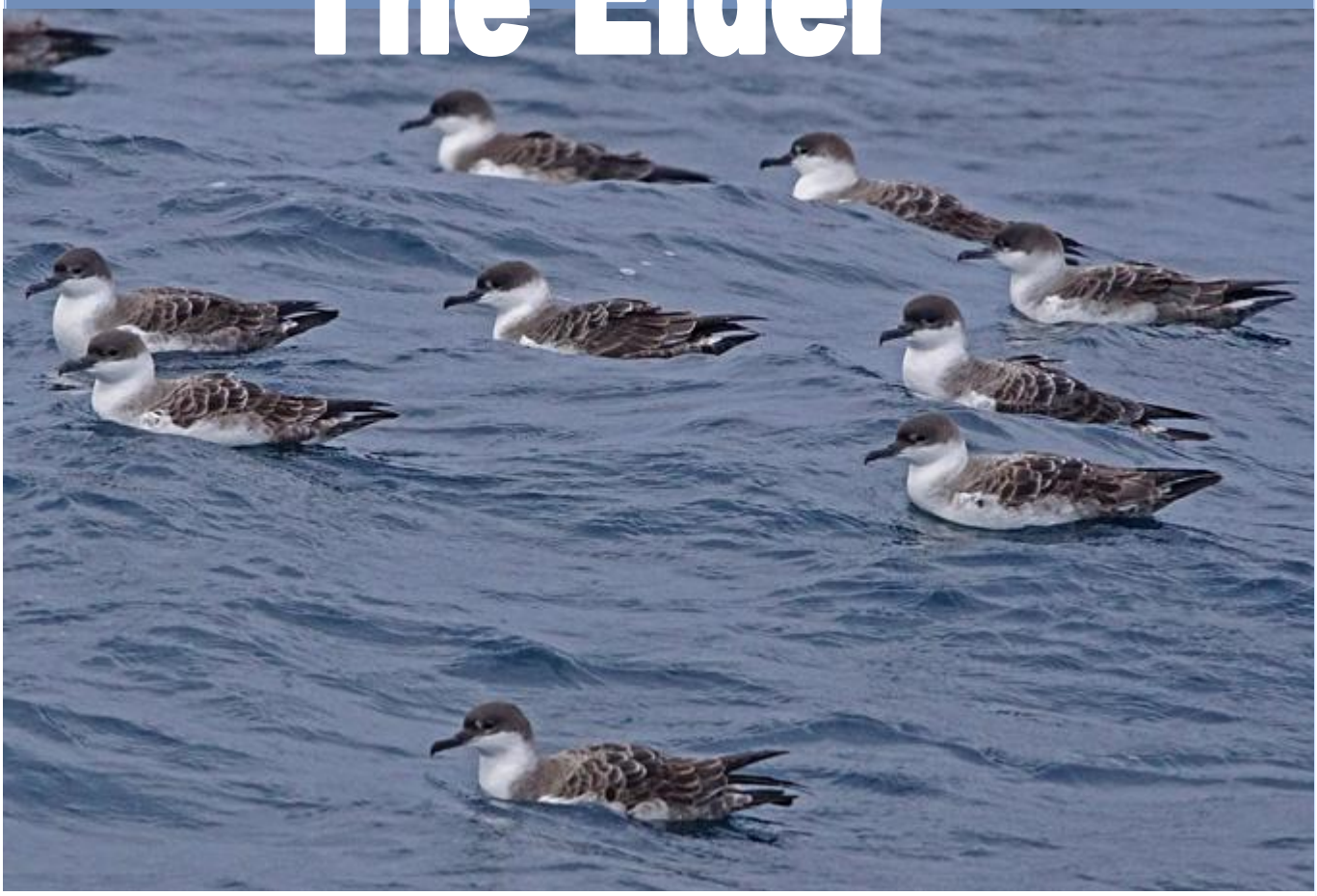
December 2024
Number 150

The Eider



Great Shearwaters: Unprecedented numbers were seen around Hawes Bank, north of Coll during late October/early November 2024 ©Jim Dickson

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

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Editorial

Probably the orthithological event of the year has been the unprecedented numbers of large shearwaters seen around Hawes Bank, a sea area just north of Coll, during late October/ early November. This involved thousands of Great Shearwaters and hundreds of Sooty Shearwaters. Numerous birding boat trips to the area provided spectacular views of these birds in near calm sea conditions (see front cover photo).

At the AGM our chairman asked members to consider helping with field trips. At present, it falls on just a few folk to organise all the field trips. So, it would be great if more members would come forward with ideas for new outing venues. You don't need to be an expert birder to do this. On the plus side, you might learn more about you local birdlife from some of the more experienced birders who would be encouraged to explore new areas. Over the last few years all our field trips have been in Argyll. How keen would you be to have some trips elsewhere?

David Jardine has provided another interesting summary of ringed birds that have been recovered in Argyll. It's well worth reading this, as it shows the value of bid ringing to understand their movements and longevity. Some highlights include; two Shags ringed on the Treshnish Isles and re-caught there in 2023 at ages 16 and 19, two Oystercatchers that had been colour ringed in Iceland as chicks and then re-sighted in Argyll in 2023 each having travelled well over a 1,000km, and four Common Guillemots that had been ringed in Argyll and recovered dead or re-sighted alive in Argyll at ages 20, 23, 28 and 29.

The deadline for contributions to the March 2024 *Eider* is 20 February, so please consider sending me something before then. Thank you.

Finally, the officials and committee of the Argyll Bird Club wish you all a very happy Christmas, and a New year full of new birds! Thank you all for continuing to support the club.

Acknowledgements

Very many thanks to the following for their contributions to this issue—Graham Catley, Malcolm Chattwood, Jim Dickson, Ron Forrester, David & Rachel Harris (photocopying & dispatching the newsletter), Ian Hopkins, David Jardine, Leah Kelly, Vince Lea, Allison Menzies, Alistair McGregor, David Palmar, Linda Petty (proof reading), Nigel Scriven, and the late Margaret Staley.

Club News

FIELD TRIPS 2024-25

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.

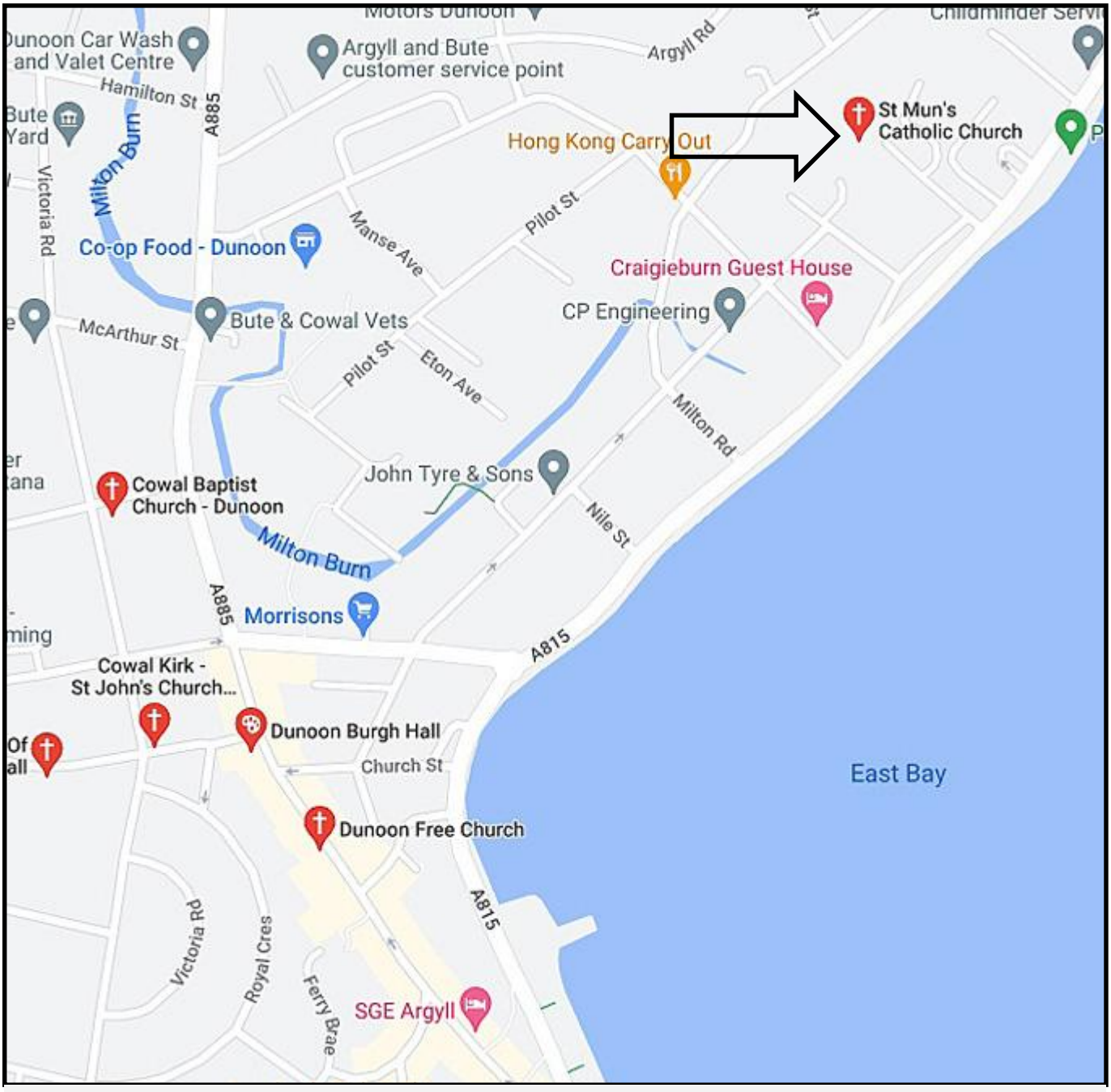
If there is a chance that adverse weather might lead to the cancellation of a field trip, please check the club's website or contact the organiser the night before or prior to setting off. Please wear suitable footwear and bring waterproof clothing if rain is forecast. For most trips you will need to bring a packed lunch and a drink.

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 30 November. Danna (and Keills). Led by Malcolm Chattwood (email malcolmchattwood@gmail.com). Rendezvous at 10.00hrs at Tayvallich Village Hall (grid ref NR741870). Please bring a packed lunch. Warm clothing and strong waterproof footwear are advised. This trip will involve walking around 7km on farm tracks, rough ground and the shore. Please let Malcolm Chattwood know if you hope to attend this outing so that he can provide last minute information as necessary.

December. No field trip.

January. No field trip.



The location (arrow) of St Mun's Church Hall in Dunoon, the venue for the Spring Meeting of the Argyll Bird Club

Saturday 22 February. Loch Gilp and the Add Estuary. Please meet Jim Dickson at 10.00hrs at the layby outside old Bank of Scotland building (facing the Front Green) in Lochgilphead, with additional parking in the Lorne Street Car Park. We will then head to Ardrishaig, and then to Islandadd Bridge at the Add Estuary. Please bring a packed lunch. We aim to finish around 15.00hrs. The meeting will involve short walks on level ground. Please contact Jim if you would like to go on this trip (e-mail Argyllbirder@outlook.com phone 01546 603967).

