

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

June 2023
Number 144



The Eider



A fantastic photograph of a flying Woodcock taken in Knapdale on 25 March 2023 ©James Lehmann

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Editorial

The spring meeting was held at the Cairnbaan Hotel on 4 March. Abstracts of talks given at the meeting are provided on pages 9-14 for those who could not manage to attend. The autumn meeting is again at the Cairnbaan on 4 November, after that we hope to resume moving the venue for the spring meeting to other suitable places in Argyll, as we did prior to the Covid outbreak. We are currently looking at Dunoon for spring 2024 meeting.

David Jardine gave a fascinating talk on bees in Argyll at the spring meeting (pages 10-12) He has now added to that by providing a list of bees recorded in Argyll (pages 15-16). I was surprised to find out that 70 species had so far been recorded. I'm sure that total could be added to, with a few more folk taking an interest in this important group of invertebrates, which apart from other roles are so important for pollination.

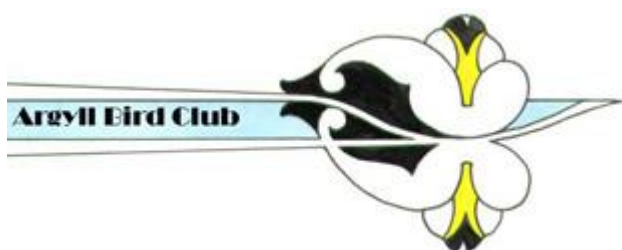
Moths are also pollinators. A recent study has found that moths were more important for the pollination of bramble flowers than diurnal pollinators, such as bees and hoverflies. I wonder how widespread this is? If moths are so valuable then recent declines in their numbers and abundance should worry us. I run a moth trap for 2-3 nights each week. This spring I've had some of my lowest catches ever, and this seems to be quite widespread in Argyll and further afield. The reason for catching so few moths is unclear. It may be linked to unusual mortality in eggs and larvae last year and overwinter or to the relatively cold and dry spring that we are currently experiencing.

There are some excellent field trips listed on the next page for the spring and summer, so do please try to join one.

The deadline for contributions to the September eider is 20 August. So, please try to send me something!

Acknowledgements

Very many thanks to the following for their contributions to this issue—Alun ap Rhisiart, John Boyd, Malcolm Chattwood, Jim Dickson, Neil Hammatt, Peter & Dorothy Hogbin (photocopying & dispatching the newsletter), David Jardine, James Lehmann, Donnie McFarlane, Alistair McGregor, David & Janet Palmar, Linda Petty (proof reading), Nigel Scriven, Frauke Thornton, the late Margaret Staley, Gordon Yates.



Club News

FIELD TRIPS 2023

Attendance on field trips is limited to a maximum of 15 members. Therefore, it is essential that you contact the leader of a trip beforehand to make sure a place is available, and to receive up-to-date 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. Trip leaders will keep a record of folk attending each trip.

Saturday 27 May. Toward and south Loch Striven. Led by Alistair McGregor (e-mail alistaircmcgregor16@outlook.com, mobile phone 07754524240). Please contact Alistair if you want to go on this trip, to make sure there are places available and to receive rendezvous details. There will be three short walks of about 1km each along a mix of shore and track, suitable footwear is advised. Please bring your own packed lunch.

Saturday, 24 June. A walk on the Island of Kerrera. This will involve a 6-7km walk on tracks around the northern end of Kerrera leaving from the ferry terminal at Gallanach, south of Oban. Please let David Jardine (dcjardine@btinternet.com) know if you are interested in attending. He will send out details in the week before the outing.

There is no field trip in July.

Saturday 26 August 2023. Seabird watching trip to Islay. Following last year's successful trip it is proposed to hold a similar outing leaving Kennacraig on the morning ferry returning later in the day following a short walk on Islay or Jura. Given the current uncertainties with the Calmac timetables the precise details will be issued closer to the date. Please contact David Jardine (dcjardine@btinternet.com) if you wish to attend.

Friday 1 September to Sunday 3 September 2023. Trip to Iona. Bookings for this trip are now closed. A small number of members have booked and accommodation has been arranged. Other members who wish to join the group are still welcome to join on the trip but are requested to make their own travel and accommodation arrangements. If you are hoping to join the group please let David Jardine (dcjardine@btinternet.com) know.

INDOOR MEETINGS 2023-24

Autumn Meeting 2023. Saturday 4 November. The meeting will be held at the Cairnbaan Hotel (www.cairnbaan.com), near Lochgilphead (phone 01546 603668). Lunches will be available in the hotel. The programme for the meeting will appear in the September *Eider*.

Spring Meeting 2024. Saturday 2 or 9 March. The venue is yet to be decided.

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

ARGYLL BIRD REPORT 34 (2022)

A PDF of the latest, excellent *ABR* (photo below) was sent to members by email on 21 March 2023. If you did not receive your copy, please contact our Membership Secretary (contact details on back page). Copies of previous reports can be downloaded from the club's website.

ARGYLL BIRD RECORDER

We are still looking for someone to fill the above post. Further details of the post were given in the December *Eider* 2021 (pages 3-4). Please contact Jim Dickson if the post appeals to you.

FUNDING FOR BIRD CONSERVATION PROJECTS IN ARGYLL

The ABC is willing to fund or part-fund worthwhile

Argyll Bird Report 2022



published by the
Argyll Bird Club

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, all of which have now been given a home. We can have more boxes made if anyone has a site in mind. If you know of a suitable building, 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).

ABC field trip to the Sound of Gigha on 25 February 2023



ABC members at Rhunahaorine Point ©David Jardine

The weather was perfect for this trip to the Sound of Gigha; a bright blue sky and a calm sea. So, the alternative plan of going to Skipness to get out of the wind didn't need to be implemented. After a short safety briefing the group of 15 members and leader moved down to the shore at Ronachan where they found divers galore on a glassy sea. All of these appeared to be Great Northern Divers until Neil H picked out a distant Black-throated Diver which promptly dived for food and was lost to view.

Also offshore were a few Black Guillemots in a variety of plumages, with some still showing a lot of white from their winter garb and other fully black birds with their white wing patches, along with several Red-breasted Mergansers. There were several Harbour (Common) Seals loafing in the sun on the offshore rocks, along with a pair of Oystercatchers and a couple of Ringed Plovers. A few folk saw two Purple Sandpipers flying in, but unfortunately they landed at the back of the rocks and remained hidden from view.

After consolidating into a few cars the group moved on to the next stop by the former West Coast Salmon site. A lovely male Bullfinch was nibbling at the buds of a willow as we walked down the track and other woodland birds were noted including a few Long-tailed Tits.

However, it was at the shore where some

of the highlights of the day were seen. Close inshore, as we arrived, was a small group of Common Scoter affording excellent views. Such clear views of the male with his glossy pure black plumage and black bill with yellow-orange flash (photo below) and the brown female with her fawn throat and cheek were unusual, and were excellent for those in the party who had not seen this scarce duck previously.

