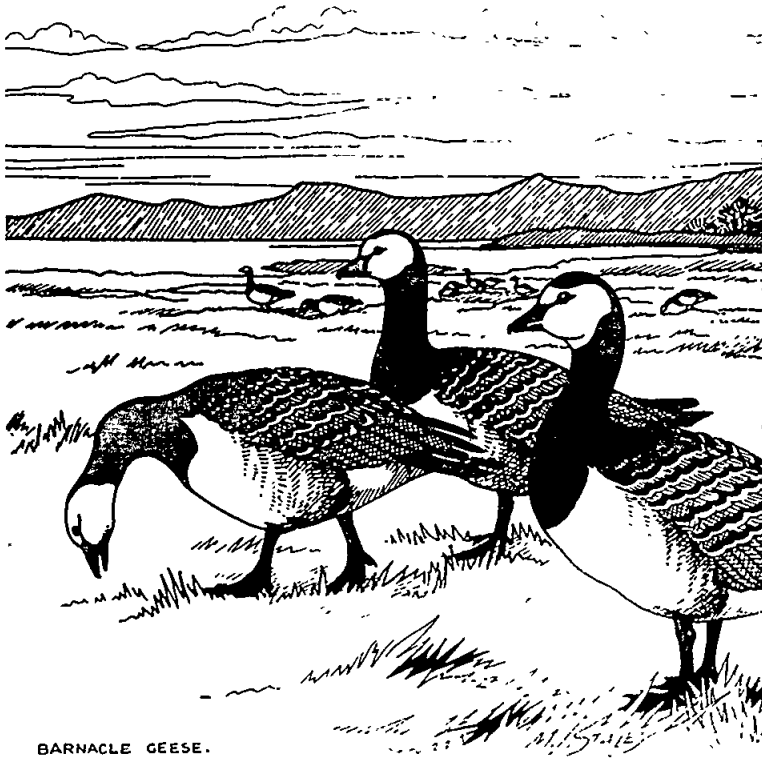

ARGYLL BIRD REPORT

with Systematic List for the year

1998



BARNACLE GESE.

Volume 15 (1999)

PUBLISHED BY THE
ARGYLL BIRD CLUB



Cover picture: Barnacle Geese
by Margaret Staley

**The Fifteenth
ARGYLL BIRD REPORT
with Systematic List for the year
1998**

Edited by
J.C.A. Craik

Assisted by
P.C. Daw

Systematic List by
P.C. Daw

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ABOUT THE ARGYLL BIRD CLUB

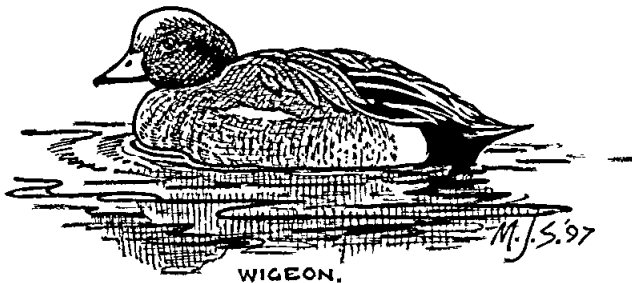
The Argyll Bird Club was formed in 1985. Its main purpose is to play an active part in the promotion of ornithology in Argyll. It is recognised by the Inland Revenue as a charity in Scotland.

The Club holds two one-day meetings each year, in spring and autumn. The venue of the spring meeting is rotated between different towns, including Dunoon, Oban, Lochgilphead and Tarbert. The autumn meeting and AGM are usually held in Inveraray or another conveniently central location.

The Club organises field trips for members. It also publishes the annual *Argyll Bird Report* and a quarterly members' newsletter, *The Eider*, which includes details of club activities, reports from meetings and field trips, and feature articles by members and others.

Each year the subscription entitles you to the *Argyll Bird Report*, four issues of *The Eider*, and free admission to the two annual meetings. There are four kinds of membership: current rates (at 1 October 1999) are: Ordinary £10; Junior (under 17) £3; Family £15; Corporate £25. Subscriptions (by cheque or standing order) are due on 1 January. Anyone joining after 1 October is covered until the end of the following year.

Further information can be obtained from the Membership Secretary: Mrs Pam Staley, 16 Glengilp, Ardrishaig, Argyll PA30 8HT.



Argyll Bird Club
Officials and Committee as at 1 November 1999

Chairman: Nigel Scriven, 2 Allt na Blathaich, Loch Eck, Dunoon PA23 8SG.

Secretary: Roger Broad, 6 Birch Road, Killearn, Glasgow G63 9SQ.

Treasurer: Prof. Bob Furness, The Cnoc, Tarbet, Loch Lomondside G83 7DG.

Membership Secretary: Mrs Pam Staley, 16 Glengilp, Ardrishaig PA30 8HT.

Committee: David Anderson, Roger Broad, Paul Daw, Helen Doherty, Arthur French, Prof. Bob Furness, Peter Kirk, Dr Steve Petty, Nigel Scriven, Bill Staley, David Wood.

Argyll Bird Records Committee: Dr Tristan ap Rheinallt, Roger Broad, Paul Daw, David Jardine, Dr Malcolm Ogilvie.

Editor of *Argyll Bird Report*: Dr Clive Craik, Scottish Association for Marine Science, P.O. Box 3, Oban PA34 4AD.

Editor of Newsletter (*The Eider*): Nigel Scriven, 2 Allt na Blathaich, Loch Eck, Dunoon PA23 8SG.

Other useful addresses

S.O.C. Recorder for Argyll: Paul Daw, Tigh-na-Tulloch, Tullochgorm, Minard, Inveraray PA32 8YQ.

Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) Organiser for Argyll: Dr Malcolm Ogilvie, Glencairn, Bruichladdich, Isle of Islay PA49 7UN.

B.T.O. Representatives for Argyll: *North Argyll including Mull, Coll and Tiree:* (Acting B.T.O. Rep.) Richard Evans, East Croft, Lochdon, Isle of Mull PA64 6AP. *Islay, Jura and Colonsay:* Dr Malcolm Ogilvie (address above).

R.S.P.B. Conservation Officer, Argyll & Bute: Roger Broad (address above).

Further copies of this report can be obtained from Bill Staley, 16 Glengilp, Ardrishaig PA30 8HT. Price £5 including postage. Most previous annual *Argyll Bird Reports* are also available at £4 including postage.

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Editorial

As usual, the Systematic List for the last calendar year is the longest and most informative article in this *Argyll Bird Report*, and we all owe a very large debt of gratitude to the County Recorder, Paul Daw, for his expertise and effort in compiling it. Please continue to send records to Paul, as requested in the introductory part of his report.

On behalf of the club, I would also like to thank those who have contributed the other articles and reports. In his new, carefully researched Checklist of the Birds of Argyll, Tristan ap Rheinallt points out that the last attempt at such a compilation was in 1892. Tristan's meticulous work identifies the fascinating changes that have occurred in the interim, both among common species and among rarities. Eddie Maguire's account of an elusive and mysterious species, Leach's Petrel, is the result of many years of dedicated recording and observation by a specialist.

For the very attractive drawings, I would like to thank Margaret Staley (Barnacle Geese on the cover, and Wigeon, Wren and Stonechat) and Eddie Maguire (Storm and Leach's Petrel, Eiders and Great Northern Diver).

May I repeat my request for more people to submit articles or notes to the Argyll Bird Report. A lot of impressive and interesting work on a variety of species is going on in Argyll, but little finds its way into these pages. Perhaps *you* can contribute something to next year's report.

Finally, very many thanks to all others who have contributed to this year's Report, particularly to the many observers who send their records to the Recorder, to various committee members for useful comments, and to Printworks Oban for their speedy and helpful co-operation in printing the final product.

J C A Craik
Editor of *Argyll Bird Report*
November 1999

Systematic List for 1998

Paul Daw

Tigh-na-Tulloch, Minard, Inveraray, Argyll, PA32 8YQ

Tel. 01546 886260

e-mail: monedula@globalnet.co.uk

INTRODUCTION

The systematic list below includes entries for 217 species, not including escapes or races. Two of these species (Cory's Shearwater and Little Egret) were recorded in 1997 but not in 1998.

This leaves a total of 215 species recorded in Argyll during 1998 (*cf* revised totals of 207 in 1997, 213 in 1996, 204 in 1995, 213 in 1994 and 213 in 1993), with claimed sightings of two other species currently under consideration by the BBRC. Three of the 217 species, namely Pied-billed Grebe, Lesser Scaup and Booted Warbler, are additions to the Argyll list, which now contains 311 species.

Perhaps surprisingly, the following were not recorded in Argyll in 1998 and so have been omitted from the list below: Golden Pheasant *Chrysolophus pictus*, Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*, Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini*, Stock Dove *Columba oenas*, Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*, Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus* and Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*. Some of these may simply have been overlooked, but there have been no records of Nightjar since 1993 and it is the second successive blank year for Tree Sparrow.

Ornithological Review of 1998

January to March

The year began with gales and heavy rain, and much of the first half of January was wet. Towards the end of the month there was a dry cold spell when grebes were much in evidence. As well as single Great Crested Grebes at West Loch Tarbert *Kintyre* on 19th and Blairmore *Cowal* on 20th, Loch Indaal *Islay* had a peak count of 25 Slavonian Grebes on 22nd together with a Red-necked Grebe on 23rd, there were 20 Slavonian Grebes at Loch na Keal *Mull* on 25th, and Outer Loch Etive *N Argyll* had a peak count of 18 Little Grebes on 17th.

Among the wildfowl a 'Green-winged' Teal from North America, in Loch Indaal *Islay* on 20th and 26th Jan, continued a recent run of records of this species there. At the same site, Pintail numbers peaked at 45 on 22nd, while 1,110 Scaup on 18th was the highest count there since 1993.

There have been very few reports of Ptarmigan in recent years so it was good to hear of 'several' in the vicinity of the BT masts above Craignure *Mull* during Jan and 2 on Beinn Fhionnlaidh *N Argyll* on 25th Jan. Good news too for Turnstones. Analysis of

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NEWS count data shows a marked decline in numbers on the west coasts of Britain over the last 10 years but, after a poor year in 1997, numbers on *Islay* were back to normal levels with a total of 139 at Lochs Gruinart and Indaal in Jan.

Apart from some heavy rain in the middle of the month, Feb was mostly relatively fine and quite mild. However, right at the end of Feb and into early Mar, we had a cold snap with some snow, even on low ground.

The usual concentration of Great Northern Divers north of *Gigha* was recorded as 67 birds on 16th Feb. Notable counts of waders at this time included 48 Grey Plovers at Loch Gruinart *Islay* on 16th Feb, and an impressive 73 Snipe at Loch Bhasapol *Tiree* on 15th. In Gunna Sound off *Tiree*, on 20th Feb, 8 Little Auks was the highest number seen at any one location during the year.

The whole question of how to treat the various races of the Herring Gull is still very much under discussion, with many textbooks now treating the Yellow-legged Gull as a separate species (*Larus cachinnans*). Be that as it may, the individual seen at Soa Point *Tiree* on 23rd Feb was the first Argyll record to be accepted by SBRC.

After the early cold spell, the second half of Mar was mainly fairly mild with reasonable amounts of dry weather.

It is always difficult to be certain of numbers of the 'white-winged' gulls because of wandering individuals, but it seems likely that during Mar at least 10 Iceland Gulls and 7 Glaucous Gulls were present in Argyll.

On 7th Mar an impressive gathering of Black-throated Divers was present in Loch Caolisport and 44 were counted there. Good numbers of Whooper Swan were recorded passing through from the middle of Mar onwards, with flocks of 66 over High Barnakill *Mid-Argyll* and 80 over Croggan *Mull* on 21st, and a total of 263 on the freshwater lochs on *Tiree* on 24th. Towards the end of the month, 12 Yellowhammers in a garden at Connel *Mid-Argyll* on 29th was the highest count of the year – some indication of the small numbers now present in Argyll.

Early migrants included a Chiffchaff in Coullabus Wood *Islay* on 27th Mar, a Swallow at Balephetrish *Tiree* on 28th, and a Sand Martin at Claggain *Islay* on 30th.

April to June

Despite a number of dry and even sunny days, the first half of Apr was dominated by cold N or NE winds. Later in the month conditions were mostly milder with rain and bright intervals.

After the early birds in late Mar, the main arrival of Chiffchaffs took place during the first week in Apr. Arrival dates for most summer migrants seemed to be fairly average this year apart from Willow Warbler (first recorded in Coullabus Wood *Islay* on 5th Apr, with the main body of birds arriving between 12th and 19th) and Grasshopper Warbler (first at Taynuilt *N Argyll* on 18th, and one at Tainish NNR *Mid-Argyll* on 21st being the earliest ever recorded there).

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The first of four Spotted Redshanks seen during the year was at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* on 7th Apr; and 2,700 Golden Plover at The Reef *Tiree* on 20th Apr was a good count for a species usually reported in only small numbers elsewhere.

The only Apr rarity of note was a Hoopoe found on *Tiree* on 28th Apr and seen again on 21st May.

As usual May was generally a good month with much fine sunny weather but, towards the end, cool NE winds returned.

Among the later migrants arriving at this time were Swift at Connel on 10th May and Spotted Flycatcher at Tainish NNR on 13th but a highlight of the month was a beautiful male Red-backed Shrike trapped at Aros Moss CES on 15th. The star rare species however was Blue-winged Teal. The male bird at Loch a 'Phuill *Tiree* on 16th May was only the second Argyll record and it (or possibly another individual) obligingly stayed for a week at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve later in that month. A Sooty Shearwater seen in the Sound of *Mull* on 31st May was our first spring record since 1983.

In Jun there was again plenty of dry weather and some sunshine but, until the end of the month at least, temperatures were below average.

The early part of Jun was a very good period for unusual birds, many first discovered by visitors to Argyll. On 1st our second Red-backed Shrike of the year (a female this time and only the 6th individual since 1980) appeared on *Mull* and on the following day a King Eider in full breeding plumage was found by a visitor at Bellochantuy *Kintyre*. Two days later, on 4th, a Quail was calling and a Green Sandpiper (rare in spring) was seen, both at Heylpol *Tiree*, a Curlew Sandpiper in summer plumage was at Loch a 'Phuill *Tiree*, and a Wryneck was seen and heard calling (again by a visitor) at Slockavullin *Mid-Argyll*. This was our first record of Wryneck since 1991. A male Common Rosefinch was singing at Balemartine *Tiree* on 7th; and our first 'new species' of the year, a Pied-billed Grebe, was discovered (by yet another visitor) at the Mishnish Lochs *Mull* on 8th. To round off this 'purple patch', a Bee-eater was found at Tynacoille *Islay* on 11th, the fifth record of the species in Argyll.

The breeding season

Despite a general perception that the summer weather was poor, the worst did not occur until the latter part of Jul onwards, by which time many species had already bred successfully.

Divers in Argyll experienced their usual mixed fortunes this year. Four out of 5 monitored pairs of Red-throats produced one fledged young each, while 10 known summering pairs of Black-throats reared only two young to fledging.

Among the wildfowl, Mute Swans again had a bad year with 11 pairs at the monitored sites producing no young at all and only 6 pairs producing young (3 of which were at sites where mink were controlled). On Loch Eck *Cowal* 18 pairs of Mandarins used nestboxes and the population appears still to be on the increase.

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A survey of selected 10km squares in Argyll found that 52 young fledged at 18 monitored Hen Harrier territories, but this is only a partial picture as less than half of the identified territories were monitored. Golden Eagles had an average year with 22 successful nests yielding 27 fledged young, but the fortunes of our local Ospreys improved considerably after such a disappointing season last year. An additional pair bred and all four pairs were successful, producing a total of 9 young.

A nation-wide survey of Corncrakes found that 38% (225) of the total of 589 calling birds were on the Argyll islands. Declines since 1997 were noted in the core breeding area, and numbers on Islay were at their lowest of recent years. However, numbers increased substantially on Iona, Oronsay and Colonsay.

A pair of Coots with 4 well-grown young were found on Kilmory Lake *Mid-Argyll* on 6th Jul, our first breeding record since 1994, and one wonders how often isolated pairs may be overlooked.

At Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve, breeding numbers of Lapwing and Redshank were both down from previous years, but Curlew were up slightly since last year. Common Sandpiper is the only wader for which there are really widespread breeding records, with reports of pairs from many hill lochs and along all suitable shores of sea-lochs. A pair of Great Skuas bred for the second year on *Coll* and a pair raised a single chick on the Treshnish Isles *Mull*, the first confirmed breeding at the latter site.

Our breeding Terns had a poor season with total numbers of fledged young of both Common and Arctic Terns down since last year. Little Terns on *Tiree* fledged very few young with adverse weather conditions and disturbance both playing a part.

Black-headed and Common Gulls seemed to hold their own with numbers of fledged young at monitored sites broadly similar to last year. Lesser Black-backed Gulls appear to have increased slightly, but Herring Gulls had a bad year with several large colonies failing completely after mink predation of eggs and chicks.

The various surveys of Barn Owls found that at least 108 young were fledged, showing that Argyll is a stronghold of this species.

Swifts were recorded in likely breeding areas in Campbeltown, Dunoon and Lochgilphead but not, surprisingly, in Oban.

After many years of suspected breeding in *Cowal*, our first confirmed breeding record for Green Woodpecker eventually came from *Kintyre* this year. The increase in records generally suggests that the species is slowly spreading in Argyll.

It was a good year for Sand Martins, with numbers up at all the regularly monitored sites and record counts in some cases. Two species especially affected by hard winters, Wren and Stonechat, both continued their recovery from the severe conditions of 1995/96 with numbers at monitored sites up by *ca* 20% on 1997. Both Flycatcher species had good breeding seasons with high numbers of young Pied Flycatchers fledged from the nestbox schemes and a record number of territories of Spotted Flycatcher at Taynish. The latter species does not, so far, seem to have suffered the

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severe decline here that has been experienced further south.

A survey of breeding Choughs in Scotland showed that all but one of the active pairs were on the Argyll islands. The total of 59 pairs found breeding revealed a continued fall in numbers since the increases of the mid 1980s. This decline was especially evident on Islay and may be related to changes in cattle rearing practice. Numbers on Colonsay/Oronsay increased slightly.

There were widespread reports of Common Crossbill from all mainland areas and from Mull; singing males in Mar and May, and adults with young much later in the year, suggest a prolonged and quite successful breeding season for this unpredictable species.

July and August

After the first week of Jul the weather deteriorated markedly with long periods of rain and relatively few brighter intervals. This pattern continued through until the end of the first week in Aug, after which it became warmer and humid. There was some fine weather with good periods of sunshine at the end of the month.

It is well known that large numbers of petrels and shearwaters pass southwards off the coasts of Argyll in autumn, but the count of 11,364 birds passing *Tiree* on 12th Aug gives some indication of the true scale of this movement. Perhaps not surprisingly, two of three Balearic Shearwaters of 1998 also occurred at this time, one off *Tiree* on 11th and one off Machrihanish on 12th Aug.

Although Shags are common in Argyll, the count of 1,126 in Gunna Sound, off *Tiree* was notable. Velvet Scoter, on the other hand, seem increasingly scarce in Argyll and the 4 in the Sound of Gigha on 26th Aug were the only birds seen apart from two singles later in the year.

It was a good autumn for wader passage and Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* had its highest counts on record for several species (e.g. 75 Dunlin on 15th Aug). Whimbrel reached a peak on 14th Aug when 76 were counted at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve and the first autumn Spotted Redshank appeared at the same location on 19th. Little Stint and Curlew Sandpiper were also well represented with 18 of the latter at Loch Gruinart on 29th Aug and 6 juvs at Loch Crinan on 30th. The only real rarity among the autumn waders was also seen at Loch Gruinart: a Pectoral Sandpiper on 29th Aug was our first in four years.

Late Aug was a good time for unusual birds and on 28th a juvenile Rose-coloured Starling was identified at Caolas *Tiree*. This rare species is becoming an Argyll speciality with nine records since 1980, although this was the first juvenile. A Yellow Wagtail at Kilmartin *Mid-Argyll* on 29th Aug was one of only two recorded in Argyll during the year.

September and October

September was notable for the absence of the gales which often bring interesting seabirds close to land at this time. The last third of the month was particularly warm and dry and this pattern lasted into the first week of Oct. Then the weather broke

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down with squally showers and gusty NW or SW winds. Although mild at first, it became much colder in the latter half of Oct and some showers included hail and thunder.

Manx Shearwaters were still passing through in large numbers during early Sep but the sight of 75 Sooty Shearwaters settled on the sea off the Mull of Kintyre lighthouse on 8th must have been arresting.

A female Goshawk seen near Glengorm Castle *Mull* on 27th Sep was our first record of this species since 1993.

On 19th-21st Sep the club took part in the annual co-ordinated count of Eiders on the Firth of Clyde. This found a total of 4,771 birds in the Argyll part of the area, a fall of 16.5% from 5,715 in 1997. In 1998 the west coast and the islands were also counted, for the first time. This found a further 1,896 birds making a grand total for Argyll of 6,667.

At the end of Sep there was a remarkable influx of Pink-footed Geese into Argyll. Flocks of 100 or more appeared at various places over Mull and the mainland during Sep 30th-1st Oct.

Good wader numbers continued into Sep with 12 Ruffs at Middleton *Tiree* on 9th, 17 Little Stints at Cairnain *Islay* on 18th, and 11 Greenshank at *Kinloch Mull* on 28th. The 25th Sep was a typical date for the Grey Phalarope seen at Loch a 'Chumhainn *Mull*. Sep also produced our second and most unexpected new species of the year, a Booted Warbler at Balemartine *Tiree* on 20th. A Lesser Whitethroat was in the same vicinity at this time.

Oct began well with an American Wigeon (our 4th) at Loch Craignish *Mid-Argyll* on 1st, followed on 2nd by a Yellow-browed Warbler (only our 3rd accepted record) at West Hynish *Tiree*. A few days later, many observers were granted the astonishing sight of no less than 4 juv. Spoonbills, which were first seen at Bridgend *Islay* on 8th. A late Whitethroat was still present at Lower Killean *Islay* on 4th Oct and the first Fieldfares were reported at Ardentinny *Cowal* on 18th.

At the very end of the month, our only Lapland Bunting of the year was spotted at the Laggan *Kintyre* on 29th.

November and December

Nov was very changeable. It began cold and showery, and then there were gales during the second week of the month. The latter half of the month was mainly cold with overnight frost but with a fair amount of sunshine on some days. Cold weather in early Dec was followed by a milder period during the second week. It then became colder again and on the evening of 26th there was a severe gale, causing widespread damage and loss of power supplies.

Early Nov was a productive time, especially for wildfowl. On 5th a count of 54 Shoveler at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve was a new record for the site, and on the following day an odd-looking duck on Ardnave Loch *Islay* was finally identified as a 1st year

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female Lesser Scaup. This is the first time this transatlantic visitor has been identified in Argyll. Then on 11th Nov a 'redhead' (female/juv.) Smew was found on Loch Gilp *Mid-Argyll*, only the second Argyll record since the long-staying bird on Islay was last seen in 1989.

