

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

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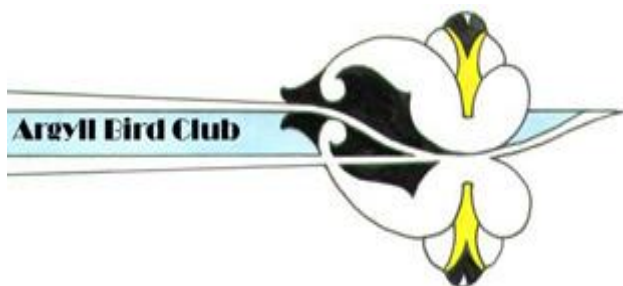
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The Eider



A Sedge Warbler at Toward (Cowal) on 13 May ©Joanna Gilpin

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Editorial

The club's spring meeting in Dunoon was a great success—see an account of the talks on pages 14-19—and the venue was excellent. We've struggled for a while to find somewhere suitable for our meetings in Dunoon, but that problem is now solved. However, we are missing having our autumn meetings at the Cairnbaan Hotel, which is now closed and up for sale. This autumn we are holding our meeting at the Inveraray Inn (see next page). More details about that meeting will appear in the September *Eider*, and, in due course, on the club's website.

Since the last *Eider* there have been three well attended field trips; to Holy Loch and Benmore Gardens, the southern tip of Kintyre and the Sound of Gigha. Accounts of all three are included in this *Eider* (pages 4-8). Details of another four new field trips are given on the next page. We do tend to go to a limited range of sites for our trips, so if anyone has ideas for new locations please contact anyone on the committee. It's a long while since we've strayed outside Argyll for a field trip—so any thoughts?

After a cold wet start, spring finally arrived and so did our summer migrants, or at least most of them. We still have a lack of Swallows around Ardentinny. On a more positive note, many tree species have flowered well. The most notable was Sitka Spruce, which produced impressive clouds of yellow pollen. The female flowers are now developing quickly and should produce a bumper crop of cones from autumn onwards. This will provide a bonanza for birds, mammals and other species that eat conifer seed. Many broadleaved trees also produced lots of flowers that will provide additional food sources throughout the latter part of this year.

The deadline for contributions to the September *Eider* is 20 August, so please consider sending something in. Thank you.

Acknowledgements

Very many thanks to the following for their contributions to this issue—Malcolm Chattwood, Jim Dickson, Neil Hammatt, Peter & Dorothy Hogbin (photocopying & dispatching the newsletter), Gordon Holm, David Jardine, the late Eddie Maguire, Alistair McGregor, David Palmer, Linda Petty (proof reading), Nigel Scriven and the late Margaret Staley.

Club News

FIELD TRIPS 2024

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 take 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 22 June. Sanda. This will be a day trip to Sanda using Mull of Kintyre Sea Adventures (www.mokseadventures.co.uk), skippered by Haydn Chambers and led by Nigel Scriven. Transport is by a fast RIB (photo below). Places are limited to 12, so early booking is advised. Additionally, if we fail to get enough takers, the cost becomes uneconomic as the day charter cost will be split between participants. The cost will be £65 each if we fill the boat, £70 if there are eleven, £75 if we have ten, £84 if we have nine. If we have eight or less the cost increases even more, so becomes somewhat expensive, so the trip may not run. We will meet on the pier at the pontoon gateway, Campbeltown at 09.00hrs, returning around 17.00hrs. The last trip two years ago was full, but had to be cancelled because of adverse weather. Even in fairly smooth conditions there is the possibility of getting wet on the crossing, so good waterproof jackets and trousers are strongly recommended. Lifejackets will be worn and will be provided. We will walk on rough ground at times, so stout footwear is advised. Bring a packed lunch and a drink. We will take a route around the coast and across the middle. It is a peak time for breeding seabirds and the Sanda list includes Kittiwake, Common Gull, Her-



ring Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Black Guillemot, Common Guillemot, Razorbill, Puffin, Fulmar, Shag, Cormorant, Manx Shearwater and Storm Petrel. There may be opportunities to observe licensed bird ringing. Booking is essential, so contact Nigel (mobile phone 07901 636353, e-mail njscriven@gmail.com).

Saturday 29 June 2024. Toward and south Loch Striven. Led by Alistair McGregor (e-mail alistairmcgregor16@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.

There is no field trip in July.

Saturday 31 August. Outing to Lismore. In a change to the normal visit to the northern end of Lismore, this walking outing (of 5-6km on paths, tracks and roads) will take the 11.00hrs ferry from Oban, returning on the afternoon ferry. Outdoor footwear and clothing required. Please let David Jardine (dcjardine@btinternet.com) know if you wish to attend so that he can advise about fuller details.

Saturday 28 September. An outing to Bute led by Alistair McGregor (mobile phone 07754 524240, e-mail alistairmcgregor16@outlook.com). Please let Alistair know if you would like to go on this trip, to check that places are available. Meet Alistair at the Colintraive Ferry at 10.00hrs. We aim to share cars to take the minimum number over on the 10.30hrs ferry. The trip will include several short walks on level ground.

INDOOR MEETINGS 2024-2025

Autumn Meeting & AGM 2024. Saturday 2 November. The meeting will be held at the Inveraray Inn, Inveraray (phone 01499 302466). Further information will be included in the September issue of the *Eider*.

Spring Meeting 2025. Saturday 8 March. The venue has not yet been decided.

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

TREASURER AND MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Our treasurer (Peter Hogbin) and membership secretary (Dorothy Hogbin) have indicated that they wish to retire at the next AGM. So, we are looking for replacements for both posts. These posts would ideally suit a couple. For anyone who is comfortable with a computer and with on-line banking, they would have no difficulty in taking up the role of treasurer. Likewise the membership secretary requires someone with basic organisational and computing skills. Peter and Dorothy (contact details on back page) are willing to discuss the posts more fully with any interested members.

FUNDING FOR BIRD CONSERVATION PROJECTS IN ARGYLL

The ABC is willing to fund or part-fund worthwhile bird conservation projects in Argyll. For example, help was given towards the costs of field work for the recent Seabird Monitoring Programme (seabird counts 2015-2019). The club has also helped to fund the provision of nest boxes for Grey Wagtails and Dippers in Kintyre (see article in the June 2021 *Eider*, page 12).

The club has also 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).

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

Applications for funding other projects should be submitted to the secretary (contact details on the back page).