It was unfortunate that they could not be compared with either of the two even rarer species of scoter (Velvet and Surf), which had been found in the Sound of Gigha in the previous weeks. Neither species could be seen amongst the larger flocks of scoter further out in the sound, which even with a telescope appeared as small black dots. However, with his telescope hawk-eye Neil H picked out an adult White-tailed Eagle perched on Gigha—only 6km away



Male Common Scoter ©John Boyd



A Sanderling in winter plumage ©David Jardine

(!). Its distinctive posture and colouring allowed convincing views for all

More Eiders were visible at this stop than at the earlier site, along with more mergansers and Great Northern Divers. The Sound of Gigha is designated as a Special Protection Area for the non-breeding populations of these three species along with Slavonian Grebes. The calm spring-like conditions meant that over 30 'slavs' were seen during the day, but this site afforded the best views with the beautiful red eye visible in one feeding close inshore.

The next stop involved a walk up the shore to Rhunaharine Point, but several species were added to the list on the way from the beach, including a group of around 200 Greenland White-fronted Geese and around 40 Lapwings in the fields near Lenaig farm.

Other waders were found feeding on the shore near the Point including around 15 Turnstone, seven Dunlin

and 14 Sanderling in their snow-white winter plumage. Sadly also on the beach was a dead adult Gannet, and earlier young Frank had found a dead Fulmar; a reminder that we may not yet be through the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza outbreak completely.

Lunch was had at the Point in the sunshine. The light northerly breeze that had sprung up was chilly, so the group didn't linger too long before heading home. Views from the Point did allow further specialities found in the area to be seen, albeit at long distance. A group of six male Long-tailed Ducks were with a single female, and at least five Red-throated Divers were feeding out towards Gigha. With the nice sunshine and calm seas the trip had been very successful in getting to know some of the scarcer sea-ducks, along with divers and grebes found in this special part of Argyll

Species list (60). Greylag, White-fronted Goose, Mute Swan, Shelduck, Mallard, Teal, Eider, Common Scoter, Long-tailed Duck, Red-breasted Merganser, Rock Dove, Slavonian Grebe, Oystercatcher, Lapwing, Ringed Plover, Curlew, Turnstone, Sanderling, Dunlin, Purple Sandpiper, Common Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Herring Gull, Guillemot, Razorbill, Black Guillemot, Red-throated Diver, Black-throated Diver, Great Northern Diver, Cormorant, Shag, Heron, White-tailed Eagle, Buzzard, Jackdaw, Rook, Hooded Crow, Coal Tit, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Skylark, Long-tailed Tit, Goldcrest, Wren, Starling, Blackbird, Redwing, Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush, Robin, Stonechat, Pied Wagtail, Meadow Pipit, Rock Pipit, Chaffinch, Bullfinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Siskin, Reed Bunting

David Jardine

ABC field trip to Bute on 25 March 2023



The group on the saltmarsh at St. Ninian's Bay ©Ian Hopkins

Mary Macintyre, who was on holiday on Bute, Ron Forrester and myself met the other eight members off the 10.30hrs ferry from Colintrave. The weath-

er was a bit better than the forecast; dull but dry and importantly, calm. After introductions I explained that as the tide was on



A distant flock of Golden Plovers ©Alun ap Rhisiart

its way in, I thought we should explore the beaches on the west side of the island first, in order to get as many waders and wildfowl as possible. Before setting off we spotted three Mute Swans having a bit of a skirmish on the Cowal side, some Eider Ducks, and some Black Guillemots, now looking very smart in their summer plumage. We also scanned the Cowal skyline just in case there was the now not uncommon sight of a Golden, or White-tailed Eagle. However, this was not our lucky day!

We then made our way along the west side of the Kyles, picking up Little Grebe, Mallard, Goldeneye, and Red-breasted Merganser on the seaward side, and Oystercatcher, Curlew and Greylag Geese feeding in the fields on the other side of the road. Before heading to the east side of the island we stopped briefly to check out Kames Bay, by Port Bannatyne. The only new bird was a lone Rock Pipit, although some of the luckier ones at the back of the convoy were treated to good views of a Peregrine Falcon soaring round eyeing up some of the unsuspecting waders. Our next stop was the north end of Ettrick Bay, where the Drumachloy Burn meets the sea, and is a favourite spot for gulls and waders. Also, there was a great view to the west with the backdrop of the majestic Arran mountains, including the Sleeping Warrior. Here we had a rather distant view of a Great North-

ern Diver out in the bay and some Wigeon dabbling at the water's edge, whilst at the mouth of the burn there were three Sanderling along with some Ringed Plover and Turnstone, plus Great black-backed, Lesser black-backed and Herring Gulls, and one or two early Gannets out in the sound.

Next stop was meant to be the bird hide at the south end of Ettrick Bay. However, we stopped short of there because there was a group of Bute Conservation Volunteers doing some minor repairs to it. Out on the water there was a lone Pink-footed Goose amongst a small flock of Greylags (photo below), and some of the sharper-eyed also spotted a Greenshank in a nearby field. There was also a flock of at least 600 Common Gulls in a field, which had recently been spread with slurry, and when they took to the air it was like a snowstorm in one of those glass paperweights! We also had a Little Egret at the south end of the bay and apparently there were two earlier that morning.

We then parked the cars at the Straad Village Hall and walked down the lane to St. Ninian's Bay, ticking off Starling, House Sparrow, Pied Wagtail and Dunnock, then west along the shore towards Bute's only piece of salt-marsh, just on the other side of a narrow



A lone Pink-footed Goose amongst a flocks of Greylags ©Donnie McFarlane

neck of land. From here, out to the west, we had lovely views of the north end of the small island of Inchmarnock with the Kintyre hills in the background. On this stretch we were accompanied by the joyful sound of a Skylark singing it's heart out, and in the field opposite we spotted a Wheatear and some Linnets. On reaching the edge of the saltmarsh, with the tide three-quarter way in, there were good numbers of gulls, Curlew, Mallard and some Wigeon and Greylag, and a small group of Shelduck stood out well. What we were hoping to find was a flock of Golden Plover, which had been frequenting this spot for quite a while, and we were not disappointed. Although well camouflaged against the rocks (photo on previous page), they were spotted roosting some distance away. Ron Forrester tried his prowess at stalking to try and get a decent photo, but was thwarted when they were flushed by a 4x4 heading out to the cottages on the point! Ron reckons there were at least 120. There was a distant Raven croaking his annoyance and, just before we left, a Stonechat was spotted.

By this time we were getting a bit peckish, so we moved on to the seal viewing platform overlooking Scalpsie Bay (photo below), with a convenient car park and some seats. Here again there were grand views over to Arran and down Bute's west coast to its southern tip. Though we were too busy eating to do much birdwatching, we did see a small flock of Fieldfares and Redwings, plus a Sparrowhawk and Kestrel. From here, with the aid of a telescope, we also saw one of a pair of Great-crested Grebes on the Quien Loch. I had intended to pay a visit to the hide at the Quien Loch, but unfortunately the volunteers were doing some maintenance there as well, so decided to give it a miss. On our way to the Greenan Loch we stopped at the roadside to see if we could catch a glimpse of one of the two pairs of Ospreys on the island, as the first to arrive was seen at the nest there only

yesterday. However, it must have "gone fishing", as all we could see was an empty nest. On arriving at the Greenan Loch we parked on the grass verge, where we had good views of the loch below us. Apparently, this was Bute's most popular curling loch in former times. There was a good selection of wildfowl, with Mallard, Wigeon, Teal, Tufted Duck, Moorhen and Little Grebe, but the best bird was arguably a handsome male Pochard, never a common bird on Bute, but now much less often seen.