Nov was also good for unusual gulls. On 7th a 2nd winter Mediterranean Gull seen at close quarters on Campbeltown Loch Kintyre was only the third Argyll record since 1980. Two days later on 9th, at Machrihanish SBO a westerly gale brought approx 2,000 Kittiwakes inshore as well as 2, possibly 3, 1st winter Little Gulls. Then on the afternoon of 28th a 1st winter Laughing Gull was found in the company of a Common Gull at Cliad *Coll*; the only other record of this species was a bird on Islay in 1974. Also late in Nov came the first of our two remarkable winter records of Ring-Ouzel. This one was at Lochdon *Mull* on 19th and was followed by one at Cruachan Reservoir *N Argyll* on 29th Dec.

Two notable counts were made on Loch Etive in early Dec: 82 Goldeneye off Glennoe Jetty on the inner loch on 5th, and 31 Little Grebes in the outer loch on 6th.

A further unusual count in early Dec was 760 Oystercatchers in Holy Loch on 3rd, the highest single count at one site in Argyll in recent years.

A 1st winter Surf Scoter at Balephetrish Bay Tiree on 11th Dec continued our recent run of records of this scarce species.

Two species in unusual places at unexpected times were a Grey Phalarope that flew in and landed on the sea off Traigh an Luig *Islay* on 14th Dec, and a Leach's Petrel found dead outside the Oyster Bar at the head of Loch Fyne *Mid-Argyll* on 15th.

Lastly, it was a good winter for Snow Buntings in Argyll with small numbers reported widely and flocks of 32 at Corran Ban *Islay* on 8th Dec and ca 70 in the A 'Chleit/ Tayinloan area of *Kintyre* on 27th.

BIRD RECORDING IN ARGYLL

Advice to contributors

When submitting records, sightings should be listed in Voous order (as in this report) and should include the following details:

Species name. The commonly used English name is usually sufficient (*British Birds* - List of English Names versions acceptable if preferred) but scientific (Latin) name is helpful if reporting sub-species.

EURING Code No. - if possible (helps to speed up computer input).

Date. Please give exact date whenever possible (rather than 'June' or 'Spring') as this makes the record much more valuable and enables us to relate it to other records received.

Grid reference if known (six-figure ref. preferred but a four-figure ref. is often sufficient).

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Location. Used in conjunction with the above to avoid ambiguity *e.g.* there are upteen Loch Dubhs in Argyll but mistakes can also occur with grid refs!

Number of individuals. Precise number whenever possible or, failing this, an estimate. Even a rough estimate is more useful than 'many', 'large flock', 'several' or 'few', which are too subjective to have much value.

Sex and age - if known

Other interesting comments are always welcome *e.g.* indications of breeding, behaviour, food, interactions with other birds/animals *etc.* Individual anecdotes add value to what can otherwise be rather a 'dry' report.

Rare birds

Details of rarities should be sent in as soon as possible after the sighting, if possible on a standard form (available from Recorder). They will be judged locally by the Argyll Bird Records Committee (whose members are listed on p. 3), sent on to the *Scottish Birds* Records Committee (SBRC), or sent on to the *British Birds* Rarities Committee (BBRC), as appropriate.

The list below details rare species whose occurrence in Argyll needs to be fully documented. It is made up of the ABRC list of Argyll rarities (in lower case) and the SBRC list of Scottish rarities (in capitals), but excludes the large number of UK rarities assessed by BBRC. Asterisked species have occurred in Argyll.

No record of any of the species and plumage phases listed below will be published unless adequate supporting details (including a description) are available. In addition, brief details may be requested for occurrences of scarce species not on the list where the circumstances appear to warrant this.

List of SBRC and ABRC species and subspecies, 1999

Black-necked Grebe*	HONEY BUZZARD*
CORY'S SHEARWATER*	MONTAGU'S HARRIER
GREAT SHEARWATER*	Goshawk*
MEDITERRANEAN SHEARWATER* #	ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD*
Bittern*	HOBBY*
LITTLE EGRET*	CRANE*
PURPLE HERON	Avocet*
WHITE STORK*	STONE CURLEW *
SPOONBILL*	LITTLE RINGED PLOVER*
Bean Goose*	KENTISH PLOVER
European White-fronted Goose*	Temminck's Stint*
GREEN-WINGED TEAL*	PECTORAL SANDPIPER*
Red-crested Pochard*	BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER*
RING-NECKED DUCK*	Red-necked Phalarope*
SURF SCOTER*	Long-tailed Skua (except adult)*
Smew*	MEDITERRANEAN GULL*
Ruddy Duck*	Sabine's Gull*

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RING-BILLED GULL*	MELODIOUS WARBLER
HERRING GULL	DARTFORD WARBLER
(yellow-legged race <i>michahellis</i>)	BARRED WARBLER*
Roseate Tern*	Lesser Whitethroat*
Black Tern*	PALLAS'S WARBLER
Little Owl	Yellow-browed Warbler*
BEE-EATER*	FIRECREST*
Wryneck*	RED-BREASTED FLYCATCHER*
LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER	BEARDED TIT
SHORT-TOED LARK	Marsh Tit
WOODLARK	Willow Tit*
Shore Lark*	Crested Tit*
RICHARD'S PIPIT*	Nuthatch*
TAWNY PIPIT	Red-backed Shrike*
WATER PIPIT	WOODCHAT SHRIKE*
NIGHTINGALE*	SERIN
Bluethroat*	Scottish Crossbill
CETTI'S WARBLER	COMMON ROSEFINCH*
AQUATIC WARBLER	Hawfinch*
MARSH WARBLER	CIRL BUNTING*
Reed Warbler*	ORTOLAN BUNTING
ICTERINE WARBLER*	LITTLE BUNTING*

Because of the frequency of records in Argyll, the SBRC has recently delegated decision-making on this species to the Recorder. Normally, a description will not now be required although the ABRC reserve the right to request one if the circumstances seem to require it.

INTERPRETATION OF THE SPECIES ACCOUNTS

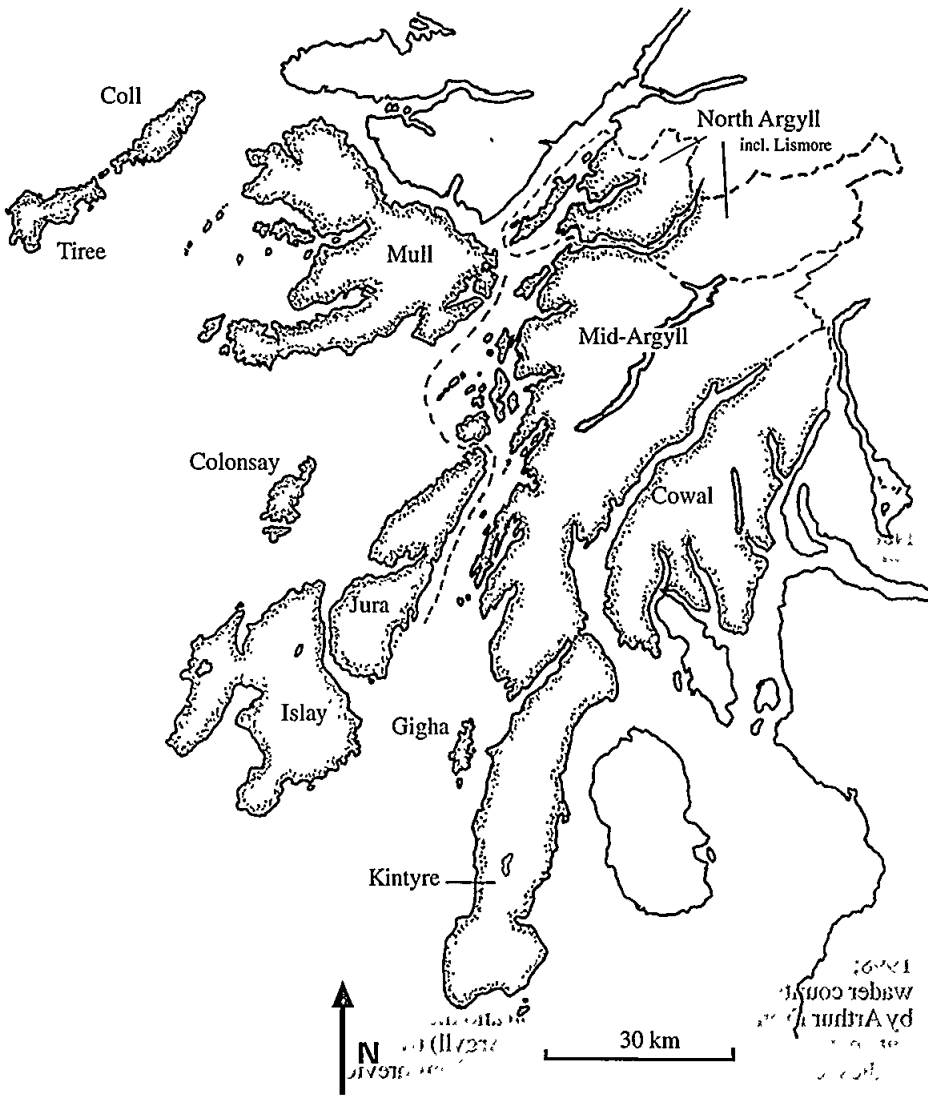
In the species accounts below, English and scientific names are as in the latest *Scottish Bird Report*; the sequence of species follows the Voous order as in the same report. Each species heading in the report contains the following information:

Common name	Scientific name	Gaelic name	EURING code
e.g. RAVEN	<i>Corvus corax</i>	Fitheach	1572

Each heading is followed by a summary of the bird's known status and distribution within Argyll, together with any other relevant information. Significant 1998 records are then listed in approximate chronological order. For scarcer species, records for 1998 may be followed by late records or recent acceptances from earlier years.

For the purposes of this report, Argyll is divided into 11 areas which are named on the accompanying sketch map (p.15). Because very few records have been received from Lismore in recent years, it is no longer considered a separate area but has been merged with North Argyll. Note that, for the moment at least, boundaries of the Argyll recording area remain unchanged despite local government reorganisation in 1996.

Records of rarities in the systematic list are accompanied by the names of the observers,



Map showing the areas of Argyll used in this Report

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starting with the finder(s)/identifier(s) (or, in the absence of this information, the person who first reported the bird to me), followed by the observer(s) who submitted details of the record, if different. All these records are also accompanied by an asterisk, to indicate acceptance by the relevant rarities committee. Summarised data from surveys of breeding birds are also accompanied by the initials of the observers or organisations responsible, to help readers who are interested in obtaining more detailed information.

An attempt has been made to ensure that all place names in the systematic list feature on the 1:50,000 (Landranger Series) Ordnance Survey maps. An exception is The Laggan (Kintyre) which refers to the roughly triangular area west of Campbeltown, bordered by the B843, the A83, and Machrihanish Bay. Campbeltown Airport (previously RAF Machrihanish) is in this area. The Machrihanish Seabird Observatory (SBO) is situated at Uisaed Point on the western outskirts of Machrihanish (NR628209). In Mid-Argyll, Kilmichael Glen extends north eastwards from Kilmichael Glassary at NR85/93. On Mull, the Mishnish Lochs are the series of lochs extending from NM46/52 to NM48/53.

On Islay, the term 'Loch Gruinart' may refer to the Royal Society for Protection of Birds (RSPB) reserve at Loch Gruinart, or to parts of the loch lying outside the reserve. When a distinction has been made by the observer, and when presenting counts of breeding pairs within the reserve, the term 'Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve' is used. The same applies to the use of the terms 'Moine Mhor' and 'Moine Mhor National Nature Reserve (NNR)' (Mid-Argyll); I have used the former term to cover an area extending west to the landward edge of Loch Crinan and north to Barsloisnoch.

Tables 1 to 4 are derived from Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) goose counts. Tables 5 to 28 are based principally on data from the Wetland Birds Survey (WeBS), The Islay Bird and Natural History Report 1997 and John Halliday's (SNH) Moine Mhor NNR and Loch Crinan Bird Reports 1997, although higher counts have been included where available. In these tables 'Loch Etive (Outer)' refers to WeBS counts covering the area from Connel Bridge to Taynuilt and 'Tiree' refers to WeBS counts covering the four main freshwater lochs on the island, viz Loch an Eilein, Loch Bhasapol, Loch Riaghain and Loch a 'Phuill. For certain species, numbers on Tiree may be higher, at any given time, elsewhere on the island: where available, appropriate counts are cited in the main text.

Special studies carried out in 1998

Regular monitoring of certain species and groups of species in Argyll continued in 1998; examples are the goose counts carried out by SNH, the monthly wildfowl and wader counts (WeBS) at several sites, monitoring of breeding birds of prey on Cowal by Arthur French and David Anderson and the Common Birds Census (CBC) carried out on two plots at Taynish NNR (Mid-Argyll) by John Halliday. Other single-species studies, either new in 1998 or continued from previous years, are referred to in the species accounts.

Three further multi-species studies are summarised here to avoid repetition of details in the species accounts.

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(1) Breeding Birds Survey (BBS)

The BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), which started in 1994, gives all birdwatchers a chance to take part in important survey work. Its objective is to extend and improve the monitoring of population changes of common breeding birds. It is now counts birds annually in more than 2,000 randomly chosen one-km squares in the UK, using a line-transect method. If you have a few hours to spare each year and wish to take part in the BBS, please contact your local BTO Representative (see p. 3 for details) or Richard Bashford at the BTO, National Centre for Ornithology, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk, IP24 2PU, Tel: 01842 750050; e-mail: r.bashford@bto.org.

In 1998, 16 such squares were surveyed in Argyll. They were located in *Kintyre* (NR68/29), *Colonsay* (NR35/88, NR38/95), *Cowal* NR92/75, NS08/84, NS12/80), *Mid-Argyll* (NM82/24, NM83/19, NN01/04, NN06/15, NR77/70, NR79/92), *Mull* (NM30/21, NM39/39, NM44/21), and *N. Argyll* (NN10/35). They are the same 16 squares as those surveyed in 1997.

New recruits are always needed for the BBS. If you think you might be interested but are not sure how much time it would take or how expert you need to be, or would like to know the location of the squares needing coverage, the BTO representatives listed on p.3 or your Recorder Paul Daw would be happy to talk to you about it.

In the systematic list below, BBS data are quoted for species which are widely distributed or for which little other information is available.

(2) Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS) study of seabird breeding success [J. C. A. Craik]

As part of a wider study of seabird breeding success, selected species were monitored in a study area along the west coasts of *Kintyre*, *Mid-Argyll*, and *N. Argyll* (including Lismore), and at additional sites in Loch Fyne (*Cowall/Mid-Argyll*) and *Mull*. Further details can be found in *ABR 11*.

(3) Systematic sea-watching at Machrihanish SBO (*Kintyre*) [E. J. Maguire].

Movements of seabirds, wildfowl and waders past this site are monitored regularly during certain months of the year. With a few exceptions, all birds flying past were identified and logged. Hours of observation during each month were as follows (c = casual observations):

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Mach. SBO	c	c	c	c	c	c	26	34	41	60	26	c

This information can be used, in some cases, to convert total counts in the systematic list to hourly rates, and *vice versa*. The vast majority of birds flew south during all months. More comprehensive data can be found in Maguire (1999).

(4) NEWS

The European Non-Estuarine Coastal Waterfowl Survey (NEWS) took place in Dec 1997/Jan 1998 and several coastal areas of Argyll were covered. This survey was a follow-up to the 1984/85 winter shorebird count which was (until NEWS) the only

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comprehensive survey of the non-estuarine coastline (coverage 90%) of the UK. The aim of the new survey was to repeat this and to cover as much as possible of the East Atlantic Flyway of Europe, so as to produce total population estimates for wader species and possibly ducks. Pilot studies had suggested significant decreases in numbers of certain wader species and the results of the main survey were expected to give a clearer picture of current trends.

Counts were carried out within a seven hour period commencing 3.5 hrs before low water and finishing 3.5 hrs after low water and took place between 1st Dec 1997 and 31st Jan 1998 (although counts on Tiree carried over into Feb). The priority was to record waders on the inter-tidal habitat. However, wherever possible, wildfowl, divers, grebes and Cormorants were also counted, and the areas of sea immediately adjacent to the coast as well as inland areas easily visible from high water mark were covered.

Counts for Argyll covered most of the mainland shoreline (including sealochs) and the islands, except for Loch Etive, Jura and Colonsay for which no data were received. In certain cases the boundaries of the sections for which counts were made were such that coastline outside the Argyll recording area was included. For this reason the total counts quoted in the main text include birds recorded in Gare Loch and the eastern shore of Loch Linnhe north to North Ballachulish. The counts nevertheless give some indication of winter populations of certain species that are not normally censused.

Categories of the British list (as revised by the BOURC - Jan 1998):

Category A. Species that have been recorded in an apparently natural state at least once since 1st Jan 1950.

Category B. Species that would otherwise be in Category A but have not been recorded since 31st Dec 1949.

Category C. Species which, although originally introduced by man, either deliberately or accidentally, have now established breeding populations derived from introduced stock that maintain themselves without necessary recourse to further introduction.

C1. *Naturalised Introductions* Species that have occurred only as a result of introduction e.g. Mandarin Duck, Little Owl.

C2. *Naturalised Establishments* Species with established populations as a result of introduction by man, but which also occur in an apparently natural state e.g. Canada Goose.

C3. *Naturalised Re-establishments* Species with populations successfully re-established by man in areas of former occurrence e.g. Red Kite, Capercaillie.

C4. *Naturalised Feral Species* Domesticated species with populations established in the wild e.g. Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon).

C5 *Vagrant Naturalised Species* Species from established naturalised populations abroad (none accepted yet although most Ruddy Shelducks occurring here must fall into this category).

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Category D. Species that would otherwise appear in Categories A or B except that there is reasonable doubt that they have ever occurred in a natural state.

Category E. Species that have been recorded as introductions, transportees, or escapes from captivity, and whose breeding populations (if any) are thought not to be self-sustaining.

Symbols and abbreviations

Species status categories

- R Resident and sedentary.
B Breeding species; breeding and wintering ranges may differ.
S Summer visitor; breeds unless otherwise stated.
P Passage migrant.
W Winter visitor.
I Introduced species; recorded in Argyll, may or may not breed here.
V Vagrant; fewer than 5 records since 1980.

Others

- * Record accepted by relevant rarities committee
ABR *Argyll Bird Report*
ABRC Argyll Bird Records Committee
ARSG Argyll Raptor Study Group
AOB apparently occupied burrows
AON apparently occupied nest-sites
AOS apparently occupied sites
b/- brood of...young
BBRC *British Birds Rarities Committee*
BBS Breeding Birds Survey
BOURC British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee
BTO British Trust for Ornithology
ca circa = approx..
c/- clutch of...eggs
cf confer = compare
CBC Common Birds Census
CES Constant Effort (ringing) Site
inc. including
JNCC Joint Nature Conservation Committee
max. maximum (the highest of 2 or more counts at a given locality during the period being analysed)
NCC Nature Conservancy Council
NEWS Non-estuarine European Coastal Waterfowl Survey
NNR National Nature Reserve
n/r not recorded (in tables of counts, where no count was made)
SAMS Scottish Association for Marine Science
SBO Seabird Observatory
SBR *Scottish Bird Report*
SBRC *Scottish Birds Records Committee*
SNH Scottish Natural Heritage
WeBS Wetland Bird Survey

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RED-THROATED DIVER *Gavia stellata* Learga ruadh 0002
B W P Widely distributed but sparse breeding species. Breeding recorded in 26% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

The highest count during the early part of the year was on Loch Indaal *Islay*, where 35 were counted on 23rd Jan. There were still 29 there on 26th Apr. The only other record of more than 10 birds was at Hynish *Tiree* where there was a max. count of 16 on 7th Mar.

The NEWS count total for Argyll (Dec 97-Jan 98) was 69.

Breeding. Single pairs (all presumed breeding) were found on just 6 lochs on *Coll*; there was no information on breeding success (RSPB). In *Mid-Argyll*, 5 pairs attempted to nest or laid (4 using rafts) in the Ederline-Eredine survey area. Of these, 4 produced one fledged young each, including one pair (not using a raft) late in the season, apparently at the second attempt [DM]. On *Colonsay*, a pair was present in the breeding season but at a different loch from the regular site. An adult and 2 juveniles were present in Jul at one site on *Islay*. Breeding season records were also received from 6 sites on *Mull* and one each in *Cowal* and on *Tiree*.

During the latter part the year, most records came from the islands and seldom exceeded single figures. However 11 were recorded on Loch Indaal on 8th Nov while at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* 19 flew past in 3 hrs on 30th Sep and 15 in 6 hrs on 11th Oct.

BLACK-THROATED DIVER *Gavia arctica* Learga dhubh 0003
B W P Scarce, though probably under-recorded in winter. Breeding now only in *Mid-Argyll* and *N. Argyll*.

Counts in Loch Caolisport *Mid-Argyll* of 21 on 28th Jan and 44 on 7th Mar were the highest in the last few years, and on the latter date there were also 7 on Loch Buie *Mull*. Otherwise records of one or two birds came from *Colonsay*, *Islay*, *Mid-Argyll* and *Tiree* during this part of the year. On 8th May, 21 were counted offshore at Skipness *Kintyre*.

The NEWS count total for Argyll (Dec 97-Jan 98) was 28.

Breeding. 10 summering pairs were monitored, including a pair of birds that summered (but did not breed) at a loch where breeding has not been recorded for many years. Breeding was confirmed at 8 sites (3 natural, 5 rafts); chicks were hatched at 2 sites (both rafts) and both young survived to fledging.

In the latter part of the year, 5 adults were seen on Loch Arail *Mid-Argyll* on 31st Jul and (presumably the same) 5 birds in Loch Fyne near Ardrishaig *Mid-Argyll* on 2nd Aug, while the highest count was 14 birds in the Sound of *Gigha* on 26th Aug. Otherwise there were records, until early Dec, of up to three birds (mostly singles) from *Islay*, *Kintyre*, *Mull*, *N Argyll* and *Tiree*.

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER *Gavia immer* Muir bhuaichail 0004
W P The Argyll coast is an important wintering locality. Summer-plumaged birds regularly recorded Apr to early Jun in all areas except *Cowal*. Pre-migratory gatherings occur off some coasts in late Apr and early May. A few individuals summer.

Max. counts for favoured localities during Jan-Apr were 11 in Loch na Keal *Mull* on 25th Jan, 35 in Loch Indaal *Islay* on 26th Jan, 10 in Loch Caolisport *Mid-Argyll* on 1st Feb, 67 counted N of *Gigha*, from the *Islay-Kennacraig Ferry*, on 16th Feb, 12 off Ardnave *Islay* on 2nd Mar, 14 in Loch Buie *Mull* on 6th Apr, and 44 in

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Hynish Bay *Tiree* on 27th Apr. Birds were also recorded in single figures off *Colonsay* and in *N Argyll*.