Saturday 29 March. Toward and south Loch Striven. Led by Alistair McGregor (e-mail alistaircmcgregor16@outlook.com mobile phone 07754524240). Please contact Alistair if you would like 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 foot-wear is advised. Please bring your own packed lunch.

INDOOR MEETINGS 2025

Attendance at meetings is free to members, and £5 to non-members (ABC membership is only £10)

Spring Meeting 2025. Saturday 8 March. The meeting will be held at St Mun's Church Hall, Dunoon, where the highly successful 2024 spring meeting was held. The map on the previous page shows the location of the church hall in Dunoon. The programme will be e-mailed to members prior to the meeting.

Autumn Meeting & AGM 2025. The date and venue has not yet been decided.

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

SECRETARY

Our Secretary, Alun ap Rhisiart resigned at the 2024 AGM. The club thanks Alun for his significant contribution over the past few years. If anyone is interested in taking over this post please contact Alun or any other club official.

EDITOR OF THE EIDER

After producing the *Eider* for many years, Steve Petty has decided that it's time for someone else to take over the reins. If this post interests you please contact Steve (for more information about the job) or any club official.

FUNDING FOR BIRD CONSERVATION PROJECTS IN ARGYLL

The ABC is willing to fund or part-fund worthwhile bird conservation projects in Argyll. For example, the club 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).

This year, the club has bought some owl nest boxes to be monitored by Rob Lightfoot. These have now been installed.

More recently the club has part-funded the purchase of Static Audio Recorders to monitor the presence (or not) of Nightjars in Argyll (September *Eider*, pages 10-11).

Applications to fund other projects should be submitted to the Secretary (contact details on the back page).

ARGYLL BIRD REPORT 35 (2023)

The latest *Argyll Bird Report* was published in the spring 2024 as a PDF file. ABC members were informed by e-mail about how to download their copies. If you didn't receive this e-mail, please contact the Membership Secretary (contact details on the back page)

Records are now coming in, and are being collated for the next *ABR* (36, 2024), which we hope to distribute to members in spring 2025. Please ensure that you submit your 2024 bird records as soon as possible. Thank you.

Great Shearwater, 4 November 2024, one of thousands seen around Hawes Bank, just north of Coll ©Jim Dickson

ABC field trip to Lismore on Saturday 31 August 2024

The ABC party on the MV Loch Striven en route to Lismore ©David Jardine

If the weather meant that the last outing to Lismore had to be changed because of high winds, then it certainly made up for it on this outing with bright-blue skies and little wind. As the ABC party met on the pier at Oban, they enjoyed close views of a young Heron feeding at the end of the Lismore Slip (photo below). It was clearly hungry and quickly caught many small fish and was reluctant to move as the MV Loch Striven came in, only flying off as the ramp was lowered.

The trip list grew quickly as the ferry crossed Oban Bay and passed Kerrera. At Maiden Island, Malcolm spotted what was possibly the sighting of the day, a Kestrel, now a relatively scarce bird confined to coastal areas. Also seen were the usual gulls, several Cormorants and Shag, and some juvenile Black Guillemots. Only one Common Tern was seen on the crossing, unlike the 70 or so seen the previous week on the leader's recce, indicating that autumn migration is now well underway. Four Pied Wagtails flying south over the calm sea were the first signs of visible migration ('vis mig') seen during the day.

A young Heron flying off from feeding on the edge of the slipway ©David Jardine

After landing, the group made its way north from Achnacroish along the path to Balnagown. Although it was a bit damp, there was a great profusion of flowers, including Grass of Parnassus, Knapweed and Devil's Bit Scabious that attracted butterflies, with Peacock, Red Admiral, Speckled Wood and Scotch Argus soon noted. Green-veined White was added later, to give a respectable total during this damp summer.

More evidence of 'vis mig' was seen as Swallows were noted flying south along the coast as we approached Balnagown Farm. Here we found more Pied Wagtails and Meadow Pipits by the burn, and Swallows overhead. This congregation attracted a Sparrowhawk that was picked out by John. Through the trees and overhead a noisy juvenile Buzzard gave excellent views.

The clear waters of Loch Balnagown, fed by Lismore's limestone springs, held only a few birds; six Greylags and four Mallards were easily visible, but the sharp-eyed picked out a Little Grebe and a distant Moorhen, now a rarely reported bird in Argyll. The sunshine and aquatic habitat meant that dragonflies and damselflies were out and about, with Southern Hawker (photo on next page) and Common Blue Damselfly being noted here, and later a Common Darter sighted on the road back to the pier.

It was a short walk up from the loch to the

A Southern Hawker Dragonfly (above) and a sun-bathing Song Thrush at Achnacroish (right) ©David Jardine

Lismore Visitor Centre. A very pleasant al fresco lunch was enjoyed there on the balcony, allowing birding to continue. A few Rooks, which enjoy the grassland on Lismore and which nest in a few locations, were seen along with Jackdaws. The walk along the road back to Achnacroish added a few more species to the trip list, with Collared Doves and flyover Redpolls being added, and Coal Tits (an unusual bird on Lismore, which has few conifers) were heard in the trees.

As we arrived back at the pier at Achnacroish we had an excellent view of a Song Thrush, which appeared to be sun-bathing—maybe that was why we saw relatively few birds on this outing—the weather was too good! The crossing back to Oban was in shirt sleeves on a glassy sea, allowing brief sightings of Harbour Porpoises. All in all, a pleasant day out.

Species list (total 44 species) [*those not seen on or close to Lismore]: Greylag, Mallard, Feral Pigeon, Collared Dove, Moorhen, Little Grebe, Oystercatcher*, Curlew*, Common Gull, Herring Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Common Tern, Guillemot, Black Guillemot, Gannet, Cormorant, Shag, Heron, Sparrowhawk, Buzzard, Kestrel, Jackdaw, Rook, Hooded Crow, Raven, Coal Tit, Great Tit, Swallow, House Martin, Goldcrest, Wren, Starling, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Robin, Stonechat, House Sparrow, Dunnock, Pied Wagtail, Meadow Pipit, Chaffinch, Linnet, Redpoll, Goldfinch

David Jardine

ABC field trip to Bute on Saturday 19 October 2024

Enjoying the sunshine on Bute ©Steve Petty

I have spent some time working on Bute with my job—I'm over at least once a week, but have little time for birding when I'm there, but on the run up to the field trip, I suggested to the young people I work with that we would have some island tours, they loved this idea. One said that any time out of the town was a good thing. I must admit I do agree with that idea, not that I

Left Photo. Little Egret ©Alistair McGregor. **Right photo**. Great Egret ©Steve Petty

dislike Rothesay, it has a great butcher's and baker's—my two favorite shops.

Anyway, this gave me an opportunity to see what was about on the island and brush up on my communication skills, I am currently working on my sarcasm! Some will say its coming along nicely.

So, the first sortie was pretty much a wash out due to the weather turning unpleasant. The second outing was much better, when we saw Kestrel, Buzzard, Sparrowhawk (just on the edge of the town), but the one the youngsters liked most was the Little Egret. They were amazed at its speed as it ran about catching what looked like sand hoppers.

There is nothing better than local know-how so I called Ian Hopkins, who has a great knowledge of birdlife on Bute. Together we formulated a plan for the field trip. Ian informed me that a Great Egret (Great White Egret) had been about the Mill Loch for a couple of days, but not to say anything, just in case it had moved on .

On the day of the meeting I met the group at the Colintraive Ferry Terminal. We arranged to take as few vehicles as possible on the ferry, and to meet with Ian Hopkins at the ferry terminal on Bute.

We saw a Black Guillemot feeding out in the Kyles of Bute as we waited for the ferry. After meeting Ian we headed south along the coastal road in the direction of Rothesay. The first encounter along the shore was a Little Egret (photo above), closely followed by a second, both feeding at the water's edge. Curlew, Oystercatcher and various gulls were spotted there too.

We stopped briefly to look over the bay before Port Bannatyne, where we saw Redshank, crows and a Great black-backed Gull.

Ian and I decided to head to Mill Loch, which is at the north end of Loch Fad in the center of the island, this was where the Great Egret had been observed recently.

The loch is down a rough track used by fishermen to access Loch Fad fisheries. We spotted Blackbird, Robin and Woodpigeon on the trackside bushes. At the Mill Loch we soon spotted the Great Egret (photo above) at the far end. We watched as the bird took flight and headed directly towards us, landing just 60m away, thus affording us great views until it ventured into the reed beds. Fortunately, I managed to get some good photos. From this location we also spotted Grey Heron, Mallard and Moorhen.

After the excitement was over we left and headed round the island stopping at Greenan Loch. Here we saw Whooper Swan, Tufted Duck, Teal, Mallard and Wigeon. We then continued on towards Kilchattan Bay where we spotted numerous crows, Rooks, Feral Pigeons and Woodpigeons. From the parking area at Kilchattan we saw good numbers of waders on the shore, and with the aid of Ian's scope we identified Bar-tailed Godwit, Redshank, Turnstone and Rock Pipit. Out at sea we saw Goosander, Shag and Cormorant, and in the nearby bushes we heard a Wren, but the little rascal wouldn't show itself.

We then headed to the view point that overlooks Scalpsie Bay for our lunch (photo, next page). The weather was behaving itself and it wasn't too cold. We saw some seals out at sea, but few birds were seen. On previous visits we have seen a Kestrel from here, but it didn't show today, although we saw one later in the afternoon.

With all of us fed and watered we headed down to Straad, which lies on the west side

Left photo. Lunch stop overlooking Scalpsie Bay ©Steve Petty

Right photo. A lone Whooper Swan ©Alistair McGregor

of the island with great views of Arran. We parked at the village hall and continued out on foot towards St Ninians Bay. We heard and saw small birds, which turned out to be mainly House Sparrows and Dunnocks, and the odd Pied Wagtail darted past. On the adjacent fields were good numbers of Curlew and a single Whooper Swan (photo above).

We walked along the beach towards the causeway that separates St Ninians Island from the main island during high tides. From here we spotted good numbers of waders (photo below), these included Golden Plover, Snipe, Ringed Plover and various gull species. On our way back to the ferry we spotted a Kestrel, at last!

The weather had been good to us, and we had managed to see 42 species. I would like to thank Ian Hopkins for his help and knowledge, and all the folk who turned out for a very pleasant day on Bute.

Species list (total 42 species): Little Egret, Great Egret, Mute Swan, Whooper Swan, Mallard, Teal, Wigeon, Tufted Duck, Eider, Goosander, Moorhen, Snipe, Redshank, Ringed Plover, Golden Plover, Turnstone, Oystercatcher, Curlew, Bar-tailed Godwit, Common Gull, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Black-headed Gull, Black Guillemot, Cormorant, Shag, Heron, Buzzard, Kestrel, Jackdaw, Rook, Hooded Crow, Magpie, Pied Wagtail, Meadow Pipit, Rock Pipit, Wren, Starling, Robin, Stonechat (at the Colintraive ferry terminal), Dunnock, House Sparrow,

Alistair McGregor

Waders resting up at high tide. They were mostly Oystercatchers, with some Turnstones in the front ©Alistair McGregor

Obituary—Dougie Menzies

Dougie was born at Borehamwood, close to the Elstree studios of north London on 16 December 1956. Shortly afterwards his parents returned to Scotland and settled in Bearsden. Dougie attained a pilot's licence when only 17. During 1978 he joined the Police Service in Glasgow, being stationed in Maryhill and Pollokshaws. This included time in the 'support and tactical firearms unit'. He was later stationed in Dunbartonshire, living at Alexandria, before moving to Bute in 1998 for a sergeant's post. After thirty years' service, he retired in 2008, continuing to live in Rothesay with his wife Allison and two sons, Fraser and Russell. Not one to remain idle for long, Dougie became the Assistant Harbour Master at Rothesay Pier for ten years from 2010.

