animals she was catching. With the aid of modern technology (mobile phone pictures) her pictures were sent to me to identify.

Lily's interest has continued to expand. Recently, I was having a clear out and found a number of old bird and animal books that I had as a kid, so I gave these to Lily. She is now doing her own research and finding out what each animal is. She is a keen birdwatcher and loves to see Oystercatchers feeding in the fields, ducks dabbling along the foreshore, and the gulls being carried about in the wind. I continue to encourage not only Lily but her whole family. Her older brother is asking for a camera for Christmas so he can take pictures of birds, and her father is hoping to become a member of the Argyll Bird Club.

My small presentation met with numerous questions and hopefully sparked the imaginations of some of those present, to try and encourage their kids or grandkids to enjoy wildlife and bird watching as much as we do.

Kilmun Bird Hide update—Alistair McGregor (summary Alistair McGregor)

The area where the new hide has been built was originally a salmon-netting station. With the decline in salmon and sea trout stocks, the netting station was abandoned. The ground, along with the old boat house (a large corrugated iron shed) was subsequently sold. Peter and Marga-

Lily with a Slow Worm ©Alistair McGregor

Kilmun Bird Hide. The old metal structure (left) and the new wooden hide (right) ©Alistair McGregor

ret Staley bought the ground on which the shed stood, which was then converted into a bird hide that was used for a number of years by the Cowal Nature History Society. However, over the years this building has decayed and become unsafe. Recently, Peter and Margaret Staley kindly transferred ownership of the hide and surrounding area to a new charity (Friends of Riverbank Hide, Kilmun), which the Argyll Bird Club has supported.

The old iron shed has been removed, and a hard standing with space for two cars has been added, together with an access down to the base of the original shed. After quite a bit of discussion it was decided to build a new 3m x 3m timber-framed hide, which is double skinned with insulation between the skins. The outside is clad with Coroline fire retardant sheeting. The front has three look-out slots, one of which is low to make it accessible for all people using the hide, and another on the downstream side look over where a feeding station will be located for smaller birds. The front affords good views over the mud flats at the head of the Holy Loch. The hide is now water tight and the roof is on and lined. The next stage is to clad the outer walls and build shutters. The final stage will be to line and insulate the interior and add shelving and a notice board. Hopefully, all work on the hide will be completed by the end of the year, after which the ground works should be finished by the end of January 2022. Whilst working on site I have seen numerous species including, Little Egret, Dipper, Kingfisher and Osprey. This hide will be a great asset to all bird watchers, and complement the Broxwood Hide on the opposite side of Holy Loch.

Seawilding at Loch Craignish—Eric Holden (summary Malcolm Chattwood)

After a brief introduction, Eric Holden showed a short video which had only been released two days before to coincide with Cop26 at Glasgow. The video described progress in the community-led seawilding project in Loch Craignish which is split into two main elements.

The project secured a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant for a five-year project to grow up to one million juvenile native oysters in Loch Craignish to restore the natural beds. The juvenile native oysters (spat) are sourced from Morecambe Bay Hatchery and arrive weighing around 1g, about the size of a thumbnail. They are grown on in a nursery which is a series of floating cages until they weigh approximately 12g, the size of a biscuit. This takes 3-4 months in the summer and at this point they are big enough to sit on the sea-bottom and survive a degree of predation from starfish and crabs.

Eric Holden ©David Palmar www.photoscot.co.uk

Extensive baseline surveys were conducted around the loch, searching for the best release sites that have a good substrate, shelter and depth. When the oysters go onto the seabed they are cast by hand into the shallows at a low spring tide. To date over 220,000 have been introduced and by the end of 2021 it is expected that over 300,000 will have found new homes. Continued monitoring shows that they are growing exceptionally well, with the ones on the seabed showing a high survival rate despite predation by starfish and crabs. Seawilding have teamed up with the Scottish Association of Marine Sciences (SAMS) and the School of Aquaculture, Stirling University to help MSc student's research, monitor and survey the restoration efforts. The aim is to reintroduce one million native oysters to Loch Craignish by 2025.

The second part of Eric's talk dealt with the efforts of Seawilding and its team of volunteers to restore Seagrass meadows in Loch Craignish. This was particularly topical given the concurrent discussions about carbon sequestration at Cop26 and the increasing realisation that "blue" carbon has to play in combating rising carbon dioxide levels. This is the first attempt in Scotland to enhance seagrass meadows by supplementing the existing patchy areas with new growth and to trial different restoration methodologies. It is anticipated that the results from this project will be rolled out to many similar suitable areas in Scotland and beyond.