ARGYLL BIRD REPORT 35 (2023)

The latest *Argyll Bird Report* has recently been published as a PDF file. ABC members have been informed about how to download their copies. Congratulations to Jim Dickson, David Jardine and Malcolm Chattwood for producing such a superb report. It gets better and bigger every year!

ABC field trip to Holy Loch and Benmore on 24 February 2024



Birdwatching in the Broxwood Hide ©Alistair McGregor

The morning's weather looked promising, so I headed out to the meeting point at Broxwood Car Park, at the head of the Holy Loch. The tide was rising, and I had a quick look over the mud flats that were still visible. I spotted the usual waders, Curlews, Redshanks and Oyster Catchers and numerous ducks including Wigeon, Mallard, and Teal, all drifting closer to the hide on the rising tide.

By 10.00hrs all the members that had contacted me had arrived. I gave a short safety briefing. Most folk were already in bird-watching mode and scanning the tide line and foreshore. I had borrowed Steve Petty's telescope and spotted a small group of Dunlin amongst the Curlews and

Redshanks.

We all headed down the short path to the bird hide (photo above), on the way seeing Chaffinch and Goldfinch moving about in the tree canopy.

From the hide we saw numerous gulls. I was now missing Jim Dickson and his expertise on the said species, but we did manage to identify them all—Great Black-backed, Herring, Common and Black-headed—which were mostly adults, but some sub-adults were also present in their varied plumages.

A couple of Little Egrets made a fleeting appearance as they moved in and out of the gullies that led out into the marsh area. Beyond the



Seen from the Broxwood Hide. Male Teal (above ©Steve Petty) and two Little Egrets (below ©Alistair McGregor)

marsh and in the sheep-grazing fields were more gulls and Canada Geese.

I had a good look at the Curlew flock now the tide was in, but didn't spot anything different other than Redshanks and Oystercatchers. I have seen Bar-tailed Godwit, Knot and Greenshank in this area on past birding outings and webs counts.

I turned the scope towards the Heronry near Kilmun Church hoping to see a Little Egret nest prospecting, but not today! I did pick out three Grey Herons in the trees near where they nest.

Neil Hammatt offered to take some of the group on a short, guided walk around the wooded area of the reserve. A few went with him and learned about the work we have been doing here and the research and field studies that Neil has initiated.

Around the hide were numerous small birds attracted to the feeders that are looked after by two Cowal-based ABC members, David Gilmore, and Andrew MacFarlane. So a great big thank you to both of them for their hard work and dedication in not only replenishing the feeders, but also supplying most of the bird food. The small birds we saw included Dunnock, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch and Robin, plus Blue, Coal, Great and Long-tailed Tits.

After a short discussion we decided to go round to the Kilmun side of the Holy Loch, to a vantage point that I

have used for the webs counts, near the doctor's surgery. From here you can scan over the mouth of the River Eachaig, the rough grassland and mud flats. We spotted a single Greenshank and several Little Grebes and Goldeneyes all around the mouth of the river.

Due to the good weather we decided to go to Benmore Gardens, after a brief spot of lunch in the car park. I was hoping we would see Dipper and Grey Wagtail on the river as we crossed the bridge to the garden entrance, but the wee rascals didn't make an appearance.

As we walked to the hide close to the entrance we saw Red Squirrels running about, and from inside the hide we saw Coal, Blue and Great Tits feeding, with a brief appearance of a Nuthatch. We decided to walk by the pond and the formal gardens, near where I grew up. I explained the changes I have seen over the years, there is no longer the wonderful flower beds that were once maintained there.

We did a circular walk round the gardens, after which I thought that was us finished, when someone spotted the Dipper close to the bridge, which made a great wee ending to the day.

I would like to thank all that come out on the day with special thanks to Steve Petty and Neil Hammatt for their support on the day.

Species list. Canada Goose, Little Grebe, Mallard, Wigeon, Teal, Goldeneye, Oystercatcher, Redshank, Greenshank, Curlew, Dunlin, Common Gull, Black-headed Gull, Herring Gull, Wood Pigeon, Little Egret, Heron, Rook, Carrion Crow, Hooded Crow, Magpie, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Tree Creeper, Nuthatch, Wren, Dipper, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Starling, Robin, Dunnock, Pied Wagtail, Grey Wagtail, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Siskin, House Sparrow (total 42 species).

Alistair McGregor



Nuthatch in Benmore ©Alistair McGregor

ABC field trip to Carskey Bay & Dunaverty on 30 March 2024



The group at Carskey Bay ©David Jardine

This was a new location for a field trip of the Argyll Bird Club at the southernmost point of the Kintyre peninsula. It was chosen for the location of the March outing in the hope that it would bring some spring sunshine—we were not disappointed, with clothing being adjusted before we left the car park at Keill Point after the safety briefing.

There was lots to see as we gathered—a few Fulmars glided over the cliffs above, which also held a pair of Raven and all too short views were gained of a Peregrine which played 'hard to get'. Out to sea it was great to see the constant stream of Gannets flying west. Over the course of the outing hundreds, if not thousands, were seen. On the water there was a single Red-throated Diver and a few Razor-bills.

In addition to the possibility of some warm weather, the outing was chosen in the hope that we might see some spring migrants. We didn't have to wait long, with a nice male Wheatear sighted from 10m of crossing the road. Nearby there was a pair of Stonechats. There was a downside to the good weather as it meant that there were many dog-walkers on the beach, which was largely devoid of birds, so the group concentrated on the fields inland. They were not disappointed and spent time learning the finer points of identification of 'little brown jobs' in the form of Meadow Pipit, Skylark, a group of Linnets (just returned from their wintering quarters) and a single Twite with its unstreaked apricot chin and yellow beak.

A pool in the fields beyond the Breakerie Water held 13 Teal and a Buzzard was perch hunting from the fence posts. At the mouth of the burn there was a pair of Mute Swans and two Eider. A small number of Ringed Plov-

ers hid in the shingle at the end of the bay, but the small group of Oystercatchers had left earlier. Enjoying the sun and views of a Peacock butterfly the group made their way back to the car-park. After a brief toilet stop at Southend and car-sharing organised, we went down to Dunaverty for our picnic in the sun and out of the cooling SE wind. While there were few birds present an Otter (also having its lunch) entertained us offshore.