Dougie first started birdwatching whilst living in Partick in the 1980s and would love to go out when on nightshift to listen to the birdsong at dawn. His retirement gave him time to take an interest in the birdlife on Bute and this coincided with the start of fieldwork for the BTO's national Bird Atlas in November of that year, for which he volunteered to do fieldwork. This brought him into contact with Ian Hopkins and Ron Forrester, and between them, during the next four years they covered all 48 tetrads on the island. In addition to providing data for the national Bird Atlas, the information formed the basis for the text, which the three birders used for a 360-page book *The Birds of Bute,* published in 2012. Dougie was also a keen photographer and provided most of the photos for this book.

The three authors continued their friendship until Dougie's untimely death from cancer on 9 September 2024, aged 67. During that period, they had annual trips together, first to Barra for five years, then four visits to the Isles of Scilly. Dougie also organised foreign birdwatching holidays to Morocco, Lesbos, The Gambia, Texas, Goa and Thailand, accompanied by Ian and their good friend Iain Andrews.

Dougie was a founder and committee member of the Bute Bird Group, which started in 2009, leading many field trips and giving several talks. He also counted the wildfowl on Loch Ascog, Bute, for the BTO's Wetland Bird Survey.

In 2018, following a talk by Tom Prescott, at the Bute Natural History Society, Dougie took up the study of moths. He soon bought a moth trap, and made himself another. Before long, studying moths quickly developed into perhaps his main interest. He set a moth trap regularly in his own garden and participated with a small group of other Bute moth enthusiasts, in particular Ron Forrester and Bill Stein, on many mothing trips to various sites throughout the island. In not much more than six years, he had added, either by himself, or as part of a team, no less than 121 moth species to the Isle of Bute list. A magnificent achievement.

Dougie Menzies 1956-2024 ©Allison Menzies

Dougie and Allison also had a static caravan in Argyll, at Carsaig, with lovely views over the Sound of Jura. They had many happy days there, where they also kept a small boat, making regular trips across to Jura.

Dougie had a very generous, and helpful personality, and since his death has regularly been referred to as 'a real gentleman', which says it all. He will be sorely missed by all who knew him.

Ron Forrester and Ian Hopkins (with help from Allison Menzies)

Call for volunteers for the Montane Bird Survey 2025

Dotterel ©Chris Gomersall (rspb-images.com)

Do you have experience of hiking on Scotland's mountains and their alpine plateaus?

Are you interested in helping to monitor the impacts of the climate and nature crisis?

The RSPB and NatureScot are collaborating on the 2025 national Montane Bird Survey to help monitor the UK's three characteristic montane bird species: Dotterel, Ptarmigan, and Snow Bunting.

Since the last national Montane Bird Survey in 2011, the accelerating rate of climate change and its potential impacts on montane habitats highlights the need for up-to-date information on how the UK's montane bird species are faring. The 2025 Montane Bird Survey will update our knowledge of recent climate change impacts on Dotterel and offer the first empirical assessments of such impacts on Snow Bunting and Ptarmigan. Monitoring these species presents one of the few indicators currently at our disposal to quantify the impacts of climate change in UK montane habitats.

We are now looking for volunteers to take part in the national Montane Bird Survey. The survey will take place between May and July 2025 and involves visiting alpine plateaus to survey for Dotterel, Snow Bunting, and Ptarmigan. If you are interested or would like more information, please contact me. Thank you.

Dr Leah Kelly (leah.kelly@rspb.org.uk)

BTO update November 2024

Bird Atlas

Fieldwork for the next Bird Atlas will be from 2027-2031. This major project will be a huge undertaking. Fundraising and planning are underway, so watch this space.

BTO Blackbirds in Gardens Survey

Why Blackbirds? The Blackbirds in Gardens project will help us to understand how Blackbirds use gardens, and reveal the potential effects of the relatively new *Usutu* virus on their already declining population in the UK. It is transmitted by mosquitos, and is being monitored by the Animal and Plant Health Agency of the UK government.

Data from the 2022 BBS showed a 39% decline in Blackbirds in Greater London, which may be linked to USUV infection. It is of particular interest because it is a single strand RNA virus, related to Japanese Encephalitis Virus, West

Nile Virus, Denge, and Yellow Fever. While it can infect captive and wild birds and mammals, Usutu can be pathogenic to humans, although the risk is thought to be low.

While incidents of the virus are scarce in Scotland, it is useful to have data from all parts of the UK. While fieldwork for 2024 has finished, it will run in 2025. Taking part in the survey has a target of one 15-minute survey per week throughout the survey period (May–October). However, you can miss odd weeks and you can undertake multiple surveys within a week if you wish.

The survey week runs from Sunday to Saturday, and the survey itself is designed to fit around everyday life activities. It can be done at any time of day, and at different times each week. You need to be able to recognise a Blackbird by sight, including reliably separating adult male, adult female and juveniles.

For more info go to: www.bto.org/our-science/projects/blackbirds-gardens

WinGS—Winter Gull Survey

This is running again in 2025, and you can contribute by making a single visit to a key site or a sample site at around dusk, to count roosting gulls in January 2025. The theory is that gulls feed during the day then fly to roost at dusk, when they can be counted going into the roost.

From experience in 2024, in the Lochgilphead/Crinan area, they seem to fly to a pre-roost, then fly on to a night roost on an island. This makes it somewhat tricky. Other areas may more straight forward, but as with WeBS counts, it helps to know the survey area and where best to view the birds.

Another lesson learned from this year is that the survey doesn't seem to include some sites that we know have a lot of gulls! Despite this, as a bird club, this data would still be valuable, and even if it's not on the vacant sites list, the information might help to get this changed for future surveys. Holy Loch is such a site, but there may be others that you know of, so please let me know at njscriven@gmail.com

Please consider counting a site or two. Zero counts are valuable too, especially from the sample sites. The vacant sites map can be found from a link here: www.bto.org/our-science/projects/winter-gull-survey

Online Gull ID Course

Gull ID is a 2-session course and costs £24. Each session is 1hr 45mins. The first covers small gulls, the second the large gulls. There is a choice of three time slots for both courses:

Tuesday 3 & 10 December 7pm

Wednesday 4 & 11 December 10am

Wednesday 4 & 11 December 7pm

Heathland Bird Survey—New for 2025

Designed to survey for Woodlark, Dartford Warbler and Nightjar, this survey aims to update the numbers and distribution of these three focal species. It will also record 12 other species: Hobby, Long-eared Owl, Cuckoo, Wheatear, Grasshopper Warbler, Stonechat, Tree Pipit, Linnet, Stone-curlew, Snipe, Curlew and Redshank (many of which occur in Argyll).

Volunteers will usually need to spend up to two hours per visit, in order to survey all the suitable habitat in a single 1-km survey square. However, where small amounts of habitat are present at least two squares could be covered per morning. The survey needs between two and four visits for each of the species during the species' survey periods, which runs from 15 Feb to 15 July.

Survey sites (1-km squares) for each species include known or recently occupied locations, including some of the larger protected sites (SSSIs and SPAs), as well as a random sample of squares containing potentially suitable habitat nearby. This combination of survey squares allows a good coverage of the current known distribution but also picks up recent range expansion and contraction.

More information and requests for survey sites for each species can be found through the Heathland Bird Survey online portal when the survey opens for registration in December:

www.bto.org/our-science/projects/heathland-bird-survey

BTO Field Craft articles

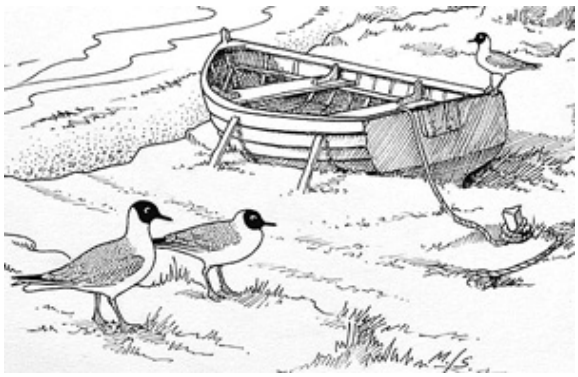
A series of articles about developing your birding skills, each packed with ideas and information to help you progress. They first appeared in our members' magazine, *BTO News*. They are now available free online at www.bto.org/develop-your-skills/field-craft-articles

BTO Shop

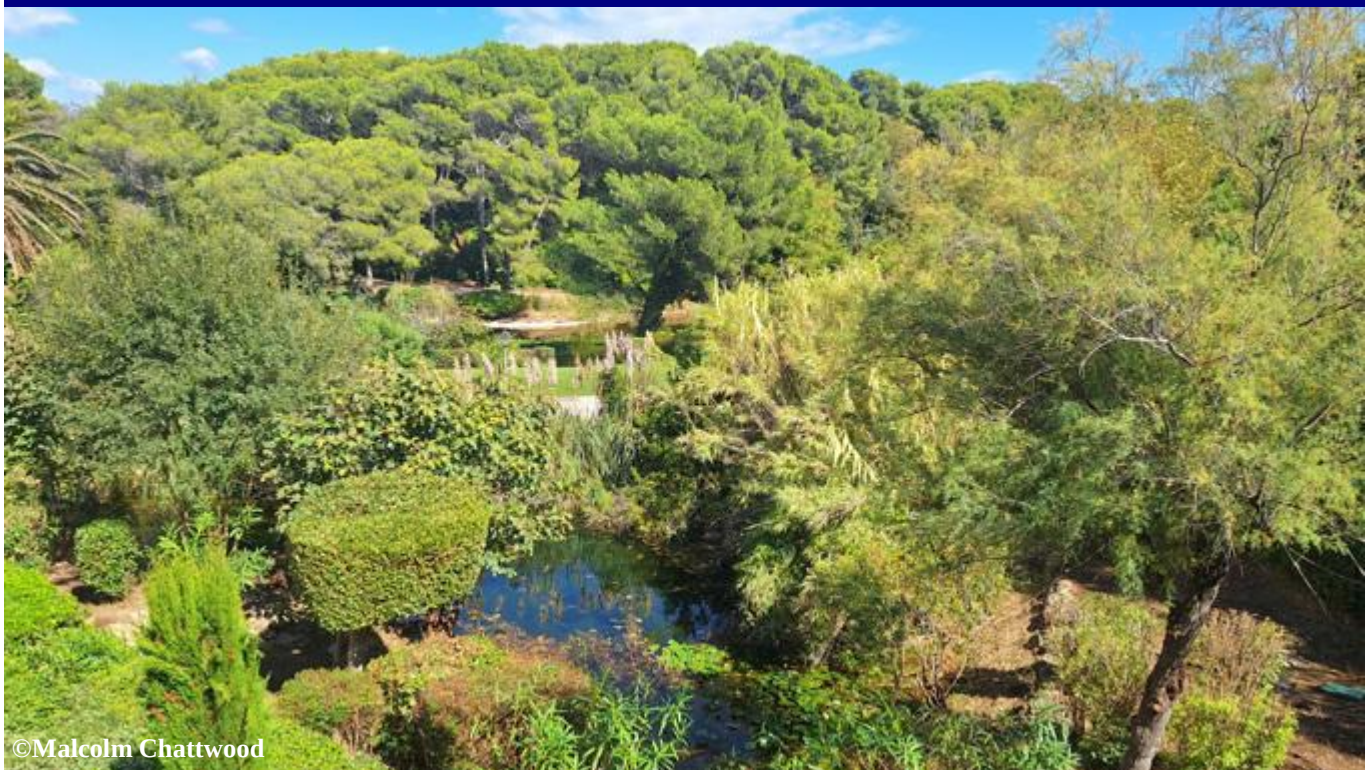
Looking for bird-themed Christmas presents or just cards and calendars. Try the BTO shop:

https://british-trust-for-ornithology.myshopify.com/

Nigel Scriven



A second court appearance for Argyll Bird Club Committee member!