Loch Craignish has ten small seagrass meadows totalling approximately 1ha, and while these seem dense and healthy, they are isolated and fragmented. The areas selected for restoration are alongside existing meadows, which are either inter-tidal or in very shallow water where there is no risk of dredging, fishing, or anchoring. In August volunteers collected seeds from existing seagrass meadows in the summer, which were then held in sea-water tanks prior to packing in small hessian bags and placed on the seabed in the autumn. Each bag contained around 50 seeds and was intended to enhance the meadow over an area of about one square metre. Ninety-five percent of the UK's seagrass meadows have disappeared, but it is a vital habitat to increase marine diversity and it also sequesters carbon faster than tropical rainforest.

Further information on the sea wilding project can be found at www.seawilding.org where it is possible to sponsor further seagrass planting or native oyster restoration and could be an ideal Christmas present for the friend or relative who already has everything!

The future of the Machrihanish Seabird & Wildlife Observatory—David Millward and Jo Goudie (summary David Jardine)

Following the sad death of Eddie Maguire earlier the summer, the future of the observatory, which he established at Uisead Point, was uncertain. Therefore, it was fortunate that David Millward came forward as the new warden, supported by Jo Goudie and Victoria Russell as Assistant Wardens.

David and Jo provided their vision for the way forward for the observatory as well as providing some background to those now involved. It looks as if the observatory will make a slight shift from the seabird side to the wildlife side with interest in otters, which are regularly seen there. In late summer the site regularly has Grayling butterflies, a scarcely seen, but widespread butterfly in coastal Argyll. It is also hoped that the geographical coverage of the observatory will increase to cover the area managed by MACC (the Machrihanish Airbase Community Company). Bird records will continue to be provided for use in the Argyll Bird Report.

The new wardens have identified a number of improvements that they hope to carry out on the site and have started this process. As well as recladding the hide, they intend to improve disabled access and replace the shelving, along with improving the viewing windows. New equipment is being sought (telescope) and binoculars which are available for the use of visitors. Video equipment is being bought and it is hoped to install

Seagrass meadows at low tide in Loch Craignish ©Loch Craignish Seagrass Project


Jo Goudie and David Millward ©David Palmar www.photoscot.co.uk

this at the Tangy Shag colony to allow a documentary of the year to be produced along with a blog. The website, which has been run by Jo for a number of years, will be updated and a Facebook page is being used to allow more immediate reporting of sightings. This has already attracted new visitors to the MBSWO, some of whom recently enjoyed seeing a Snow Bunting.

Previously the hide was only open from spring--autumn, but it is hoped to trial opening throughout the year this winter. Those wishing access should contact David or Jo prior to their visit, and they will try to make sure it is open.


David Jardine ©David Palmar www.photoscot.co.uk

David Millward is a professional photographer, following a career in aviation (Air France) and in fund-raising for conservation bodies (RSPB, SWT and Woodland Trust). He has had a lifelong interest in wildlife and first met Eddie Maguire in 2011, before he was asked in 2018 whether he might take over running the observatory if necessary.

Victoria Russell is a former police officer who has recently moved to the Campbeltown area. She is keen to learn about wildlife and has recently taken up photography. Jo Goudie is a wildlife artist who is a former member of the St Helen's bird group. She is a talented artist who received a Gold Signature award from the UK Colour Pencil Society in 2015.

A long-term study of Common Buzzards in an area with an increasing eagle population—David Jardine (summary David Jardine)

In a long-term study of Common Buzzards on the islands of Colonsay and Oronsay the population varied between 18-28 territories occupied during 1988--2010. It subsequently fell to 8-9 pairs by 2019, following an increase in the number of Golden Eagles *Aquila chrysaetos* and White-tailed Eagles *Haliaeetus albicilla* present on the islands. Competition for food and nest sites, along with direct predation of adults and chicks from the nest are believed to be factors in this decline. Unlike mainland studies of this species,

Two Buzzard chicks in a crag nest on Colonsay ©David Jardine

most of the Buzzard nests were on small crags, which are more vulnerable to predation and over the course of the study there was a reduction in the proportion of crag nests used by Buzzards.

Rabbits, small birds and Brown Rats were found to be the principal prey items, and the population levels of these were monitored each year. Rabbit numbers fluctuated with the lowest levels being recorded in 1999 and 2010/11 when the number of young reared was lower than in other years. As rabbit numbers dropped, the number of rats recorded in prey items increased.