Walkers had also cleared the waders from Dunaverty Bay, so the group crossed the bridge over the Conieglen Water and had a look at Brunerican Bay, and in addition to a small number of Oystercatchers and Ringed Plovers, we found a small feeding group of Sanderling (photo below) and Turnstones. Inland, on a pool beyond the golf course, were good numbers of Common Gulls, which we were reliably informed by Rab Morton would be from the Sanda colony. Previously he had seen many with rings in the spring in this area. Also hidden amongst these and the Herring Gulls were a pair of Mallard and two Shelduck.

As we headed back to the cars Ann and Noel Hand



Sanderling ©David Jardine



Male Common Scoter ©David Jardine

found a nice male Common Scoter (photo opposite) feeding close inshore near to the lunch stop—a fitting end to an enjoyable field trip which allowed members from the Campbeltown area to connect with those from further north.

Species list. Mute Swan, Shelduck, Mallard, Teal, Eider, Common Scoter, Rock Dove, Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover, Turnstone, Sanderling, Common Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Herring Gull, Razor-bill, Red-throated Diver, Fulmar, Gannet, Cormorant, Shag, Buzzard, Peregrine, Jackdaw, Rook, Hooded Crow, Raven, Great Tit, Skylark, Wren, Starling, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Stonechat, Wheatear, House Sparrow, Dunnock, Pied Wagtail, Meadow Pipit, Rock Pipit, Twite, Linnet (total 40 species)

David Jardine

ABC field trip to the Sound of Gigha on 27 April 2024



©Nigel Scriven

Despite an uncertain looking forecast on previous days, the weather turned out to be excellent, with light winds and sunny intervals. While waiting for the group to assemble at the Rona-

chan layby, the first species were logged—Sandwich Tern, Whimbrel (photo on next page), Common Sandpiper, Oystercatcher, Chaffinch, Great Northern Diver (photo below), Common



Great Northern Diver, one of many seen during the day ©David Palmar www.photoscot.co.uk

Goldfinch ©David Palmar www.photoscot.co.uk



Gull, White Wagtail and Shag.

The party comprised Nigel Scriven, Rab Morton, Louise Rohan, Janet and David Palmar, and Bridget Baker. The six of us resolved to take two vehicles to the Gigha Ferry, catching the 11.00hrs boat over to the island. While waiting for the ferry at Tayinloan we added Sand Martin, Eider, House Sparrow, Linnet and more Great Northern Divers. Nothing new was seen on the crossing despite the ideal, calm conditions.

Upon landing we were met by a Hooded Crow, and Colin Cross, himself a new migrant to the island and a new club member, who has decided to base himself on Gigha when he is not out in Gambia running the Kartong Bird Observatory. While not having been a resident for long, his local knowledge proved to be invaluable in making the day so enjoyable. We turned left to head to the south pier, where we found Greylag Geese, Shelduck, Great Black-backed Gull, Willow Warbler, Lapwing, Mute Swan, Grey Heron, Buzzard and Goldfinch (photo above). Although already on the day list, we saw 22 Great Northern Divers for the island list, and spied a Hooded Crow on its nest.

Turning back north, we stopped at Colin's house in Ardminish for our picnic on his decking with a view over Ardminish Bay, basking in the sunshine. New species for the day were Blackcap, Wren, Eider,



Whimbrel ©David Palmar www.photoscot.co.uk

Dunnock, and Coal Tit. Colin also showed his passive recording rig set up in his garden shed, using a basic microphone and digital recorder. He has been using Birdnet from Cornell University to analyse his data, and has had a surprising range of birds migrating over during the night, including Red Kite at 20.55hrs on 7 May.

The north end of the island beckoned. At the end of the road we set up scopes and saw more of what we had seen already, but Raven, Wheatear, Blackbird, Pied Wagtail and a very fleeting Merlin through the telescope were new. We did also see or hear Willow Warbler, Greylag, more Great Northern Divers, Shag, Chaffinch, Common Sandpiper, Goldfinch, Whimbrel and Shelduck.

Returning south, at Kinerarach we found Stonechat, saw another Buzzard over Creag Bhan. Lapwing were displaying over a field at Tarbert Farm, and in the dip before Drumyeonmore Farm we found Chiffchaff. Near the farm itself there were Swallows, another Blackcap, and a Grasshopper Warbler. The run down to the ferry revealed nothing new to add to the list, but we had had an enjoyable day, blessed with great weather. Island species total 34. Day total 38.

Nigel Scriven



Jura from Ronachan Point, Kintyre ©David Palmar www.photoscot.co.uk

BTO update May 2024



Breeding Bird Survey at 30

With 30 years of data from BBS, provided by nearly 9,000 volunteers collecting 660,000 records, some notable changes are evident in the status of our breeding birds. Of the 75 species monitored by BBS in Scotland, 16 have decreased since 1995, and 23 species have increased.

The top six winners and losers are given in the table opposite

Losses	% loss (1995 – 2022)	Gains	% gain (1995 – 2022)
Green-finch	-71	Chiffchaff	+1,089
Kestrel	-67	Blackcap	+679
Lapwing	-61	Tree Sparrow	+450
Curlew	-60	Jay	+445
Swift	-60	Great Spotted Woodpecker	+440
Oyster-catcher	-37	Goldfinch	+238

Birds in Greenspaces

A new BTO partnership project with 'Fields in Trust' aims to record birds using local greenspaces, whether a park, playing field or cemetery in order to understand their importance for birds and to increase engagement with nature among local communities. Groups and organisations are invited to register their interest and to help spread the word. Groups can register now, and public registration will open later this year, with the survey starting in 2025. Fieldwork has already started in 2014 to trial the methodology