The NEWS count total for Argyll (Dec 97-Jan 98) was 160.

There were still 34 birds in Hynish Bay on 20th May but by 23rd only 3 remained.

In late May and Jun summering birds were present at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre*, 3 locations off *Mull*, 2 off *Tiree*, 2 off *Colonsay* in Loch Indaal *Islay*.

Numbers seemed slow in building up in the latter part of the year. Eight were seen in the Sound of *Gigha* on 30th Sep, 10 flew past Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* in 2 hrs on 11th Oct, 16 passed Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* in 7.5 hrs on 25th Oct, and 12 were off Port Charlotte *Islay* on 31st Oct. By Dec there were 15 in Hynish Bay *Tiree* on 12th, and 31 were counted between Machrihanish and Westport *Kintyre* on 20th.

PIED-BILLED GREBE *Podilymbus podiceps* 0006
V No previous records for Argyll and only four records for Scotland.

This very elusive bird was found on Loch Peallach (Mishnish Lochs) *Mull* at 1330hrs on 8th Jun by N. McKee, a visitor from Northern Ireland. He watched for just 10 seconds before it dived out of sight and failed to re-appear. Nevertheless he was, fortunately, able to put together a description and report the sighting to the local birding community. However, despite frequent searches, no-one was able to locate the bird again until a group from Norwich, on a birdwatching holiday, managed to see it at the same site for two periods of about 10 and (later) 15 minutes on the morning of 15th Jun. Mark Cocker, the leader of the group also submitted a record form. Both descriptions were accepted by BBRC but the bird was not seen on any other occasions.

LITTLE GREBE *Tachybaptus ruficollis* Spagriton 0007
B W Uncommon. Breeds widely, mainly on small, low-lying eutrophic lochs. Breeding recorded in 18% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Small numbers gather in sheltered coastal waters in winter.

The highest counts for the early part of the year were a max. of 10 in Campbeltown Loch *Kintyre* during Jan and 18 on Outer Loch Etive *N Argyll* on 17th Jan. Otherwise 1-4 birds were reported from various locations in *Cowal*, *Islay*, *Kintyre*, *Mid-Argyll* (several sites), *Mull* and *Tiree*, with 5 on Loch Allan *Islay* on 5th Feb.

The NEWS count total for Argyll (Dec 97-Jan 98) was 27.

Breeding. Confirmed breeding was reported from East Loch Fada (b/3), Mid Loch Fada (b/3) and Dubh Loch (b/2) *Colonsay*, 'Blue Lake', Corlarach *Cowal*, Loch nan Geadh (nr Claonaig) *Kintyre* (b/2+), Camas Daoine Loch (b/2) and Loch nam Breac Buidhe (b/3), both in the Ederline/Eredine area *Mid-Argyll*, Loch Peallach (Mishnish Lochs) *Mull* (b/3), and Loch Bhasapol *Tiree* (b/1). A pair probably bred at Lochan Taynish *Mid-Argyll*, and birds were seen during the breeding season at one other loch in both *Cowal* and *Mid-Argyll* and at 3 lochs on *Islay*.

Once again, exceptional numbers were recorded on Outer Loch Etive during the latter months of the year. Numbers rose steadily from 18 on 12th Sep to 21 on 4th Oct, 23 on 7th Nov and an impressive 31 by 6th Dec. Elsewhere 1-5 birds were recorded at various places in *Cowal*, *Islay*, *Kintyre*, *Mid-Argyll*, *Mull* and *Tiree*.

GREAT CRESTED GREBE *Podiceps cristatus* Gobhlachan Iaparan 0009
W P Uncommon, with 2-6 records annually since 1984. Recorded in all months except Jun.

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A typical year, with three (possibly four) records. The first was in the entrance to West Loch Tarbert *Mid-Argyll* on 19th Jan and the following day one was off Blairmore (Loch Long) *Cowal*. Later in the year one was on Loch an t-Sailein *Islay* on 14th Oct, while one on Loch Indaal on 16th Oct was possibly the same bird.

However the NEWS count total for Argyll (Dec 97-Jan 98) was 24. Two of these were reported from Mull and the remaining 22 from the Gare Loch/Loch Long/Dunoon section, which includes places outside the Argyll recording area.

RED-NECKED GREBE *Podiceps grisegena* Gobhlachan ruadh 0010
W P *Less than annual. Of 14 records during 1980-96, 12 were during Sep-Mar with one in May and one in Jun.*

There were two records: one in Loch Indaal *Islay* on 23rd Jan, and one in Loch na Keal *Mull* on 31st Mar.

SLAVONIAN GREBE *Podiceps auritus* Gobhlachan mara 0011
W P *Regular wintering species in sea lochs and sounds, particularly West Loch Tarbert (Kintyre), Sound of Gigha (Kintyre), Loch Indaal (Islay) and Loch na Keal (Mull).*

The only substantial counts were 25 in Loch Indaal *Islay* on 22nd Jan and 20 in Loch na Keal *Mull* on 25th Jan. The only other sites where birds were reported between Jan & Apr were Loch Ba *Mull*, Gunna Sound and Salum Bay *Tiree*, and Loch Caolisport and Loch Fyne *Mid-Argyll*, with up to 8 birds present at any given site at one time.

The NEWS count total for Argyll (Dec 97-Jan 98) was 20.

The first returning birds were in Loch Indaal where 12 were counted on 2nd Sep and numbers there built up to 24 (off Bowmore) on 31st Oct before falling to 21 on 8th Nov and 17 on 7th Dec. The max. count for Loch na Keal *Mull* during this period was 9 on 30th Sep, while the Sound of Gigha had 10 on 30th Sep. As in 1997, there were some freshwater records, with a single bird on Loch nan Druimnean *Mid-Argyll* on 29th Nov, and up to two during Nov and Dec on Loch Bhasapol *Tiree*. Other single birds were seen off Oronsay *Colonsay*, at Port Appin *N Argyll* and off East Kames (Loch Fyne) *Mid-Argyll*.

FULMAR *Fulmarus glacialis* Eun crom 0022
B W P *Common but localised breeding species in all areas except Cowal and N Argyll. Large numbers on passage off western headlands.*

Breeding. Counts at sample census cliffs on *Colonsay* in Jun gave 523 AOS at Uragaig (cf 577 in 1997), 52 AOS at Kiloran Bay (cf 54 in 1997) and 23 at Turnigil (cf 22 in 1997). At Sanda *Kintyre* there were 500 AON (cf 480 in 1997 and 460 in 1996) and breeding success appeared to be good. The other continuing monitoring programme, at Lunga (Treshnish Isles) *Mull*, produced a total of 579 AON (cf 570 in 1997 and 641 in 1996). 17 nests were found at Port an Duine Mairbh (Iona) *Mull*.

In autumn 310 birds flew south past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* in 7 hrs on 16th Aug. At Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* 382 passed in 3 hrs on 25th Aug, with 68 in 2 hrs there on 30th Aug, 321 in 3 hrs on 2nd Sep and 132 in 2 hrs on 3rd Sep.

CORY'S SHEARWATER *Calonectris diomedea* 0036
V *Five accepted Argyll records involving a total of seven birds, mostly in Aug or Sep.*
1997 One was seen with Manx and Sooty Shearwaters from the Oban-Colonsay ferry, ca 10 km W of Scarba, on 20th Sep {JDj}*.

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SOOTY SHEARWATER *Puffinus griseus* Fachadh dubh 0043
P Large numbers sometimes recorded off headlands during Aug-Sep; very few records outside the period Jul-Oct

One seen in the Sound of Mull, from Craignure, on 31st May was only the second spring record for Argyll since 1983.

In autumn, the first birds reported were at Machrihanish SBO Kintyre on 16th Aug. From this date until 2nd Sep a total of 35 birds was recorded with a max. daily count of 24 on 25th Aug. Perhaps the most remarkable record was off the Mull of Kintyre Lighthouse on 8th Sep, when 75 birds were counted sitting on the sea or flying short distances before alighting again. The only other large gathering was ca 20 birds seen off the W coast of Mull from a boat between Coll and Colonsay on 24th Sep. Otherwise, up to 9 birds were reported from Frenchman's Rocks Islay (3 dates), N of Gigha [Kennacraig-Islay ferry] (2 dates), Sound of Mull (2 dates), and Hynish (3 dates) and Port Fada (2 dates), both Tiree. The last birds of the year were one seen flying SW past Machrihanish SBO on 14th Oct and 5 flying N past West Hynish Tiree on 23rd Oct.

MANX SHEARWATER *Puffinus puffinus* Fachadh ban 0046/1
B P Very localised breeding species. Colonies confirmed only on Sanda (Kintyre) and Treshnish Isles (Mull). Another colony may await discovery on or near Garvellachs (Mid-Argyll). Large numbers on passage, especially during Aug-Sep.

The first birds of the year were reported from Tiree where 5 were seen offshore at Balevullin on 21st Mar, followed by 57 off Balemartine on 24th Mar and 162 passing offshore in 10 minutes at Hynish on 5th Apr. A most unusual freshwater record came from Mull on 23rd May when one was seen to fly in over the W end of Loch Ba and settle on the water.

Breeding. Presumed breeding birds were seen at night on Lunga, Treshnish Isles Mull in late Jun-early Jul and one bird was found in a burrow. Sanda Kintyre had 160 AOB in June and 27 nestlings were ringed there. A total of 550 birds in one large raft and two smaller rafts off the Garvellachs on 5th Jun reinforces suspicions of a colony there.

Large numbers of this species passing offshore in autumn are a typical sight but 11,364 passing the NW coast of Tiree in one hour on 12th Aug was an astonishing total (not to mention an astonishing counting achievement). Almost as impressive, and at the same location, were the counts of 4,464 in one hour on 18th Aug and 5,778 in an hour on 21st Aug.

At Frenchman's Rocks Islay the max. daily count was 1,554 in 3 hrs on 2nd Sep and at Machrihanish SBO Kintyre 590 flew S on 12th Sep. The last records were in Oct with single birds at Frenchman's Rocks on 10th and at Balevullin Tiree on 25th.

An individual ringed on Sanda on 15th Jul 1989 was found dead on the Scilly Isles (591 km S) on 24th Jul 1998; and two ringed as nestlings at Copeland Bird Observatory, N. Ireland, were trapped while breeding on Sanda in 1998.

MEDITERRANEAN SHEARWATER *Puffinus yelkouan* 0046/2
P Extremely rare in the past (only 2 accepted Argyll records prior to 1992), but a recent large increase starting in 1992-93. Recorded in autumn (Aug-Dec), usually with Manx Shearwaters. Only recently (1991) separated taxonomically from the Manx Shearwater; it has now been further split by some authorities into two species:

Balearic Shearwater P. mauretanicus and Yelkouan (or Levantine) Shearwater P. yelkouan.

There were 3 records during the year, all seen in the company of Manx Shearwaters. One flew W off Balevullin *Tiree* during a large passage of Manx Shearwaters on 11th Aug, one flew S at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 12th Aug, and 2 were seen off Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* on 3rd Sep.

1997 The following records for Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* have been accepted by SBRC since the publication of ABR 14: one on 9th Aug, one on 13th Aug, 2 on 14th Aug, one on 18th Aug, one on 22nd Aug, 2 on 25th Aug, one on 29th Aug, one on 5th Sep, 2 on 8th Sep and 2 on 13th Sep. All were seen flying S with Manx Shearwaters.

STORM PETREL *Hydrobates pelagicus* Paraig 0052
B P Very localised breeding species; large colonies known only on Sanda (Kintyre) and Treshnish Isles (Mull). Breeding birds first come ashore in late May or Jun. Most sightings away from breeding colonies are during Jul-Sep.

There were no reports of birds seen prior to the breeding season.

Breeding. On the Treshnish Isles *Mull*, birds were heard churring from burrows on Lunga and Fladda. There was no count of breeding birds but 741 new birds were ringed and there were 99 re-traps. Of 97 mist-netted birds, only one did not have a brood patch whilst 6 were seen to be carrying eggs. On Sanda *Kintyre* an estimate of 150 AOB was made and 204 adults were ringed. Birds were also reported as 'apparently breeding' on Staffa *Mull*.

Up to 4 birds were seen offshore from Hynish/Balemartine *Tiree* on 8 dates in Jul, 15 were seen off Balevullin *Tiree* on 15th Aug, and there was a peak hourly count of 24 at Hynish on 19th Aug. The only Sep records received were all from *Tiree* and included 5 passing Aird Cornaigmore on 1st, 4 off Hynish on 6th, and 10 passing Aird Cornaigmore in 4 mins on 16th. At Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* 178 flew S in 7 hrs on 13th Aug (a record daily count for this site), and there was one on 15th Aug, 20 in 7 hrs on 16th Aug, and one on 19th Aug. The last of the year were singles off Hynish on 24th Oct and at Loch Beg *Mull* on 29th Oct.

Among birds re-trapped on the Treshnish Isles in 1997 were 16 first ringed as adults on Sanda and single birds ringed at Portland Bill, Dorset (714 km S) and Blasket Islands, Kerry, Eire (557 km SW), both almost exactly 4 years previously. An individual trapped as an adult at St. Abbs, Borders, on 20th Jul 1997 was controlled just 4 days later on Sanda. Had it come overland or did it travel all the way round the coast in such a short time?

LEACH'S PETREL *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* Gobhlan mara 0055
P Scarce, but regular in autumn off western headlands following strong westerlies.

Rather fewer than usual reported. The only records for Sep were a single bird in the Sound of *Islay* seen from the ferry to Colonsay on the morning of 16th, and 2 birds there on the return journey later that day. Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* had 16 flying S in 6 hrs on 11th Oct and one on 27th Oct, and a single bird was seen offshore at Hynish *Tiree* on 20th Oct. A more unusual record was that of a bird found recently dead near the Oyster Bar at the head of Loch Fyne *Mid-Argyll* on 15th Dec.

GANNET *Morus bassanus* Sulaire 0071
S P W Does not breed in Argyll; nearest colonies are Ailsa Craig (40 km E of Mull) of

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Kintyre) and the *Shiant Isles* (140 km N of Mull). Common inshore from May to Sep, and often seen high up sea-lochs. Scarce in winter.

Single birds were reported in Jan at *Hynish Tiree* on 1st and at *Kintra Islay* on 29th;

and 10 (all adults bar one) were seen flying S down Loch Fyne at *Minard Mid-Argyll* on 5th Feb. Subsequently numbers built up through Mar and Apr, but no large flocks were reported until 86 were counted feeding offshore at *Balemartine Tiree* on 30th May. Reported from all areas, apart from *N Argyll*, during the summer months in groups of up to 100 birds.

Daily counts of birds passing *Frenchman's Rocks Islay* included 589 in 3 hrs on 25th Aug, 245 in 2.5 hrs on 27th Aug, 287 in 2 hrs on 30th Aug, 599 in 3 hrs on 2nd Sep, and 453 in 2 hrs on 3rd Sep. The last birds reported there were 20 moving SW in 30 mins on 10th Oct. Of 1,243 birds passing *Machrihanish SBO Kintyre* between 22nd Jul and 9th Nov, 1,134 (91%) were adults and only 4 were juveniles. The last reported were a juvenile at *Machrihanish SBO* and 13 birds passing *Sanaigmore Islay* on 25th Oct, and an adult at *Machrihanish* on 9th Nov.

CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo* Sgarbh 0072
R W Breeds in Kintyre, Cowal, Mid-Argyll, Mull and N Argyll. Less numerous than Shag. Small numbers occur on some inland waters, often moving to the coast in autumn.

Counts of more than 10 birds during the early part of the year came from *Loch Indaal Islay* (max. 22 on 18th Jan), *Eilean Aoghainn (Loch Fyne) Mid-Argyll* (max. 38 on 24th Feb), *Rubha Chraiginis Tiree* (max. daily count 53 on 7th Feb), and *Loch Creran N Argyll* (max. 27 on 17th May).

The NEWS count total for *Argyll* (Dec 97-Jan 98) was 727.

Breeding. In the *Argyll* part of the SAMS study area, 111 pairs bred at 4 colonies (colony size varied from 3 to 51 pairs) and fledged at least 157 young (*cf* 100-110 from 102 pairs in 1997). Cormorants continued to be absent from the former large colony at *Corr Eilean (Sound of Jura) Mid-Argyll*. There were 31 active nests on *Sanda Kintyre (cf* 23 in 1997) and nesting success appeared excellent with broods of 3 common. Late-hatching chicks did not do so well, with 6 being found dead.

During the latter part of the year, the only sites with counts exceeding 10 birds were *Gunna Sound Tiree* (41 on 6th Aug), *Holy Loch Cowal* (max. 13 on 23rd Aug), *Loch Creran* (max. 43 on 6th Sep), *Loch Indaal* (max. 20 on 30th Oct and 4th Nov) and *Loch Crinan/River Add estuary Mid-Argyll* (max. 14 on 5th Nov).

SHAG *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* Sgarbh an sgumain 0080
R W Very common coastal species, but rare inland.

The only counts of more than 20 birds during the early part of the year were 58 in *Loch Caolisport Mid-Argyll* during the NEWS survey in late Jan, 41 in the vicinity of *Port Ellen Islay* on 28th Jan, and in *Loch Indaal Islay* with a max. of 41 on 15th Feb.

Breeding. In the *Argyll* part of the SAMS study area, at least 351 pairs bred at 8 colonies (*cf* 310 pairs at 7 colonies in 1997). At 2 of these colonies fledging was not assessed; at the other 6 with a total of 269 pairs, at least 250 young fledged. At *Corr Eilean (Sound of Jura) Mid-Argyll*, where 45 nests were counted but 100-200 adults (apparently failed breeders) were present, no young fledged for the first year on record; one mink was seen and killed in this colony but others were apparently present.

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Elsewhere, there were 427 nests on 4 of the Treshnish Isles *Mull*, and 564 active nests on Sanda *Kintyre*, where breeding success was again considered good. Counts at sample census sites on *Colonsay* yielded 8 nests at Uragraig (*cf* 11 in 1997), and 42 nests at Pigs Paradise with mean clutch 2.15 (*cf* 35 and 2.61 in 1997).

During the latter part of the year, by far the largest gathering was 1,126 birds counted in Gunna Sound *Tiree* on 7th Aug. The only other sites with counts exceeding 50 were Hynish *Tiree* (max. 175 on 22nd Jul), Oronsay *Colonsay* (max. 86 on 7th Nov), Loch Indaal *Islay* (max. 61 on 6th Sep), and the N end of the Sound of Iona *Mull* where 60+ were feeding with gulls on 22nd Sep.

At Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* 119 flew past in 3 hrs on 25th Aug and 63 in 2.5 hrs on 27th Aug, with smaller numbers recorded up to 3rd Sep. Of 1,110 birds passing Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* from 22nd Jul to 9th Nov, 360 (33%) were adults.

A bird ringed as a nestling on Sanda on 24th Jun 1997 was found dead on *Tiree* (163 km) on 13th Apr 1998.

LITTLE EGRET *Egretta garzetta* Corra gheal bheag 0119
V No Argyll records prior to 1958 but several since, mostly in spring and autumn. Could be seen more frequently now that breeding colonies have become established in southern England and Ireland.

1997 One was seen near the shipyard on the N bank of Campbeltown Loch *Kintyre* on 18th May, but it could not be found the following day [EO,EJM]. (One recorded on *Islay* on 12-13th Jun 1997 was detailed in last year's report.)

GREY HERON *Ardea cinerea* Corra ghritheach 0122
R Widespread, breeding in all areas. Breeding recorded in 7% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

Counts of 10 or more birds were made during the early part of the year at Loch Don *Mull* (max. 14 on 11th Jan), Oronsay *Colonsay* (max. 22 on 13th Jan), Salum Bay *Tiree* (14 on 13th Feb), Loch Etive (Outer) *N Argyll* (max. 12 on 15th Feb & 14th Mar), Loch Sween *Mid-Argyll* (max. 13 on 15th Feb), Inverlussa (Loch Spelve) *Mull* (12 on 17th Mar), and Loch na Lathaich *Mull* (14 on 9th Apr). The NEWS count gave a total of 21 for the whole of *Tiree* in Feb.

The NEWS total for Argyll (Dec 97-Jan 98) was 379, of which 246 were on *Mull*.

Breeding. At Garvard on *Colonsay*, 8 nests held a total of 26 eggs with max. 10 young reared, and 2 nests at Mid/West Loch Fada produced at least one young. No nests were found at former heronry sites at Loch Cholla and Scalasaig. Two pairs on Oronsay *Colonsay* had one young each on 9th May. No other breeding records were received.

The only sites with counts of 10 or more birds during the latter part of the year were Holy Loch *Cowal* (max. 11 on 25th Jul), Carnain (Loch Indaal) *Islay* (12 on 29th Aug), Loch Etive (Outer) (max. 24 on 12th Sep), inner Loch Scridain/Loch Beg *Mull* (max. 11 on 11th Oct), and Loch Don *Mull* (max. 12 on 6th Dec). At least 30 birds were reported roosting at Ederline Farm *Mid-Argyll* on 31st Oct.

SPOONBILL *Platalea leucorodia* 0144
V Six previous Argyll records. The most recent records were individuals on Islay in 1978 and at Dervaig, Mull, in 1994.

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On the morning of 8th Oct, 3 regular birdwatching visitors to *Islay* scanning the shores of Loch Indaal from Bridgend hide were astonished to see no less than 4 large white long-legged birds with spatulate bills, obviously Spoonbills. Closer examination from the Whinpark viewpoint revealed extensive pink on the bills, indicating that they were juveniles. An excellent photograph by the finders shows the birds feeding as a close group and they were seen in this way by many other observers until 12th Oct. After this a single bird was present until 19th Oct [C. M. & A. A. Johnson, P. F. Young *et al.*]*.

At about this time, 4 single birds were found in N Ireland, one on Bute and one in Ayrshire [*per* A. Murray].

MUTE SWAN *Cygnus olor* Eala

0152

R Widespread but uncommon breeding species, both inland and at sheltered coastal locations. Scarce breeder in Kintyre; absent from Colonsay. Breeding recorded in 25% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Emigration from some breeding localities in winter.

During the first part of the year, the highest count reported for Oban Harbour *Mid-Argyll* was 51 on 18th Feb. The max. whole-island count of *Tiree* at this time was 27 on 11th Apr, mostly at Loch a 'Phuill. The only other sites with counts of more than 10 birds were Ardrishaig *Mid-Argyll* (13 on 13th Jan), Port Ellen *Islay* (max. 20 inc. 4 imm. on 17th Jan), and Loch Etive (Outer) *N Argyll* (max. 11 on 14th Mar).