Measurement of the chicks allowed back-calculation of the hatch date of every nest. During a 15-year period, the hatching date advanced by 17 days, which appeared to be caused by increased temperatures in January (and April) and increased spacing between nests. There was also a suggestion that increased rainfall in January delayed laying/hatching, but the population levels of rabbits did not appear have an influence on breeding date. Similar findings where temperature was found to be important, and not prey levels (voles), was found in a migratory population of buzzards in Finland.

An increase in the diversity of diurnal raptors was noted with the increasing density of eagles and the decline in Buzzards; in particular Hen Harriers colonised the islands.

The 2021 Argyll Bird Club Nuthatch Survey; Results—David Jardine, Malcolm Chattwood and Jim Dickson (summary David Jardine)

This short presentation provided preliminary results for this year's club survey. Support for the project had been excellent with 104 contributors (more than double those involved in the Swift Survey and three times those in the Survey of Rookeries). Thanks were provided to all involved.

The survey sought all records of Nuthatches in Argyll from 1 January to 30 July 2021, particularly during March—June. Observers were asked to note the activity (feeding, singing, entering nest, feeding young, etc.) of Nuthatches along with the location (1km square). Limited use was made of playback of Nuthatch calls in some areas, particularly in areas of suitable habitat where they had not been found previously.

Nuthatches recolonized Argyll in 2000 and in the period up to the survey were recorded in a total of 49, 10km^2. These records were in all months of the year and included transient birds.

This year's survey received records from 47, 10km^2 (positive and negative records). Nuthatches were found in 40, 10km^2, nine of which were

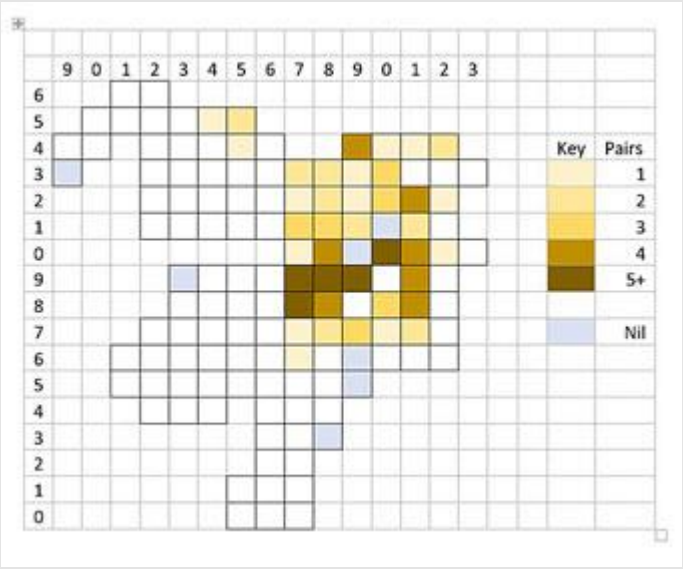


Fig. above. Preliminary results of the 2021 Argyll Bird Club Nuthatch Survey, showing the number of pairs recorded in each 10m^2

Photo right. A Nuthatch at a nest hole ©Jim Dickson

10km^2 where Nuthatches had not previously been recorded. Negative records were received from sites in 24 10km2, but 16 of these also had positive records and a further two had historical records.

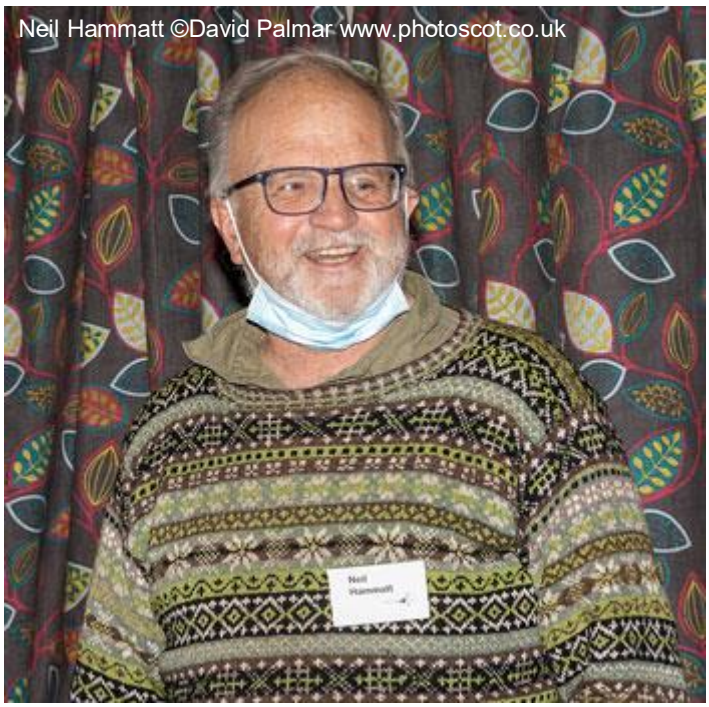
At a finer scale, Nuthatches, which have relatively small territories, were recorded in 107 1km^2 and some of these contained more than one pair, giving a provisional total of 112 pairs/singing males in Argyll. However, as some birds may have been missed and others may have been on the boundary of two 1km^2, the current population is estimated to be between 100-150 pairs.