Any members with a long and excellent memory may recall a article I penned for the December 2010 edition of the *Eider* in the form of a spoof court report. This described how a bird club committee member had been summoned to the Ornithologist's Court and accused of taking over a week to identify a regular sighting of four Linnets feeding in front of his apartment whilst on holiday in Provence. The committee member pleaded guilty and in mitigation had stated that they were all females in an unusual garden habitat, and at no point did a male appear to make identification easier. A custodial sentence was not handed down and the member was charged with serving on the committee for another 12 months.

Step forward 14 years and following frequent bad behaviour, the offending member (me) still serves on the bird club committee and was again taking a holiday in Provence. Surely the member's bird identification skills had improved over time and a repeat offence wouldn't be committed?

Indian Silverbill or White-throated Munia ©Malcolm Chattwood

Staying in a second-floor apartment with a balcony overlooking a landscaped area, which until the 1960s had been clay pits and associated brick works, a sense of overwhelming foreboding came over me on our second night there whilst sitting content with a glass of the local rosé.

Immediately below our balcony was a pond surrounded by a variety of dense vegetation and bushes (photo above) with a resident family of Moorhens and regular visiting Kingfishers. Blackcaps and Sardinian Warblers—the latter more often heard than seen. As you would expect, binoculars were always to hand and an unrecognized call revealed the presence of a couple of Chaffinch-sized birds whose "jizz" from their short appearance did not provide immediate identification.

Subsequent appearances by the pair were equally brief but a long, black-tipped tail, distinct white rump, lightish underparts, uniform brown back and head and black eye were all significant features. Distinct white rump shouts Bullfinch or Wheatear to me but familiarity ruled them out instantly.

Time to refer to the trusty Collins guide but nothing jumped out at me. Another day and another glimpse of a pair and then two pairs. The thought crossed my mind that the birds might be escapees, but the sight of four together suggested that was probably not the case. A search of internet sources didn't bring any immediate relief to the identification conundrum and frustration was mounting with some trepidation that

another visit to the Ornithologists' Court as a repeat offender might be on the horizon.

However, persistence pays off and I came across a website dedicated to the birds of the immediate area of restored clay pits in which we were staying. One entry in the list of passerines stood out: Le capucin bec-de-plomb (*Euodice malabarica*). Clicking on the link provided took me to a whole raft of photographs, which allowed identification at last and prompted a suitable celebration. Questions of course remained, and further internet research provided the explanation that the Indian Silverbill or White-throated Munia (a native of the Indian Subcontinent) had been first seen in Nice in 1988 following an assumed escape from an aviary. It would appear that the climate and habitat of the Cote d'Azur suited the species as it has seemingly spread up the coast for at least 170km and possibly beyond. With that mystery solved, time could be spent enjoying the sight of Kingfishers plunging into the pond for their lunch, Crested Tits flitting about in nearby pine trees and hoping that the Night Herons heard on our first night would pay a repeat visit. They didn't!

Original article:

https://argyllbirdclub.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/eider-dec2010.pdf

Malcolm Chattwood

Waterlife Recovery: A Mink-free Britain—has reached Argyll!

An American Mink with Water Vole prey. Mink are the main cause of Water Vole decline, with voles being lost from 94% of locations where they were formerly present in the 1980s ©Graham Catley

I was delighted to be asked to give a presentation to the Argyll Bird Club autumn meeting, on 2 November 2024, outlining the work I have been involved with in the Waterlife Recovery Trust (WRT) project. This is an ambitious partnership that aims to eradicate Mink entirely from Great Britain. Eradication sounds impossible to many people who have worked on Mink control for many years as there seems to be a consistent supply of new Mink coming into areas after decades of trapping, but we have recently completed a pilot study showing that this is possible at a large scale (5,853 km^2, slightly smaller than the size of Argyll).

The innovation that has made this possible is the use of permanently sited 'Smart Traps', which remove the need for daily visual checks or monitoring (see photo on next page). A Remote Monitoring Device (a box on the trap which has a magnet, connected by a cord to the trap door) makes a trap smart. When the trap closes, the magnet is pulled off, triggering a solenoid switch to activate the trap alarm, which then sends a message to a server that alerts the user via text message and email. This improves the welfare standard of the system as animals can be attended to

Project Officer for Cambridgeshire, Emily Coleman, demonstrating the trap operation to two volunteers (left and right of image) with landowner (at the back) looking on. The traps are simple to operate, and WRT rely entirely on co-operation from landowners and support from volunteers ©Vince Lea

within short notice of their capture, it improves efficiency as most visits to the trap are purposeful, and in some cases more than one capture can be made during the same day, unlike traditional once-a-day visual checking. Most importantly, Smart Traps do not get bored after not catching a Mink for a year or two.

Professor Tony Martin and I discussed the concept of mink eradication using this technique back in 2015. He had recently been involved in the eradication of Rats from South Georgia, at the time the largest island-based eradication attempt, and the team was successful. Buoyed by this and panged by a guilty conscience that his father had been one of the many small-scale Mink farmers in the past, Tony was keen to think about going up in scale from the 3,756 km^2 of South Georgia to the somewhat larger 209,331 km^2 of Great Britain!

Although Tony is a sea-mammal researcher based at Dundee University, he happens to live in Cambridgeshire, and we were acquainted through the Cambridgeshire Bird Club. When I replied that it would be technically possible, if challenging, he was very interested. All the academics he'd spoken to about this, people who had been working on Mink for longer than I had, did not give him any hope. Much work has been going on behind the scenes since then, developing the concept and refining the techniques.

I'm a regular visitor to Argyll, and when I discussed the project with the Board of Trustees for the charity I work for, Nicholas Watts (a CRT Trustee) said I should talk to Clive Craik. Nicholas has been here with Clive on seabird ringing trips, and he knew about Clive's work to control mink that are a major cause of seabird colony failure on the small inshore islands around the Argyll coast. One of my early missions was to meet Clive and get his opinion on the Argyll Mink population and the potential to eradicate them. There has been a long-running

Mink control programme in the Tayside, Grampian and Highland region of Scotland, initiated by Professor Xavier Lambin at Aberdeen University, and now running under the banner of the Scottish Invasive Species Initiative (SISI). However, they have always considered the vast coastline, island and lochan network of Argyll too big a problem to tackle. We have a different approach and believe it is possible.

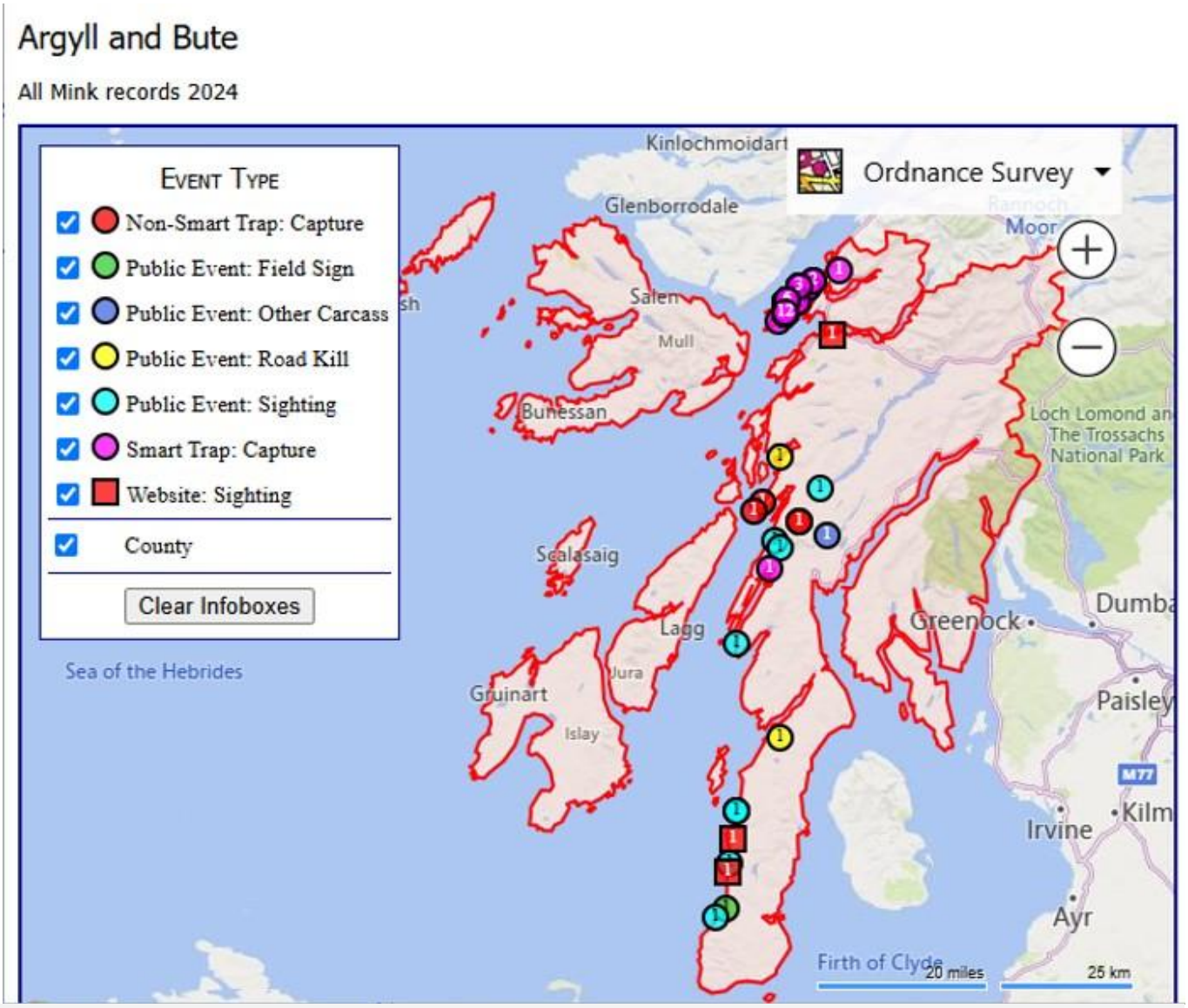
The method that was developed under the banner of 'Waterlife Recovery East' is a network of Smart Traps, approximately one per 20km^2, across a large area of East Anglia, all of Norfolk, Suffolk, most of Cambridgeshire and Essex plus bits of Lincolnshire, Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire. It mainly works by intercepting moving mink. There is not a high enough density of traps to remove all Mink in the first year, but Mink are highly dispersive twice a year—the mating season (January-March) and the post-breeding juveniles (August-September). In the mating season, it is primarily the males that do all the running, and in the first year we see a heavy bias towards those. Females that have secured favourable territories, tend to stay put, so we only catch those that have a trap in the territory. For this reason, getting traps into high-quality habitat areas is really important, as there will almost certainly be females queueing up to occupy that territory, and if they are neglected, those females will have the chance to rear large litters. Males mate and then continue to move around the watercourses looking for further females, and eventually find a Mink-scented trap that puts an end to their fun. The females that were resident in areas between traps will remain in their territory, only moving once the young are large enough to follow her around in July—sometimes this brings them within range of a trap and a whole family may be caught, one after another (sometimes multiple Mink may enter the trap and be caught together). Once the young are weaned and independent, they disperse to find a territory of their own and this is where we get the second peak of captures starting in August. By year two, there will be a reduction in the number of Mink overall, but especially of males. This means that some females will fail to breed and, of course, that means fewer new Mink recruited to the population. Unmated females tend to then make a movement, either in the autumn or the next mating season, presumably in an attempt to increase their chances of mating, and in the latter stages of eradication there is a female bias in the catch ratio. The speed with which this all happens will depend on a number of factors—the initial Mink population, the density of traps, and the proximity of other Mink populations not subject to a trapping regime. This latter point is important, as it means the larger the size of a joined-up operation that can be established, the better. Untrapped areas will always have a surplus of Mink and those can readily travel 20km or more. Previous catchment-based Mink control projects have always been indefinite operations, as Mink cross from one catchment to the next with ease. The Waterlife Recovery approach is to work at a much larger scale, initially trialling the method across East Anglia, 16,000km^2 (with the core area of 5,853km^2 being the proving ground) and expanding to adjacent areas to protect those gains.