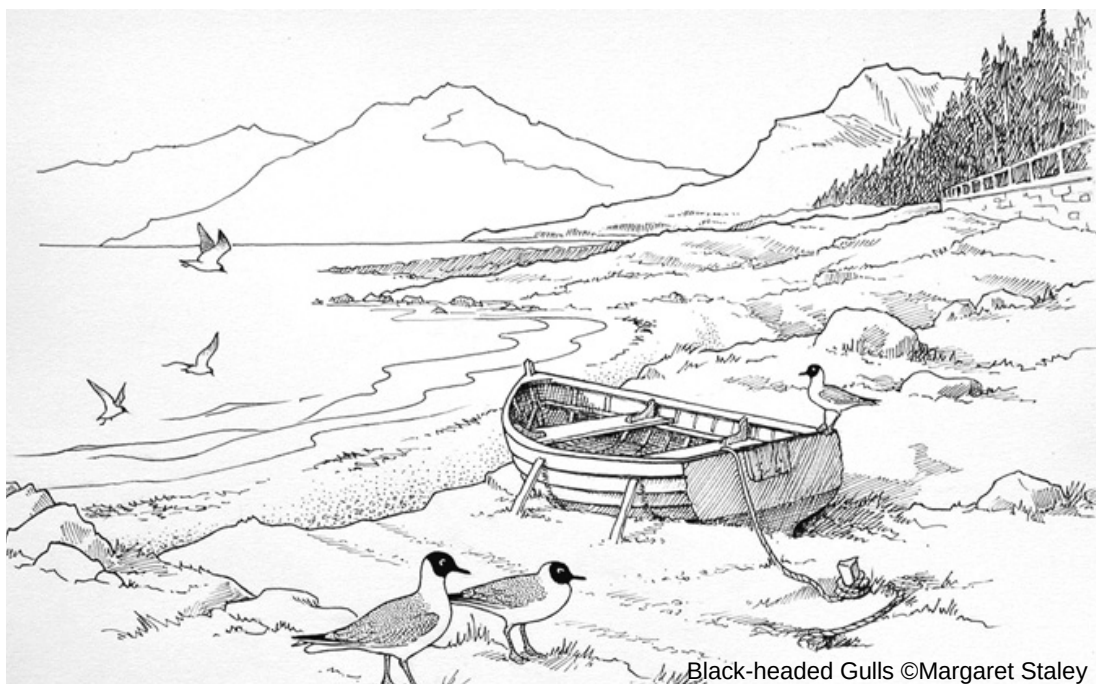
<https://fieldsintrust.org/about-us/news/new-partner-collaboration-with-the-british-trust-for-ornithology>

Winter Gull Survey

A total of 38% of sites were counted and submitted for January 2024, which was short of the 48% of sites allocated, largely as a result of the storms on the key date and the following weekend. If counter effort is repeated next winter then the coverage will be good.

The autumn survey date is now set for Sunday 29 September, the week after the WeBS core count. As with the January surveys there is one week's leeway before and after this key date where counts can be conducted. The survey portal will be open from August to October where counters can submit repeat counts. All sites will be open to counters for the autumn period meaning both sample and key sites are to be covered in September.

Nigel Scriven



Black-headed Gulls ©Margaret Staley

Recent literature on Argyll birds

This article is the next in a series of articles which appeared in the hard copy versions of the *Argyll Bird Report* and provides a brief bibliography, in alphabetical order by author name, of recent publications that relate to birds in Argyll (or are studies elsewhere on the ecology of birds of conservation importance in Argyll), with a short description where considered appropriate. It adds to previously published bibliographies and includes new material not listed in previous reports. It includes literature from 2021-24.

Atherton, D., Jardine, D., De Clerment, T. & Dickson, J. 2023. Yellow Warblers in Scotland during Autumn 2023. *Scottish Birds* 43: 374–377. Describes the first instance of the North American Yellow Warbler on Tiree in late September 2023.

Bowler, J. 2022. Yellow-bellied Flycatcher in Argyll: new to Britain and the Western Palearctic. *British Birds* 115: 169-169. Describes the first occurrence of this North American passerine on Tiree in September 2021, the first occurrence in the Western Palearctic.

Bowler, J. 2022. Arctic Warbler, Balinoe, Isle of Tiree, Argyll, 12 September 2021—first Argyll Record. *Scottish Birds* 42: 82-83. Description of the first occurrence of an Arctic Warbler in Argyll.

Bowler, J. 2022. Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Balephuil, Isle of Tiree, Argyll, 30 September 2021—first Argyll Record. *Scottish Birds* 42: 77-78. Description of the first occurrence of a first-winter male Rose-breasted Grosbeak in Argyll.

Brides, K., Thorstenson, S., Einarsson, O., Boiko, D., Peterson, A., Auhage, S.N.V., Mcelwaine, G., Degen, A., Laibek, B., Andersen-Harild, O., Helberg, M., Vangeluwe, D., Nienhus, J., Wieloch, M., Luigujoe, L., Morkanus, J., Bogomolova, Y., Bogdanovich, I., Petrek, S.W., Wood, K.A. & Rees, E.C. 2022. Interchange of individuals between two Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* populations, and its effect on population size estimates. *Ringling & Migration* 37: 1-12. Of 18,000 whooper Swans ringed in 17 European countries, 172 individuals (<1%) were later found outside the nominal range of their assigned biogeographical population. The proportion of swans from the Icelandic population which were subsequently found out of range did not differ from the Northwest Mainland European population and was unlikely to have impacted on population estimates.

Lila Buckingham; Maria I. Bogdanova; Jonathan A. Green; Ruth E. Dunn; Sarah Wanless; Sophie Bennett; Richard M. Bevan; Andrew Call; Michael Canham; Colin J. Corse; Michael P. Harris; Christopher J. Heward; David C. Jardine; Jim Lennon; David Parnaby; Chris P. F. Redfern; Liz Scott; Robert L. Swann; Robin M. Ward; Ewan D. Wes-

ton; Robert W. Furness; Francis Daunt (2022) Interspecific variation in non-breeding aggregation: a multi-colony tracking study of two sympatric seabirds. *Marine Ecology Progress Series* 684: 181-197 This study explored the wintering distribution of 290 Guillemots and 135 Razorbills from 11 colonies around northern UK (including Argyll) using geolocation-immersion loggers. The results provide helpful insights into the behaviour of these species and potential risks of proposed off-shore developments.

Lila Buckingham, Francis Daunt, Maria I. Bogdanova, Robert W. Furness, Sophie Bennett, James Duckworth, Ruth E. Dunn, Sarah Wanless, Michael P. Harris, David C. Jardine, Mark A. Newell, Robin M. Ward, Ewan D. Weston & Jonathan A. Green.(2023) Energetic synchrony throughout the non-breeding season in common guillemots from four colonies. *Journal of Avian Ecology* <https://doi.org/10.1111/jav.03018> This study compared the wintering distribution, energy expenditure and diet of four colonies of Guillemot, two on the west coast of Scotland and two on the east. West coast Guillemots foraged at a lower trophic level than those in the east, but energy expenditure was remarkably similar in all colonies, peaking in late February/early March.