At this stage one or two of the group had to take their leave to catch an earlier ferry and I suggested we have a look for an immature Iceland Gull, which had been hanging around a sewage outfall at Craigmore, on the east side of the island, for over a month, and had been seen that morning. However, as with the Osprey, we were out of luck! Unfortunately, it then started to rain quite heavily, so we agreed to call it a day.

Thanks to Ron and Graham for assisting and to everyone else for turning up, car sharing, and contributing to a very pleasant day.

Species List (63). Great. Northern Diver, Little Grebe, Great. Crested Grebe, Gannet, Shag, Little Egret, Grey Heron, Mute Swan, Pink-footed Goose, Greylag Goose, Canada Goose, Shelduck, Wigeon, Teal, Mallard, Pochard, Tufted Duck, Eider, Goldeneye, Red-breasted Merganser, Sparrowhawk, Buzzard, Kestrel, Peregrine, Moorhen, Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover, Golden Plover, Sanderling, Curlew, Redshank, Greenshank, Turnstone, Black-headed Gull, Common Gull, Lesser-black-backed Gull, Herring Gull, Great black-backed Gull, Black Guillemot, Woodpigeon, Skylark, Meadow Pipit, Rock Pipit, Pied Wagtail, Wren, Dunnock, Robin, Stonechat, Wheatear, Blackbird, Fieldfare, Song Thrush, Redwing, Jackdaw, Rook, Carrion Crow, Hooded Crow, Raven, Starling, House Sparrow, Chaffinch, Linnet, Bullfinch.

Ian Hopkins



Lunch stop overlooking Scalpsie Bay ©Ian Hopkins

ABC field trip to Kintyre on 30 April 2023



Rab Morton and David Merrie in the observatory ©Nigel Scriven

Reading through the account of the September trip to Kintyre led by Malcolm, he too had his concerns about the weather, but fortunately was blessed with a good day (*Eider*, December 2022, pages 7-9). On 30 April we were not so lucky! It turned out to be somewhat grey with frequent showers. The forecast probably deterred folks turning out, as just four of us assembled on the pier in the wee toon—David and Rachel Harris, Rab Morton and myself. We hung around for a few minutes for late arrivals, then walked round the pier to see what was about in the harbour. This yielded Black Guillemot, Sandwich Tern, Herring Gull, Rook, Jackdaw, Feral Pigeon, and Common Sandpiper.

As there were no late arrivals at the pierhead, we made our way eastwards on the south shore of Campbeltown Loch towards Stinky Hole, the brackish lagoon at the start of the Doirlinn tidal causeway that leads out to Island Davaar. We saw Blackbird and Shag along the way.

Here we picked up more shorebirds and seabirds—Ringed Plover, Mute Swan, Oystercatcher, Gannet, Mallard, Eider, Greylag and Red-bested Merganser. In the fields and woods we also had Chaffinch, Pied Wagtail, Swallow, Linnet, Wren, Willow Warbler and Great Tit. Moving further round the coast to the sheep fanks at Ballimenach we were able to add Cuckoo, Teal, Razorbill, Rock Pipit, Great Black-backed Gull, Curlew, Buzzard, Pheasant, Heron and oddly, nine Whimbrel flying south. With the daily tally now above 30, it was beginning to look almost respectable.

Returning to Stinky Hole, we added Wheatear, then headed west for Machrihanish, and on the way saw Starling, House Sparrow and Collared Dove. On arriving at the observatory it wasn't long before a White Wagtail presented itself on the shingle. Goldfinch, Lesser Redpoll and Twite also turned up to provide close views. Not far offshore were three Great Northern Divers and three Shelducks. Some dolphins, possibly three or more, were very lazily making their way from left to right. Amongst this intense birding and mammal watching we had an unexpected club member arrive in the form of David Merry with his daughter, unaware of the bird club trip that day, but a very welcome addition nevertheless.

Nigel Scriven



A bedraggled Goldfinch feeding on niger seed in front of the observatory ©Nigel Scriven



Nigel Scriven welcoming members to the spring meeting at the Cairnbaan Hotel ©David Palmar www.photoscot.co.uk

Nigel Scriven welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave a brief introduction to the day's events. The meeting was attended by 36 people, including the six speakers. The Cairnbaan Hotel proved to be an excellent venue as usual and everyone enjoyed their lunches, with the opportunity to chat to friends.

Changing Fortunes of Bute's birds by Ron Forrester (summary Frauke Thornton)

Ron has lived on the Isle of Bute for 32 years and has seen many changes in the bird population at first hand. Bute is situated to the southwest of the Cowal Peninsula and is about 25km long, and 7km at the widest point.

Greylag Goose. During 2007-2011, between 1700 and 8000 were recorded during the winter. Year on year there was huge variation in numbers. They occur more in the south of the island, coastal and inland, but only 10-20 pairs were recorded as breeding on the island. In the 1990s only a few stayed during the summer. They were mainly winter visitors and migrated northwards in March. By 2010 approximately 650 geese were counted in August, and now about 20 pairs breed on the island each year. Meanwhile migrating numbers have declined, arriving later and leaving earlier (reason maybe to do with global warming). During severe winter conditions more birds arrive on Bute from the mainland as its climate is milder and feeding conditions are better.

White-fronted Goose (from Greenland). In 1990 there were 200-250 on Bute, during 2007-2011 there were 170-220, and in the 2020s around 50-100 birds.

Canada Goose. In 1990, 13 birds stayed for just a few days before moving on. The first breeding occurred in 2008 with a flock of around 50 present in August. Now, a flock of 200-500 and several breeding pairs are present mostly around the mid/west of the island.

Wigeon. Seen on all parts of the island outside of the breeding season with birds migrating from Siberia. In 2004 there was a maximum of 3,500 on the island. Numbers had declined to around 500 in 2022. The reason for this decline is probably due to increasingly better feeding grounds further to the south and east, so the birds avoid unnecessary travel to Scotland

Goosander. Rarely seen before 1980s. Mostly seen during winter with flocks of 13 in both 1998 and 1999. Now small groups are present every winter.

Eider. Seen all around the coast of Bute throughout the year. Generally, numbers are declining around the Clyde area and it is not clear why. During 2007-2011 it was estimated that there were 100-200 breeding pairs.

Fulmar. During 1990 there were four nesting sites, but more recently none have bred on Bute since 2010.

Osprey. A pair bred for the first time on Bute in 2010, and in each year since. A second nesting site has been used in the last two years. During that time 20+ young have been raised from both nest sites. Bute is the only Scottish island to have breeding Ospreys.