The Waterlife plan relies on willing landowners and volunteers who permit and help run the trap network, without whom it would be impossible. So, if you could be either of those, do get in touch (v.lea@thecrt.co.uk). It has always been a collaborative effort, joining up the interest of many individuals and organisations with the same aim.

The other essential elements of the plan are data and science. Every trap is logged in the same database, and every visit made to it is entered, so we can see at a glance where the effort is, if there are traps that have been neglected for a long time or areas where there are high catch rates that might need more trapping effort. Every Mink sighting (dead or alive) is valuable information that can be added to the database. Also, every Mink is a valuable resource. Each one gets a scientific examination to determine age, gender and for the females, breeding condition. These data feed into a population model which can determine the rate of extinction (approximately 70% annual population decline in the East Anglian trial). Each animal is also sampled for genetic testing, which provides an independent modelling system to look at extinction curves—the two sets of data gave a strong agreement in the trial, which was very reassuring. Each dead Mink is also harvested for its anal scent gland fluid, a pungent substance that is used as an irresistible lure in the traps! Each dead Mink should be carefully bagged, labelled and frozen to enable all of this to be gained from it.

Leaping from East Anglia to Argyll may seem a bit disjointed if we're talking about a joined-up approach! There are no immediate plans to start a joined-up eradication phase in Argyll at this time, but getting some knowledge about the level of interest and current activity at this stage will help WRT get a more accurate plan of attack when the time comes. It has long been recognised that the north-west of Scotland will be a much greater challenge than the benign conditions of south-east England. Starting here will give us time to work out how to meet those challenges, before the ever-expanding wave of Waterlife Recovery rolls out to reach this area. The Waterlife project is rapidly expanding, so it won't be too long before the front line reaches here anyway, and it would jeopardise the plan of Britain-wide eradication if the last areas to be tackled proved the most time-consuming and difficult.

There is also an existing landscape-scale operation which wraps around Argyll, under the Scottish Invasive Species Initiative, so the influx of Mink from the east should not be too great, so any gains made in Argyll are likely to be long-lasting. Argyll also stands to benefit greatly in



This map shows the number of known mink events in Argyll in 2024 (smart trap capture = 39, public event, sighting = 8, non-smart trap capture = 4, website sighting = 3, public event, road kill = 2, public event, other carcass = 1, public event, field sign = 1. Grand Total = 58

ecological terms if Mink are reduced; not only do the last few Water Vole populations stand a chance of surviving (Mink are the primary cause of Water Vole's catastrophic decline), there are also important seabird populations on the small islands around the coast, islands that should be predator-free but are within swimming range of Mink. Clive Craik has amply demonstrated that if Mink are removed, these seabirds succeed, but if Mink visit, there is almost always complete colony failure.

Our next challenge is to put together the various factors required to achieve the same result in Argyll as we have managed in East Anglia. WRT has no current funding in place for Argyll as a whole, so it will be a while before any of this can start. Smart Traps are well over £300 each and require staff to install and oversee their operation. At least 500 such traps will be required to cover Argyll, and staff members can cope with around 100 traps per person, so we will need about five staff for perhaps five years to complete the task. While the staff are important to the operation, volunteers are even more important! It is not possible for anyone to deal with every trap event that may occur across a network of traps every day of the year. Most trap visits are by local volunteers who can get to the trap promptly and deal with whatever needs doing—restoring a raft the right way up after a flood event, releasing a Water Rail or dispatching a Mink. The staff are there as back-up for the day when a volunteer is not available, and they deal with equipment supply and maintenance, data collection, sample handling and background work that goes into the project. So, it is great that the Argyll Bird Club and a few other organisations and individuals have been able to fund and run some traps themselves, and are sharing their information with WRT. We now know of 46 Mink that have died in Argyll this year—one taken by a White-tailed Eagle, two as road kills, four in 'traditional' daily check traps, one in a Smart Trap in Knapdale and an astonishing 38 in Smart Traps on Lismore (see map above). Coincidentally, there are 46 'Smart Traps' in operation across

the county, with again, most of them on Lismore. This is a great start, as it shows us that the system works despite areas of poor phone signal and difficult weather, and it also suggests that the Mink population is not uniformly distributed. There are some large areas where numerous traps have hardly caught any Mink, whereas Lismore seems to be overrun with them. We won't be able to set a high density of traps everywhere, but once traps are in place it will become apparent where the main efforts are required.

In the meantime, ABC members can really help the project by reporting any Mink sightings, telling us about any Mink trapping that they know of and especially looking out for dead Mink which we can use for the genetic and population modelling work. If you see a roadkill, tideline corpse or find a bit of mink in a raptor nest, please collect it for us (do not remove the food supply of a nest, just a tiny piece for DNA analysis will suffice). The best way to do this is via the reporting page on the Waterlife Recovery Trust website, where you can also sign up for the newsletter and learn more about the project:

https://www.waterliferecoverytrust.org.uk/

Dr Vince Lea

(Conservation Officer, Countryside Regeneration Trust)

Argyll Bird Club—Conservation Strategy

Following a presentation at the March meeting in 2023 to start to shape the priorities for a club conservation plan, David Jardine helpfully processed the responses to a request for suggestions. The ideas were quite varied but could be categorised into major, medium and local scale projects. Trying to work out priorities for these proved to be a daunting task, so it became apparent that we needed some kind of strategy for working out which were feasible within the club's capacity and resources.

This led to producing a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis of the club, against which each project could be assessed for appropriateness of fit (see table below). It needs to be objective and honest, not over-playing strengths and under-playing weaknesses, and not everything is equally important.

From this it seems that for future projects there are four choices:

1. Advocacy, where the club encourages and advises others on delivery

2 Support for others, where the club provides funding but is not involved in delivery

3. Partnership with others, where the club contributes to both funding and delivery

4. Direct involvement, where the club leads and funds projects that are relatively small in scale

Examples of current projects are Passive Acoustic Monitoring, Barn Owl Boxes and Mink Trapping.

In terms of future management of funds for projects, it is proposed to set up a restricted fund for conservation projects, separate from the more routine club activities, and which is open for donations, grants and legacies.

The next steps will be to review what we currently do together with the ideas we already have, so that we can match the appropriate choice of action and give them a priority rating. By reviewing what we already do, as well as new projects, we hope that we do not take on more than we can deliver.

Nigel Scriven, Chairman

STRENGTHS **(what an organisation is good at)**	**WEAKNESSES** **(stop the organisation performing at a higher level—what could be done better?)**
• Membership • Connections/links to other organisations • SCIO status • Independence • Knowledge & expertise of members • Database of records • Focussed species surveys	• Volunteers—may limit commitment • Numbers—limits income and resources • Finite income/resources • Over/Under ambition • Age profile—succession • Loss of key people on committee
OPPORTUNITIES **(favourable external factors—new things to do)**	**THREATS** **(potential to harm the organisation)**
• Influence • Grant eligibility • Joint working with other organisations • Conservation projects	• What trends are changing • Lack of young people participating • Failure to recruit new members • Taking on too many things at once

Chairman's chat—November 2024

The November club meeting in Inveraray was very well attended, with over 50 delegates, getting back to pre-Covid levels. The talks were excellent, and provide plenty of thoughts to ponder.

While ideas of the Club's Conservation Strategy are coming together, having a strategy rather than a plan allows us to formulate a flexible document that can embrace opportunities as they arise, in addition to the plans and projects we already have. A critical element of this has to be communication, both within the club and externally. I'm beginning to think communication strategy, but suffice to say, that as members of the club, we are a network of birders with an interest in their conservation. What I am asking is that we encourage links with other individuals and organisations that share our interest so that we can work together to mutual benefit and for the birds and other wildlife.

As a committee we can't be everywhere and know everything, so networking is important. Please tell us of any threats and opportunities that we need to consider and react to. Together we can achieve more. This is a membership organisation that depends on volunteers. We are fortunate in having some very good members, especially on our committee, but also within the membership, who make significant contributions to the work of the club. We would like to achieve more, but it needs more resources of various kinds to do that. With more members who contribute, even in small ways, more can be achieved.

There are two projects in particular, where this help will be relevant. One is with mink trapping. This needs partnerships with communities to achieve delivery (see pages 13-17). After the Mink-free Britain talk at the autumn meeting, we will have some of the club's smart mink traps operating in the Loch Craignish area, to protect the birds on the islands there. There are already traps operating on Lismore as a community initiative, and more starting in the Knapdale Beaver area with the Heart of Argyll Beaver Centre. If there are other areas you might know of where networking with the local community can help get things started, then please tell us. There is also a database for mink sightings held by the Waterlife Recovery Trust who are spearheading mink eradication across Britain (see pages 13-17). It is important to know where they currently are.

The second project is not so pressing and unspecific. It is to keep a watching brief for opportunities. This could be in a variety of forms. It could be a potential grant opportunity from a business, a sympathetic landowner who might be interested in developing some land for wildlife, the chance to create a wader scrape, build a Sand Martin bank. There are environmental developments such as fish farms, onshore and offshore wind farms that may be looking for some opportunity for biodiversity offset/mitigation/compensation, or new rewilding schemes. If we can help them do better for birds and wildlife, lets know about it.

In terms of members making a contribution, we will shortly have a Conservation Fund, which will help realise some of these actions, and will be open to donations. We also have a vacancy on the committee for a secretary (to minute the committee meetings and AGM) and one for a newsletter editor for the quarterly *Eider*, so if either of these are of interest, please do make contact.