Geographically they are well established in Cowal, Mid-Argyll and North Argyll, and are establishing in North Kintyre and North Mull. They remain absent from South Kintyre, Islay, Jura, Colonsay, West Mull, Coll and Tiree.

Birding on Shetland; expect the unexpected—Neil Hammatt (summary Neil Hammatt)

When I bought my cottage in Argyll almost six years ago, one of the many attractions was being able to bird watch on the islands more easily; seeking out those rarer species difficult to find down south. But, with seemingly never-ending Calmac chaos and many trip cancellations, I decided it was far easier to get to know Shetland, which suffers far less travel disruption (although fog at the airport does cause problems for air travellers).

Stuck out in the north Atlantic, Shetland can be a safe haven for migrating birds from Europe and North America that get blown off course, and need somewhere to feed and rest before continuing on their journey. With many fewer regular, resident species than on the mainland, Shetland's incredible number of recorded species derives mostly from migrants both in the spring and autumn. Keen birders avidly watch the pressure charts to see when strong winds from straight across the Atlantic or from deep in central Europe are expected—and that's when they jump on an overnight ferry from Aberdeen, arriving first thing next morning. Quick car hire formalities, and you're off on an adventure full of the ornithological unexpected.


Neil Hammatt ©David Palmar www.photoscot.co.uk

Shetland is an archipelago with many of its islands connected by causeways and regular ferries, making birding pretty straight forward on mostly well-kept roads. For someone who enjoys birding overseas, birding on Shetland during the pandemic has helped to keep me sane. October 2020 was an odd experience because most of Scottish population could not travel due to restrictions, but Argyll was in a low-enough tier for Shetland travel to be possible (as long as you drove straight through to the airport without stopping in the higher-tier areas surrounding it). Many English birders stayed away except for the "hard core". This much reduced back-up support for an improving birder, meaning that I had to up my game at a time with very favourable winds for rarities. In fact, there were far too many species for any one person to see over the ten days I spent there.

With few birders about, though, it was much easier for individuals to find rarities, but also more difficult for the less experienced to work out what they were! It can be very frenetic trying to find other people's reported species, but I like to visit my favourite spots in the morning and then catch up with others' sightings elsewhere in the afternoon. An Olive-backed Pipit had been seen for several days at Collafirth on the mainland, and as I had many times passed a sign to Collafirth, I decided to investigate as I'd only ever had glimpses of this species before. As I approached the head of Collafirth Voe, I noticed some willows as described, but no pipit was to be found. But I did hear a very loud "tack tack". It was busy in the only garden there with Chiffchaffs, Yellow-browed Warblers, Bramblings, Wrens etc. I thought I had seen a dark Chiffchaff and assumed the tack tack was coming from the Wrens. But I thought more carefully and decided Chiffchaffs don't get that dark. The bird then flew to some seed heads and the penny dropped that this warbler was making the call and not the Wren. My head went into a spin, but as the bill was quite long and thin, I eventually worked it out to be a Dusky Warbler. What made this more remarkable was that I had gone to the wrong Collafirth which was why I hadn't found the pipit! It pays to expect the unexpected on Shetland and so my thinking process changed that day.

This was to come in handy next day. After a slow morning, I noted that a mega-skulking Lanceolated Warbler had been reported at East Burrafirth plantation. I headed over there and noticed the "hard-core" traipsing through a large iris bed suggesting to me that the warbler was no longer in the plan-

tation. As I got out of the car, the horde was heading back to the plantation. They split in two and headed up both sides, leaving the bird plenty of room to shoot out through the middle. As I worked slowly up through this middle area I noticed a small bird working its way up through an alder. I had been learning how to identify of warblers with wing bars, but this looked odd as the wing bars were longer and wider than anything I'd learnt and streaking and colouration didn't fit either. Until the day before, I'd never seen a North American passerine in the UK, but that day I'd found my second, a Blackpoll Warbler. Once I told the returning horde, the word went out, and within half an hour I left, feeling uneasy by the scrum that ensued. It really does pay to expect the unexpected in Shetland.