Coot. There was a single breeding site (a



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

mid-island loch) during 1998-91. During 2007-2011, numbers increased to 15-20 breeding pairs with 40-75 birds counted during the winter. In 2022 only one bird was recorded. The reason for this decline is unknown.

Lapwing. During 2007-2011, 40-80 pairs bred on the island with 1000-1600 birds counted during the winter. Now there is probably half that number, all sightings are in the south of Bute.

Curlew. Sightings from all over the island, both inland and coastal. It was a common breeder until 1990s. Numbers had declined to 20-50 pairs by 2008-2011. There are now probably less than 25 breeding pairs.

Black Guillemot. In the 1980s only a small number were recorded. During 2008-2011, there were 10-20 breeding pairs, mainly in Rothesay Harbour.

Wood Pigeon. Previously seen all over the island, now not so much at the northern end. During 2008-2011 there were estimated to be 1000-1500 breeding pairs

Magpie. During 2007-2011 only 6-12 birds and no proof of breeding. Now 20+ birds and five pairs breeding

Jay. One confirmed sighting during the 1990s. During 2007-2011, 10-20 pairs and 30-50 birds counted.

Spotted Flycatcher. During 2008-2011, there were 50-100 birds counted, now only 20-40.

Chiffchaff. Twentieth century status uncertain, but apparently increasing with no more than 25 pairs by 2000, then 50-100 pairs during 2008-2011. Now approximately 75-100 pairs, mainly at south and east of the island

Willow Warbler. Widespread. During 2008-

2011 there were 2000-3000 pairs, and at present 1500-2000 pairs.

Blackcap. A very uncommon bird on Bute prior to the 1950s when 'a few pairs bred'. Uncommon, although slowly increasing during 1960-2000, with 100-200 pairs by 2008-2011. Similar numbers still present.

Stonechat. Numbers are greatly affected by cold winter weather. During 2008 and 2009 there were approximately 75-100 pairs, but only 10-20 pairs by 2010. There are now probably 75-100 pairs.

Greenfinch. In 2000 there were possibly 500-1000 pairs, but only 240-360 pairs by 2008-2011 following the Trichomonosis outbreak in England. Numbers have subsequently increased to around 500 pairs.

Goldfinch. Populations have shown an increasing trend (1991 c.200-300 pairs, 2008-2011 possibly 400-600 pairs, and now 600-800 pairs).

Bullfinch. A slow increase in breeding pairs noted (in 1991 approximately 50-80 pairs, by 2008-2011 there were 90-140 pairs, and now around 120-200 pairs).

Yellowhammer. A large decline in numbers from c.10-20 pairs breeding in 1991, with 50+ birds in the winter to the present day with probably no breeding pairs and only 5-10 seen overwinter.

Sightings of the three species below are becoming more regular, and breeding may occur in the future

White-tailed Eagle. The first modern sighting was in 2011, and now seen regularly.

Little Egret. First recorded on Bute in 2008. Sightings are now regular.

Nuthatch. First recorded in 2008. Sightings are now regular.

Ron said that he had not covered all of the species on Bute, but he has chosen a selection of those with interesting changes in status. He closed his presentation by saying that he "fully expects bird populations to continue to change. Perhaps that's one of the attractions of our hobby! Birds are never boring!"

VSAS Seabird Monitoring Project by Nigel Scriven (summary Nigel Scriven)

Learning about bees in Argyll by David Jardine (summary David Jardine)

The national lockdown imposed from March 2020 as a result of the Covid pandemic placed many challenges on us all, but the warm spring weather that year led to many 'reconnecting with nature'. Recognising that we had to 'stay local' David Jardine decided to explore the insects of his garden and with the help of some mentors (Carl Farmer, and especially Murdo MacDonald of Highland Biological Recording Group), with whom he could communicate with electronically, he started to learn

about the bees in and around his garden.

A Tree Bumblebee *Bombus hypnorum*, with its rusty thorax and white tip to its abdomen, was the first to attract his attention. He was surprised to find that this bumblebee, which builds its nests in holes in trees and bird nest boxes, was first found in Britain in 2001 and has spread north, having arrived in mainland Argyll in recent years, but has yet to reach some of the islands.

Using resources provided (online) by the Bumblebee Conservation Society, he set out to find the 'big seven'. These common bumblebees, which all occur in Argyll, can readily be told apart by the colour of the 'bar-codes' on their thorax and abdomen. He explained that he was fortunate to start in the spring when only queen bumblebees are on the wing, thus avoiding the smaller and more variable workers and males which appear from their nests later in the year. Later, some of the less common and more specialised bumblebees e.g. Heath Bumblebee *Bombus jonellus*, which have subtle differences in head shape and colouration from the 'big seven' started to be identified.

As the spring progressed he started noting other bees in the garden which looked like bumblebees, but did not have pollen baskets on their hind legs and were less hairy. These turned out to be cuckoo bees, which lived up to their name by laying their eggs in the nests of bumblebees and leaving them to rear the young. Hence they had no need to carry pollen back to the nest.

After briefly explaining the differences in lifestyle between the social and solitary bees, David described the discovery an earthen bank close to his house that was full



Northern Mining Bee photographed on Kerrera
©David Jardine

of mining bees. These were more of a challenge to identify—but *The Field Guide to the Bees of Great Britain and Ireland* (Falk & Lewington) had arrived in the post. Identification was through a series of keys, with different keys for each sex (which can be told apart by counting the segments in the bee's antennae). The harder work had started, but using the patterning of leg and body hairs, along with sculpturing on the body, and help from Murdo, he started to identify a few such as Chocolate Mining Bees *Andrena scotica* that were digging in his potato patch. Later he acquired a binocular microscope to help with the mini-miners.

Other surprises were turning up in the garden—a male Hairy-footed Flower Bee *Ancistrocerus plumipes* and Willughby's Leafcutter Bee *Megachyle willughbiella*, both first records for Argyll. The flower bee is spreading north (as a result of changing climate) with the nearest records around Glasgow. Evidence that the leafcutter was breeding was found when circular holes were noticed in the leaves of *Alchemilla mollis*. This bee uses pieces of leaves to seal its nest.

At the mining bee 'colony' up the track by David's house, predators of bees in the form of Emerald beetles *Cicindella campestris* and Large Bee Fly *Bombylius major* were turning up along with two groups of parasitic bees, the nomad bees and blood bees, which lay their eggs in the nests of mining bees; their young feed on the larvae of the mining bees—there was a lot to learn!

As travel restrictions from lockdown eased, David explored other sites in Argyll and during spring 2021 he, along with Ann McGregor on Kerrera, started to find a number of sites of the Northern Mining Bee *Andrena ruficrus* (photo above). This is an early-flying bee which feeds in willow catkins. Ann and David found some large colonies, and in more locations than previously noted, suggesting that it is more common in Argyll than previously understood and under-recorded, findings which questioned its Red Data listing.



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

David concluded by summarised bee populations—of 275 species found in Great Britain, 117 have been seen in Scotland, with 70 species having been found so far in Argyll. With the variation in climate and habitats in Argyll it is likely that there are more to be found and there is definitely room for more recording. A list of the species found (to date) in Argyll is included on pages 15-16 of this issue of the *Eider*.