I hope you all have a good festive season, but don't forget to send in your birding records for the end of the year, as the 2024 report is being worked on so that it can appear in the first few months of 2025.

Nigel Scriven

Four more species added to the IUCN Red List

The world's leading authority on nature, the International Union for Nature Conservation (IUCN), has added four species of wader to the Global Red List. Grey Plover has declined by over 30% since the late 1990s and has moved from Least Concern to Vulnerable. Dunlin has declined by 20% globally and has moved to Near Threatened, as has the Ruddy Turnstone. Curlew Sandpiper, declining over 30% since the late 2000s, has moved from Near Threatened to Vulnerable.

These are familiar waders in Argyll, especially Dunlin and Turnstone, which emphasises the need to both monitor their numbers and to protect their wintering and staging areas. With climate change, our coastal habitats are going to be under threat, making the challenge even greater.

Nigel Scriven

Recent recoveries of birds ringed/recovered in Argyll—2023

This note provides some details of the more interesting recoveries of birds ringed in Argyll or found here in 2023. These have been extracted from the BTO's online ringing report (Robinson *et al*., 2024), which covers the whole of Britain; it is possible to filter for different years, species and specifically for Argyll. A few other records of colour-ringed birds are included.

There was a significant increase in the number of birds ringed in Argyll in 2023 to 5,505 (+43%), including 1,470 nestlings. This increase followed the lifting of the precautionary restriction in seabird ringing (except Great Skuas and Gannets) in Scotland in place in 2022 in response to the outbreak of HPAI (Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza).

In a British context, the number of birds ringed in Argyll in 2023 of the following species was significant (>15% of the national total): White-fronted Goose, Grey Heron, Herring Gull, Hooded Crow and Twite.

The 2023 recoveries listed below provide an insight to the movements and lifespans of some Argyll birds. Ages are expressed in years (y) months (m) and days (d).

Barnacle Goose

ISR 123250. Adult male ringed at Skiptingahaus, Brytalaekir, Iceland on 16 July 2021, found freshly dead (disease) on RSPB Coll reserve 25 January 2023 (1,044 km, SE, 1y 6m 9d).

ISR 122194. Adult male ringed at Skiptingahaus, Brytalaekir, Iceland on 13 July 2020 found long dead (disease) at Bridgend, Islay on 7 February 2023 (1,133 km, SE 2y 6m 25d).

ISR 122215. Adult female ringed at Skiptingahaus, Brytalaekir, Iceland on 13 July 2020 found dead at Milton, Tiree on 3 May 2023 (1,045 km, SE 2y 9m 20d).

12954240. Adult male ringed at Gruinart Farm, Islay on 12 February 2018, found dead on North

Greenland White-fronted Goose with neck collar ©Jim Dickson

Uist on 4 July 2023 (206 km, NNW, 5y 4m 22d).

Greylag

5258552. Adult female ringed at Loch an Eilean, Tiree on 4 July 2009, freshly dead (shot) at Balinoe, Tiree on 24 March 2023 (3 km, -, 13y 8m 20d).

Greenland White-fronted Goose

1HX. Neck collar attached on Islay in winter 2012/13, resighted at Ballinaby, Islay on 21 December 2022.

Whooper Swan

XY2609. First-year female ringed at Martin Mere, Lancashire on 25 February 2016, found freshly dead at Badha A Churin, Isle of Jura on 13 December 2023 (329 km, NNW, 7y 9m 18d).

ZY0756. Adult female ringed at Caerlaverock, Dumfries & Galloway on 11 February 2011, found long dead (leg only) at Balinoe, Tiree on 20 April 2023 (272 km, NW, 12y 2m 9d).

Z90273. Adult female ringed at Toome, Antrim on 26 January 2020, found freshly dead (disease) at Dunlossit, Islay on 15 February 2023 (123 km, N, 3y 0m 20d).

Storm Petrel (a selection of long-lived and well-travelled birds)

2542959. Adult ringed on Lunga, Treshnish Isles on 26 June 2001, recaught there on 27 Jun 2023 (3 km, 22y 0m 1d).

2591035. Adult ringed on Sanda, Kintyre on 8 July 2005, recaught there on 28 July 2023 (0 km, 18y 0m 20d).

2605623. Adult ringed at Tulagh Point, Donegal on 21 July 2006, recaught at Sanda, Kintyre on 27 July 2023 (122 km, E, 17y 0m 6d).

2773694. Adult ringed at Clardon, Highland on 8 August 2021, recaught at Sanda, Kintyre on 28 July 2023 (395 km, SSW, 1y 11m 20d).

2657915. Adult ringed at Girdleness, Aberdeen on 10 August 2014, recaught at Sanda, Kintyre on 27 July 2023 (300 km, SW 8y 11m 17d).

2773035. Adult ringed at Carreg Fawr, Gwynedd on 7 July 2021, recaught at Sanda, Kintyre on 27 July 2023 (283 km, N, 2y 0m 20d).

Fulmar

FP51540. Adult ringed at Baugh, Tiree on 30 May 2007, recaught there on 10 July 2023 (0 km, 16y 1m 10d).

FJ42741. Nestling ringed at Ceann A Mhara, Tiree on 24 July 2021, recaught at Balephetrish Hill, Tiree on 10 July 2023 (10 km, NE, 1y 11m 16d).

Manx Shearwater

FB60706. Adult ringed at Cristin Garden, Gwynedd, on 14 June 2022, found dead at Uiskentuie, Islay on 15 August 2023 (350 km, NNW, 1y 2m 1d).

EX61423. Nestling ringed at Copeland Bird Observatory, Down on 30 August 2011, found long dead at Ardalanish Bay, Mull on 28 May 2023 (182 km, NNW, 11y 8m 28d).

FB22696. Adult ringed at Lunga, Treshnish Isles, Mull on 28 June 2006, recaught there on 27 June 2023 (0 km, 16y 11m 30d).

Grey Heron

1512450. Nestling ringed at Eilean Eoghainn, West Loch Tarbert on 6 May 2023, found freshly dead (hit by car) at Cushendall, Antrim on 27 December 2023 (92 km, SSW, 0y 7m 21d).

Gannet

146817. Nestling ringed at the Sule Stack, Orkney on 27 July 2011, ring only found at Craigaig, Ulva, Mull on 5 June 2023 (303 km, SSW, 11y 10m 9d).

Shag

1399676. Adult female ringed at Lunga, Treshnish Isles, Mull on 28 June 2003, recaught there on 26 June 2023 (0 km, 19y 11m 29d).

1421707. Nestling male ringed at Lunga, Treshnish Isles, Mull on 24 June 2007, recaught there on 28 June 2023 (0 km, 16y 0m 4d).

Golden Eagle

ZY3565. Nestling ringed at a confidential site on 4 June 2017, found long dead at Kilmelford on 27 March 2023 (25 km, NNW, 5y 9m 23d).

ZY3674. Nestling colour-ringed at a confidential site in Perth & Kinross on 25 June 2022; colour ring number read at another confidential site on 18 December 2023 (63 km, WSW, 1y 5m 23d).

Sparrowhawk

EX76258. Nestling female ringed at Corlarach For-

Shag—adult with colour ring ©Steve Petty

Oystercatcher with colour rings ®David Jardine

est, Dunoon on 4 July 2007, found dead (predated) at Inverkip, Inverclyde on 11 May 2023 (7km, ESE, 5y 10m 7d).

Hen Harrier

FJ18858. Female nestling ringed on Colonsay on 10 June 2023, colour-rings photographed at Kirk Dam, Isle of Bute on 21 November 2022 (ESE, 0y 5m 3d).

FJ18858. Female nestling ringed on Colonsay on 10 June 2023, found dead (predated) at Beinn An Oir, Jura on 17 October 2023 (SSE, 0y 4m 7d).

FJ32161. Female nestling ringed at Corrie Cravie Moor, North Ayrshire on 18 June 2022, found long dead at Cour Windfarm, Beinn Bhreac on 6 August 2023 (28 km, NW, 1y 1m 19d).

White-tailed Eagle

ZY3218. Nestling colour-ringed at confidential site on 10 Jun 2012, resighted in Argyll on 15 June 2023 (49 km, SSW, 11y 0m 5d).

ZZ0609. Nesting female ringed and wing-tagged in Tipperaray on 19 June 2021, resighted in Kerry on 27 December 2021 and 31 December 2023. and then resighted in Argyll on 25 May 2023 (434 km, NNE, 1y 11m 6d).

XY0517. Nestling colour-ringed in Argyll on 12 June 2018, resighted in Highland on 21 February 2023 (121km, ENE, 4y 8m 9d).

ZY3139. Nestling colour-ringed in Argyll on 26 June 2014, resighted in Highland on 3 February 2023 (117 km, N, 8y 7m 8d).

Oystercatcher

FH67860. Adult colour ringed at Bangor Harbour, Gwynedd on 19 January 2014, resighted at Loch A Phuill, Tiree on 22 March 2023 (405 km, NNW, 9y 2m 3d).

FH75274. Adult colour ringed Broadmeadow Estuary, Malahide, Dublin on 20 December 2021 resighted at Portnahaven, Islay on 23 March 2023 (250km, N, 1y 3m 3d).

ISR 4120779. Nestling colour ringed at Asgardur, Midnes, Gullbringusysla, Iceland on 2 July 2021, resighted at the bay at the Back of the Ocean, Iona on 2 September 2023 (1,240 km, SE, 2y 2m 0d).

ISR 4123038. Nestling colour ringed at Skultursfjord, Nordur-Isfjardarsysla, Iceland on 22 June 2022, resighted at Brunerican Bay, Southend, Kintyre on 11 August 2023 (1,521 km, SE, 1y 1m 20d).

Curlew

FH99225. Nestling ringed at Bosqoy, Dounby, Orkney on 20 June 2021, found dead at Croisebrig, Balnahard, Colonsay on 2 May 2023 (370 km, SSW, 1y 10m 12d).

Woodcock

EM24812. Fully-grown individual ringed at Cornabus, Islay on 8 December 2021, shot at Middle Cragabus, Islay on 29 January 2023 (2 km, 1y 1m 2d).

Kittiwake

EG61236. Adult ringed at Lunga, Treshnish Island, Mull on 26 June 2002, recaught there on 28 June 2023 (0 km, 21y 0m 2d). Longest recorded in British Isles is 26y 8m 18d.

EW18349. Adult ringed at Lunga, Treshnish Island, Mull on 29 June 2007, recaught there on 28 June 2023 (0 km, 15y 11m 30d).

Black-headed Gull

EA43611. Nestling colour-ringed on 22 June 2023 at Teanish, Tiree resighted at Port Seton, East Lothian on 26 October 2023 (246 km, ESE, 0y 4m 4d).

Common Gull

EA43599. Nestling colour-ringed at Heanish, Tiree on 20 June 2023, resighted at Glynn, Larne Lough, Antrim on 5 August 2023 (195 km, SSE, 0y 1m 16d).

EA85121. First-year bird ringed at Gott Bay, Tiree on 21 August 2012, found freshly dead as Caolas, Tiree on 9 March 2023 (3 km, 1y 6m 16d).