In 2021, I decided my first spring visit was appropriate as I'd see birds that don't tend to turn up in autumn. It was quiet again with birders mostly deciding to stay away. I managed to find my own Red-backed Shrike (photo opposite), singing Marsh and Icterine Warblers and Rosy Starling though. The local Quendale patch birder managed to disturb the Great Reed Warbler (photo opposite) before he'd seen it, even though I was waving furiously to show him what fence post it was perched on. Then, after he left another Marsh Warbler flew up the iris bed at Quendale Mill.

Later that morning, I headed up to Vidlin to try and find some Red-rumped Swallows (photo opposite) as I'd never had a good view of them. When I arrived I followed the direction of some big lenses pointing towards a washing line full of laundry. And there they were, perched among a long line of socks and assorted underwear. In Shetland, due to the lack of trees, birders often find themselves peering carefully into gardens, trying not to alarm the residents. So on this occasion, we also had to avoid appearing to be photographing the resident's smalls, now getting damp due to a sudden

Top Photo. Red-backed Shrike at Unst

Middle photo. Great Reed Warbler at Quendale Mill

Bottom photo. Red-rumped Swallow at Vidlin

shower.

Although many people head to the RSPB Reserve at Funzie on Fetlar to see Red-necked Phalaropes (photo opposite). I have never seen any there myself, but on this visit I saw seven in three unexpected spots out of the car window!

In October 2021 things had returned to normal, with a lot more birders staying in the Brae Hotel. I arrived at midday, and by three o'clock I was birding at Norwick on Unst, home to the Valyie Bird Garden. One crofter there gets funding to plant two small fields with oats, potatoes and wild flower/weed mix. This is roughly harvested in late September and the village instantly becomes a mecca for birds looking for somewhere to feed, having just arrived from the continent. I quickly found the Citrine Wagtail on the beach, and unexpectedly a male Long-tailed Duck feeding in the shallows. I then went along to the two fields just as the heavens opened. I had to unexpectedly stop in my tracks as an adult male Bluethroat was feeding on the track and I didn't want to disturb it. Around 500 finches were present alongside a few buntings, some Common Redpolls and a handful of Tree Sparrows. The hillside above was alive with newly arrived Redwings. I noticed a Little Bunting on a power line above the garden just as it became too wet to stay outside. As it was October, the days were short, so I called it a day and headed back to my base at Brae. On the way, I was surprised to see an adult Golden Plover still in full breeding plumage.

Having missed a good look at Olive-backed Pipit the year before, I headed back to Unst next morning. Two had been seen on and off at a housing estate in Baltasound, and two birders were already there. They eventually gave up even though I had told them I thought I'd disturbed the pipits while quickly checking out some long grass in one of the gardens. I persisted in my quest, and eventually had good, but brief views of the birds hopping about in a small pine. My next challenge will be to photograph this species.

I then headed a mile up to Skaw where the British road system ends at its most north-easterly point, just before a beach where the island meets the Atlantic breakers. A trip up to a large gravel area, where some wartime installation had been built, rewarded me with fantastic sea views and a couple of Lapland Buntings which trilled their way over my head. On the way back to Norwick I diverted over the Lamba Ness ex MoD site, where a Bar-tailed Godwit was unexpectedly running down the road towards the car! My attention was drawn to a group of Twite on a fence. This is usually a good place to find an Arctic Redpoll, a few of which can be found on Unst feeding on heather seeds. Lo and behold, there with the Twite was a silhouette of a plump finch with small head and a bill which looked like it had been shoved into its head. A quick glimpse of its flank streaking confirmed it as the "Coue's" subspecies.

Next day it became apparent to me just how many people had returned to Shetland for autumn birding. Having quickly found the Eastern Yellow Wagtail at Noss Farm and the Semi-palmated Sandpiper and Little Stint at the Pool of Virkie, a call went out that a Bonelli's Warbler was in a small patch of isolated conifers in a field at Quarff. When I arrived, the cars parked by the roadside stretched for hundreds of yards and the location of the bird was apparent from the hundred or so people all peering into one single tree. Although most people there hoped it was the much rarer Eastern species, a quick few calls identified it as the not-quite-as-rare Western species. Unfortunately, some of the birders received three points and a fine for dangerous parking (not me I hasten to add).