Burnell, D., Perkins, A.J., Newton, S.F., Bolton, M., Tierney, T.D. & Dunn, T.E. 2023. Seabird Count: a census of breeding seabirds in Britain and Ireland (2015-2021). *Lynx Nature Books*. The book providing the definitive results of the latest seabird survey. While most of the counts in Argyll were conducted prior to the recent HPAI outbreak most species have declined locally, often in line with national trends. Totals are provided for Argyll & Bute (not just Argyll) and show the following changes (% since the 2000 Seabird survey, e=estimated): Fulmar -69, Manx Shearwater -55e, Storm Petrel +98, Cormorant 0, Shag -7, Arctic Skua -67, Great Skua +733, Black-headed Gull -30, Common Gull -41, Lesser Black-backed Gull -93, Herring Gull -80, Great Black-backed Gull -70, Kittiwake -47, Common Tern -60, Arctic Tern -17, Little Tern -46%, Guillemot -6, Razorbill -51%, Black Guillemot +12, Puffin +134. as well as detail on the survey methodology, the possible reasons for these declines are set out in this important book.

Chattwood, M., Dickson, J.M. & Jardine, D.C. 2022. Nuthatches in Argyll. *Scottish Birds* 42: 124-129. An historical review of Nuthatches in Argyll and the results of an Argyll Bird Club Survey in 2021 which found Nuthatches in 109 1-km squares and an estimated population of 130-150 pairs, which is expanding rapidly.

Clavijo Michelahgeli, J. A. & Sharp, C.S. 2021 Gannet choked by Lesser spotted Dogfish. *Scottish Birds* 41: 319-320. Description and photograph of a Gannet found dead on Arda-

Ianish Bay, Mull. This is only the second record of a Gannet eating this bottom dwelling fish. The other record was also of a bird which had choked to death.

Dewar, R. & Lawrence, S. 2023. The status of breeding Red-throated Divers *Gavia stellata* and Black-throated Divers *Gavia arctica* in Kintyre, Scotland, 2016-2020. *Bird Study* 70: 269-281 The results of post construction monitoring from an onshore wind-farm project in Kintyre. The populations on Kintyre were estimated to be 18-23 pairs of Red-throated Divers and 2-6 pairs of Black-throats. The Red-throated Divers appear to have lower productivity than the UK average and no Black-throated Divers bred successfully in Kintyre between 2016 and 2020. Predation and interspecific competition may be limiting breeding success. No diver collisions were recorded at the windfarm monitored.

Dickson, J.M. 2022. Dark-eyed Junco, Kildalton, Islay, 7 May 2022—first Argyll Record. *Scottish Birds* 42: 370-371. Description of the first occurrence of a Dark-eyed Junco, a 2CY male, in Argyll.

Dickson, J.M. 2022. Serin, Lephinstreath Bridge, Kintyre, 6 June 2022—first Argyll Record. *Scottish Birds* 42: 370-371. Description of the first occurrence of a Serin, a male, in Argyll.

Doyle, S., Cabot, D., Griffin, L., Kane, A., Colhoun, K., Redmond, C., Walsh, A. & McMahon, B.J. 2023. Home range of a long-distance migrant, the Greenland Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis*, throughout the annual cycle. *Bird Study* 70:37-46. The home range and foraging distance for Greenland Barnacle Geese were estimated from tracking data of 29 annual cycles from 18 individuals. The home range was approx. 14km² in winter, 9.5 km² in spring, 7 km² in the nesting period and 43 km² in the post-nesting period and 48 km² in autumn. Maximum (and core) foraging distances were approx. 7 (5.5) km in winter, 5 (3) km in spring, 3.5 (1) km in the nesting season, 15.5 (8.5) km in the post-nesting period and 32.5 (19.5) km in autumn.

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success and the prey consumed. Many of its food items were small, with larger items being brought to the surface before being consumed. Flatfish and crabs appear important prey items of solitary feeders but these may be a reflection of the food resources available.

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used the intertidal as the main source of food raised larger broods than those which foraged on terrestrial resources.

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It also assesses the impact of ongoing hybridization with the Feral Pigeon.

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Stoddart, A., On behalf of BBRC. 2023. From the Rarities Committee's files: The BBRC review of records of 'Little Shearwaters' in Britain. *British Birds* 116: 699-706. The record of a Little Shearwater at Frenchman's Rocks, Islay on 30 June 1976 was accepted by the review as a record of a Barolo Shearwater.

Summers, R.W., Lewis, M. & Hunter, S. 2023. What we don't know about birds in Scotland. *Scottish Birds* 43: 118-131. A review of knowledge gaps on birds in Scotland covering distribution and numbers, population dynamics, causes of population change, movements/migration, habitat and pressures with examples by species groups.

Thorarinsson, T.L., Merkel, B., Snaethorsson, A.O. & Kolbeinsson, Y. 2023. Wintering and migration strategies of Slavonian Grebes *Podiceps auratus* breeding in Iceland. *Bird Study* 70: 251-259. The use of GLS found that Slavonian Grebes breeding in Iceland moult on freshwater before migrating to the seas around the British Isles, including the west coast of Scotland, for the winter.

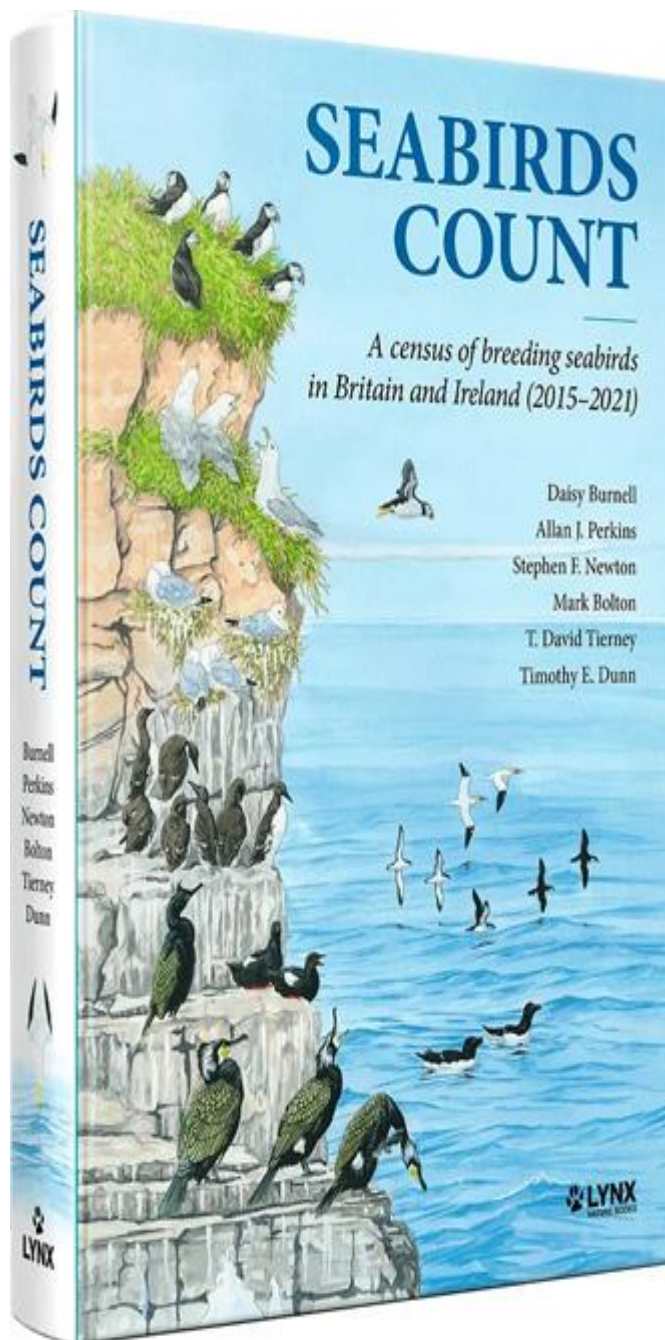
Ki, T.L.T., Pain, D.J., Gill, J.A. & Green, R.E. 2023. The relationship between Mute Swan *Cygnus olor* population trends in Great Britain and environmental change. *Bird Study* 70: 99-112. The increase in autumn sowing of crops is probably an additional contributory factor to the national ban on lead angling weights in influencing the large increase in Mute Swan numbers since the 1970s.