Birding Experiences in Argyll by David Palmar (summary Malcolm Chattwood)

At the club's indoor meetings David is a familiar presence, sneaking around in the dark trying to remain unobtrusive whilst taking photographs of the speakers to illustrate reviews such as this. Similar techniques will no doubt be employed when he is out in the field which allow him to position himself to take the excellent photographs, which feature on the wide selection of cards available for purchase at our meetings and which we were fortunate enough to see displayed on the big screen during his talk.

David and Janet have been regular participants in club field trips over the years, often being the first to arrive at the rendezvous having stayed nearby overnight in their campervan. I never cease to be amazed at his endurance in carrying round his gear—often a tripod, a camera with a huge, long lens attached and of sufficient weight to warrant the use of a substantial shoulder pad. That is surely commitment to the cause—and the results are plain to see. David's involvement in the club goes back some 30 years when an encounter with our chairman at the Clyde branch of SOC prompted David to attend the club's next meeting in Dunoon. Trips to Argyll weren't restricted to those organised by the club and reference was made to many visits to offshore islands illustrat-

ed by a map and including some of those less easy to visit such as Scarba and the Garvel-lachs.

Thus followed a whirlwind tour of some of the highlights of David and Janet's excursions in Argyll over the years, mainly, but not exclusively on club trips. David's photographic interests are not confined to birds though and although his talk was mainly illustrated by stunning photos of birds it also included shots of glorious Argyll scenery and mammals too. For those of us whose photography skills consist mainly of "point and click" it has been an education to see David in action and I recall two instances on club trips which have stuck in my mind for several years. Both involved the use of a very long lens and demonstrated the skill which David possesses in abundance. The first was a shot of a Long-tailed Duck in flight taken from the Gigha Ferry and after having it pointed out he whipped the camera to his eye, pressed the shutter with the result being a pin-sharp image with a fast-flying duck in the centre of the frame. The second occasion when in failing light a Treecreeper was spotted in the crown of a tree near Ardpatrik on West Loch Tarbert. Barely visible through binoculars in the poor light, David's image was not quite a silhouette, but the image was sharp enough to see that the bird had a small seed in its bill. Sometimes the circumstances of the taking of the photograph can be as memorable as the result.

For those members who weren't present to see the stunning images presented by David I would recommend an online visit to <http://www.photoscot.co.uk/> but prepare to become engrossed!

Developing Conservation Priorities for the Argyll Bird Club by David Jardine (summary David Jardine)

At the November meeting Bob Furness highlighted the need to consider possible mitigation projects in response to proposals for renewable energy projects. This stimulated discussion within the club's committee, which from time to time has to consider the potential impact of proposed development of birds in Argyll. It was agreed that a discussion on the possibility for conservation enhancement should take place at the meeting to hear the views of members and to help develop club priorities which could be used to stimulate positive outcomes.

In introducing the discussion David Jardine ran through some of the important bird species in Argyll (the list was not comprehensive)

- Chough (100% of the Scottish population)
- Corncrake (46% of the Scottish population)
- White-tailed Eagle (c. 33% of the Scottish population)



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



Around 46% of the UK Corncrake population breed in Argyll ©Gordon Yates

- Golden Eagle (20-25% of the Scottish population)
- Hen Harrier
- Twite
- Seabirds (important populations including Storm Petrel, Kittiwake, Manx Shearwater)
- Greenland White-fronted Goose (46% of the world population winters)
- Great Northern Diver (c20% of European wintering population)

He highlighted that many of these are protected within designated Special Protection Areas (SPAs). Argyll has 17 SPAs, which cover many of the species above. Turning to the major threats he identified that inappropriate aquaculture, dredge fishing, inappropriate afforestation, onshore and offshore renewables all have the potential to impact on the important birds in Argyll, along with the difficulties caused by invasive non-native species such as rhododendron (threatening native woodlands), and Brown Rat and North American Mink which are threatening important breeding colonies.

There then followed a positive discussion on possible mitigation projects. These ranged from the very large scale to more local opportunities. It was noted that the largest projects, which might be funded by e.g. major offshore renewable developments, would have to be developed in partnership with other key bodies e.g. NatureScot and RSPB, but Argyll Bird Club could play an important advocacy role by suggesting ambitious possibilities. At the other end of the scale, the club would have to consider what role it, and its members,

might play in the delivery of small scale projects alongside other members of the Argyll community. It was noted that for some projects it might be sensible to discuss the principle of an enhancement project, without being specific on location in order to ensure that any future negotiation on land acquisition was not compromised.

In order to hear the views from as many as possible, those present were asked to complete a questionnaire giving their thoughts on:

- Suggestion for major projects
- Suggestions for medium projects
- Suggestions for local projects
- Species which should be considered as priorities
- Other suggestions

The next steps would be to collate the views expressed at the meeting (see 17-18 of this issue of the *Eider*) and to encourage further suggestions from members not present. Following this the committee, bearing in mind the capacity of the club, would consider the best ways forward for the different possibilities and present conservation priorities for use by the club.

Update on Kilmun Bird Hide and what's going on at the Holy Loch Nature Reserve, Sandbank by Neil Ham-matt and Alistair McGregor (summary Alistair McGregor)

Neil and I were asked at short notice to do a 'fill in' talk at the indoor meeting. I suggested a brief update on the bird hides on Holy Loch. So, we both started putting a talk together. Mine was easy, mostly because I was present when the works were being carried out.

Kilmun Bird Hide improvements: with some birds, plants, trees, and people

On the day I had a full ten minutes for the talk, which was ample to explain what work had been completed and what was in the pipeline for this summer. I had taken note from a number of people who had been using the hide throughout the winter of some of the improvements that were required. One was to raise the floor level and another was to lower the shelves along the front of the shutters. Work commenced in early spring, with the help of the young men from the Help project. We started on the inside cement work by raising the level of the floor by about 5cm. This was to allow a clear view out of the hide shutters from a seated position. The shutter shelves haven't been done yet, but on some fine west coast day they will be lowered. For the safety of all who use the hide it was neces-



Neil Hammatt (seated) and Alistair McGregor ©David Palmar www.photoscot.co.uk

sary to install Armco barriers on the front of the car park and along the path leading down to the hide, and the gradient of the path needed to be reduced. Again with the help of the young men we cemented the barrier in position. It now needs a coat of paint in natural colours to help blend in with environment. The work for the summer is as follows, place non-slip pads on the smooth concrete on the way down to the hide door, regrade the path, deal with knotweed, and continue with surveying the area's plants. To date we have 28 tree and five shrub species logged, and I have personally seen 85 different species of bird in the hide area. The hide is at the mouth of the River Eck where we have numerous duck and wader species. Throughout the winter months a Kingfisher made the odd appearance, usually when the camera was still in the bag! Ospreys have been seen fishing along the river and we see White tailed Eagles from time to time. With a little luck it can be an interesting birding location. If you haven't been to the hide feel free to visit. The hide combination is given out to Argyll Bird Club members on request.