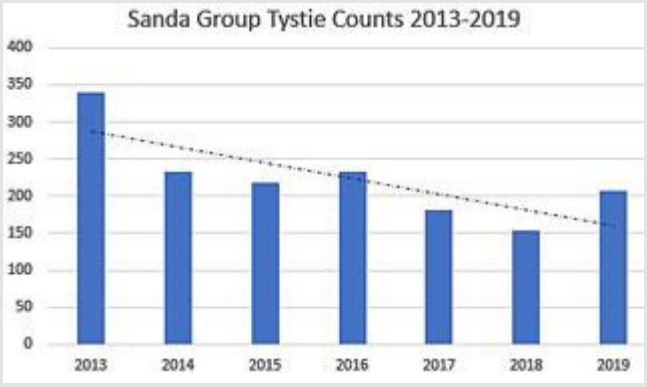

Red-necked Phalarope on Fetlar ©Neil Hammatt

Given the unpredictability of weather and birds in Shetland, every trip delivers something new. One day, Calmac might become a reliable service again, making Hebridean (rather than Shetland) trips to see rarer species much easier, but I may be waiting a long time and I'll be heading back to Scotland's far-north next year.

Sights, sounds and seabirds of Sanda—Nigel Scriven (summary Nigel Scriven)

The presentation began with a sunset over the Mull of Kintyre, a sight seen by many visiting yachtsmen to Sanda's anchorage, and would have been shared 1000 years ago by Viking raiders. As the light faded to black the sound heard would have been a screaming, gurgling,

Manx Shearwaters by Margaret Staley



Graph above. Sanda island group Black Guillemot counts 2013-2019

Photo right. A Razorbill ith food for a chick

Both images ©Nigel Scriven

coughing calling from the air above. The audience were invited to close their eyes to listen to a recording of these sounds and imagine what might be making them. Not the Trolls of Norse mythology and lore, but the contact calls of Manx Shearwaters circling in to find their nesting burrows on the hillsides of Sanda. This is but one dimension of the special nature of Sanda's seabird community. There are eleven species of breeding seabirds named in the SSSI citation for the Sanda group of three islands which lie 2.5km from the south end of Kintyre and in the Firth of Clyde, and another three species present not in the citation. The ease of access to the birds has made them particularly suitable for ringing studies by Clyde Ringing Group and other visiting ringers.

The rest of the presentation detailed these species with their respective sound recordings, and their past and recent status. Black Guillemots have been of particular interest since the declaration of the Clyde Sea Sill Marine Special Protection Area, as the Sanda Islands are included, and these birds are part of that citation, and subject to annual counts every spring. This has documented a steady fall by about 40% between 2013 and 2019 (graph above), which is causing some concern. This year an attempt was made to estimate numbers of breeding Storm Petrels by an audio recording-response technique, which has yielded not very convincing results so far. It is prompting a quest for additional techniques to estimate this tricky nocturnal underground nester. The story rounded off with the recent introduction of Red Deer and the possible impact this might have on the vegetation and the seabird community, before closing with a final sunset from the lighthouse garden.

In Memory of Eddie Maguire (1946-2021)

A fledged child needs time to find its wings.
Separated from your sibling, you were taken
to the kids' home among other casualties,
protesting at the referee's unfair decision.
You didn't want to sign up for a team
since life had already put the boot in,
but played your own gentler game when
the housefather handed you his binoculars,
and you focussed on your first starling,
knowing by its thrilling song, the robin
beyond the oppressive window of the dorm.
Later, when you had migrated to Kintyre,
in joyful days in the seabird observatory
at Machrihanish, you saw the rarities,
identifying them carefully by their jizz,
that quaint term covering an avian's
overall appearance, voice, shape, maturity,
flying style, before giving it its name:
phalarope, black-browed albatross.
Eddie, your own jizz will remain,
though you've flown into the unknown.

Lorn Macintyre

Contributions for the March *Eider* should be sent to the editor before the 20 February 2022

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The Eider

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 only) 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. Ideally, contributions should be less than 1500 words

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 currently has 313 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 indoor 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. Your annual subscription entitles you to one copy of the *Argyll Bird Report* (PDF file), four issues of the *Eider* (PDF files) 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

A surcharge of £5 will be added to the above rates, if printed copies of the *Eider* are requested. 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).