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David C Jardine



Book review



Seabirds Count—A census of breeding seabirds in Britain and Ireland (2015-2021). ISBN: 9788416728602 Lynx Editions, £44.99, Hardback only.

This is the book from the survey that took seven years of fieldwork to complete, testament to the massive task to know how many seabirds breed in the British Isles. Despite some early funding difficulties, a collaboration of a host of organisations, with additional funding from governments and renewable companies, came together to provide the answers, through the efforts of hundreds of surveyors, professional and amateur.

How they did it is set out in the Methods and Analysis chapter, which is essential reading to better understand the species accounts. To best make comparison with the Seabirds 2000 survey data, the methods should be the same wherever possible. However, methods have developed since then and so has equipment, so there have to be adjustments in how such data are interpreted. This was particularly so with Storm-petrel, Leach's Petrel, Manx Shearwater and urban nesting gulls.

The species accounts make up the most interesting part of the book and cover 25 species, plus a short section on rare species that have bred, or bred in hybrid pairs. Twenty-one of these species breed in Argyll (or have done recently), so very much of local interest to Argyll birders. Each species account has a painted portrait heading, with several excellent colour photographs, distribution tables, distribution pie charts plus the all-important maps showing distribution and changes. The text for each species has an introduction, census methods and coverage, status and trends, and a discussion followed by the international context.

After a short chapter on international importance comes a chapter on causes of population changes, which are many and varied, but include exploitation, persecution, fishing bycatch, collision with turbines, predation, diseases and natural toxins, food availability, development, pollution, nesting habitat availability and climate change.

For anyone with an interest in seabirds, this is an essential reference to dip into at regular intervals, marking the benchmark for the next 20 years until the next survey. You would never read it from cover to cover, but you would want it on one of your handier bookshelves.

Nigel Scriven

Abstracts of talks from the Spring Meeting of the ABC on 9 March 2024



The audience ©David Palmar

David Jardine welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave a brief introduction to the day's events. This was the first meeting in Dunoon for quite a while, and St Mun's Church Hall was a new venue, which proved to be excellent. Twenty-five members plus six speakers attended the meeting. Just prior to the meeting a PDF of the 2023 Argyll Bird Report had been sent to members. David Jardine, Jim Dickson and Malcolm Chattwood are to be congratulated on producing such a large (153 pages, and packed with many colour photos) and informative report. This is no mean feat, to produce a bird report just two months after the end of 2023. David then proceeded to summarise some recent bird sightings.

Then onto the talks for the day!

Holy Loch Nature Reserve in winter by Neil Hammatt (summary Neil Hammatt)

Winter can appear a barren time of year on the reserve. However, many bird species that do not visit the seed feeders, do survive in the reserve's woodland and on its beaches. Ecological processes ongoing through winter, and which ramp up with lengthening days, ensure a growing supply of food for when migrant birds, such as Meadow Pipits, return to the reserve to breed in spring.

In the more than thirty pools, photosynthesis continues throughout, and oxygen bubbles can be seen rising to the surface on sunny January days. Many fly species overwinter as larvae in the pools, often the fourth stage of aquatic food chains, emerging to swarm on warmer, sunny spring days. Meadow Pipits are ready to pounce!

On the beaches, seaweed piled up by winter tides are a great source of food for Kelp Flies and other species of fly and beetle. So, for

any bird on a winter beach, these insects, and washed-up seeds, are a quick, easy meal on shorter days where the priority is to survive long, often cold, nights.

In the woods, a wide range of species are busy recycling dead plant and fungal material. Apart from the obvious, such as other fungi, this community includes woodlice, slugs, beetles and many families of flies, particularly fungus gnats. A typical winter, woodland scene includes lots of bird species feeding on the ground in flocks, not only on fallen seeds, but also on this abundance of small invertebrates.



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

And if that's not enough, the reserve's mosses and lichens harbour their own community of fungi and animals such as millipedes, springtails and "moss" mites. This is great news for the reserve's Treecreepers and tits in particular.

Breeding divers in Kintyre—increasing our understanding of a species by Rafe Dewar, MacArthur Green (summary Steve Petty)

This work was undertaken in combination with the Coul Wind Farm development where planning permission was given in 2012. The project involved a Kintyre-wide monitoring plan for divers. During 2016-2020 all suitable water bodies were surveyed for divers, with their presence and productivity monitored. A total of 88 lochs were surveyed with repeat visits during the breeding season when the presence of other bird species was also recorded. Monthly carcass searches were also done around all the wind turbines. Diver breeding attempts were recorded on 24 lochs, mainly above 200m above sea level and in the northern half of the Kintyre peninsular. The average size of lochs occupied by breeding Red-throated Divers (RTD) was 4.2ha and smaller (1.4ha) for lochs where successful breeding occurred. This is consistent with other studies that show higher productivity on water bodies <1ha. In contrast, the average breeding loch size for Black-throated Divers (BTD) was 1.6ha, well below the size of lochs in other studies (>30ha). High rates of breeding failure in Kintyre led to RTD productivity per breeding pair being much lower than the national average (0.34 vs 0.57 fledged chicks). There were no successful breeding attempts by BTDs from three breeding attempts. There was no clear evidence that wind farms influenced the distribution of divers on

Kintyre, and no dead divers were recorded under turbines.