Breeding. In the Argyll part of the SAMS study area, 3 pairs reared 11 large young (all 3 bred in areas where mink were successfully controlled to protect breeding seabirds), 3 pairs were seen in late Jun or Jul with small young but the outcome was unknown, and 11 pairs reared no young: 6-7 of these 11 are known to have laid or nested. Colour-ringing of this species has given intriguing insights: for example, on 31st Oct the resident pair at Dunstaffnage *Mid-Argyll* with 3 large young were challenged by a pair with 4 large young that had bred 47 km to the NW near Fort William. The females and young looked on during a long confrontation between the 2 males although no bodily contact was observed. The resident male eventually saw the intruders off and they were not seen there again, although they did appear together in Oban Harbour on 23rd Dec. Elsewhere, the only reports from *Islay* were of 2 pairs at Loch Gruinart in May (outcome unknown) and a pair at Claggain Bay in Aug with 3 large young. Eight pairs were reported nesting on *Mull* in May but by Aug only one young with a pair of adults near Craignure was recorded and the 5 cygnets hatched at Loch Don had all disappeared. *Tiree* fared rather better, with one failure among 4 pairs and broods of one, 6 and 7 all surviving until at least until Aug. In *Mid-Argyll*, a pair with 3 young were present in the Crinan area from July to at least Sep, and a nesting pair were on Loch a' Choire in May (outcome unknown). An adult was seen on Holy Loch *Cowal* with 5 young until at least late Aug, a pair at the mouth of the River Ruel *Cowal* had one young on 22nd Aug, and a pair with 3 young were in Campbeltown Loch *Kintyre* from Oct to Dec. Thus by the end of the summer at least 41 young are known to have been reared in Argyll (but data from *Islay*, at least, are incomplete).

A male swan was seen at head of Loch Feochan on 23rd Jun associating with two white geese. As the observer approached the swan flew out to sea. The geese followed, on foot and swimming, until they were with it again!

The highest counts during the second half of the year were max. 24 on Loch Etive (Outer) on 4th Oct, 16 (inc. 3 juvs) at Scoor *Mull* on 14th Dec, 12 at Loch Crinan

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Mid-Argyll on 17th Oct, 17 in Loch Sween *Mid-Argyll* on 11th Oct, max. 51 at Loch Craignish *Mid-Argyll* on 7th Dec, max. 50+ in Oban Harbour on 24th Dec, and 65 on Loch a' Phuill on 8th Nov (although the WeBS count for all of Tìree reached 69 on 6th Dec). No other sites had counts exceeding 10 birds.

WHOOPEER SWAN *Cygnus cygnus* Eala bhan 0154
W P Common passage species; small numbers winter. A few birds summer in most years and breeding has been recorded.

Apart from a total of 22 birds on Tìree on 15th Feb, no more than 4 birds were recorded at any one site until about the middle of Mar, most of these being on *Islay* and in *Mid-Argyll*. Birds were much more numerous and widespread on spring passage. Starting with 10 flying north at Loch Don Mull on 13th, numbers in Mar soon built up, with 74 flying N over the Reef Tìree on 18th, 20 over Loch Tulla N Argyll on 20th, 66 flying NW over High Barnakill *Mid-Argyll* on 21st, and ca 80 over Croggan (Loch Spelve) Mull also on 21st. On 22nd Mar there were 40 at Kilchrenan *Mid-Argyll*, 16 flying NW over Loch Don and 11 flying in from Ireland at Portnahaven *Islay*. On Tìree numbers built up to an impressive total of 263 on Lochs Bhasapol, an Eilein and a' Phuill on 24th Mar. After 20 at Aird of Kinloch Mull on 26th Mar and 25 over Glen Cannel Mull on 5th Apr, numbers fell quickly until a single bird was over Loch Assapol Mull on 19th Apr.

From May to Aug summering birds were reported at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve & Ardnave Loch *Islay* (an immature bird), Loch Bhasapol Tìree (where 4 1st years with 2 adults in May fell to 2 1st years and 2 adults by Aug), and Mid/East Loch Fada Colonsay (one from at least 10th-24th Jun).

The first returning birds were at Loch Don, where 3 were seen on 15th Sep, and 8 on the following day, and 9 on 19th. *Islay's* first birds were 5 at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve on 26th Sep. In early Oct small parties of up to 10 birds were reported from various sites on Colonsay and in *Mid-Argyll*, and there were up to 22 at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve. On Tìree numbers in Oct peaked at 94 on 16th. Extensive flooding of fields at The Laggan Kintyre attracted an unprecedented gathering there: from 29 (inc. 7 sub-adults) on 16th Oct, numbers built up to a peak of 142 (inc. 37 sub-adults) on 28th - a record count for this area. Meanwhile on *Islay*, a total of 83 was recorded during the SNH Goose count on 27th-28th Oct.

By contrast, the only counts exceeding 10 birds during Nov were, curiously, all on the 8th when 18 (inc. 4 1st years) were at Ulva Lagoons (Loch Sween) *Mid-Argyll*, 11 in Loch Indaal *Islay*, and the monthly max. of 110 on Tìree. On 6th Dec the total for Tìree peaked at 129, and the only other site with more than 10 birds in Dec was Scoor Mull with 16 on 14th. Smaller numbers were seen at various other locations on *Coll*, *Colonsay*, *Islay* and *Mull* and in *Kintyre* and *Mid-Argyll* during Oct-Dec.

PINK-FOOTED GOOSE *Anser brachyrhynchus* Geadh gorm 0158
P W Variable numbers on passage, with occasional large flocks. Relatively few winter.

Between Jan and Apr up to 4 individuals were seen at 8 locations on *Islay* and 4 on Tìree while 6 birds were with Greylags at Inion (Loch Etive) N Argyll on 14th Mar. Subsequently 3 were seen with the Greylags on Loch Etive at various times from Jun to Dec.

A single bird was with Greylags on Tìree on 22nd Aug and the next occurrence on the island was 77 flying in off the sea at Carrastaoin on 15th Sep.

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At the end of Sep there were indications of an extraordinary influx into Argyll. It started with 100 birds flying NE over Loch Don *Mull* on 28th Sep, followed on 30th by 350 flying E over Tobermory *Mull* in 20 mins., 300 in groups of 20-100 at Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll*, and 250 considered as probably this species over Loch Don. The following day, 1st Oct, 184 flying E over Bleachfield Farm at The Laggan *Kintyre* was the largest recorded count in this area. On *Tiree* 107 flew over Heylipol on 2nd Oct and at Connel *Mid-Argyll* 100 geese in two flocks flying over on 4th calling noisily are considered also to have been this species. At Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve a max. of 189 on 5th Oct followed by slightly smaller numbers from 6th-13th might have been part of this movement but could also have been normal seasonal passage through Islay. Unusual numbers were also recorded at this time from the Firth of Clyde and Malcolm Ogilvie (in corres.) suspected that the larger-than-usual passage through Argyll coincided with easterly winds bringing the birds further W than their usual route to eastern Scotland.

After this, apart from 14 at Kintra *Islay* on 28th Oct, no more than 9 birds were recorded at any one site until the year end.

WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE *Anser albifrons* Geadh bhlar 0159
WI Birds are of the Greenland race A. a. flavirostris. Argyll holds about 40% of the world population of this race in winter, mainly on Islay. A small introduced population breeds on the Rhinns of Islay. Birds of the European race A. a. albifrons occur as vagrants.

On *Islay*, there were 12,418 birds in Jan (cf 11,853 in 1997). Also in Jan, a dead bird was found at Drumlemble *Kintyre* on 4th that had been ringed at Sondestrom Fjord, NW Greenland, in 1992.

A co-ordinated count in late Mar-early Apr gave a total of 17,669 in Argyll [Table 1]. In *Kintyre* birds were at The Laggan (800), Clachan (203) and Tayinloan (1,142) and in *Mid-Argyll* at Danna (99), Keills (240), Ulva (102) and Moine Mhor (28) [SNH Goose Project]. The main spring departure took place from mid-Apr and 350 migrant birds passed over *Tiree* on 18th. The last birds at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* were 70 on 27th Apr and single birds were at Oronsay Farm *Colonsay* on 5th May and Loch an Eilein *Tiree* on 9th May.

Breeding. Three pairs of introduced birds bred in the southern part of the Rhinns of *Islay*, but only one brood of 2 young was seen. Elsewhere, the only breeding season record was of a single bird first seen with Greylags at Heylipol *Tiree* on 19th Jun and later at Caolas on 22nd Aug.

The first returning birds were 8 at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* on 21st Sep with up to 25 there until the end of the month. Elsewhere birds did not appear until early Oct with 30 over Heylipol on 2nd, the first of the season for *Tiree*. The co-ordinated count carried out in mid-Nov gave a total of 17,735 birds in Argyll [Table 2] (cf 18,077 mid-Nov 1997). As in spring, most of the *Kintyre* birds were at The Laggan (1,215) and Tayinloan (1,182), the remainder (196) being at Clachan; 537 of those counted in *Mid-Argyll* were on the Tayvallich peninsula, the remaining 35 being at Moine Mhor [SNH Goose Project].

Ageing of samples on *Islay* in the second winter period showed that 19.03% were young birds (cf 10-year average of 16.05%), with mean brood size 4.09 (n=161) (cf 3.63 in 1997). A sample of virtually the whole population at Tayinloan gave a similar percentage of young birds (20.2%).

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Table 1. Numbers of White-fronted Geese in Argyll areas, 30th Mar to 3rd Apr 1998.

Kintyre	Mid-Argyll	Mull	Coll	Tiree	Colonsay	Oronsay	Islay	Jura
2,145	469	27	1,052	1,464	163	125	12,224	n/r

Table 2. Numbers of White-fronted Geese in Argyll areas, 14th to 18th Nov 1998.

Kintyre	Mid-Argyll	Mull	Coll	Tiree	Colonsay	Oronsay	Islay	Jura
2,593	572	0	727	1,299	94	24	12,426	n/r

GREYLAG GOOSE *Anser anser* Geadh glas 0161
R W P I Increasing breeding population on Colonsay, Mull, Tiree and Coll. These may be native birds that have colonised from the Outer Hebrides, while introduced birds breed in Mid-Argyll. Breeding recorded in 6% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

In late Mar-early Apr, a total of 3,334 was recorded in Argyll during the SNH co-ordinated goose count, 54% of these birds being on Tiree [Table 3]. However there were significant numbers at 2 sites not covered by this survey, namely Muckairm (Loch Etive) Mid-Argyll (up to 100 in the bay during winter) and Ardyne Farm Cowal (ca 250 late Jan-early Mar). Moreover, larger numbers were recorded at two further sites earlier in the winter, namely Moine Mhor Mid-Argyll (max. 320 on 12th Jan) and Tiree (total for island 2,417 on 17th Feb). A migratory flock of ca 90 flew N over Loch Ba Mull on 6th Apr.

Breeding. Confirmed breeding records came from Coll, Colonsay, Islay, Mid-Argyll, Mull and Tiree. Colonsay (excl. Oronsay) had 6 breeding pairs which produced a total of 18 goslings (+ 18 feral birds with 3 goslings). The only reports from Islay were of an agitated pair on Ardnave Loch (31st May), a pair with b/10 on Loch Gorm (5th Jun) and a pair with b/4 on Loch Corr (7th Jun). In Mid-Argyll, a nest with c/4 was found on Eilean an Ruisg (Loch Feochan) (13th May), the remains of 4/5 hatched eggs were found in a nest on Bach Island (Sound of Kerrera) and, in the Loch Etive area, 2 pairs bred at Kilmarnaig (Connel) and a hatched nest was found (25th May), a nest with c/4 was on the Abbot's Isles (13th May), and 3 pairs with 13 goslings were in the bay near Stonefield on 16th Jul. On Mull, 6 pairs were breeding on the S side of Ulva Island, 3 pairs with 15 goslings were on Loch Peallach in Jun, 2 pairs had small goslings on Loch Don on 6th Jun, a pair with b/4 were at Achnadrish on 29th May, and at Ban Eileanan a nest with hatched eggs was found on 25th May. Also a 'small number' of breeding pairs were reported from the Treshnish Isles in Jun. A survey on Tiree in Jun located 426 goslings in 116 broods with mean brood size 3.67 (cf 3.42 in 1997) and a total breeding population of 150-200 pairs was suggested. An adult which had been ringed on N Uist was found on Tiree with a mate and gosling, suggesting one origin of the breeding birds on Tiree.

On 31st Jul, 34 passage/wintering birds appeared at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve Islay and numbers there built up to 189 by 24th Aug. On Tiree 2,807 were found during an all-island census on 22nd Aug. In mid-Nov, the co-ordinated goose count produced a total of 5,203 in Argyll [Table 4] (cf 2,675 in 1997). Of this total 54% were on Tiree and all the Mid-Argyll birds were at Moine Mhor [SNH Goose project]. The last sizeable count at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve was 154 on 26th Sep. Other counts later in the winter included 29 on Oronsay Colonsay on 10th Oct, 41 at

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Blarcreen (Loch Etive) on 4th Oct, 350+ near Ballure *Kintyre* on 7th Dec, and 385 at The Laggan *Kintyre* on 26th Dec.

During 1998, 240 birds were ringed on Coll and Tiree.

Table 3. *Numbers of Greylag Geese in Argyll areas, 30th Mar to 3rd Apr 1998.*

Kintyre	Mid-Argyll	Mull	Coll	Tiree	Colonsay	Oronsay	Islay	Jura
201	254	nil	953	1,797	79	30	20	n/r

Table 4. *Numbers of Greylag Geese in Argyll areas, 14th to 18th Nov 1998.*

Kintyre	Mid-Argyll	Mull	Coll	Tiree	Colonsay	Oronsay	Islay	Jura
461	203	246	645	2,822	129	nil	97	n/r

SNOW GOOSE *Anser caerulescens* Geadh ban 0163
I W A small introduced population breeds on Coll and on Mull, wintering mainly on Coll. Stragglers among wintering Greenland Whitefronts on Islay and Tiree may have a wild origin.

An adult bird of unknown origin was seen with Greenland White-fronted Geese at Barrapol *Tiree* from at least 17th Feb to 16th Apr. Interestingly, a single Snow Goose was seen with White-fronts passing over the Outer Hebrides on 18th Apr, at the same time as our birds were departing from *Islay/Tiree* [per AJL].

Breeding. On Coll a group of 15 birds was present (6 white-phase and 5 blue-phase adults together with 4 goslings).

Once again a single adult appeared with Greenland White-fronts and was present in the Barrapol/Loch a 'Phuill *Tiree* area from at least 19th Nov to 6th Dec. On 29th Nov 38 birds were counted in the Crossapol Bay area of *Coll*; these included 11 blue-phase birds and a single white-phase gosling, and 4 of 7 birds ringed on the island during the summer were still present [AJL].

CANADA GOOSE *Branta canadensis* Geadh dubh 0166
I W Resident population on Colonsay, introduced in 1934. Regular breeding in Mid-Argyll since 1992, and occasional breeding attempts elsewhere. A transatlantic origin seems probable for at least some of the medium-sized and small individuals seen in winter goose flocks on Islay.

In Jan possibly vagrant small or medium-sized birds were reported from *Islay* as follows: one medium-sized bird (possibly race *parvipes*) with Barnacle Geese at Traigh Gruinart on 19th Jan, one small, stubby-billed, pale bird (possibly *hutchinsii*) with Barnacles at Loch Skerrols on 22nd Jan, and one medium-sized bird, again with Barnacles, at Ardnave Loch on 26th Jan. Elsewhere 26 were on Oronsay *Colonsay* on 12th Jan, 12 at Kilchrenan *Mid-Argyll* on 1st Mar, and 16 on Loch Leathan *Mid-Argyll* on 9th Mar.

Breeding. Breeding was confirmed on *Colonsay* and in *Kintyre* and *Mid-Argyll*. On *Colonsay* (including Oronsay), 7 pairs with broods totalling 21 young, together with a further 28 failed/non-breeders, were found in Jun. In *Mid-Argyll* pairs were present at Loch nan Eilean and Dubh Loch (Eredine) on 2nd May with a bird sitting on a nest at the latter site, a pair was breeding at Cam Loch (Knapdale), and a pair with 8 large goslings were at Eilean Inshaig, Ardfern, on 11th Jul. A pair with 2

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goslings were at Peninver Kintyre in Jun.

A moulting flock of 66 adults and two broods was seen on Oronsay on 8th Jul, and 60 birds on Loch Ederline *Mid-Argyll* on 24th Jul also included some immatures.

In the second winter period, possible vagrants accompanying migrant geese of other species on *Islay* included: small individuals at Carnain on 6th Nov, at Ballinaby on 18th Nov and at Grainel (Loch Gruinart) on 8th Dec as well as a medium-sized bird at Kintra on 28th Dec. Apart from 26 on Oronsay on 15th Oct, there were no reports of flocks of 'large' birds during the latter part of the year.

BARNACLE GOOSE *Branta leucopsis* Cathan 0167
WI Very large numbers of birds from the Greenland population winter on *Islay*, with smaller numbers elsewhere. A few birds occasionally summer, and at least some of these are probably injured. A few introduced birds also breed on the Rhinns of *Islay*

An all-island count for *Islay* in Jan gave a total of 32,392. Peak winter counts elsewhere included 225 at Balmeanach *Mull* on 2nd Jan, 410 at Danna Island *Mid-Argyll* on 8th Feb, 421 on Oronsay *Colonsay* on 3rd Feb, and 1,359 on *Tiree* on 22nd Feb. By the time of a co-ordinated goose count on 30th Mar – 3rd Apr, numbers on *Islay* had fallen to 31,099 (cf 32,398 in 1997), but still accounted for over 93% of the Argyll total of 32,841 birds (cf 35,053 in 1997). The remaining birds were on *Coll* (653), *Tiree* (1,089), and Oronsay/*Colonsay* (436) [SNH Goose project]. No birds were reported elsewhere in Argyll during Jan-Apr. The main spring departure took place from mid-Apr, when a remarkable 6,280 were counted passing over *Tiree* on 18th, while 1,000 were heading NW over Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* on 27th. The last birds seen were 2 on the beach at Balevullin *Tiree* on 30th May.

In late summer, 2 birds were seen grazing on Gunna *Coll* on 23rd Jul and (possibly the same) 2 were at Balephetrish Hill *Tiree* throughout Aug. A single bird was present at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve on 24th Aug.

The first wintering birds arrived on *Islay* on 12th Sep, when 18 were at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve with numbers there building up rapidly to 870 on 5th Oct. The main arrival began on 10th Oct when 82 flew over *Tiree*, 42 were on Oronsay and 560 arrived at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve. By contrast, single birds were seen on 2 dates in late Sep on the W coast of Iona *Mull*, near Tobermory *Mull* on 6th Oct, at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 11th Oct, and with White-fronts at Tayinloan *Kintyre* on 14th Oct. A co-ordinated count was carried out in mid-Nov: *Islay* had 33,544 birds (cf 32,812 in 1997) and held 93% of the Argyll total of 36,178 (cf 34,123 in 1997), with the remainder on *Coll* (415), Oronsay-*Colonsay* (463), *Tiree* (1036) and at Danna Island *Mid-Argyll* (720) [SNH Goose project]. An all-island count on *Tiree* on 30th Dec yielded a total of 1,185.

Ageing of a sample of 10,254 birds on *Islay* showed that breeding success in 1998 had been above average with 12.84% of young birds (cf 10-year average of 10.54%) and a mean brood size of 2.28 (n=178).

BRENT GOOSE *Branta bernicla* Geadh got 0168
WP Uncommon passage migrant. Very few winter. Most birds seen in Argyll are of the light-bellied race *B. b. hrota*, which breeds in Greenland and arctic Canada, wintering mainly in Ireland. Birds of the dark-bellied race *B. b. bernicla* occur occasionally, and there has been one record of the Black Brant *B. b. nigricans*.

Except for one with Barnacle Geese at Ruaig *Tiree* on 18th Feb, all records in the period Jan-Mar were from *Islay*, where up to 7 were seen, mainly around Loch

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Indaal. Birds on spring passage were recorded in Apr on Oronsay *Colonsay* (59 on 16th) and over Loch an Eilean *Tiree* (17 on 24th). The last spring records were 4 in Loch Indaal on 26th Apr and one at Loch Corran *Islay* on 27th.

The first birds of autumn were on *Islay* where 33 were at Portnahaven on 6th Sep. The species was widely reported in the following days with 12 at Hynish *Tiree* on 8th, 107 at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve on 9th, 3 at Lagganulva *Mull* on 11th, and singles at Arrinagour *Coll* on 11th and Sound of Iona *Mull* on 13th. At Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* one was present 10th-12th Oct and 64 flew past S on 14th Oct. Up to 5 individuals were reported from various locations on *Islay* until mid-Dec. Otherwise, one was with Greenland White-fronted Geese at Tayinloan *Kintyre* throughout Nov, and 6 were at Loch na Cille *Mid-Argyll* on 11th Nov.

SHELDUCK *Tadorna tadorna* Cra-gheadh 0173
B W Widespread breeding species, especially on sandy coasts. Breeding recorded in 39% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). The majority are absent from Aug to Nov when they migrate to moulting grounds.

At Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart *Islay*, numbers peaked at 264 in Feb (cf max. 271 in Jan 1997) [Table 5]. Elsewhere, the highest counts during Jan - Apr were at Oronsay *Colonsay* (max.35 on 16th Jan & 20th Mar) and at Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* where 44 in Apr was the highest spring count in recent years. No other site had counts exceeding 20 birds.

Breeding. On *Colonsay* (inc. Oronsay), a total of 25 pairs with 8 broods totalling 34 young were seen in Jun. *Islay* had 4 broods of young at Loch Indaal and 5 pairs were present at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve, one of which had a brood of 6 young. On 28th May a pair with b/3 were reported from Iona *Mull*, and 3 broods of young were seen in Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* on 9th Aug.

After single juveniles were recorded at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 16th Aug and at Grasspoint *Mull* on 25th Aug, none was reported until 11th Oct when 5 were at Loch Indaal. By Dec numbers at Loch Gruinart and Loch Indaal had built up to 148 [Table 5]. The only other site with more than 10 birds later in the year was Salum Bay *Tiree* with 15 on 31st Dec.

Table 5 *Maximum monthly counts in 1998 of Shelduck at two sea-lochs on Islay.*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L.Gruinart	68	201	148	144	86	62	0	14	0	2	51	107
L. Indaal	82	63	71	57	61	21	12	0	0	5	17	41

MANDARIN *Aix galericulata* 0178
I Has bred regularly at Loch Eck (Cowal) in recent years. The recent expansion of the Argyll population (whose origin is unknown) suggests that it is well on the way to becoming self-sustaining.

A female with young was seen at Creggans *Cowal* in May and 18 pairs used the nest boxes provided on Loch Eck *Cowal*. During Mar at least 50 birds were seen coming to a pond at Glenbranter *Cowal* to feed [D. Anderson].