Goings on at the Holy Loch Nature Reserve

Neil began with showing maps of the boundaries of the Holy Loch Nature Reserve, which is comprised of sand and mud flats, salt marsh, mixed woodland and borders on to sheep grazing to the north and a busy main road on the west (an article about the reserve appeared in the December 2022 *Eider*, pages 12-13). The bird hide is a brick structure fully open on one side, with the front facing on to the tidal mud flats. The north end of the hide looks on to the mixed woodland where there is a well-established bird-feeding station. Alistair started feeding the birds here eight years ago, but due to work commitments the feeding was taken over by Andrew McFarlane and David Gilmore (thanks guys). Neil took on the task of eradicating invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed (by pulling, trampling, burning and maybe using a suitable weedkiller), exotic conifers, Himalayan Balsam and, on one island, Montbretia.

Some headway has been made; the spruce have been felled and knotweed is to be sprayed on the reserve and adjacent areas. One problem that is not so easy to overcome is the plastic debris that gets washed up on the shores of Holy Loch. Numerous beach cleans have been carried out by local volunteers and Neil himself, but more appears after every storm to pollute this fragile area. As the reserve is close to a large car parking area numerous dog walkers frequent the area, most are happy to clean up after their dog and even keep them on leads, but there are always some who have little to no respect for nature, letting their dogs rampage through prime ground-nesting-bird area. Signs have now put up to ask dog owners to kindly keep their dogs on leads.

Neil's program to regenerate natural woodland conditions began with gathering seed and small saplings, and growing them on in his garden. He is currently planting them out on the reserve. He is also extending the existing reed beds by the same process. Numerous nest boxes have been built and placed throughout the wooded areas. These boxes range in size to accommodate a number of species, and Andrew McFarlane built some boxes for Tree Creeper. Hopefully they will be used. An updated interpretation board was funded by NatureScot and the Argyll Bird Club. This board has a QR code that can be read by anyone with a smart phone. This links to the website, and will take you on a virtual tour of the reserve and all the species that can be seen. Neil with his scientific and research background has taken on the monumental task of identifying all the living organisms that live on the reserve. So far he has logged 850 species which include 220 flowering plants, 120 birds, 106 moths, 10 butterflies, 33 hoverflies, 45 other flies, 35 mosses and 15 liverworts. Neil has also found some new species for Argyll including a small beetle *Cassida nobilis* and a ladybird *Propylea quatuordecimpunctata*. Neil's work continues, with young trees and plants being transferred to the reserve. The wildflowers he has planted will help attract the pollinators, such as bees, butterflies, moths and hoverflies. I look forward to his updates and he always has an interesting story to tell!

Summary

Thanks are due to Nigel Scriven and David Jardine for organising the programme, and to the Cairnbaan Hotel for helping to make the day such a success. Thanks too, to numerous members who donated Raffle prizes, Peter and Dorothy Hogbin for managing the door and all the attendees, and, of course the excellent speakers.

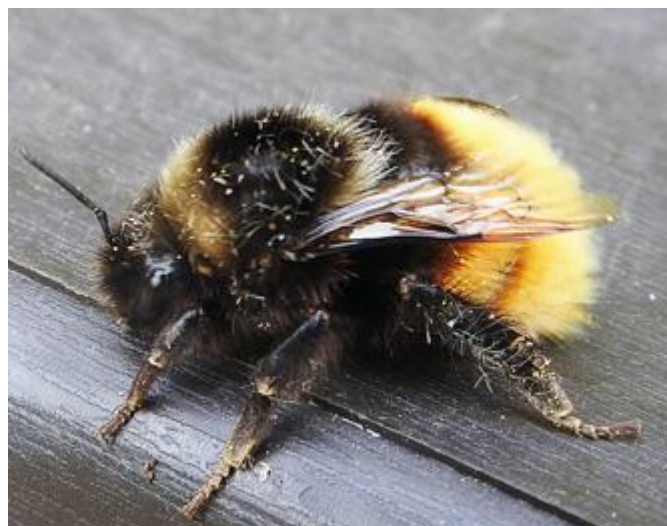
Bees found in Argyll, compiled by David Jardine

At the end of the talk at the March 2023 meeting on 'Learning about Bees' a question was asked about the accessibility of a list of the bees found in Argyll. The list below has been extracted from the Scottish Aculeate List (which also includes wasps and ants) published on the Highland Biological Recording Group Website (The Highland Biological Recording Group (hbrg.org.uk)—see downloads section).

The Watsonian Vice Counties in which each species of bee has been found in Argyll (to date) is given in parenthesis. 98=Argyll (main), 101=Kintyre, 102=South Ebuades (Islay, Jura & Colonsay), 103=Mid Ebuades (Mull, Coll & Tiree).

Species	Name	Vice County
<i>Colletes floralis</i>	Northern Colletes	(102, 103)
<i>Colletes succinctus</i>	Heather Colletes	(98, 101, 102, 103)
<i>Andrena barbilaris</i>	Sandpit Mining Bee	(98, 103)
<i>Andrena bicolor</i>	Gwynne's Mining Bee	(98, 101, 102, 103)
<i>Andrena chrysoseles</i>	Hawthorn Mining Bee	(103)
<i>Andrena cineraria</i>	Ashy Mining Bee	(98, 101, 102)
<i>Andrena clarkella</i>	Clark's Mining Bee	(98, 102, 103)
<i>Andrena coitana</i>	Small-flecked Mining Bee	(98, 103)
<i>Andrena fucata</i>	Painted Mining Bee	(98, 101, 102, 103)
<i>Andrena haemorrhoea</i>	Early or Orange-tailed Mining Bee	(98, 101, 102, 103)
<i>Andrena helvola</i>	Coppice Mining Bee	(98, 101)
<i>Andrena lapponica</i>	Bilberry Mining Bee	(98)
<i>Andrena nigroaenea</i>	Buffish Mining Bee	(101, 103)
<i>Andrena ruficrus</i>	Northern Mining Bee	(98, 101, 102, 103)
<i>Andrena scotica</i>	Chocolate Mining Bee	(98, 101, 102, 103)
<i>Andrena tarsata</i>	Tormentil Mining Bee	(98, 102, 103)
<i>Andrena wilkella</i>	Wilke's Mining Bee	(98)
<i>Andrena minutula</i>	Common Mini-miner	(98)
<i>Andrena semilaevis</i>	Shaggy-margined Mini-miner	(98, 101, 102, 103)
<i>Andrena subopaca</i>	Impunctate Mini-miner	(98, 102, 103)
<i>Andrena wilkella</i>	Wilke's Mining Bee	(98)
<i>Halictus rubicundus</i>	Orange-legged Furrow Bee	(98, 102)
<i>Lasioglossum albipes</i>	Bloomed Furrow Bee	(98, 101, 102, 103)
<i>Lasioglossum calceatum</i>	Common Furrow Bee	(98, 101, 102, 103)
<i>Lasioglossum cupromicans</i>	Turquoise Furrow Bee	(98)
<i>Lasioglossum fratellum</i>	Smooth-faced Furrow Bee	(98, 102, 103)
<i>Lasioglossum leucopus</i>	White-toothed Furrow Bee	(98, 102, 103)
<i>Lasioglossum rufitarse</i>	Rufous-footed Furrow Bee	(101)
<i>Sphecodes crassus</i>	Swollen-thighed Blood Bee	(103)
<i>Sphecodes ephippius</i>	Bare-saddled Blood Bee	(103)
<i>Sphecodes ferruginatus</i>	Dull-headed Blood Bee	(103)
<i>Sphecodes geoffrellus</i>	Geoffrey's Blood Bee	(98, 102, 103)
<i>Sphecodes hyalinatus</i>	Furry-bellied Blood Bee	(103)
<i>Sphecodes monilicornis</i>	Box-headed Blood Bee	(98, 101, 102, 103)
<i>Osmia bicornis</i>	Red Mason Bee	(98)
<i>Osmia parietina</i>	Wall Mason Bee	(102)
<i>Megachile centicularis</i>	Patchwork Leafcutter Bee	(98)