Penguins by Gordon Holm (summary Gordon Holm)

Penguins are an ancient group of birds with early ancestors dating from 55 million years ago. They are exclusively a southern hemisphere bird. The scientific name of the extinct Great Auk *Pinguinus impennis* led early sailors to the Antarctic to think similar-looking birds (penguins) were related.

There are three major groups of penguins. True Antarctic include the Emperor and King Penguins. The Emperor breeds on ice whilst the King is found concentrated on sub-Antarctic islands with a major population on South Georgia. These penguins lay one egg and it is then passed to the partner who incubates it on a special flap above his feet.

Small Antarctic penguins include, Gentoo, Chinstrap (photo on next page), Adele and Rockhopper. All of these lay eggs on bare rocks away from the snowline. Snow-free spaces may be restricted, so fighting and theft of stones for nests is common. The first areas to become free of snow are usually the tops of hills. These are the prime sites, with the penguins walking or climbing the long distance to their nests. The Rockhopper is found further north than the others and walks around like Dennis the Menace, daring any other bird to stop him.

In South Africa there is the Jackass Penguin, which is similar in habits to the Magellan Penguins of South America. They live in warmer climates, nest in burrows. And usually have two chicks. The

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



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

Chinstrap Penguins ©Gordon Holm



Galapagos Penguin is similar to the Magellan but is uniquely found at the equator. It is only possible for them to live there as there are cold upwelling currents ensuring the sea rarely is warmer than 16 degrees C.

The smallest penguin is the Little or Fairy Penguin. These are found around the coast of New Zealand and Australia. It feeds offshore during the day and small groups will simultaneously come ashore at sunset, quickly heading to their burrows

Species on the edge in Argyll and the Inner Hebrides by Lucy Atkinson, RSPB Scotland (summary David Jardine)

Species on the Edge is a new partnership project to help conserve some of the special species found in Scotland's coasts and islands. It has been set up in response to Scotland's biodiversity crisis by NatureScot, RSPB Scotland, Butterfly Conservation, Buglife, Plantlife, Am-

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



phibian & Reptile Conservation, Bat Conservation Trust and Bumblebee Conservation Trust with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Lucy gave an excellent overview of this multi-faceted project which is being delivered at over 40 sites throughout the west coast of Scotland, the majority of which are in Argyll. She first described the birds, which it was hoped would benefit from the project and then also widened the talk to other taxa being addressed by the partners. She explained how these taxa, many of which are specialists, had been chosen to help a far wider range of species through conservation of the habitat of the species included in the project.

Amongst the birds, one project is dedicated to waders, which are in decline in Scotland. Initial surveys have been carried out, particularly on Islay, away from the RSPB reserves so that advice can be provided to farmers about managing their land specifically for waders.

Another project is focussed on Chough, which now has fewer than 50 pairs in Scotland (all of which are in Argyll on Islay and Colonsay & Oronsay). One of the key threats identified is a decline in invertebrates that inhabit the dung of livestock. One of Species on the Edge's projects is research into dung and veterinary practices, particularly to test for resistance to the treatments, thus saving farmers money on ineffective treatments that are harmful to the environment.

The Corncrake is another species benefitting from Species on the Edge. Before the turn of the century Corncrakes recovered well, but more recently they have been in decline due to changes in agricultural incentives. It is hoped Species on the Edge will help reverse this and the early signs are that numbers are increasing again on some islands.

Argyll holds a significant proportion of Scotland's breeding population of Little Terns and it is hoped that better (recreation) management for this species will be aided by Species on the Edge. Greenland White-fronted Goose, the difficulties of which were described at the December 2022 meeting of the ABC by David Stroud, is also included in the Species on the Edge project.

Moving away from birds, Lucy described how Species on the Edge, through the Bat Conservation Trust, hoped to find out more about the distribution and numbers of the bats found in the Hebr-



Marsh Fritillary ©James Silvery

Short-necked Oil Beetle ©Jess Barratt



des and the west coast.

There are a series of entomological projects. One is centred on the rare species of burnet moths (mainly found on Mull) to ensure appropriate habitat management for their conservation. A similar approach was also being adopted for the Marsh Fritillary (photo on previous page), ensuring that the correct level of grazing is maintained for this butterfly, which has its UK stronghold in Argyll.

A particularly interesting project was to search for Short-necked Oil Beetles (affectionately abbreviated to 'SNOBs'—photo above). This large beetle is a parasite of the Northern Colletes Mining Bee, a rare bee whose distribution is largely confined to the Hebrides. Good progress is being made on this project, as SNOBs had previously only been found in Scotland on Coll and the Uists, but have now been found on Tiree, Islay and Barra.

The final project mentioned by Lucy, supported by a lovely video, is on the Medicinal Leech, the distribution of which is poorly known in Scotland, with the few reports coming from the west coast and the islands.

In finishing her talk Lucy described how to become involved and in particular she encouraged members to submit records of the project species (other than birds) via i-Record.

Developing watchpoints for iconic species, John Simpson (summary David Jardine)

John Simpson gave an excellent talk on the work that he and other members of the Clyde Branch of the Scottish Ornithologists' Club have been doing to help develop watch points to allow people to see some of our rarer and more iconic birds.

At the start of his talk John set out three key principles which underpinned the project; it must involve careful research into the species involved; it must not compromise the protection of the species and it should provide the opportunity for viewing of the birds being studied. These sound principles will be helpful to anybody who wishes to try to do something similar.

In addition to the guiding principles the project had clear aims and audiences:

- * For those who just love birdwatching and who want to promote it
- * For those who want to know a little more and get involved in fieldwork
- * For those who love wildlife photography and are prepared to support research and conservation

Having set the scene John then went on to describe a number of case studies.