Herring Gull

GA25154. Nestling ringed on Sanda Island, Kintyre, on 21 June 1999, found freshly dead at Dunaverty on 28 June 2023 (6 km, NW, 24y 0m 7d).

GC02126. Nestling ringed on Sanda Island, Kintyre, on 27 June 2005, found freshly dead at Carskey Bay on 11 August 2023 (8 km, WNW, 18y 1m 15d).

Lesser Black-backed Gull

GA27138. Nestling ringed on Sanda Island, Kintyre on 23 June 2001, found freshly dead (hit by car) at Dailly, South Ayrshire in 14 May 2023 (55 km, E, 21y 10m 21d).

GR35383. Nestling ringed on Eilean Aoghainn, Loch Fyne on 23 July 2012, ring read in field at Olhao Saltpas, Faro, Portugal on 15 October 2023 (2,130 km, S, 8y 2m 22d).

Sandwich Tern

DB64414. Nestling ringed at Lady Island, Wexford on 7 June 2004, found long dead at Carradale on 28 June 2023 (379 km, N, 19y 0m 21 d).

Common Tern (an interesting series of diverse recoveries)

SR17639. Nestling ringed at Glas Eileanan, Sound of Mull on 11 July 2004, caught by ringed at La Langue de Barbarie, Senegal on 6 April 2023 (4,601 km, SSW, 18y 8m 26d).

SR31926. Nestling ringed at Sgeir na Caillich, Loch Melford on 5 July 2007, found dead at Dakar, Senegal on 26 February 2023 (4,728 km, SSW, 15y 7m 21d).

SR63092. Nestling ringed at South Shian, Benderloch on 9 July 2011, caught by ringed at La Langue de Barbarie, Senegal on 2 April 2023 (4,610 km, SSW, 11y 8m 24d).

SV86598. Nestling ringed at Airds Islet, Loch Etive on 25 June 2003, found freshly dead at Skinflats, Upper Forth on 8 September 2023 (107 km, ESE, 20y 2m 14d).

ST65847. Adult colour-ringed at Gott Bay, Tiree on 6 May 2023, resighted at Benone Strand, Londonderry on 28 August 2023 (151 km, S, 0y 3m 17d).

SR63882. Nestling ringed at South Shian, Benderloch on 1 July 2012, found dead (disease) at Avoch Bay, Highland on 1 August 2023 (140 km, NNE, 11y 1m 0d).

FPP 4H85169. Fully-grown bird ringed at Langue de Barbarie, Senegal on 5 April 2023, recaught by ringer at Gott Bay, Tiree on 6 May 2023 (4,587 km, N, 0y 1m 1d).

ESI 1V010211. Adult ringed at Est, Ornit, Anastasio Senra, Huelva, Spain on 8 September 2018, recaught by ringer at Gott Bay, Tiree on 6 May 2023 (2,139 km, N, 4y 7m 28d).

Arctic Tern

ST97106. Nestling ringed on Treshnish Isles, Mull on 29 June 2018, caught by ringer at Blackness Castle, Upper Forth on 2 August 2023 (187 km, ESE, 5y 1m 4d).

Great Skua

MA23084. Nestling colour-ringed on Garbh Eilean, Shiant Isles, Western Isles on 7 July 2011, resighted at Loch Tuath, Mull on 28 June 2023 (154 km, S, 11y 11m 21d).

Guillemot

T82327. Adult ringed on Colonsay on 6 July 1993, resighted there on 12 Jun 2023 (0 km, -, 29y 11m 6d).

X12468. Adult ringed on Sanda Island, Kintyre on 24 July 1994, found freshly dead (oiled) at Ouaisne, St Brelade, Jersey on 10 February 2023 (717 km, SSE, 28y 6m 17d).

R19823. Adult ringed on Lunga, Treshnish Isles, Mull on 27 June 2000, found freshly dead at Ballyheigue, Buncurrig, Kerry on 5 November 2023 (507 km, SSW, 23y 4m 9d).

R32612. Adult ringed on Sanda Island, Kintyre on 29 June 2002 ,refound (ring read in field) at Clo Mor, Cape Wrath, Highland on 31 May 2023 (373 km, N, 20y 11m 2d).

K00089. Nestling ringed on Sanda Island, Kintyre on 30 June 2009, recaught by ringer on Bardsey Island, Gwynedd on 2 June 2023 (283 km, S, 13y 11m 2d).

R47888. Nestling ringed on Sanda Island, Kintyre on 2 July 2003, found dead (disease) at Formby Point, Merseyside on 3 July 2023 (250 km, SE, 20y 0m 1d).

R08735. Nestling ringed on Sanda Island, Kintyre on 25 June 2003, found freshly dead at Traeth Cwyfan, Aberffraw, Isle of Anglesey on 19 July 2023 (242 km, SSE, 20y 0m 24d).

Razorbill

M85678. Adult ringed on Lunga, Treshnish Isles on 16 June 1999, found freshly dead (disease) Newtonhill, near Stonehaven, Aberdeenshire on 18 September 2023 (268 km, ENE, 24y 3m 2d).

M97710. Nestling ringed on Sanda Island, Kintyre on 25 June 1999, found dead at Fleshwick Bay, Isle of Man on 11 July 2023 (141 km, SSE, 24y 0m 16d).

K08098. Nestling ringed on Sanda Island, Kintyre on 25 June 2003, recaught by ringer at confidential site in Gwynedd on 9 June 2023 (283 km, S, 19y 11m 15d).

K00074. Nestling ringed on Sanda Island, Kintyre on 28 June 2009 found freshly dead at Cresswell, Northumberland on 7 June 2023 (255 km, E, 13y 11m 10d).

Puffin

EW18290. Adult ringed on Lunga, Treshnish Isles, Mull on 21 June 2008, recaught there on 29 June 2023 (0 km, 15y 0m 8d).

EL52921. Adult ringed on Lunga, Treshnish Isles, Mull on 28 June 2006, found long dead (oiled) at Playa de Campiechos, Canelmar, Valdes, Spain on 19 February 2023 (1,437km, S, 16y 7m 22d).

Barn Owl

GR20718. Nestling female ringed at Ballochgair, Kintyre on 22 July 2023, caught by ringer at Billeaford Hall, Suffolk on 15 June 2023 (592 km, SE, 9y 10m 24d).

GY23605. Nestling ringed at Largiebaan, Kintyre on 22 Jun 2020, hit by car at Calvine,

Blair Atholl on 5 January 2023 (191 km, NE, 2y 6m 14d).

GC84765. Nestling ringed in Glendaruel Forest, Strachur on 18 September 2020 caught by ringer at Weensmuir, Borders on 16 April 2023 (172 km, ESE, 2y 6m 29d).

Tawny Owl

GN19966. Nestling ringed at Corlarach Forest, Dunoon on 23 April 2006, found drowned under wire netting at Cluniter Farm, Innellan on 7 February, 2023 (3 km, 16y 9m 15d).

GR35196. Nestling (female) ringed at Loch Eck, Dunoon on 28 May 2012, recaught by ringer at Ardentinny on 3 May 2023 (6 km, SE, 10y 11m 5d).

Peregrine

GV84781. Nestling ringed at Loch Eck, Dunoon on 12 June 2021, found freshly dead at Cranslagmory (Argyll & Bute) on 17 April 2023 (27 km, SSW, 1y 10m 5d).

GV85912. Nestling ringed at Corlarach Forest, Dunoon on 25 May 2023, found freshly dead (natural causes) at Parklea, Port Glasgow on 6 August 2023 (22 km, E, 0y 2m 12d).

Chough

Y/W B. Nestling colour-ringed at Ardnave, Islay in May 2023, resighted at the Bay at the Back of the Ocean, Iona on 14 & 15 October 2023 (15 km, N)

EL71589. Nestling colour-ringed at Balerominmore, Colonsay on 16 May 2011, resighted on Oronsay, Colonsay on 19 December 2023 (3 km, 12y 7m 3d).

Hooded Crow

FJ18728. Nesting colour-ringed on Oronsay, Colonsay on 17 June 2016, resighted there on 13 December 2023 (3 km, 6y 5m 26d).

Blue Tit

X616870. First-year bird ringed at Lagganbeg, Kilninver on 26 November 2016, recaught there in 18 December 2023 (0 km, 7y 0m 22d).

Great Tit

ANE9974. First-year bird ringed at Chad valley, West Midlands on 28 November 2019, recaught by ringer at Calliburn Corner, Kintyre on 15 October 2023 (411 km, NNW, 3y 10m 17d).

Long-tailed Tit

KJJ918. Fully-grown bird ringed at Glen Euchar on 4 January 2020, recaught there on 23 February 2023 (0 km, 3y 1m 18d).

Willow Warbler

PCC037. First-year male ringed at Calliburn Corner, Kintyre on 9 July 2023, recaught by ringer at Hollowcombe Farm, Ermington, Devon on 17 August 2023 (580 km, SSE, 0y 1m 8d).

LDE971. Adult ringed on the Calf of Man, Isle of Man on 31 July 2022, found freshly dead (hit glass) on 12 May 2023 at West Loch Tarbert on 12 May 2023 (203 km, N, 0y 9m 11d).

Sedge Warbler

FRP9880540. First-year bird ringed at Mars-Ouest, Sant-Philbery-de-Grand-Lieu, France on 20 August 2022, recaught by ringer at Heanish, Tiree on 7 May 2022 (1,099 km, NNW, 0y 8m 17d).

L974731. Adult ringed at Aros Moss, Campbeltown on 23 May 2019, recaught there on 9 May 2023 (0 km, 3y 11m 16d).

Starling

LL82931. First-year female colour-ringed at Montrose, Angus on 22 July 2019, resighted at Oban on 13 April 2023 (187 km, W, 3y 8m 22d).

Blackbird

LL74421. Adult female ringed on the Isle of May on 21 October 2022, found freshly dead in Ardrishaig on 8 March 2023 (180 km, W, 0y 4m 15d).

Robin

AKJ4204. First-year bird ringed at Glen Euchar on 24 February 2020, recaught there on 18 December 2023 (0 km, 3y 9m 24d).

Lesser Redpoll

AAV1943. Female ringed at Calliburn Corner, Kintyre on 19 April 2022, recaught by ringer at Retford, Nottinghamshire on 11 March 2023 (386 km, SE, 0y 10m 20d).

L974769. Adult male ringed at Aros Moss, Campbeltown on 4 June 2020, recaught there on 14 June 2022, and then recaught by ringer at Corbridge Common, Northumberland on 2 April 2023 (238 km, ESE, 2y 9m 29d).

Goldfinch

AYK5934. Fully-grown bird ringed at Kilmartin on 14 April 2022, caught by ringer at Edinbane, Skye, Highland on 13 April 2023 (160 km, NNW, 0y 11m 30d).

FRP9251148. Frst-year male ringed at L'eglise, Bournonville, France, found freshly dead (hit glass) at Fionnphort, Mull on 22 April 2024 (826 km, NW, 0y 1m 25d).

Siskin

AYK5807. First-year male ringed at Kilmartin on 5 April 2022, found dead (hit glass) at Ford on 2 March 2023 (2 km, 0y 10m 25d).