<i>Megachile willughbiella</i>	Willughby's Leafcutter Bee	(98)
<i>Nomada fabricana</i>	Fabricius' Nomad Bee	(103)
<i>Nomada ferruginata</i>	Yellow-shouldered Nomad Bee	(102)
<i>Nomada flavoguttata</i>	Little Nomad Bee	(98, 101 103)
<i>Nomada leucophthalma</i>	Early Nomad Bee	(102, 103)
<i>Nomada marshamella</i>	Marsham's Nomad Bee	(98, 101, 102, 103)
<i>Nomada obtusifrons</i>	Flat-ridged Nomad Bee	(102)
<i>Nomada panzeri</i>	Panzer's Nomad Bee	(98, 102, 1030)
<i>Nomada ruficornis</i>	Fork-jawed Nomad Bee	(98, 101)
<i>Anthophora plumipes</i>	Hairy-footed Flower Bee	(98)
<i>Bombus cryptarum</i>	Cryptic Bumblebee	(98, 101, 103)
<i>Bombus distinguendus</i>	Great Yellow Bumblebee	(102, 103)
<i>Bombus hortorum</i>	Garden Bumblebee	(98, 101, 102, 103)
<i>Bombus humilis</i>	Brown-banded Carder Bee	(103)
<i>Bombus hypnorum</i>	Tree Bumblebee	(98, 101, 102, 103)
<i>Bombus jonellus</i>	Heath Bumblebee	(98, 101, 102, 103)
<i>Bombus lapidarius</i>	Red-tailed Bumblebee	(98, 101, 102, 103)
(<i>Bombus lucorum</i> agg)	White-tailed Bumblebee	(98, 101, 102, 103)
<i>Bombus magnus</i>	Northern White-tailed Bumblebee	(98, 102, 103)
<i>Bombus monticola</i>	Bilberry Bumblebee	(98, 102)
<i>Bombus muscorum</i>	Moss Carder Bee	(98, 102, 103)
<i>Bombus pascuorum</i>	Common Carder Bee	(98, 101, 102, 103)
<i>Bombus pratorum</i>	Early Bumblebee	(98, 101, 102, 103)
<i>Bombus ruderarius</i>	Red-shanked Carder Bee	(103)
<i>Bombus soroensis</i>	Broken-belted Bumblebee	(98, 103)
<i>Bombus terrestris</i>	Buff-tailed Bumblebee	(98, 101, 102, 103)
<i>Bombus barbutellus</i>	Barbut's Cuckoo Bee	(98, 103)
<i>Bombus bohemicus</i>	Gypsy Cuckoo Bee	(98, 101, 102, 103)
<i>Bombus campestris</i>	Field Cuckoo Bee	(98)
<i>Bombus sylvestris</i>	Forest Cuckoo Bee	(98, 103)
<i>Apis mellifera</i>	Honey Bee	(98, 101, 102, 103)



Ashy Mining Bee *Andrena cineraria* (left) and Bilberry Bumblebee *Bombus monticola* (right) ©David Jardine

Developing of conservation priorities for the Argyll Bird Club

At the March meeting of the club a discussion took place regarding the conservation priorities for the Argyll Bird Club (see pages 12-13 of this issue). As part of this discussion members present were asked to provide their suggestions as to priority species and small, medium and large scale projects which might benefit birds in Argyll. From the responses it is clear that those present had differing views on the boundaries between the different sizes of projects (what was large for some was small for those who were more ambitious!). This note summarises their responses for projects in one list and invites members not present to provide their views.

Priority species

The members present suggested that the following species and thoughts should be used in developing the conservation priorities in Argyll:

- Chough
- Corncrake
- Golden Eagle
- Kittiwake
- Puffin
- Curlew
- Owls
- Lapwing
- Anything on red list, anything with a large proportion of Scottish/British population in Argyllshire
- Target some species not already protected by NatureScot, RSPB
- SPA designated features [species]
- Great Yellow Bumblebee

Suggestions for conservation projects for birds in Argyll

The members present provided the following suggestions of projects (roughly grouped by habitat) which can be used to further the conservation of birds in Argyll. It was envisaged that some of these might be mitigations provided by developers in response to their projects. Members have very helpfully provided a number of important suggestions to possible locations for these projects; these have been retained but are not included in this list to reduce any landowner sensitivities.

- Big projects which will mitigate climate change
- Ban bottom trawling in Argyll, especially in MPAs
- Enforcement/strengthening the dredging ban

in MPAs

- Sound of Jura HPMA
- Exterminate mink & rats on (bigger) islands
- Offsetting 'displaced seabird/coastal birds' by renewable energy projects by supporting local shoreline projects. Possible locations suggested
- Buy an island (small) to manage or crannog
- Freshwater projects. Possible sites suggested.
- Creation of a medium to large freshwater (a lack of such habitat) habitat including pools, scrape, and islands for breeding waders. Possible locations were suggested
- Restoring important peatbog areas (ie removing drainage & sheep & trees), locations suggested
- Create boardwalks in a marshy area with information boards about the local wildlife and plants
- Buy an area of woodland. Possible location suggested
- Mitigation to allow for edge habitat e.g. native woodland habitat, creation or regeneration on forestry projects
- Create a farmland nature reserve perhaps alongside a working farm to help Yellowhammers etc.
- Create a wildflower meadow
- Increasing native hedge species and corridors e.g. site given; wherever there is currently fencing
- Projects that involve surveys where there are obvious current gaps
- Local bird hides. There are very few in Argyll
- Path clearance where footpath is overgrown
- Footpath signs
- Persuade Planning Authorities to require bird conservation measures in new build property e.g. swift bricks
- Funding landowners to provide land for mitigation off-site e.g. habitat creation for Biodiversity Net Gain
- Work with existing landowners and communities to improve wildlife habitats and biodiversity
- Community based input on enhancing a local

site or particular provision for species such as woodland improvement or seeded meadow

Other suggestions

Members were also asked for other suggestions; the following responses were received:

- Not supportive of land purchase—use club's resources for surveys
- Supportive only if working on ideas with Scottish Government, NatureScot, RSPB etc.
- ABC needs to realise the limitations of members' involvement, but give support to enthusiastic members
- Definitely need broad ideas to start, then discussion with any partners brought on board/developers when specific developments arise.