Hen Harrier viewing during May and June—a partnership between the SOC, Scottish Raptor Study Groups (SMSG), Landmarc and the Defence Infrastructure Organisation at the Naval Base at Faslane and Coulport. Using contacts from his previous employment as chief of police for the naval base, John was able to set up viewing of Hen Harriers (photo below) during the breeding season. This was often on a short-term 'pop-up' basis when there was a favourable weather forecast, using social media. Visitors were able to see the fantastic sky-dancing display and even photograph them mating from a safe distance. Later in the season some were privileged to see a carefully managed ringing operation where some chicks were colour ringed at the nest, while others were quickly shown to visitors at a safe distance before being re-

Male Hen Harrier
©Eddie Maguire





turned to the nest. As a result of the closer 'connection' gained by participants some had become involved in helping with Hen Harrier roost surveys. The absolute 24-7 security (under armed guard) present within the naval base provided a unique opportunity to view this heavily persecuted species, something which would be difficult to find in the wider countryside.

Black Grouse viewing during March and April—a partnership between the SOC, Landmarc, and the Defence Infrastructure Organisation at the naval base at Faslane and Coulport. Earlier in the year the restricted access at the naval base had also provided the opportunity (again at relatively short notice) to allow groups and photographers to watch the wonderful lekking display of Black Grouse without fear of further disturbance by uncontrolled future access. These participants have become involved in wider survey work for this and other species.

Ardmore Point—a partnership project is being developed with the Clyde Ringing Group, SOC, the Wetland Bird Survey and Helensburgh RSPB. This open access area had been improved by providing new (but simple) facilities e.g. benches for watching waders from, along with public ringing events and the use of camera traps to investigate night-time use of the area by birds. Many more birds were found in areas where they were not normally seen. John also had ambitious plans to try to get 'live streaming' cameras from the MV Captayannis, the sugar boat wreck in the Clyde estuary, which is an important roost for many birds.

The Glasgow Peregrine Project between April & July—a partnership between SRSG, SOC, RSPB, University of Glasgow, Glasgow Natural History Society, Scottish Wildlife Trust and Friends of Glasgow's Local Nature Reserves. This project has grown with the arrival of urban Peregrines in Glasgow. Expert photography which showed that one of the birds was colour-ringed; Orange

L7 that had been ringed as a chick at Norwich Cathedral (Norfolk)! After initially being found on Glasgow Cathedral, birds were soon encouraged to nest on the tower at Glasgow University. It was not possible to install nest cameras in 2023, so on good days their presence was advertised on social media. Telescopes were set up and the public were invited see these great raptors all within a few minutes walk of a coffee on Byre's Road. During the past winter nest cams were installed at the nest on the University Tower, and can be watched on-line at www.birdsinclyde.scot/peregrines.

This was an inspiring talk, which showed how the enthusiasm and energy of John and his colleagues has brought viewing opportunities of these iconic species to the wider public. Behind the scenes it also demonstrated a determination to ensure that such work added to our scientific understanding of the species involved and a considerable degree of wisdom when choosing sites for public viewing, which did not put the species at risk from any disturbance.

Some Shetland Islands worth visiting, David Palmar (summary David Jardine)

As a closing talk David Palmar took us on a tour of some of the Shetland islands. In this multimedia talk we were treated to not just some of David's excellent photos (which can be viewed at www.photoscot.co.uk) but also some of the sounds of the special birds of these islands.

After hearing about the journey there (via Orkney) we landed in the early morning at Lerwick, but we were soon away from 'mainland' Shetland to Mousa, with its iron-age broch, in whose walls Storm Petrels breed. However, because of the risk of predation, this oceanic species only comes ashore under the cover of darkness—quite a challenge for the photographer. But it



was a challenge to which David rose, with a photograph of one in the semi-darkness accompanied by its mechanical churring call—evocative!

Next it was over to Bressay and Noss with their fantastic cliffs, caves and underwater life. These cliffs are the homes to Kittiwakes, Guillemot and Gannets in their thousands and David's use of sound recordings helped capture the cacophony associated with these magnificent places, but at least we were saved their aroma!

It was then north over to Yell where we were treated to Golden Plovers, their downy young and their plaintive calls, before catching the ferry to Fetlar and then Loch of Funzie, where there was a wonderful collection of waders—drumming Snipe, Dunlin, summer plumaged Black-tailed Godwit, seven-whistling Whimbrel and colourful Red-necked Phalaropes with their reversed sex roles (the males rear the chicks). Arctic Skuas were also there and Red-throated Divers with their strange display when they dance over the water giving stranger calls, leading to their Shetland name of 'rain geese'.

Finally we went to Unst, the most northerly inhabited island in Britain. Our first stop was at the Keen of Hamar National Nature Reserve – a large area of serpentine rock, known for its special plants which can survive the toxic metals found in the soil. Its speciality is Edmonston's Chickweed (or Shetland Mouse-ear *Cerastium nigrescens*), an endemic plant, named after the Shetland botanist who discovered it and found nowhere else in the world. Our final stop was at Hermaness, with its views of Bonxies (Great Skuas) and over to Muckle Flugga, the most northerly point in the British Isles.

Summary

Thanks are due to Nigel Scriven and David Jardine for putting together a really excellent meeting, and to the speakers for some very interesting presentations. Alistair, Catherine and Frauke did a super job arranging and serving the excellent lunch. Also, thanks are due to all members who attended the meeting, and to those who brought raffle prizes. We hope to see you at the autumn meeting.

Book review

The Larger Moths of Scotland by Roy Leverton & Mark Cubitt. Triphosa Publications. Hardback, 332 pages. ISBN 978-1-3999-7626-8. 2024. £45.

The book covers the 577 species of larger (macro) moths that had been recorded in Scotland up to 2022 (2023 for some rarer species). Each species account includes at least one photograph (most taken by the first author) a distribution/abundance map, a phenology chart and text that includes an introduction, distribution and habitat, flight periods and recording issues.

The data used in the book come from the Butterfly Conservation's National Moth Recording Scheme. As far as possible the authors have tried to correct some of the distribution errors that are inherent in such a large scheme, and which were included in the recently published *Atlas of Britain and Ireland's Larger Moths* (2019) (see review in March *Eider* 2019, page 8).

The effects of climate change are re-shaping the moth fauna of Scotland, as southern species extend their range north of the Border and northern species struggle to retain a foothold in Scotland. Overall, the picture is less depressing than in England, with 55 new species added to the Scottish list in the last 50 years while only seven species have been lost since records began. However, while this picture is encouraging, there is concern for some habitats, such as moorlands, and their associated species, which are declining.

This is a 'must' for anyone with an interest in moths in Scotland. The authors are to be congratulated on producing such a superb book, which they had to publish themselves, as no publishing firm would take it on!

Steve Petty

The Larger Moths of Scotland



Roy Leverton

Mark Cubitt

Contributions for the September *Eider* should be sent to the editor before the 20 August 2024

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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).