WIGEON *Anas penelope* Glas lach 0179
B W P Scarce and irregular breeding species. Common winter visitor to all areas.

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In the early part of the year numbers at Loch Gruinart and Loch Indaal *Islay* peaked at 587 birds in Jan [Table 6] (cf 464 in Jan 1997). The only other sites with counts of more than 100 birds were Loch Etive (Outer) *N Argyll* (max. 101 on 14th Mar) and Loch Don *Mull* (max. 120 on 7th Jan). Flocks of 50 or more were reported from 5 other lochs: Loch Craignish *Mid-Argyll*, Loch Gilp *Mid-Argyll*, Loch Sween *Mid-Argyll*, Loch Spelve *Mull* and Loch Creran *N Argyll*.

The NEWS count total for Argyll (Dec 97-Jan 98) was 1,488.

Breeding. Breeding occurred at Loch Tulla *N Argyll* where at least 2 broods of young were seen with 3 females on 13th Jun. Two pairs were present at Loch Scammadale *Mid-Argyll* from 4th to 8th May, and at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve a max. of 7 loafing males were present in Jun, but with no proof of breeding in either case.

Later in the year, numbers at Loch Gruinart and Loch Indaal built up to a peak of 639 in Nov [Table 6]. However the peak count for all sites listed in Table 6 was 1,748, in Oct (when there were also peak counts in Loch Sween and Loch Laich). Other sites with counts of more than 100 birds were Campbeltown Loch *Kintyre* (105 on 25th Dec), Loch Sween (max. 140 on 11th Oct), Loch Etive (Outer) (max. 105 on 6th Dec) and Loch Laich *N Argyll* (max. 110 on 17th Oct).

Table 6 *Maximum monthly counts in 1998 of Wigeon at two sea-lochs on Islay, at Loch Crinan (Mid-Argyll), at Holy Loch (Cowal) and on Tiree (i.e. at all sites which regularly held 100+ birds).*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L. Gruinart	175	300	280	20	4	7	0	0	75	222	223	40
L. Indaal	412	207	111	30	0	0	0	0	297	389	416	381
L. Crinan	160	151	91	0	0	0	0	0	56	658	213	110
Holy Loch	187	140	39	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	105	130	121	96
Tiree	n/r	259	217	21	0	4	10	17	122	349	156	291

AMERICAN WIGEON *Anas americana* 0180
V Three previous records for Argyll, all of single males: one on Islay in Nov 1989, one at Campbeltown Loch (Kintyre) in Feb-Apr 1992, and one on Tiree in May 1992.

A male bird was found with a flock of moulting (Eurasian) Wigeon in Loch Craignish *Mid-Argyll* on 1st Oct, while the observer was carrying out a coastal survey of Eiders. This constitutes the fourth accepted record for Argyll [S. C. Votier]*.

GADWALL *Anas strepera* Lach glas 0182
B W P Scarce but regular on passage and in winter, with most recent records from Kintyre, Islay, Mid-Argyll and Tiree. Breeding confirmed on Tiree in 1986, 1987 and 1989, and probable on Islay during 1992-94.

The only records were from Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* from Feb to Jun, with a max. of 5 (inc. 3 males) on 4th Mar.

Breeding. Despite the presence of two loafing males in May-Jun, there was no evidence of breeding.

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TEAL *Anas crecca* Crann lach 0184
B W P Widespread but uncommon breeding species. Common winter visitor. Breeding recorded in 20% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

At Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart *Islay*, numbers in the early part of the year peaked at 727 in Mar [Table 7]. The only sites, other than those in Table 7, with counts of more than 50 birds during the early part of the year were Holy Loch *Cowal* (max. 99 on 2nd Jan), Loch an Raoin *Islay* (80 on 7th Jan), and Loch Don *Mull* (max. 80 on 11th Jan).

The NEWS count total for Argyll (Dec 97-Jan 98) was 1,107.

Breeding. At Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve at least 3 broods of young were seen in Jun, 2 pairs were at Loch Riaghain *Islay* on 30th May, and at least 4 pairs were located on lochs on *Tiree*. A pair bred successfully at Loch Leathan *Mid-Argyll*, and 6 pairs at 5 hill lochs in the Eredine-Ederline area of *Mid-Argyll* in early May were considered to be breeding.

During the latter part of the year, numbers at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart peaked at 1,594 in Dec, due to a near record count at the latter site [Table 7]. Other than those listed in Table 7, the only counts of 50 or more birds were from Breachacha Loch *Coll* (90 on 29th Nov), Ballure *Kintyre* (50 on flooded fields on 29th Nov), Loch Lussa *Kintyre* (230 on 8th Nov), and Loch Don *Mull* (max. 70 on 15th Nov).

Table 7 Maximum monthly counts in 1998 of Teal at two sea-lochs on *Islay*, at Loch Crinan (*Mid-Argyll*) and on *Tiree*.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L.Gruinart	523	523	638	286	4	29	0	ca120	300	1177	1054	1429
L. Indaal	187	107	89	27	4	2	0	50	41	101	107	165
L. Crinan	145	96	43	4	0	0	0	0	50	44	c.50	110
<i>Tiree</i>	n/r	105	144	8	4	2	5	23	22	185	67	278

NEARCTIC RACE ('Green-winged Teal') *A. c. carolinensis*
V There have been six or so accepted records of this North American vagrant since 1980, mostly on Islay.

A single drake was seen on Loch Indaal *Islay* on 20th and 26th Jan [S. C. Votier]*.

1996 A single drake was at Gruinart Flats *Islay* on 15th Oct. This and those seen there every winter since 1992-93 might be the same bird [TapR]*. Another drake was seen with Common Teal overwintering at a wildfowl collection at Easter Ellister *Islay* on 1st Dec [J. Dawson]*. Away from *Islay*, a drake was present at An Faodhail *Tiree* from 27th Nov to 4th Mar 1997. From Feb 1997 onwards it was seen to be paired with a female Common Teal [MW and CRM per RAB]*.

1997 See 1996.

MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos* Lach 0186
B W P Common breeding and wintering species. Breeding recorded in 67% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

Numbers at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart *Islay* peaked at 197 in Jan [Table 8]. Other than those shown in Table 8, the only count exceeding 50 birds during the early part of the year came from Loch Gilp *Mid-Argyll* (max.62 on 19th Jan).

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The NEWS count total for Argyll (Dec 97-Jan 98) was 1,160.

Breeding. Birds were recorded in 5 of 16 BBS squares (*cf* 3 of 16 in 1997). On *Colonsay* 4 broods totalling 20 young were found in Jun, while 3 pairs bred successfully on *Sanda Kintyre*. An estimated minimum of 25 pairs bred at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve and at least 5 broods were seen. On *Tiree* the earliest evidence of breeding, a pair with one duckling, was at Balinoe on 17th Apr, and at least 3 more broods were seen subsequently. There were scattered records in Jun of confirmed breeding by lone pairs in *Mid-Argyll* and on *Mull*.

The total of 140 birds at Loch Crinan on 18th Aug was the highest count there in recent years, while the peak count at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart was 257 in Sep [Table 8]. Other than those shown in Table 8, the only sites holding more than 50 birds later in the year were Ormsary (Loch Caolisport) *Mid-Argyll*, where 78 were roosting at the high water line on 7th Oct, and Lochan Luing *Kintyre* with 70 on 4th Nov.

Table 8 *Maximum monthly counts in 1998 of Mallard at two sea-lochs on Islay, at Loch Crinan (Mid-Argyll), at Loch Etive [Outer] (North Argyll), at Holy Loch (Cowal) and on Tiree.*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L.Gruinart	46	78	22	11	23	8	0	c.150	220	89	65	34
L. Indaal	151	71	29	12	17	42	22	29	37	47	84	169
L. Crinan	100	5	13	9	10	18	5	140	16	65	96	31
L. Etive	42	77	37	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	54	112	134	135
Holy Loch	114	18	19	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	58	149	122	80	117
Tiree	n/r	24	32	40	60	65	65	55	150	203	64	91

PINTAIL *Anas acuta* Lach stiùireach 0189
B W P *Very scarce breeding species. Localised in winter, with a regular flock on Islay.*

In Jan, 22 were counted in Loch Indaal *Islay* on 18th and numbers reached a peak of 45 on 22nd. After this numbers declined [Table 9] with a last spring record of 6 on 26th Apr. Elsewhere on *Islay*, the most seen at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve in spring was 4 on 7th Apr and a pair were at Gartmain on 1st Mar. The only other records came from *Tiree*, where 10 were at Loch Riaghain on 17th Feb, falling to 8 by 15th Mar, and a pair were at Loch an Eilean on 11th Apr with a single female there on 29th Apr.

Breeding. Breeding was not attempted or suspected with no sightings on *Islay* or *Tiree* from May to Jul.

1997 *Correction* Entry in *ABR* 14 page 34 should read: "On *Tiree*, a pair bred successfully rearing 5 young" (not "7 pairs").

During the latter part of the year, numbers at Loch Indaal peaked at 32 on 7th Dec [Table 9] but there were no *Islay* records away from there and Loch Gruinart. On *Tiree* the first returning bird was a female at Loch a'Phuill on 25th Aug and the max. there was 5 on 4th Oct. Numbers at Loch Riaghain *Tiree* totalled 10 on 6th Dec. The only other records were of single females flying S past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 17th and 21st Oct.

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Table 9 *Maximum monthly counts in 1998 of Pintail at two sea-lochs on Islay.*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L.Gruinart	2	2	2	4	0	0	0	0	5	5	1	0
L. Indaal	45	23	15	6	0	0	0	2	2	16	18	32

GARGANEY *Anas querquedula* Lach crann 0191
S Rare. Bred in Kintyre in 1994 and may have bred on Islay in 1993.

A pair was present at Loch Bhasapol *Tiree* on 26th Apr and a drake, still there on 2nd May, was seen subsequently at Loch Riaghain on 16th May and at Loch an Eilean on 20th May. At Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* a male was seen on 11th May and 2 males were there on 14th May. There was no sign of a female or evidence of breeding. The only other record was of a pair in eclipse plumage at Loch a 'Phuill *Tiree* on 7th Aug.

BLUE-WINGED TEAL *Anas discors* 0192
V The only previous record for Argyll is of one on Tiree in 1986.

A male was present on the evening of 16th May at Loch a 'Phuill *Tiree*. It was not seen there subsequently [MW]. Amazingly a male was also seen on flooded fields at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* from 24th to at least 30th May and was seen displaying on 25th. [ASC, MP, FR, CRM, MAO *et al.*]*. Possibly these records involve the same bird.

SHOVELER *Anas clypeata* Lach a'ghuib leathainn 0194
B W P Uncommon. Most records from Islay and Tiree.

The majority of records during the year came from Loch Gruinart *Islay* and from *Tiree* with both sites having unusually high numbers [see Table 10]. The only records from elsewhere were of 2 on Oronsay *Colonsay* on 3rd May and 2 again on 5th May.

Breeding. At Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay*, 8 males were seen in Jun and taken to indicate 8 breeding pairs. Two broods of young were seen there on 10th Jun. On *Tiree* 5 broods totalling 20 ducklings were seen in Jun. A female was seen on Loch Breac *Colonsay* on 6th Jun but there was no evidence of breeding.

During the latter part of the year, numbers at Loch Gruinart peaked at 54 on 5th Nov; a new record count at this site. Apart from the counts from *Tiree* shown in Table 10, and 4 at Loch Indaal *Islay* on 7th Dec, the only sighting elsewhere was again on Oronsay where one was present on 15th Aug.

Table 10. *Maximum monthly counts in 1998 of Shoveler at Loch Gruinart (Islay) and at the four main freshwater lochs on Tiree.*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L.Gruinart	44	29	25	10	15	8	0	3	21	43	54	0
<i>Tiree</i> *	n/r	19	31	6	16	13	9	6	6	18	16	18

* *Mostly on Loch Bhasapol and/or Loch a 'Phuill.*

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POCHARD *Aythya ferina* Lach mhasach 0198
W No confirmed breeding in recent years. Wintering flocks generally small.

The highest count during the early part of the year came from Loch Bhasapol *Tiree* where 39 were present on 15th Feb. The only other site with more than 30 birds was Loch Skerrols *Islay* with 35 on 14th Jan and 36 on 22nd Jan. Elsewhere the flock at Loch Leathan (Kilmichael Forest) *Mid-Argyll* peaked at 15 on 24th Jan and none were reported there after 10th Feb, when there were 10. The last spring record was 9 birds on Loch nan Druimnean *Mid-Argyll* on 6th Mar.

The first returning bird was a male on Loch Nell *Mid-Argyll* on 21st Sep. After one on Loch Riaghain on 1st Oct most *Tiree* records were from Loch Bhasapol, where numbers reached 16 on 22nd Nov and peaked at 21 on 6th Dec. The only other records were 2 on Loch na Druimnean on 5th Nov, 10 on Loch Ballygrant *Islay* on 20th Dec, and 3 on Lussa Loch *Kintyre* on 28th Dec.

TUFTED DUCK *Aythya fuligula* Lach thopach 0203
B W Scarce breeding species. Breeding recorded in 12% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Common winter visitor.

The highest count during the early part of the year was on *Tiree* on 15th Mar, where 94 out of a total of 130 were on Loch Bhasapol [see Table 11]. The only other sites with counts of more than 10 birds were Loch Skerrols *Islay* (max. 20 on 1st Mar), Loch Leathan (Kilmichael Forest) *Mid-Argyll* (max. 20 on 12th Jan) and Mid Loch Fada *Colonsay* (11 on 3rd May).

Breeding. On *Tiree* 7 broods totalling 32 ducklings were located, and 5 breeding pairs were found on *Colonsay* in May-June. Pairs were also seen in the breeding season at a Camas Daoine Loch *Mid-Argyll*, Loch a' Choire (Ford) *Mid-Argyll*, Loch Scammadale *Mid-Argyll* and Loch Gorm *Islay*.

During the latter part of the year, peak counts were 106 on *Tiree* on 6th Dec (inc. 68 at Loch Bhasapol) and 19 at Ardnave Loch *Islay* on 10th Nov [see Table 11]. The only other counts of more than 10 birds were 12 on Loch Ballygrant *Islay* on 8th Oct, max. 11 on Lochan Tainish *Mid-Argyll* in Nov, and 17 (all drakes) on Dubh Loch (Glen Shira) *Mid-Argyll* on 3rd Nov. Single drakes at Lochan Luing and Loch na Beiste *Kintyre* on 4th Nov were unusual records for this area.

Table 11 *Maximum monthly counts in 1998 of Tufted Duck at Ardnave Loch (Islay) and at the four main freshwater lochs on Tiree.*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Ardnave L.	n/r	n/r	10	n/r	2	0	n/r	2	8	17	19	9
<i>Tiree</i>	n/r	99	130	82	32	13	9	5	4	49	56	106

SCAUP *Aythya marila* Lach mhara 0204
W P Large wintering flock at Loch Indaal (Islay). Scarce elsewhere. Occasionally summers.

Numbers at Loch Indaal *Islay* peaked at 1,110 on 18th Jan (the highest count there since 1993), with 271 still present on 26th Apr [Table 12]: the last record there was on 17th May when 21 were counted. The only other records during the early part of the year were on *Tiree*, where 2 drakes were on Loch Bhasapol from 15th Feb to the end of Mar, with one staying until the end of Apr, and 12 at Gott Bay on 7th May; and

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on Oronsay *Colonsay* where 3 were seen on 20th Mar.

There were no records in Jun or Jul.

The first returning birds were 9 seen flying S past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 25th Aug. Numbers at Loch Indaal built up from 15 on 31st Aug to a peak of 1,010 on 7th Dec [Table 12]. The only other records were from *Tiree*, where one or two birds were located in Oct and Nov and a max. of 3 on 6th Dec.

Table 12 *Maximum monthly counts in 1998 of Scaup at Loch Indaal (Islay).*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L.Indaal	1,110	1,040	310	271	21	0	3	15	50	298	870	1,010

LESSER SCAUP *Aythya affinis* 0205
V No previous records for Argyll.

On 6th Nov C. Bradshaw, who was visiting *Islay*, found an odd-looking duck among the flock of Tufted Ducks on Ardnave Loch. On closer inspection he became convinced that the bird was a 1st year female Lesser Scaup. The following day local bird watchers also obtained lengthy views and came to the same conclusion [MAO, CRM, ASC]. What was presumably the same individual was seen on several occasions subsequently, and a further description was submitted for a sighting at the same location on 9th Dec [AJL]. Both this and the description provided by C. Bradshaw were later accepted by BBRC. The bird was later seen at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve on 16th Dec and the last reported sighting in 1998 was at Ardnave Loch on 31st Dec.

EIDER *Somateria mollissima* Lach lochlannach 0206
B W P Common in all areas. Breeding recorded in 66% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Large flocks of moulting drakes and first-year birds gather at some sites during Jun to Aug. Many Argyll breeding birds winter in the Firth of Clyde.

During Jan-Apr, flocks of 100 or more birds were reported from Loch Gilp *Mid-Argyll* (150 on 19th Jan), Balephetrish-Salum *Tiree* (151 offshore on 19th Feb), Eilean Aoghainn (Loch Fyne) *Mid-Argyll* (130 on 28th Feb), Kilfinichen (Loch Scridain) *Mull* (max. 150 on 25th Mar) and Loch Indaal *Islay* (max. 160 on 26th Apr).

The NEWS count total for Argyll (Dec 97/Jan 98) was 3,283 of which 2,092 were in the Loch Long/Gair Loch/Dunoon area.

Breeding. On *Colonsay* a census in Jun, found 20 males and 45 females without young as well as 35 females with 33 broods totalling 94 juvs. (mean brood size of sample on Ardkenish peninsula = 2.62 [cf 3.06 in 1997]). In addition, reports of females with broods of young came from many sites in *Cowal, Islay, Kintyre, Mid-Argyll, Mull* and *Tiree*.

A co-ordinated count of Eiders in the Firth of Clyde which took place 19th-21st Sep gave a total of 4,771 for the Argyll part of the area (cf 5,715 in 1997). A count of the west coast and the islands which took place at the same time found 1,896 birds there, making a grand total of 6,667 for the whole of Argyll. On average there were about 1.3 to 1.4 males per female (56-58%). Most of the concentrations were in *Cowal*, where more than 300 were counted between Otter Ferry-Creagan Dubh (884), mouth of Loch Goil-Ardentinny (600), Bull Rock-Toward Pt. (450), Ardentinnny-Holy Loch (425) and Toward Point-East Loch Striven (332). Elsewhere 350 were in Campbeltown Loch *Kintyre* and the total of 528 for *Mull* included 394 in Loch Scridain [C. Waltho/

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R.W. Furness)].

Numbers at Loch Indaal *Islay* peaked at 212 on 9th Aug [Table 13]. Significant counts later in the year included 300 in Loch Spelve *Mull* on 6th Oct, 197 off Hynish *Tiree* on 24th Oct, 201 in Holy Loch on 3rd Dec, and 449 in Campbeltown Loch on 8th Nov. Of 1,932 birds recorded at the last site between Aug and Dec, 67% were male.

Table 13 *Maximum monthly counts in 1998 of Eider at Loch Indaal (Islay).*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L. Indaal	67	82	73	160	111	161	187	212	181	171	119	78

KING EIDER *Somateria spectabilis* 0207
V Seven Argyll records dating back to 1889, all of single males. The most recent was in 1993.

On the afternoon of 2nd Jun a male in full breeding plumage was found by a visitor at Bellochantuy *Kintyre*. It was with a group of Common Eiders. It was seen several times in the following week and last recorded on 10th Jun [R. Taylor/E. J. Maguire]*. With the acceptance of the earlier records below, this becomes the tenth record for Argyll.

1995 On 26th Mar an adult male was found among a small flock of Common Eiders close to Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre*. On 1st Apr it was found again at the same site, but not seen subsequently [E. J. Maguire/A. Lambert]*.

1993 On the morning of 3rd Nov an adult male flew past Machrihanish SBO in the company of 9 Common Eiders [E. J. Maguire]*. This brings the total number of records in 1993 to three.

LONG-TAILED DUCK *Clangula hyemalis* Eun buchainn 0212
W P Uncommon winter visitor, most numerous in Kintyre, Islay, Tiree and Coll. Usually marine but occasionally seen on inland lochs. Occasional summer records.

The NEWS count total for Argyll (Dec 97-Jan 98) was 36, all but 2 of which were off *Coll*. No other counts during the early part of the year reached double figures, but small numbers were seen regularly in Balephetrish Bay *Tiree*, peaking at 8 on 21st Mar. The remaining reports, involving up to 6 birds, were in Loch Indaal *Islay*, Campbeltown Loch *Kintyre* and, again on *Tiree*, at Traigh Chornaig, Traigh nan Gilean and Sandaig. The last birds of spring were 4 (inc. 2 males) at Balephetrish Bay on 3rd May.

Apart from an adult female at Ganavan *Mid-Argyll* on 21st Jul, there were no further records until 11th Oct when one was in Loch Indaal. Following this, again only small numbers were reported, the max. single count being 9 (inc. 5 males) in the Sound of *Gigha* on 4th Nov. Up to 3 birds were recorded at Ardnave Loch, Claggain Bay & Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay*, Balemartine & Balephetrish Bay *Tiree* and, more unexpectedly, in Loch Gilp *Mid-Argyll* where a female was seen from 29th Nov to 2nd Dec. Four in Loch Indaal on 7th Dec was the last record of the year.

COMMON SCOTER *Melanitta nigra* Lach bheag dubh 0213
B W P Very rare breeding species in Islay and Mid-Argyll. Present throughout the year in the Sound of Gigha (Kintyre) and at Loch Indaal (Islay). Scarce winter visitor elsewhere, although birds may be present well offshore.

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During the early part of the year there were few records away from Loch Indaal *Islay* where numbers at peaked at 57 on 26th Apr [Table 14]. In Loch Caolisport *Mid-Argyll* there were 8 on 7th Mar and 6 (3 pairs) from at least 4th to 11th Apr. The NEWS count total for Argyll (Dec 97-Jan 98) was 67, inc. 17 in Loch Caolisport. The only other report was of a single bird at the N end of Loch Awe *Mid-Argyll* on 24th Jan.

Breeding. On *Islay*, there was a max. of 6 pairs, plus an additional female, at the usual breeding site on 5th Jun. In *Mid-Argyll*, a pair were reported near the usual site on 30th May and at the locality in *N Argyll* where a pair bred in 1997, in late Jun a single female was seen behaving as if she had a clutch of eggs, and on 6th Sep she was present with a brood of 2.

Numbers during late summer-early autumn were low again at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* where a total of only 11 were recorded on 4 dates between 24th Jul and 25th Oct. The Loch Indaal flock peaked at 68 on 11th Jul [Table 14]. Birds were present regularly in the Sound of *Gigha* until at least late Nov, with a max. count of 44 on 26th Aug. Only small numbers were recorded elsewhere, with up to 7 birds at Loch Caolisport, Loch Buie & Loch Scridain *Mull*, and Balephetrish Bay & West Hynish *Tiree*.