Next steps

The ABC is very grateful to those members present at the March meeting for their suggestions, but equally want to hear from those members who were not present. Please send these in by 31 August. Following this the club committee will collate these for discussion with our conservation partners and presentation into our draft priorities which we shall share with the club before publishing our priorities for use by the club, developers, communities and conservation bodies.

Please send your suggestions on which species should be treated as priority species in Argyll and ideas for conservation projects (small, medium and large) to David Jardine (dcjardine@btinternet.com) by 31 August 2023.

David Jardine

Book review

James D. Paruk (2021). *Loon Lessons: Uncommon Encounters with the Great Northern Diver*. Hardback, 221 pages, University of Minnesota Press, ISBN: 9781517909406

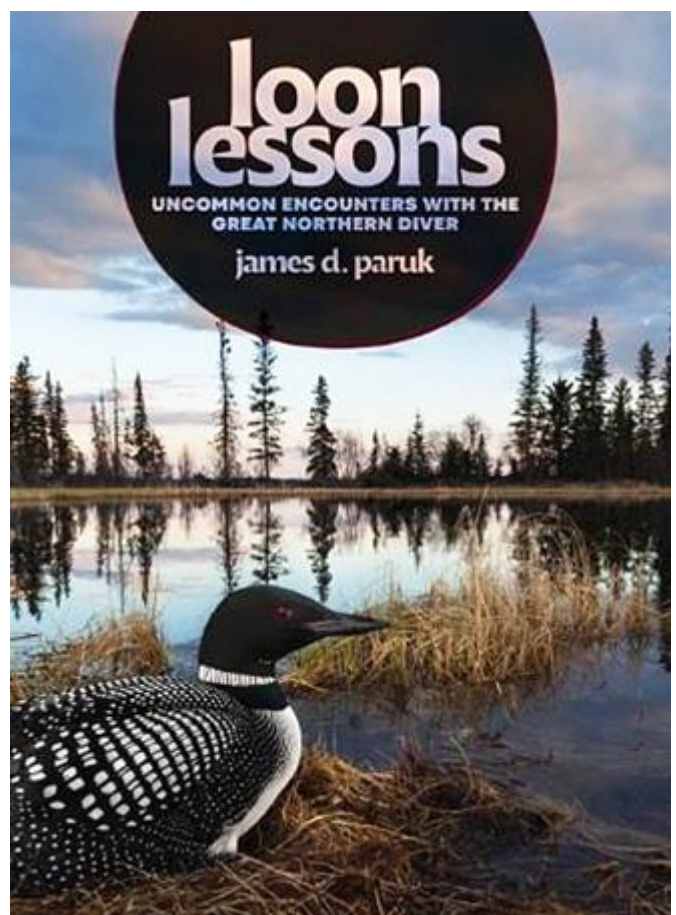
While Argyll supports around 20% of the European wintering population of Great Northern Divers, the number found on the eastern side of the Atlantic is only around 1% of the world population. Most are found in North America, where they are known as Common Loons. This name is thought to have arisen from their awkward movement while on land, hence the use of the Scandinavian word for clumsy (*lom* or *lumme*), which led to their North American name.

James Paruk is one of the world's leading experts on the Common Loon. He has studied their breeding in several US states and in Canada for almost 30 years. After the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010, he studied the health and recovery of wintering loons in Louisiana for the Earthwatch Institute. As a key species at the top of the aquatic food chain it has now become a much loved and protected species in both the USA and Canada (where it is found on the one dollar coins of the latter).

This book covers the whole range of the biology of Great Northern Divers in North America (their adaptations to their underwater lifestyle, behavioural ecology, nesting, breeding and other behaviour, calls, migration strategies, winter ecology) along with details of conservation threats and how they are being helped to adapt to a changing environment dominated by human-kind.

What I found particularly enjoyable about this book was its wonderful blend of the science of the loon, but also a lovely series of research stories showing how much hard work, and many early mornings and late nights were required to really understand this wonderful bird.

David Jardine



RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch: An Argyll Perspective

This event takes place every year at the end of January, and the 2013 results are now available on a county by county basis, although they are not reported and commented in such a way. The results are also compared with those of 2022. These data do need a bit of caution as they do not directly compare like with like as it may not involve the same suite of gardens in each year. While many gardens will occur in both years, there will be some in one year and not the other. Also the total number of gardens may have changed and this is not reported either. What the total number of gardens amounts to can only be guessed at.

The table below shows that the top ten species remain the same species, with the top 5 in the same order. The species are ranked in order of the highest mean number per garden, which is somewhat different to the ranking in terms of % gardens recorded in.

Species	2023				2022			%change in %gardens
	Rank	Mean no./garden	% gardens	% gardens rank	Mean no./garden	Rank	Rank change	
Chaffinch	1	6.69	80.8	4	7.21	1	-	+0.5
House Sparrow	2	5.35	66.0	5	5.32	2	-	+2.3
Blue Tit	3	3.16	81.2	3	3.51	3	-	-2.6
Goldfinch	4	2.43	49.3	9	2.59	4	-	+3.3
Blackbird	5	2.39	86.4	2	2.37	5	-	+1.1
Robin	6	1.99	92.6	1	1.88	7	+1	-0.5
Great Tit	7	1.80	65.0	6	2.20	6	-1	-5.7
Starling	8	1.73	25.1	13	1.52	9	+1	+4.4
Coal Tit	9	1.43	53.9	8	1.81	8	-1	-5.1
Dunnock	10	1.28	58.9	7	1.16	10	-	4.7

So, no great surprises there. All resident species with fairly stable populations. However, there were 57 species recorded altogether this year, and a selection of some of the more notable changes lower down the league table are given below. Caution should also be taken, as some of the numbers of birds, and gardens are low, which would amplify the % change figures.

Species	2023			2022		%change in %gardens
	Rank	Mean no./garden	% gardens	Rank	Rank change	
Feral Pigeon	11	1.09	16.2	14	+3	+18.5
L-t Tit	12	1.07	22.3	16	+4	+31.2
Magpie	18	0.60	25.8	18	0	+19.9
Bullfinch	24	0.12	5.6	28	+4	+68.8
B-h Gull	33	0.04	1.4	43	+10	143.4
Blackcap	36	0.03	2.6	48	+12	+549.1

Some of these results seem consistent with known trends, such as increasing numbers of wintering Blackcap, or the spread of Magpies and Ravens. It must have been a poor winter for wintering Brambling compared to 2022. A notable absentee from the list was Nuthatch, known to be spreading, but not recorded by the BGBW in Argyll, as yet.

If you did take part, you will want to see how your own results compare with the national results as well as the county results. Have fun.

Nigel Scriven

Contributions for the September *Eider* should be sent to the editor before the 20 August 2023

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

Suitable illustrations greatly enhance the attractiveness of the *Eider*, and artists and photographers are encouraged to submit artwork and unedited digital photographs (jpeg files 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, standing order or direct debit. 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).