Reference

Robinson, R.A., Leech, D.I. & Clark, J.A. (2024) The Online Demography Report: Bird ringing and nest recording in Britain & Ireland in 2023. BTO, Thetford (http://www.bto.org/ringing-report, created on 4-September-2024)

David Jardine

Abstracts of talks from the Autumn Meeting of the ABC on 2 November 2024, held at the Inveraray Inn Inveraray

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

Introduction

Nigel Scriven welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave a brief introduction to the day's events. This was the first meeting at the Inveraray Inn for quite a while. Fifty folk (including speakers) attended the meeting. Nigel gave a brief account of recent bird sightings. Of particular note have been the sightings of increasing numbers of Little Egrets and some Great Egrets. In addition, this has been one of the best years on record for observing the larger shearwaters off our west coast, including unprecedented numbers of Great (see cover photo) and Sooty Shearwaters.

Then onto the talks for the day!

Waterlife recovery: Mink-free Britain

by Vince Lea, Countryside Regeneration Trust (summary Alistair McGregor)

Dr Vince Lea is passionate about wildlife and conservation. He has been involved with numerous projects all over the UK and is now head of wildlife monitoring with the Countryside Restoration Trust in Cambridgeshire, England. One of the projects that he has pioneered was the American Mink eradication project in the Cambridgeshire/East Anglia area. He explained how he went about this. In 2010 the project started off by identifying areas where Mink had been seen, and also areas where they were absent. In 2014 the team started trialling smart traps (live-catch cage-traps fitted with a trip switch that send a message (SMS) to a designated mobile number). These alert the operator when an animal has been caught. Such traps are covered by numerous laws and guidelines that must be adhered to. The laws include the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Acts 2006 and the BASC Trapping Pest Mammals code of practice.

Mink had been brought over from America in the 1920s to be farmed for their fur, but escapees soon became established, and the first breeding was noted in the 1950s. By the 1960s Mink were widespread in the UK, and a mass release of Mink from farms by animal rights activists only added to the problem. Dr Lea highlighted some of the problems that Mink have caused. Comparing Water Vole surveys done in 89/90 and then again in 96/98 showed there had been a massive decline of Water Vole populations, and in some areas they had completely disappeared.

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

Female Mink are much smaller than males and can negotiate Water Vole burrows and kill not only the adult voles but any young in the nest. Fortunately, Mink are highly inquisitive and readily enter traps. The survey work used to monitor Mink included clay traps (floating rafts with clay pads from which footprints could be identified) and as technology improved, camera traps too. Also, a dedicated group known as the 'Mink Police' checked the camera traps and clay rafts and recorded the Mink sightings of other river users, such as fishermen and walkers. Each of these sightings was plotted on a map in a database. As the trapping and survey work progressed, it was found that Water Voles recovery was quick (within a couple of years) after mink removal. Following this a few groups joined together and formulated a plan for the way forward, starting with defining trapping areas and setting up buffer zones. This was a success and the group received further funds for an extension of the project. As the project grew, more land owners were contacted for permission to trap on their land. Data from before and after trapping demonstrated that this approach worked. All Mink trapped were given a unique code number and DNA samples were taken. Mink DNA differed between areas and was used to determine movements and to create buffer zones. The project was a great success and in 2024 no breeding mink were present.

Dr Vince Lea has consulted on a number of Mink eradication projects in Scotland, and has helped to set up projects in Tayside and Argyll. It is estimated that in Argyll 500+ traps would be needed, with some permanent staff and lot of volunteers. It would be great to see a Mink-free Argyll, and the benefits for our wildlife would be immense. This is just a brief outline of Dr Vince Lea's talk, but for further information have a look at the Waterlife Recovery Trust website:
www.waterliferecoverytrust.org.uk/
I would like to thank Dr Lea for his excellent talk (for a full account of this work, see pages 13-17).

Saving Scotland's Choughs *by Dave Parish, NatureScot* (summary Steve Petty)

The Red-billed Chough is a cliff-nesting bird in Scotland, where most of the population are to be found on Islay. Choughs will also breed in disused farmsteads, and some buildings have been erected specifically for Choughs. However, the Scottish Chough population is declining, unlike most populations elsewhere in the UK and Ireland. The English population is increasing due to colonisation and translocation of birds to new areas. The Irish and Welsh populations are doing well and the Irish population is high and stable. Since the 1980s there have

been many studies of Choughs on Islay to try and determine why the population is declining. Many of the birds have been colour ringed. Breeding success, as measured by the number of chicks fledged per breeding pair, has fluctuated over time, but it has shown no consistent downward or upward trend, and the same trend has been found with adult survival. In contrast, first-year survival has declined over time, and this is the main reason for the population decline. Most of this mortality occurs soon after the chicks fledge, suggesting that food shortage may be the problem. Recently fledged chicks feed largely on invertebrates, many of which are found in either grasslands grazed by cattle (e.g. craneflies) or in cow dung (dung beetles etc.). The abundance of larvae found in cattle dug are greatly reduced when cattle are treated with an antiparasitic drug (Ivermectin). Recently, supplemental feeding has been shown to increase first-year survival. The supplements comprise mealworms, fat and oatmeal, and aim to provide around 15% of daily requirements. Other problems (blindness, increased susceptibility to disease etc.) appear to be linked to a reducing genetic diversity, a problem often seen in small isolated populations. Lately, a modelling exercise has indicated that even with improved habitat management and supplementary feeding, the population may still be destined become extinct. However, this study suggests this trend could be reversed by releasing Choughs from elsewhere in the UK on Islay (to increase genetic diversity within the population), combined with the correct habitat management. Currently, a lot of work is going on to improve the grassland habitats for Choughs on Islay, as at present Choughs only use eight or nine key foraging sites.

The potential of PAM: Passive acoustic monitoring as a tool for monitoring birds and other taxa *by Mark Wilson, British Trust for Ornithology (BTO)* (summary Malcolm Chattwood)

The geographical coverage of standardised bird surveys generally reflects the availability of skilled surveyors and Mark and his colleagues at the BTO have undertaken work that is intended to address issues which are particularly problematic in upland and rural areas. BTO has highlighted the difficulties of providing trends for species in those areas that hold a limited number of Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) squares affected by such factors as human population density, elevation, rugged terrain and coverage of conifer plantations. Mark described the BTO project to explore the potential for Passive Acoustic Monitoring (PAM)

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

techniques to increase the amount of useful data from such areas. Thirty acoustic monitors were offered to BBS surveyors for the 2023 season and BTO was overwhelmed by the enthusiastic response. Thirty sites were selected, including some in the Argyll recording area, and Song Meter Micros were deployed to record for one minute every 15 minutes. The resultant 2077 hours of recording and 300GB of data demanded that automated classification was part of the process using Cornell's BirdNet classifier to detect and identify bird songs and calls.

BirdNet identified over 750,000 detections from 196 species. However, it was necessary to verify these results by means of a skilled surveyor manually checking over 10,000 randomly selected three-second clips to determine Recall (the percentage of calls that were found by both surveyor and BirdNet) and Precision (which tells us what percentage of detections made by BirdNet were correct). Performance varied quite a lot between species as described by Mark, but in general, precision was quite high (around 80% for all species) but recall was quite low, with BirdNet missing about three in four calls detected by the human. A complex filtering exercise was undertaken to exclude those species that don't breed in a particular BBS square and for which the verification work suggested the detections were incorrect. Further assessment was also carried out on data and observations from the same 200m sector in which the recorders were placed. This approach worked well for common species such as Willow Warbler, but less well for less common species where sample numbers were very small.

In his excellent presentation, Mark highlighted some of the advantages of PAM including the deployment of recorders by unskilled volunteers and monitoring of nocturnal or infrequently detected species. Conversely, the study identified a number of issues that would be regarded as disadvantages compared to conventional survey methods. These included the monitoring of species generally recognised by sight rather than call, the relatively small sample area covered by PAM rather than BBS transects, and the difficulty of determining abundance.

The PAM technique has been used for other species and in different countries. This recent study has demonstrated that much of the spatial variation in traditional monitoring data between BBS squares is reflected in the outputs of acoustic monitoring. Improvement of classifier performance and interpretation of output are both seen as important to ensuring that levels of precision and recall are robust and repeatable.

To properly understand the potential of acoustic monitoring to inform us about changes in bird populations over time and how this compares with traditional monitoring, acoustic monitoring datasets spanning a number of years will need to be built up. Based on the experience of this early work it appears that the BTO won't be short of willing volunteers to help.

The club's conservation plan: where do we go from here? What are the options? *By Nigel Scriven*

For a full account of this talk, see page 17

Results of the 2023 Hen Harrier survey *by Leah Kelly, RSPB* (summary Steve Petty)

The aims of the survey were: to estimate the current size of the population of breeding Hen Harriers, to calculate population changes since the last survey in 2016 (and earlier surveys go-

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Penelope Whitehorn ©David Palmar

ing back to 2004), and to assess broad habitat use in 2023 compared with 2016. In 2023, a complete survey was undertaken in England, Northern Ireland, Wales and Orkney of all 10km^2 within the known breeding range of Hen Harriers, while in Scotland the survey was restricted to a sample of 10km^2 within the known breeding range.

In Scotland, survey squares were selected in equal densities within five geographical areas; East Highlands, Hebrides, North Highlands, Southern Uplands and West Highlands. Within these squares all suitable breeding habitat was covered. The surveyors included members from Raptor Study Groups, RSPB staff and research assistants, staff from other conservation organisations and other volunteers. When Hen Harriers were located within the sample squares, breeding was classified as proven, possible or probable, based on certain criteria. The number of 10km^2 covered in the survey included 372 in Scotland, 120 in England, 87 in Northern Ireland, 55 in Wales and 10 in the Isle of Man. The survey estimated there were 691 (593-802) territorial pairs in the UK and Isle of Man in 2023. Most of these were in Scotland with 529 (431-640) territorial pairs. Since previous surveys the Scottish populations had declined in the West Highlands and Southern Scotland, but had increased in the Hebrides, North Scotland and the East Highlands. While Hen Harriers had increased on most of the habitats surveys, there had been a significant decline on managed grouse moors since the earlier Hen Harrier surveys. Based on the availability of suitable habitat, the current UK Hen Harrier population is well below the potential population of 2514-2653 pairs (1467-1897 in Scotland). Overall, there has been a 14% decline in the population of Hen Harriers since the 2004 survey. The results of the survey will be published soon in *Bird Study*.

Taynish Estate rewilding *by Penelope Whitehorn*

BTO update *by Nigel Scriven*

For a full account of this talk, see pages 10-11

Summary

Having lunch at the hotel gave everyone the opportunity to chat with friends. Lunch was followed by the AGM which was completed promptly. Most of the existing officials and committee of the club were re-elected for another year, apart from: Peter and Dorothy Hogbin who stood down as Treasurer and Membership Secretary respectively. David and Rachel Harris were elected as the new Treasurer and Membership Secretary respectively, and Alun ap Rhisiart stood down as Secretary, and has yet to be replaced.

Many thanks are due to Nigel Scriven and David Jardine for putting together a really excellent programme, and to the speakers for some very interesting presentations. Also, thanks are due to all members who attended the meeting, and to those who brought raffle prizes, and to David Palmar who provided photographs of the meeting, which have been used in this account. We hope to see you at the spring meeting in Dunoon on Saturday 8 March 2025.

Contributions for the March *Eider* should be sent to the editor before the 20 February 2025

Officials and Committee of the Argyll Bird Club (2024-2025)

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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, 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).