Table 14. *Maximum monthly counts in 1998 of Common Scoter at Loch Indaal (Islay).*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L. Indaal	38	47	52	57	48	49	68	63	59	49	38	47

SURF SCOTER *Melanitta perspicillata* 0214
V Only 7 Argyll records, mostly in spring.

A first winter bird (probably female) was present in Balephetrish Bay *Tiree* on 11th Dec [AJL/RAB/MW]*. Prior to 1996, the last record was on *Islay* in 1990 but there have now been records in each of the last three years. (A further record from *Islay* is awaiting a decision from ABRC.)

VELVET SCOTER *Melanitta fusca* Lach dubh 0215
W P Scarce but regular on the west coast of Kintyre and at Loch Indaal (Islay), with birds present during most months at the former location.

The only records were 4 (inc. 3 males) in the Sound of *Gigha* on 26th Aug, and single males flying N past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 18th Sep and 11th Oct.

1997 A female was in Loch an t-Sailein *Islay* on 29th Dec.

GOLDENEYE *Bucephala clangula* Lach bhreac 0218
W Common. Birds regularly present from late Sep or Oct to Apr or early May, with occasional summer records.

The highest count on a single day during the early part of the year was 66 on Loch a 'Phuill *Tiree* on 18th Mar [Table 15]. However, the NEWS count total for Argyll (Dec 97-Jan 98) was 362 of which 73 were recorded in Loch Caolisport *Mid-Argyll* from 25th to 30th Jan. Other than those shown in Table 15, the only sites holding more than 20 birds were Kilnaughton Bay *Islay* (max. 54 on 22nd Jan) and Loch Sween *Mid-Argyll* (max. 47 on 15th Mar).

The only record between the end of Apr and early Oct was of a single bird off

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Blairmore (Loch Long) Cowal on 5th Jun.

The first returning bird was at Loch Bhasapol Tiree on 3rd Oct but numbers did not really build up until early Nov. The total of 82 birds seen off Glennoe Jetty (Upper Loch Etive) N Argyll on 5th Dec is the largest single count of this species in Argyll in recent years. The only site not listed in Table 15 holding more than 20 birds during the second winter period was Loch Sween (max. 21 on 13th Dec).

Table 15. Maximum monthly counts in 1998 of Goldeneye at three sea-lochs: Loch Indaal (Islay), Loch Etive [Outer] (North Argyll) and Holy Loch (Cowal) and on Tiree. No birds were reported from these sites between the end of Apr and early Oct.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Oct	Nov	Dec
Loch Indaal	11	14	6	2	11	21	12
Loch Etive	11	31	34	0	15	11	17
Holy Loch	13	26	9	0	0	8	11
Tiree	n/r	37	66	1	1	44	64

SMEW *Mergus albellus* Sioltaich breac

0220

W Rare visitor

A 'redhead' was found in Loch Gilp Mid-Argyll on 11th Nov and stayed until at least 14th Nov [MJG/PD/JDi]*. This is only the second record of this species in Argyll since the long-staying bird on Islay was last seen in 1989. It occurred at about the same time as a major influx into England was reported.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER *Mergus serrator* Siolta dhearg 0221

B W Common. Breeding recorded in 52% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Large moulting flocks gather at some sites during Jul-Aug.

The only single-day count of more than 30 birds during the early part of the year was in Loch Indaal Islay (max. 31 on 18th Jan) [see Table 16]. However the NEWS count total for Argyll (Dec 97-Jan 98) was 470, inc. 37 in Loch Caolisport 25th-30th Jan.

Breeding. Adults with recently hatched young were reported from several sites in Cowal, Mid-Argyll and Mull, and 4 broods were seen on Loch an Eilein & Loch a 'Phuill Tiree. This species is noted for large clutches and broods but, if the 18 or 19 newly-hatched chicks seen with a female at Dunstaffnage Mid-Argyll on 25th Jun all came from the same nest, this would probably constitute a new British record. Perhaps even more remarkably, there were apparently many survivors from the brood on 22nd Aug, when 12 large young were seen with an adult female nearby, at Dunbeg.

A flock of moulting birds formed at Skipness Kintyre in late Jun and numbers reached 66 on 26th Aug. Later in the year, numbers at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve Islay peaked at 35 on 12th Aug, while numbers at Loch Indaal reached 191 on 6th Sep [Table 16]. No other sites reported counts exceeding 30 birds during the latter part of the year.

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Table 16. *Maximum monthly counts in 1998 of Red-breasted Merganser at two sea-lochs on Islay and at Loch Crinan (Mid-Argyll).*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L. Gruinart	3	6	6	8	13	1	0	35	18	15	10	17
L.Indaal	31	25	27	49	17	38	71	179	191	69	52	62
L. Crinan	10	1	13	12	6	5	5	14	27	0	6	20

GOOSANDER *Mergus merganser* Siolta 0223

B W Scarce breeding species, mainly in Mid-Argyll, with an estimated 40-50 pairs. Many (but apparently not all) drakes leave Argyll waters to moult at the end of May, and may gather at Loch Awe (Mid-Argyll) beforehand.

Counts of 5 or more birds during Jan to mid-Apr were: 7 at Loch Ba Mull on 26th Jan, 8 at Loch Leathan (Kilmichael Forest) *Mid-Argyll* on 1st Feb, and 6 in the Aros Estuary Mull on 22nd Feb. Records of 1-4 birds came from *Mid-Argyll* (7 other sites), Mull (5 other sites), Cowal (2 sites) and *N Argyll* (2 sites).

The NEWS count gave a total for Argyll (Dec 97-Jan 98) of 20, all on Mull.

Breeding. The only confirmed breeding records were from Lock Eck Cowal where 9 females, using nest boxes, hatched 53 chicks. There were other records of females or pairs during the breeding season in Cowal (one site), *Mid-Argyll* (3 sites), Mull (5 sites) and *N Argyll* (one site).

There were no records between late Jun and 11th Oct when 3 flew S past Machrihanish SBO Kintyre, followed by 7 there on 14th Oct and one on 25th Oct. The only other records during the second winter period were: a 'redhead' at Dubh Loch (Glen Shira) *Mid-Argyll* on 3rd Nov, 2 at Loch Beg Mull on 8th & 15th Nov, no less than 3 singles at different sites on Islay 20th Nov – 20th Dec, and 8 (5 males, 3 females) on Lussa Loch Kintyre on 25th Dec.

RED KITE *Milvus milvus* Clamhan gobhlach 0239

IV Genuine vagrants have occurred in the past, but most recent Argyll records refer to birds released in Highland Region as part of a re-introduction project begun in 1989. Further re-introductions commenced in Central Scotland in 1996. All records are requested, ideally with details of activity and presence/absence of wing tags.

A wing-tagged bird seen in the Heylipol area of Tiree on 26th-27th May had fledged from a nest the Highland region in 1997. There were reports of a bird in NW Mull in early Oct, and 2 were seen near Loch Tarsan Cowal on 3rd Nov. In neither of the latter cases were wing-tags seen.

WHITE-TAILED EAGLE *Haliaeetus albicilla* Iolair mhara 0243

I Formerly resident breeder in Argyll, but released birds currently placed in Category D of the British list. A total of 82 birds imported from Norway was released on Rum between 1974 and 1985 as part of the NCC's re-establishment programme. An additional 59 chicks, also from Norway, were released in northern Scotland by SNH between 1993 and 1998. All records are requested, ideally with details of age, activity and presence/absence of wing tags.

Breeding. In Scotland, there were 17 pairs or trios holding territory (cf 13-15 in 1997) and 15 clutches were laid. Nine successful pairs (including 2 pairs from the

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second phase of the release programme) fledged a total of 13 young. But for the fact that 2 nests of established pairs were robbed of eggs, the success rate would almost certainly have been even higher. The second phase of the release programme came to an end in 1998, 59 birds having been released in N Scotland since 1993 [RSPB].

Wandering or dispersing birds were reported from *Islay* (immature seen at Loch Gruinart and Smaull in Sep) and *Mull* (inc. in Aug an adult seen thermalling above cliffs at Caliach Point, and then plummeting in a vertical dive to take a Fulmar from the cliff face). Mainland records came from *Mid-Argyll* (immature with blue wing tags [1997 release] at Oban harbour, and an immature near Minard Point [Loch Feochan], both in Aug) and *N Argyll* (immature with blue wing tags at Ardmaddy in Feb, and 2 reports from Appin in Mar).

MARSH HARRIER *Circus aeruginosus* Clamhan Ioin 0260
P Scarce but now more or less annual, with records in 11 of the 13 years 1985-97. Most records are in May.

At least 2 individuals were seen on *Islay*. A female/immature first seen near Bowmore on 27th May was subsequently reported in the Loch Gruinart area until 5th July. Possibly the same individual (sex not stated) was on the Oa Peninsula on 6th Jul. Then an immature male appeared at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve on 3rd Aug and was seen there regularly until 27th Oct.

HEN HARRIER *Circus cyaneus* Breid air toin 0261
BWP Sparse but widespread breeding species. Breeding recorded in forty-eight 10 km squares in Argyll. A total of 471 Argyll chicks was fitted with wing-tags during 1990-93, as part of a national study by RSPB; details of all sightings of these birds are requested, even if the letter/digit on the tag cannot be read.

Numbers in the early part of the year at the two roosts at Moine Mhor *Mid-Argyll* were well down on previous years, with a total of only 4 in Jan and Feb. However the roost at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* fared much better, with a peak count of 17 on 20th Jan and 11 still present on 20th Feb. There were no reports at this time from Aros Moss *Kintyre*, but a male and 2 ringtails were roosting there in late May-early Jun. Away from the usual breeding areas, a male was seen regularly on Oronsay *Colonsay* from early Jan to late Mar, and both a male and a ringtail were reported on *Tiree* during the same period.

Breeding. A national survey carried out by the RSPB with the help of the Raptor Study Groups located 52 territorial pairs (in study areas and randomly selected 10 km squares) in Argyll and Bute. Based on these data, 124 pairs (66-189 pairs at 95% confidence levels) are estimated for the whole county, or 25% of the estimated total Scottish population. Of those fully monitored, 18 successful territories fledged 52 young (2.88 young/successful territory). Where causes of failure were known, most were natural (*e.g.* fox). On Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve 5 pairs fledged a total of 12 young [RSPB]. Adults were reported from at least 14 locations on *Mull* during Apr-May.

Oronsay *Colonsay* had a male and a female on various dates between early Aug and late Dec, and a male and a female were at different locations on *Tiree* on several dates from 9th Sep to the year end. The Loch Gruinart roost held up to 8 birds in Oct and Nov and, in Dec, the two Moine Mhor roosts also held a combined total of 8 birds. No birds were seen at the Aros Moss roost during this period.

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GOSHAWK *Accipiter gentilis* 0267
V? Last confirmed reports were in Cowal and on Mull in 1993.
 A female was seen near Glengorm Castle Mull on 27th Sep.

SPARROWHAWK *Accipiter nisus* Speireag 0269
B W P Widespread. Breeding recorded in 36% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

Birds were reported from all areas of Argyll except *Gigha* and *Jura*, often as visitors to gardens and bird tables. Prey items recorded included Chaffinch and Brown Rat.

Breeding. The species was recorded in one of 16 BBS squares (6%) (as in 1997). In the *Cowal* study area, 10 of 12 occupied sites were known to be successful and fledged 33 young (3.3 young/successful territory) [ARSG]. A pair at Fearnoch *Mid-Argyll* fledged young in late Jul. No other breeding records were received.

BUZZARD *Buteo buteo* Clamhan 0287
B W Common in all areas. Breeding recorded in 78% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

Breeding. The species was recorded in 7 of 16 BBS squares (44%), (cf 6 of 16 in 1997). On *Colonsay* incl. *Oronsay*, 48 known territories were checked and a minimum of 20 pairs were considered to have bred. Of these, a minimum of 14 pairs laid eggs and 13 of these hatched young [DCJ]. 31 occupied territories were located in the Loch Eck and Glen Branter study area *Cowal*. From these, 23 pairs are known to have fledged a minimum of 29 young. Elsewhere in *Cowal* 40 occupied territories were located but their outcome was unknown [DA, AF]. The 16 territories known to have produced young in *SW Mull* fledged a total of 25 [P. Haworth]. Elsewhere, there were 2 nests at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay*, and 3 young were fledged from 2 nests on *Tiree*. A pair breeding at a cliff site on Treshnish Isles *Mull* hatched 2 young in Jun, one of which fledged prematurely and fell into the sea.

Some indication of how numerous the species is in Argyll is given by two records: 16 birds were seen in the air simultaneously from the top of Beinn Bheula *Cowal* on 8th Aug, and 22 birds were counted during a goose survey on *Coll* on 29th Nov.

GOLDEN EAGLE *Aquila chrysaetos* Iolaire 0296
B W Breeding recorded in 39% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Immatures tend to wander in winter and may be recorded in areas where breeding does not occur.

Breeding. 61 known territories were checked and 54 were occupied. From these, 22 successful nests fledged a total of 27 young, inc. (as in 1997) 5 broods of 2. The productivity of 1.22 per successful pair was similar to 1997 (1.23). A dead eagle was found close to a nest-site in *Mid-Argyll* that has had a singular lack of breeding success in recent years. Earlier in the year, a forest ranger's dog died nearby from poisoning, and analysis showed that the eagle had died from the same cause. Despite extensive enquiries by the police, no further action was possible [ARSG].

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OSPREY *Pandion haliaetus* Iolaire iasgach 0301
SP Very scarce breeding species; recent re-colonist. Occurs more widely on passage.

There were no reports of birds prior to those seen at one of the regular nest sites on 2nd May. Later in May single, presumably passage, birds were reported at Glenbranter Cowal on 9th, Loch Finlaggan Islay on 10th, and Tobermory Mull on 11th.

Breeding. A much better season than 1997, when no young were produced. In addition to the 3 well-established Argyll sites, a new pair was located. All 4 pairs bred successfully and reared a total of 9 chicks, 6 of which were colour-ringed. Additional birds were seen at several locations during the breeding season, inc. some that stayed for several weeks [ARSG].

Several times during the summer, individuals were seen fishing in the River Add estuary *Mid-Argyll* and in the Holy Loch Cowal.

After mid-Aug, birds were reported from West Loch Tarbert Kintyre on 17th, Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve Islay on 18th, and Holy Loch (2) on 23rd Aug. A very late bird was seen at Loch Don Mull on 11th Oct.

KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus* Clamhan ruadh 0304
B W P Widespread but uncommon. Breeding recorded in 41% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Marked decrease in breeding population reported from Kintyre in recent years. Population in some other areas appears to fluctuate from year to year. Emigration from some areas in autumn (e.g. Mull).

Away from known breeding areas, singles were seen regularly from Jan to Oct on Oronsay Colonsay and throughout the year on Tiree, where two were present during Dec.

Breeding. Recorded in 2 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (*cf* 3 of 16 in 1997). In Cowal, 26 occupied territories were located; of these, 14 sites fledged a minimum of 70 young, a very high productivity (5.0 young/successful nest) despite falling vole numbers [DA, AF]. Ten occupied territories were located on SW Mull and the 5 known to have been successful fledged a minimum of 18 young (3.6 young/successful nest) [P. Haworth]. Once again the pair on Colonsay is thought to have failed this year.

MERLIN *Falco columbarius* Meirmeal 0309
B W P Scarce breeding species, probably under-recorded.

During Jan-Apr individuals were reported regularly on Oronsay Colonsay, Tiree (up to 3 birds) and at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve Islay. There were also records from 5 other localities on Islay, 6 sites on Mull and 2 in *Mid-Argyll*.

Breeding. Of 9 regular territories checked, 4 were apparently vacant. Of the 5 occupied, only 2 (both in new areas, on the Ross of Mull and on Islay) were known to be successful and fledged a minimum of 7 young [ARSG]. Birds were also seen during the breeding season on Colonsay and in Cowal and *Mid-Argyll*.

Following the first autumn migrant at Machrihanish SBO Kintyre on 15th Aug, several individuals were seen in that area, especially during Oct. During the second winter period birds were again seen regularly at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve until mid Nov, Oronsay Colonsay (regular records until the year end), and on Tiree where up to 4 individuals were present during Oct. The only other records during this period were from Coll and Mull.

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PEREGRINE *Falco peregrinus* Seabhag 0320
B W P *Sparsely distributed but widespread breeding species, found in all areas. Breeding recorded in fifty-two 10 km squares in 1991 survey [RSPB et al.].*

Breeding. Of 16 known territories monitored in Cowal, 11 were occupied. Seven sites were successful, fledging a total of at least 17 young. Failure at all the other 4 sites occurred at the egg/small young stage [DA, AF]. Elsewhere in Argyll, 26 sites were monitored of which 21 were occupied and 7 of these known to be successful produced at least 16 fledged young [ARSG].

Birds were reported during the breeding season from all Argyll areas except Gigha and Jura.

RED GROUSE *Lagopus lagopus* Coileach fraoich 0329
R *Sparsely distributed. Breeding recorded in 20% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

Breeding. The species was recorded in 3 of 16 BBS squares (19%) (cf 1 of 16 in 1997). A minimum of 5 calling males were recorded at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve Islay in Jun, and a female was sitting on a clutch of 7 eggs at Margadale Hill Islay on 9th Jun. Other records were received from Jura, Mull, Mid-Argyll and N Argyll.

PTARMIGAN *Lagopus mutus* Tarmachan 0330
R *Very localised, generally above 800 m. Breeding recorded in 5% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). All records required.*

In Jan 'several' were reported in the vicinity of the BT masts above Craignure Mull, and 2 were seen on Beinn Fhionnlaidh N Argyll on 25th. The only other records were in Oct, when 2 were on the summit of Ben Buie Mull on 16th and one was on Creach Bheinn N Argyll on 18th.

BLACK GROUSE *Tetrao tetrix* Caoileach dubh 0332
R F *Local. Populations in some areas may derive from released birds. Recent increases as a result of birds colonising forestry plantations may obscure general steep decline in numbers. Breeding recorded in 21% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

Breeding. Birds were recorded in 3 of 16 BBS squares (19%) (cf 2 of 16 in 1997). In late Mar, 5 males were reported at Clashgour (Loch Tulla) N Argyll, 4 were lekking near Tarbert Kintyre, and single males were seen near Kilmartin Mid-Argyll and at Easter Ellister Islay. A single male displaying on Dunadd Moss on 17th Apr was the first record for Moine Mhor Mid-Argyll since 1991, a male was seen near Cour Kintyre on 29th Apr, and an individual was reported N of Kilmelford Mid-Argyll on 7th May. Lastly, a series of reports from Cowal in late Apr-early May gave a total of 24 males at 9 different locations.

Later in the season, 1-3 birds were reported from: near Lussa Loch Kintyre on 14th May, near Achahoish Mid-Argyll on 19th May, near Cairndow Cowal on 28th May, Eredine Forest Mid-Argyll on 29th May, and between Kennacraig and Claonaig Kintyre on 20th Jul.

CAPERCAILLIE *Tetrao tetrix* Capull coille 0335
R *Very rare. Small population Mid-Argyll, and known to have bred Cowal in 1993. Three males using the only regular lek site of this species in Mid-Argyll during*

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spring all appeared to be hybrid Capercaillie-Black Grouse [per RAB]. Females were recorded during mid-Mar at 3 locations in Cowal [DA].

RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE *Alectoris rufa* Cearc thomain dhearg chasach 0358

I Birds (some hybrids with Chukar A. chukar) introduced to several areas. Although this species is in Category C of the British list, populations in Argyll do not appear to be self-sustaining.

The only birds reported were one at Foreland House Islay on 16th Mar and 4 in the vicinity of Kilkivan Quarry (Machrihanish) Kintyre during Aug.

GREY PARTRIDGE *Perdix perdix* Cearc thomainn 0367

R I Very localised distribution. Introductions, which take place in several areas, do not appear to result in self-sustaining populations. All records required.

The only records came from Islay, where 12 near Cluanach on 24th Sep, and 31 on several dates in mid-Nov at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve, presumably derived from releases.

QUAIL *Coturnix coturnix* Gearradh gort 0370

S Rare and irregular visitor.

Breeding During the breeding season, single calling birds were heard on Tieve near Heylipol on 4th Jun and at Mannal on 22nd Jun. The only other record was of a bird calling at Upper Kilchattan Colonsay on 13th Jun.

PHEASANT *Phasianus colchicus* Easag 0394

I Long-established, widespread and common resident. Birds also annually reared and released on many estates. Breeding recorded in 41% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

Breeding. The species was recorded in 6 of 16 BBS squares (38%) (cf 2 of 16 in 1997). In Jun, a total of 16 calling males were found on Colonsay (cf 17 in 1997) and an estimated 20 males were calling at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve Islay. A pair with a brood of young was reported from Moine Mhor Mid-Argyll in Jun. A late brood of 7 two-week-old young were seen at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve on 5th Sep.

No large flocks were reported.

WATER RAIL *Rallus aquaticus* Snagan allt 0407

B W P Scarce, but under-recorded.

During Jan-Mar single birds were recorded in the Loch a 'Phuill area of Tieve.

Breeding. The species was recorded in 1 of 16 BBS squares (6%). In May, calling birds were heard at 3 sites on Colonsay and at 6 localities on Tieve. At least one pair probably bred at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve Islay and one was heard calling near Keills (Loch Sween) Mid-Argyll on 27th Jun.

During the second winter period, singles were at Loch Bhasapol Tieve on 7-9th Aug and 8th Nov, at Aros Moss Kintyre on 26th Oct, and near Strachur Cowal on 24th Dec.

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CORNCRAKE *Crex crex* Traon

0421

S Localised distribution. Breeding mainly on Islay, Colonsay, Iona (Mull), Tiree and Coll.

The first confirmed record of spring was at Cornaigbeg *Tiree* on 23rd Apr. On 28th April the first birds were reported on *Colonsay* and *Islay*.

Breeding. A full survey of singing male Corncrakes was carried out for the whole of Britain in 1998 by RSPB with SNH. This located a minimum of 589 males, 23% higher than the last full survey in 1993. 225 of these birds were found in the Argyll Islands (38% of the national total) but there were no records from the Argyll mainland during the survey (see Table below). Annual counts are carried out in the core areas for Corncrakes (including the Argyll Islands), which hold the majority of the British population. After four increasingly successful years, the 1998 core area count showed a disappointing 15% decline from the 1997 total. This decline was least evident in the Inner Hebrides where the overall total was very similar to 1997. Indeed areas like Iona, Colonsay and Oronsay showed substantial increases and the recolonisation of Mull was an encouraging development. Numbers on Islay, however, fell to their lowest level in recent years (RSPB/SNH).

Table 17. Numbers of calling Corncrakes in Argyll areas in 1998, with revised 1997, 1996 and 1995 totals for comparison.

Area	1995	1996	1997	1998
Coll	37	40	42	40
Tiree	140	117	136	136
Mull	0	0	0	2
Iona	4	5	8	12
Colonsay & Oronsay	12	8	8	14
Islay	14	7	17	4
<i>Total</i>	<i>207</i>	<i>177</i>	<i>211</i>	<i>208</i>

In addition 3 calling birds (one on Fladda, 2 on Lunga) were reported from the Treshnish Isles *Mull*, where censuses are not carried out annually.

A female with 5 tiny chicks was found at Balemartine *Tiree* on 24th Aug and the last birds reported were at the same location: 2 live birds on 12th Sep and one dead bird (killed by a cat) recovered from the beach on 23rd Sep.

MOORHEN *Gallinula chloropus* Cearc uisge

0424

R Very localised. Breeding recorded in 16% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

Breeding. At least 2 pairs bred at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay*, and pairs also bred at Skipness *Kintyre*, Silver Craigs *Mid-Argyll* and Benderloch Gravel Pit *N Argyll*. In addition breeding was suspected at Loch Bhasapol *Tiree*.

Birds were also recorded at 3 other localities on *Tiree* in the early part of the year and at Corsapol and Loch Ballygrant *Islay* in Mar, Loch Ederline *Mid-Argyll* on 23rd Jan, Loch Cearn a Choin *Mid-Argyll* in Nov, Lochan Luing *Kintyre* on 4th Nov, and at Muircroft (Oban) *Mid-Argyll* on 16th Nov.

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COOT *Fulica atra* Lach a bhlairst 0429
B W Scarce breeder and uncommon winter visitor. Breeding recorded in only two 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

The usual flock on Loch Bhasapol *Tiree* numbered 12 birds on 24th Jan and decreased to 10 by 15th Mar. The only other records during the early part of the year were singles at Loch Ederline *Mid-Argyll* on 23rd Jan, at Loch Ballygrant *Islay* on 2nd Mar and at Loch na Keal *Mull* on 3rd Apr.

Breeding. A pair with 4 well-grown young on Kilmory Lake *Mid-Argyll* on 6th Jul was the first confirmed breeding record for Argyll since 1994.

On Loch Bhasapol, later in the year, numbers increased from a single bird present on 24th Oct to 6 on 23rd Nov and 10 throughout Dec. Elsewhere single birds were present in Nov at Muircroft (Oban) *Mid-Argyll* on 16th, on Loch Skerrols *Islay* on 18th, and at Kilmoluaig *Tiree* on 23rd.

OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ostralegus* Gille brighde 0450
B W P Widespread and common. Breeding recorded in 70% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

Numbers at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart *Islay* peaked at 1,003 in Mar (cf peak of 944 in Apr 1997) [Table 18]. Most of the monthly maxima were higher than last year. The only other sites with counts of more than 100 birds during the early part of the year were Loch Gilp *Mid-Argyll* (max. 150 on 19th Jan), Crossapol *Tiree* (max. 176 on 8th Mar), and Machir Bay *Islay* (max. 165 on 17th Feb).

The NEWS count total for Argyll (Dec 97-Jan 98) was 4,799 birds, of which 2,121 (44%) were in the Loch Gare/Loch Long/Dunoon area.

Breeding. The species was recorded in 2 of 16 BBS squares (13%). Nine territorial pairs were located on the Treshnish Isles *Mull* but only one brood of young was observed. On Sanda Islands *Kintyre* at least 20 pairs were judged to have bred (cf 11 in 1997) and 57 pairs were counted on The Reef *Tiree* during a survey in Jun. Records of one or two breeding pairs came from 5 sites in *Mid-Argyll* and one on *Mull*.

On 23rd Jun 127 were in Finart Bay *Cowal*.

Southward passage was observed at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* in Jul (e.g. 140 flew past in 3 hrs on 24th) and Aug (total of 745 on 6 dates - max. 320 in 2 hrs on 16th).

The WeBS count total of 291 at Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* on 9th Aug was the highest count there in recent years, and the remarkable total of 760 birds in Holy Loch on 3rd Dec is the highest single count in recent years for any individual site in Argyll. Other counts exceeding 100 birds came from Blairmore (Loch Long) *Cowal* (132 on 21st Jul) and Loch Gilp *Mid-Argyll* (max. 208 on 14th Dec).

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Table 18. *Maximum monthly counts in 1998 of Oystercatcher at two sea-lochs on Islay, at Loch Crinan (Mid-Argyll), at Holy Loch (Cowal), on Oronsay (Colonsay) and at the four main freshwater lochs on Tiree.*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L.Gruinart	219	322	382	288	228	240	n/r	132	67	58	106	133
L. Indaal	496	441	621	492	414	437	412	398	381	210	381	480
L. Crinan	36	64	53	91	48	49	80	291	43	39	38	35
Holy Loch	450	355	214	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	434	668	690	760
Oronsay	49	103	19	84	88	75	121	42	41	38	41	83
Tiree	n/r	64	173	68	32	65	104	27	0	0	0	0

RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius hiaticula* Trilleachan traghad 0470
B W P Widespread and common. Breeding recorded in 55% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

During the early part of the year, numbers at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart Islay peaked at 172 in Apr [Table 19]. On Tiree 240 were counted on the four main beaches in Feb and numbers peaked in Apr when 307 were counted in Balephetrish and Vaul Bays on 26th. Other sites with counts exceeding 50 birds were: Ledaig Point N Argyll (max. 70 on 23rd Jan), the W coast of Iona Mull (60 on 12th May), and Oronsay Colonsay (max. 96 on 24th Jan).

The NEWS count total for Argyll (Dec 97-Jan 98) was 1,115, of which 476 (42%) were on Tiree.

Breeding. The species was recorded in 1 of 16 BBS squares (6%). On Colonsay and Oronsay, at least 36 breeding pairs were located in Jun (*cf* 39 in 1997) and a survey of the Reef Tiree revealed a total of 51 breeding pairs. The only other count of breeding birds was on Sanda Islands Kintyre where up to 6 pairs bred and 3 pairs were seen with young.

Numbers at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart peaked in Oct with 225 while Oronsay/Colonsay had 190 birds on The Strand on 14th Nov [Table 19]. Southward passage at Machrihanish SBO Kintyre peaked on 13th Aug when 78 flew past in 7 hrs. On Tiree numbers built up to the impressive total of 344 birds at Balephetrish and Sorobaidh Bays on 6th Dec. Other sites with counts of 50 or more birds were Ledaig Point N Argyll (max. 60+ on 14th Oct) and Traigh nam Barc Colonsay (71 on 15th Oct).

Table 19. *Maximum monthly counts in 1998 of Ringed Plover at two sea-lochs on Islay and on Oronsay.*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L.Gruinart	48	1	30	51	7	8	n/r	16	162	148	88	0
L. Indaal	51	61	48	121	101	47	38	117	43	77	40	91
Oronsay	96	7	61	7	4	22	5	36	50	0	190	79

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DOTTEREL *Charadrius morinellus* Amadan-mointich 0482
P B? Scarce migrant, mostly in late Apr and May. Has bred in N Argyll in the past and may still do so.

The only records were of 3 at The Reef Tree on 22nd Apr, with a single there on the following day.

GOLDEN PLOVER *Pluvialis apricaria* Feadag 0485
B W P Sparse but widespread breeding species. Upland afforestation has greatly reduced available breeding habitat in some areas. Breeding recorded in 28% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

Numbers at The Reef Tree increased through the first winter period to reach a peak of 2,700 on 20th Apr. The only other locations with counts of more than 50 birds during Jan-Apr were Loch Don Mull (60 on 26th Jan), Oronsay Colonsay (max. 88 on 28th Jan), Loch Gruinart Flats Islay (300+ on 1st Mar), Ardnave Islay (800 on 2nd Mar), and Fionnphort Mull (150 on 14th Apr). The NEWS count total for Argyll (Dec 97-Jan 98) was 892, all on Coll, Islay and Tree.

Breeding. Recorded in 2 of 16 BBS squares (*cf* 4 of 16 in 1997). Otherwise the only records of birds on territory were in N Knapdale Mid-Argyll and at Killiemor Mull.

Numbers at the main sites for this species peaked in Oct, when an island census of key areas on Tree gave a total of 980 on 1st, 580 were recorded at The Laggan Kintyre on 18th, and the WeBS count at Loch Gruinart Islay totalled 1,014 on 23rd. The only other sites with max. counts of 50 or more birds were: Corran Bay Islay (300 on 19th Oct), Loch Indaal Islay (max. 320 on 8th Nov), Oronsay Colonsay (max. 109 on 8th Nov), and An Leth-onn (Loch Beg) Mull (50+ on 15th Nov). By Dec numbers had declined in most places but there were still 590 around Scarinish Tree on 15th.

GREY PLOVER *Pluvialis squatarola* Trilleachan 0486
P W Uncommon passage migrant, mostly to islands. A few winter, mainly on Islay.

By far the highest count during the early part of the year was 48 birds at Loch Gruinart Islay on 16th Feb. After 3 at Loch Indaal Islay on 18th Jan and one at Loch na Cille Mid-Argyll on 19th Jan, all the remaining records were from Tree, with one at Traigh Thodhrasdail on 24th Jan, one at Ard Mor on 14th Feb, 5 at Balephetrish Bay on 11th Apr and one at The Reef on 11th May.

The NEWS count total for Argyll (Dec 97-Jan 98) was 34, mostly on Islay and Tree.

In autumn, the first returning bird was moving S at Traigh nan Gilean Tree on 15th Aug, as were singles at Machrihanish SBO Kintyre on 10th and 16th Sep. Thereafter, one was in the Aros Estuary Mull on 30th Sep, 2 were off Gartmain Islay on 9th Oct, up to 4 were in Loch Indaal on various dates between 11th Oct and 7th Dec, one was at Oronsay Colonsay on 19th Oct, 4 were in Loch Gruinart on 30th Oct, one was in Loch Gilp Mid-Argyll from 20th Nov until late Dec, 8 were at Traigh Nostaig Islay on 15th Dec, and 2 were at Miodar Tree on 25th Dec with one still there on 31st.

LAPWING *Vanellus vanellus* Carracag 0493
B W P Localised breeder and widespread wintering species. Breeding recorded in 48% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

During the early part of the year numbers peaked in Feb, when 639 were in the

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Loch Gruinart area *Islay* on 24th and 1,583 were on *Tiree* on 15th [Table 20]. The only other site with a count exceeding 50 birds was Oronsay *Colonsay* (max. 91 on 23rd Mar).

The NEWS count total for Argyll (Dec 97-Jan 98) was 865.

Breeding. Recorded in 3 of 16 BBS squares (19%). A total of 169 pairs bred at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay*, well down on 232 pairs there in 1997 (*cf* 221 in 1996 and 263 in 1995). The first chicks at The Reef *Tiree* were seen on 20th Apr and a total of 269 breeding pairs were found there. Elsewhere up to 7 breeding pairs were found at 2 sites on *Islay*, one site in *Mid-Argyll*, 7 sites on *Mull*, and pairs with young were also found on Oronsay *Colonsay*.

In autumn, numbers in the Loch Gruinart area and at Loch Indaal reached a peak in Oct with a total of 455 [Table 20]. On *Tiree* a whole-island count totalled 780 on 29th Aug and 320 were in the Scarinish area on 15th Dec. At The Laggan *Kintyre* the autumn max. was 400 on 12th Nov. The only count exceeding 50 birds elsewhere was at Ballure *Kintyre* where 56 were in flooded fields on 29th Nov.

Table 20. *Maximum monthly counts in 1998 of Lapwing at two sea-lochs on Islay and at the four main freshwater lochs on Tiree.*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L.Gruinart	280	639	5	13	22	n/r	n/r	1	55	376	162	390
L. Indaal	0	11	42	4	5	6	0	43	49	79	100	110
Tiree	n/r	1,583	436	104	31	72	261	136	9	231	87	180

KNOT *Calidris canutus* Luatharan gainmhich 0496
W P Uncommon passage migrant with main passage Aug-Sep. A few winter.

Only small numbers were recorded during the early part of the year. No more than 9 were seen in Loch Indaal *Islay* (on 15th Feb), with 6 there on 17th May being the last. The only other records were 4 at Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* on 17th Jan, 4 on Oronsay *Colonsay* on 24th Jan, 2 at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* on 16th Feb and 27th May, 6 at Loch Craignish *Mid-Argyll* on 17th Feb, 8 at Gartmain *Islay* on 6th Mar, 6 at Hynish *Tiree* on 25th May, and 2 at Loch Don *Mull* 27th-31st May.

Two at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve on 24th Jun were presumably non-breeding birds.

In Jul the first returning birds were 2 in Loch Indaal on 11th, followed by 22 at Gott Bay *Tiree* on 21st and singles, still in breeding plumage, at Tayinloan *Kintyre* on 20th and 28th and at Ardmore *Tiree* on 29th. At Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* a total of 87 flew past on 15 dates between 24th Jul and 28th Sep, with a max. day-count of 30 in 4 hrs on 15th Aug. Numbers in Loch Indaal reached 50 on 31st Aug and 15th Sep, with 25 there on 18th Oct, 19 on 8th Nov and 32 on 7th Dec. Small flocks were widely reported elsewhere during the latter part of the year with counts of more than 10 at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve (max. 34 on 6th Sep), Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* (max. 13 on 15th Aug was the highest count on record there), Gott Bay *Tiree* (max. 32 on 26th Aug), and West Parkfergus *Kintyre* (12 on a flooded field a mile inland on 29th Oct). Single birds were at Gott Bay and Miodar *Tiree* on 30th Dec.

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SANDERLING *Calidris alba* Luatharan glas 0497
W P Main passage in May and Aug. Some winter, mainly on Islay and Tiree. Occasionally recorded in summer.

Good numbers were recorded Feb-May on *Tiree*. Records there were concentrated in the Balephetrish/Vaul/Gott Bay area with monthly maxima of 220 on 24th Feb, 146 on 14th Mar, 215 on 26th Apr and 240 on 5th May. On *Islay* 30 were at Traigh Nostaig on 2nd Mar, 30 at Killinallan on 7th Mar, 6 at Loch Gruinart on 7th Mar and 4th Apr, and 11 in Laggan Bay on 21st May. Records elsewhere came from: *Iona Mull* (2, one in winter and one in summer plumage, on 12th May), *Ardalanish Bay Mull* (43 on 24th May), and *Oronsay Colonsay* (one on 27th May).

The NEWS count total for Argyll (Dec 97-Jan 98) was 663, of which 364 (55%) were on *Tiree*.

Five individuals at Loch a 'Phuill *Tiree* on 4th Jun was an unusual summer record.

The first returning birds were 2 in Loch Indaal on 11th Jul and up to 6 were recorded here regularly until 8th Nov. Birds were also recorded regularly at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve with a max. of 38 on 10th Nov. *Tiree* also had impressive numbers in the latter part of the year and 409 were counted in the major bays on 23rd July. Later on, Balephetrish/Gott Bays had 239 on 29th Aug, 249 on 1st Oct and 122 on 28th Nov. The last large count of the year on *Tiree* was 183 at Sorobaidh & Balephetrish Bays on 6th Dec. At Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre*, a total of 240 were recorded flying past S on 15 dates 24th Jul – 28th Oct (max. day-count 80 in 4 hrs on 15th Aug). The only other sites with more than 10 birds were: *Oronsay Colonsay* (max. 15 on 19th Jul), *Traigh Nostaig Islay* (30 on 15th Aug), *Laggan Bay Islay* (19 on 23rd Aug), and *Ardnave Point Islay* (12 on 19th Oct). A single bird at West Parkfergus *Kintyre* on 26th Dec was an unusual location and date.

LITTLE STINT *Calidris minuta* Luatharan beag 0501
P Scarce but annual, with the majority of records in autumn.

A good year for this species with 8 records involving at least 25 birds. The first was seen on 4th Jun at Loch a 'Phuill *Tiree*.

The next was not until 29th Aug when 2 were at Carnain (Loch Indaal) *Islay*: 2 juvs reported at the same site on 2nd Sep may well have been the same birds. On 8th Sep 2 were in the River Add estuary *Mid-Argyll* and 2 more were at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 10th. Carnain seems to have been the favoured locality as 10 were seen there on 15th Sep increasing to at least 17 on 18th Sep. The last report was a single at Machrihanish SBO on 5th Oct.

These records occurred at about the same time as a notable fall of migrants on the east coast of Scotland, involving especially this species and Curlew Sandpiper.

PECTORAL SANDPIPER *Calidris melanotos* 0507
P Less than annual. Seven accepted Argyll records during 1980-1995.

A juvenile seen at Rubha Luidhneis (Loch Gruinart) *Islay* on 29th Aug is our first confirmed record since one on Mull in 1995 (P. Robinson).

CURLEW SANDPIPER *Calidris ferruginea* Luatharan crom 0509
P Scarce but more or less annual, with the majority of records in autumn.

As with Little Stint, 1998 was an excellent year for this species in Argyll.

The only spring records were of an adult at *Ardalanish Bay Mull* on 24th May

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and one (with Dunlins and a Little Stint) in summer plumage at Loch a 'Phuill *Tiree* on 4th Jun.

The first autumn birds were on 28th Aug when 18 were at Loch Gruinart *Islay*. Two days later on 30th, 6 juvs. were in Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* and one moulting adult was at Port Fada *Tiree*. In Sep, 5 were at Carnain (Loch Indaal) *Islay* on 2nd, 4 at Loch Crinan on 9th and 2 at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 10th - all present at the same time as Little Stints. On 11th Sep no less than 46 were counted at Loch Gruinart, and the next day the last record of the year was 5 at Carnain.

PURPLE SANDPIPER *Calidris maritima* Luatharan rioghail 0510
W P Widely distributed along rocky coasts from Sep to May.

Most records during the early part of the year were from *Tiree* starting with 2 at Hynish on 1st Jan and 21 at Urvaig on 2nd. In Feb the highest coastal day-count there was 107 and 31 were on Eilean Ghreasamuill on 14th. Numbers had declined by Mar when the largest flock was 15, and the last were 6 at Crossapol on 26th Apr. Up to 9 were in Loch Indaal *Islay* from Jan onwards and the last record there was 8 on 26th Apr. The only reports from elsewhere were 5 at Eilean Aoghainn *Mid-Argyll* on 19th Feb, 8+ at Staffa *Mull* on 14th May, and 2 adults at Eilean Mor (McCormaig Islands) *Mid-Argyll* on 20th May.

The NEWS count total for Argyll (Dec 97-Jan 98) was 369, none of which were on mainland coasts.

Two were at Staffa *Mull* on 6th Aug but no more were reported until Oct, when a single bird was at Portnahaven *Islay* on 27th and 7 flew S past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 29th. A few birds were in Loch Indaal *Islay* from 8th Nov until the year end with max. 12 on 7th Dec. The only other records were 20 at Kirm (Dunoon) *Cowal* on 17th Nov and 56 in small groups around Caolas and Miodar *Tiree* on 25th Dec.

DUNLIN *Calidris alpina* Graillig 0512
B W P Very localised breeding species. Breeding recorded in 20% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Numbers highest on passage, except on Islay where several hundred birds winter.

The highest single count for the early part of the year was 1,070 for the whole of *Tiree* on 9th May, and 418 were in Balephetrish Bay alone on 26th Apr. Numbers on Oronsay *Colonsay* peaked early with 320 on 16th Jan while, on *Islay*, the highest total for Loch Gruinart and Loch Indaal was 304 in Feb [Table 21]. Elsewhere, 170 were at Traigh Nostaig *Islay* on 2nd Mar, and 50 adults in summer plumage were on Iona *Mull* on 20th May.

The NEWS count total for Argyll (Dec 97-Jan 98) was 896, of which 633 (70%) were on *Islay* and *Tiree*.

Breeding. On *Tiree* 30-40 pairs were considered to have bred on The Reef and 4 pairs bred at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve. Other breeding pairs were reported from Loch Gorm *Islay*, Oronsay *Colonsay* and Ardmaddy (Loch Etive) *N Argyll*.

The peak count for autumn migration at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* was 144 flying S in 7 hrs on 13th Aug and a total of 860 were recorded there on 19 dates, 24th Jul - 16th Oct.

Numbers on *Islay* reached a peak in Nov with a total of 620 at Loch Indaal plus Loch Gruinart on both 8th & 10th [Table 21]. On *Tiree* 423 were in the 5 main bays on 26th Jul but numbers then declined sharply until late Nov when a day-count of 276 was made for the whole island on 25th. Thereafter 253 were in Balephetrish and Sorobaidh

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Bays on 6th Dec and 238 in Gott Bay and Caolas on 30th Dec. The only other site with more than 50 birds during the second winter period was Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* (max. 75 on 15th Aug).

Table 21. *Maximum monthly counts in 1998 of Dunlin at two sea-lochs on Islay and on Oronsay.*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L.Gruinart	143	103	15	8	40	6	n/r	301	292	269	440	228
L. Indaal	89	201	142	61	101	12	39	111	67	43	180	180
Oronsay	320	111	47	6	13	2	1	35	3	0	12	60

RUFF *Philomachus pugnax* Gibeagan 0517

P Scarce but annual passage migrant, more numerous in autumn.

The only spring records were singles at Loch an Eilein *Tiree* on 25th and 26th Apr, a male at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* on 17th May and 2 at Balearmartine *Tiree* on 25th May.

All the autumn records came from *Islay* and *Tiree*. The first on *Tiree* were 5 at Loch a 'Phuill on 5th Aug with 2 there on 9th Aug. At Middleton there were 4 on 17th Aug, one the next day and 12, the largest autumn flock, on 9th Sep. Elsewhere, up to 3 birds were at 5 localities on *Tiree* from 23rd Aug to 29th Sep. In Oct, 7 were at the Airport on 1st, with 5 at Loch a 'Phuill on 18th and 2 there on 23rd. The last record was one at Heylipol on 1st Nov.

At Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* there were 9 birds on 1st Sep, followed by 5 on 5th, 2 on 6th, one on 9th and 2 on 17th Sep. The only other *Islay* records were one at Ardnave Loch on 25th Aug and 3 at Carnain on 3rd Sep.

JACK SNIPE *Lymnocyptes minimus* Gobhrag bheag 0518

W P Scarce but probably under-recorded.

During the first winter period 6 were recorded at Airds Bay (Loch Etive) *Mid-Argyll* on 17th Jan and singles were seen at Loch Beg *Mull* on 15th Mar, Cnoc Mor (Saligo) *Islay* on 31st Mar and Reudle *Mull* on 16th Apr.

Later in the year, singles were at Carnduncan *Islay* on 6th Oct and at Loch Breac *Colonsay* on 15th Oct. At least 2 were on The Reef *Tiree* on 23rd Nov, and 3 were seen on Corlarach Hill *Cowal* in Dec.

SNIPE *Gallinago gallinago* Naosg 0519

B W P Widespread and locally common. Breeding recorded in 51% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

By far the highest count Jan-Apr was an impressive 73 recorded at Loch Bhasapol *Tiree* on 15th Feb. The only other large count at this time was 29 on Oronsay *Colonsay* on 1st May. Otherwise up to 4 birds were reported from widely scattered sites on *Colonsay*, *Islay*, *Mull*, *Tiree* and in *Mid-Argyll*.

The NEWS count total for Argyll (Dec 97-Jan 98) was 293.

Breeding. Recorded in 3 of 16 BBS squares (19%). A circuit of the *Colonsay* road network at dusk on 13th Jun located 35 drumming birds (cf 30 in 1997) and a census on The Reef *Tiree* in Jun revealed 87 displaying birds. At Loch Gruinart RSPB

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Reserve *Islay* an estimated 49 males were drumming during the breeding season. Elsewhere, at least 5 drumming males were heard on the Treshnish Isles *Mull* in late Jun-early Jul and a nest with 4 eggs as well as a brood of 4 were found. Birds were also reported in suitable habitat during the breeding season from *Islay*, Oronsay, Iona *Mull*, mainland *Mull* and 5 sites in *Mid-Argyll*.

During the latter part of the year, 40 or more were recorded at various sites on *Tiree* during Aug – Nov with max. 51 at Middleton on 18th Aug. As in spring there were widespread reports of up to 4 birds, but the only other counts of more than 10 were 40 at Kilmun Hill *Cowal* in Sep and 11 near Iona Abbey *Mull* on 22nd Sep.

WOODCOCK *Scolopax rusticola* Coileach coille 0529
B W P Widespread but under-recorded. Breeding recorded in 35% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

During Jan-Mar one or two birds were reported from: *Islay* (10 sites), *Mid-Argyll* (4 sites), *Mull* (3 sites), Oronsay *Colonsay* and *Tiree*.

Breeding. A circuit of the *Colonsay* road network at dusk on 9th and 13th Jun located 9 roding birds (cf 4 along the same route in 1997): The only other report was of "several" roding birds at Aird of Kinloch *Mull*.

The first record of a migrant bird was one at Sorobaidh Bay *Tiree* on 4th Oct. Thereafter one or two were reported from *Coll*, *Colonsay*, *Islay*, *Mid-Argyll* and *Mull* until the year end.

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa limosa* Cearra ghob 0532
P Regular in recent years on *Islay* and *Tiree*, both in spring and in autumn. Scarce elsewhere.

Numbers on spring passage were down on last year, with records only from *Tiree*. The first birds were 6 at Loch an Eilein on 21st Apr followed by 4 at Loch a 'Phuill on 23rd Apr. After this there were birds at Loch an Eilein on most days until 7th May with a peak of 25 on 5th May. The next record was not until 21st May when 6 were at Loch an Eilein and 7 at An Fhoadhail, followed by one at Loch Bhasapol on 30th May.

There were 3 Jun records, all on *Tiree*: 4 at Loch Bhasapol on 4th, 2 at An Fhoadhail on 7th and one at The Reef on 15th.

The first returning birds were 23 on 8th Jul at Loch an Eilein followed by one there on 14th and 21 flying over Gott Bay *Tiree* on 26th Jul. Next, a flock of 15 birds was seen on Oronsay *Colonsay* on 29th Jul.

In Aug birds were seen on *Tiree* on 7 dates, with a peak of 32 at Loch a 'Phuill on 6th. Elsewhere, there were 2 at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* on 12th followed by one on 20th and 18 on 24th; 7 flew past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 13th and 6 on 16th; 2 were on Oronsay on 13th and 19th; and 15 were at Ardnave Loch *Islay* on 25th and 30th.

Most Sep records were on *Islay*, with 2 at Gartmain and 10 at Craigens on 1st, and a max. of 11 at Loch Gruinart on 9th and 17th. Two were at Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* on 2nd, with a single bird there on several dates up to the end of the month; and 3 were at Loch a 'Phuill on 6th. The last birds were 3 at Loch a 'Phuill on 4th – 7th Oct and singles at Loch Gruinart on 19th and 26th Oct.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa lapponica* Cearra ghob mhòr 0534
W P Uncommon passage migrant, with most records in autumn. Wintering birds on

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Islay and small numbers elsewhere. Regular on Islay in summer.

Numbers at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart *Islay* at the beginning of the year peaked at 228 in Feb (*cf* 165 in Feb in 1997) [Table 22]. The only other site with a count of more than 10 birds during Jan-May was Gott Bay *Tiree* (max. 34 on 10th Mar). Smaller numbers were recorded from Oronsay *Colonsay*, Loch Don *Mull*, Loch Gilp *Mid-Argyll* and Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll*.

The NEWS count total for Argyll (Dec 97-Jan 98) was 44.

There were 44 birds in Loch Indaal on 13th Jun [Table 22]. Other Jun records were singles at Loch Don *Mull* (on 2nd), Heylipol *Tiree* (on 9th) and Oronsay (on 23rd), and 9 at Milton *Tiree* on 24th.

The only autumn records at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* were one on 10th Sep and 12 on 11th Oct. Other sites with counts of 10 or more birds were Gott Bay *Tiree* (max. 22 on 21st Aug), Loch Don (max. 30 on 24th Sep) and Oronsay (max. 13 on 20th Dec). Single-figure counts came from other sites on *Coll*, *Colonsay*, *Islay*, *Kintyre* and *Mid-Argyll*.

Table 22. *Maximum monthly counts in 1998 of Bar-tailed Godwit at two sea-lochs on Islay.*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L.Gruinart	37	160	26	4	0	0	n/r	3	12	48	54	68
L.Indaal	43	68	57	49	35	44	40	14	19	41	65	45

WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus* Eun bealltain 0538
P A regular migrant in small numbers, with main passage late Apr to May and late Jul to Aug. Summer records not infrequent.

The first three spring records were all of single birds at Loch Don *Mull*, on 7th, 16th and 20th Apr, followed by 6 at Loch Gilp *Mid-Argyll* on 22nd Apr. Records were frequent after this, with flocks of 10 or more reported from Loch an Eilein *Tiree* (max. 28 on 1st May), Heylipol *Tiree* (max. 33 on 4th May), Tayinloan *Kintyre* (max. 32 on 6th May), and Loch Gruinart *Islay* (19 on 18th May). A total of 45 were counted over the whole of *Tiree* on 9th May. Small groups of up to 7 birds were widespread, with reports from other sites on *Colonsay*, *Islay*, *Mull* and *Tiree*. The peak period was 24th Apr to 18th May with a few to the end of May.

Records of single birds in Jun and early Jul came from *Colonsay* on 6th and 8th Jun, Heylipol on 15th Jun, Oronsay *Colonsay* on 27th Jun, and Hynish *Tiree* on 3rd Jul.

Returning migrants first appeared on 24th Jul (one at Cornaigmore *Tiree*) followed by one on Oronsay and 5 at Rubha Chraiginis *Tiree* on 25th. By far the highest total of autumn was 76 at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* on 14th Aug. At Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre*, 6 flying S on 31st Jul was the only autumn record. The remaining reports, all in single figures, came from *Colonsay*, *Islay*, *Mull* and *Tiree*, the last being a single bird at Loch Don *Mull* on 26th Sep.

CURLEW *Numenius arquata* Guilbneach 0541
B W P Common. Breeding recorded in 50% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

Numbers generally reached a peak in Feb, with a total of 646 at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart *Islay* and 191 at Holy Loch *Cowal* [Table 23]. The only other localities with counts of more than 50 birds during the early part of the year were

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Kintra *Islay* (54 on 29th Jan), and *Tiree* where 281 were counted between Sandaig and Hynish on 16th Feb.

The NEWS count total for Argyll (Dec 97-Jan 98) was 2,563.

Breeding. Recorded in 1 of 16 BBS squares (6%). The only count of breeding birds was 38 pairs at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve (*cf* 31 in 1997).

In the latter part of the year, numbers peaked at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart during Dec, with a total of 808, and those at Holy Loch on 25th Oct with 163 [Table 23]. The max. day-count at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* was 318 on 18th Sep. Other counts of 50 or more birds were max. 92 at Loch a 'Phuill *Tiree* on 29th Jul, 60 moving N at Sandaig *Tiree* on 5th Aug, 52 at Crossapol Farm *Tiree* on 22nd Aug, max. 65 at Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* on 2nd Sep, max. 82 at Tayinloan *Kintyre* on 29th Nov, and 85 at Ceann Fachachd *Coll* also on 29th Nov.

Table 23. *Maximum monthly counts in 1998 of Curlew at two sea-lochs on Islay and at Holy Loch (Cowal).*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L.Gruinart	249	450	324	151	67	195	n/r	344	237	181	340	203
L. Indaal	322	196	156	67	47	61	219	417	505	401	282	605
Holy Loch	104	191	42	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	86	163	123	139

SPOTTED REDSHANK *Tringa erythropus* Gearradh bhreac 0545
P Rare, with only 9 records during 1980-97: 3 in May, 4 in Aug, one in Sep and one in Oct.

A very good year for this species with four records, all on *Islay*. In spring, one was at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve on 7th Apr and another was there on 19th Apr. The first autumn record was an individual at Loch Gruinart on 19th Aug, and a juv. was at Gartmain on 17th-18th Sep.

REDSHANK *Tringa totanus* Cam ghlais 0546
B W P Localised breeder. Breeding recorded in 40% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Widespread passage migrant and wintering species.

The highest count during the early part of the year came from *Tiree* where 85 were seen between Heanish and Scarinish on 7th Feb. Apart from those listed in Table 24, no other sites had counts exceeding 20 birds.

The NEWS count total for Argyll (Dec 97-Jan 98) was 763, of which 414 (54%) were on *Tiree*.

Breeding. Recorded in 3 of 16 BBS squares (19%). A total of 85 pairs bred at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* (*cf* 95 in 1997 and 114 in 1996); and 11 pairs were found on *Colonsay* (excl. Oronsay) (*cf* 12 in 1997), while on Oronsay itself 7 pairs were located. A census on The Reef *Tiree* gave a total of 48 breeding pairs; but at Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* only one successful pair was in evidence. An adult was seen with chicks at Fidden *Mull* on 9th Jun.

Southward passage was observed in autumn at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre*, with 40 flying past in 26 hrs during 24th-31st Jul and 115 in 34 hrs during Aug (max. 27 on 24th). Also 45 were in Machrihanish Bay on 18th Sep and up to 35 wintered there.

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Numbers at Loch Gruinart *Islay* peaked at 120 on 6th Sep and those in Holy Loch Cowal at 70 on 8th Oct [Table 24]. Except those in Table 24, the only sites with 20 or more birds during the latter part of the year were: Loch Gilp *Mid-Argyll* (max. 25 on 13th Oct), The Strand *Colonsay* (max. 29 on 20th Dec) and Heylipol *Tiree* (max. 32 in flooded fields on 25th Dec).

Table 24. Maximum monthly counts in 1998 of Redshank at two sea-lochs on *Islay*, at Loch Crinan (*Mid-Argyll*), at Holy Loch (*Cowal*) and at the four main freshwater lochs on *Tiree*.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L.Gruinart	19	5	16	33	16	32	n/r	1	120	13	40	80
L. Indaal	14	13	20	12	10	9	12	12	12	12	14	14
Loch Crinan	28	11	14	1	0	2	5	37	6	26	20	16
Holy Loch	35	42	10	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	56	70	15	46
<i>Tiree</i>	n/r	7	21	74	48	61	18	1	2	1	3	0

GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia* Deoch bhuidhe 0548
B W P Very scarce breeding species (only in Mull and *N Argyll* in recent years). Breeding recorded in 4% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Small numbers on passage with a few birds wintering in some localities.

During Jan-Apr, birds were regularly seen at various sites on Mull (max. 4 at Loch Don on 16th Apr) and on Oronsay *Colonsay* (max. 5 on 20th Mar). Singles were also at Balephetrish Bay *Tiree* on 19th Feb, Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* on 22nd Feb, Loch Craignish *Mid-Argyll* on 12th Mar, Loch Gruinart *Islay* on 4th Apr, Loch Gorm *Islay* on 12th Apr and Loch a 'Phuill *Tiree* on 24th & 28th Apr. The NEWS count total for *Argyll* (Dec 97-Jan 98) was 11, all but one of which were on Mull.

Breeding. One was present at the usual breeding site on Mull on 5th May and again in Jun and a single bird was singing at the traditional site in *N Argyll* on 14th May.

The only other Jun records were a single at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve on 10th and one calling at sea level by Loch Etive *N Argyll* on the 17th.

From 3rd Jul until the year end records of up to 4 birds were widespread, from sites in *Kintyre*, *Mid-Argyll* and *N Argyll* as well as on *Islay*, Mull and *Tiree*. Larger numbers were at: Gruinart Flats *Islay* (max. 5 on 28th Jul), Loch a 'Phuill *Tiree* (max. 5 on 29th Jul), Loch an Eilein *Tiree* (max. 5 on 26th Aug), Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* (max. 7 on 31st Aug), Kinloch Mull (11 on 28th Sep), and The Strand *Colonsay* (max. 7 on 29th Dec).

GREEN SANDPIPER *Tringa ochropus* Luatharan uaine 0553
P Scarce but more or less annual. Majority of records in autumn (mostly mid-Jul to mid-Oct); very rare in spring.

One at Heylipol *Tiree* on 4th Jun was an unusual spring record.

The remaining records, all singles in Aug, were at Loch a 'Phuill *Tiree* on 7th and 9th, Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* on 10th and Heylipol on 18th.

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WOOD SANDPIPER *Tringa glareola* Luatharan coille 0554
P Scarce and less than annual. Recorded in 10 of the 18 years 1980-97, with 7 of the 12 records in spring.

One was at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve Islay on 18th May.

COMMON SANDPIPER *Actitis hypoleucos* Luatharan 0556
S P Widespread and common breeding visitor. Breeding recorded in 68% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

The first bird of spring was a single at Loch Caolisport *Mid-Argyll* on 10th Apr, followed by one at Loch Ba *Mull* on 19th Apr. The main arrival was during the period 23rd Apr-3rd May when birds were reported from many sites in *Mid-Argyll*, *Mull* and *Tiree*.

Breeding. Recorded in 2 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (13%). Four territories were identified at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* and breeding pairs were located at 14 hill lochs in the Ederline/Eredine Forest area of *Mid-Argyll*. At least one pair bred on the Treshnish Isles *Mull* and on *Colonsay* a total of 30 pairs were found in Jun (*cf* 26 in 1997).

During a WeBS count on 14th Jun, 22 birds were counted in the Inner Loch Scridain/Loch Beg area of *Mull*

A late bird at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 18th Sep was the last record.

TURNSTONE *Arenaria interpres* Trilleachan beag 0561
W P Widespread and common, mainly from Aug to May. Summer records not unusual.

After the poor showing in the early part of 1997, numbers in 1998 were back to respectable figures with a peak count at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart *Islay* of 139 in Jan (*cf* peak of 22 in Apr 1997) [Table 25]. Other sites with peak counts exceeding 30 at this time were: Ledaig Beach *N Argyll* (35 on 25th Jan) and, on *Tiree*, Ruaig-Caolas (217 on 6th Feb), Loch a 'Phuill (max. 43 on 15th Feb), and The Reef (max. 176 on 8th Mar).

The NEWS count total for Argyll (Dec 97-Jan 98) was 1,346, of which 887 (66%) were on *Tiree*.

There were 3 Jun records: one on the W coast of *Mull* on 5th, 30 on Oronsay *Colonsay* on 9th, and 3 at Crossapol *Tiree* on 24th.

At Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre*, 40 on 25th Aug was the highest day-count of autumn there. Numbers at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart built up to 172 in Dec (*cf* peak of 174 in Nov in 1997) [Table 25]. The only other counts exceeding 30 birds were 32 at Gott Bay *Tiree* on 31st Oct, 53 in Campbeltown Loch *Kintyre* on 6th Nov, and 80 between Caolas and Salum *Tiree* on 31st Dec.

Table 25. Maximum monthly counts in 1998 of Turnstone at two sea-lochs on Islay.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L.Gruinart	78	90	61	51	0	0	n/r	0	0	73	77	152
L. Indaal	61	43	44	21	4	0	11	16	6	31	58	20

GREY PHALAROPE *Phalaropus fulicarius* Liathag allt 0565
P Irregular, associated with autumn gales. All but 4 of 36 records during 1980-96 were in the period mid-Sep to mid-Oct.

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An individual at Loch a 'Chumhainn *Mull* on 25th Sept was on a typical date for this species, but not so one that flew in and landed on the sea at Traigh an Luig *Islay* on 14th Dec.

POMARINE SKUA *Stercorarius pomarinus* Fasgadair donn 0566
P Scarce but annual, with several records most years. Majority seen in autumn.

Three adults flying S off the mouth of Campbeltown Loch *Kintyre* on 19th Jun was an unusual late spring record.

The first record of autumn was an adult flying S past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 31st Jul, followed by another adult on 13th Aug and a third on 10th Sep. The last record there was a first winter bird on 17th Oct. Elsewhere, single birds flew S past Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* on 27th Aug and 2nd Sep, one flew W past Aird Cornaigmore *Tiree* on 13th Sep, and a juvenile was seen offshore at Balevullin *Tiree* on 17th Oct (the same day as the last record at Machrihanish SBO).

ARCTIC SKUA *Stercorarius parasiticus* Fasgadair 0567
SP The commonest skua in Argyll, regularly seen in small numbers near large seabird colonies. Small breeding colonies on Jura and Coll. Passage birds regular and widespread in spring and especially autumn.

The first spring record was a dark-phase bird attacking Manx Shearwaters, seen from the ferry SE of *Tiree* on 1st May. Other *Tiree* records in May included a dark-phase individual passing Hynish on 3rd, and single pale-phase birds off Mannal on 9th, chasing Arctic Terns at The Reef on 15th, and harrying terns off Gunna Sound on 25th. Elsewhere in May, 3 flew over Oronsay *Colonsay* on 21st, one flew over Loch Ba *Mull* on 23rd, 2 were at Treshnish Point *Mull* on 23rd, and 2 flew over Oronsay on 26th.

Breeding. On *Coll* 20 pairs were located breeding in three separate areas. No information was received from *Jura*.

In Jun and early Jul, individual pale- and dark-phase birds were seen daily in Gunna Sound, dark-phase birds were seen at Pigs Paradise *Colonsay* on 11th and 13th Jun, 'small numbers' of pale- and dark-phase birds were seen daily around Treshnish Isles *Mull* 27th Jun-4th Jul, and singles were seen from Oronsay on 2nd, 4th and 5th Jul.

Southward passage past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* was again sparse: 3 adults (2 dark, 1 pale) on 31st Jul and 2 adults (1 dark, 1 pale) on 13th Aug were the only records. *Tiree* had single birds on 9 dates in Aug, with 2 on 18th Aug and late records on 11th Sep and 10th Oct. On *Islay*, single birds were seen at Frenchman's Rocks on 25th and 27th Aug, followed by 2 on 2nd Sep and 5 on 3rd Sep, and one was in Laggan Bay on 23rd Aug. Elsewhere, one was at Duart Point *Mull* on 28th Aug, 4 passed Craignish Point *Mid-Argyll* on 31st Aug, one was over Oronsay on 11th Sep, and a very late dark-phase bird was seen from the Oban-Craignure ferry on 12th Nov.

GREAT SKUA *Stercorarius skua* Fasgadair mor 0569
SP Uncommon passage migrant and summer visitor. Bred unsuccessfully on Coll in 1989.

There were no records until May, when singles were seen at Balemartine *Tiree* on 13th, off Staffa *Mull* on 14th, over Loch Ba *Mull* on 23rd, and over Loch Riaghain *Tiree* on 26th.

Breeding. Once again a pair bred on *Coll*: eggs were laid but the outcome is not known. On the Treshnish Isles *Mull*, a pair had a single chick in late Jun and

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another pair were present but with no proof of breeding. This is the first proved successful breeding on the Treshnish Isles, although breeding has been suspected for the last year or two.

In Jul 2 were at Grasspoint *Mull* on 7th and 2 circled over Gott Bay *Tiree* on 23rd. The only autumn migrant at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* was one on 31st Jul; and at Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* 3 flew S on 27th Aug, followed by singles on 2nd Sep and 10th Oct. One was in Loch Indaal *Islay* on 31st Aug. Singles were recorded on *Tiree* on five dates and 2 on 3 dates in Aug, followed by singles on 11th and 13th Sep and a late bird on 11th Oct. The last record was one seen from the ferry, 5 miles N of *Tiree* on 23rd Oct.

MEDITERRANEAN GULL *Larus melanocephalus* 0575
V Only two records since 1980: one on *Mull* in 1992, and a 1st winter bird at Machrihanish SBO in 1995.

A second-winter bird was seen at close quarters, dip-feeding in Kildalloig Bay (Campbeltown Loch) *Kintyre* on 7th Nov [EJM]*.

LAUGHING GULL *Larus minutus* 0576
V The only previous record was one on *Islay* in 1974.

On the afternoon of 28th Nov a first-winter bird was seen, in the company of a Common Gull, at Cliad Coll. This is only the second Argyll record of this transatlantic vagrant [A. J. Leitch]*.

LITTLE GULL *Larus minutus* Crann fhaoileag 0578
S W P Irregular, with several records in most years but none in others. Typically seen Aug or Sep, but summer records (usually involving first-year birds) and winter records not infrequent.

An adult was seen at Loch Don *Mull* on 28th May; and at least 2, possibly 3, first-winter birds were sheltering from a gale at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 9th Nov.

1997 A first-winter bird was off Ardnave Point *Islay* on 28th Dec.

BLACK-HEADED GULL *Larus ridibundus* Faoileag a'chinn duibh 0582
B W P Patchily distributed breeder. Breeding recorded in 16% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Scarce in many areas in winter.

During the early part of the year, the only sites (other than those in Table 26) with counts of more than 50 birds were Balephetrish Bay *Tiree* (max. 285 on 25th Apr) and Loch Caolisport *Mid-Argyll* (392 counted during NEWS survey 25th-30th Jan).

Breeding. Recorded in 1 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (6%). In the Argyll part of the SAMS study area, 318 pairs bred at 8 sites (7 in *Mid-Argyll*, and one in *Kintyre*), varying in numbers from one to 125 pairs, and fledged a total of ca 75 young (cf 284 pairs at 6 colonies raised 133-138 young in 1997). Only 3 of the colonies held more than 10 pairs each, and productivity at 4 of the colonies was known to be zero.

The only other record of breeding birds was 2 pairs on Oronsay *Colonsay*.

During the latter part of the year, the only counts exceeding 50 birds are those shown in Table 26.

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Table 26. Maximum monthly counts in 1998 of Black-headed Gull at two sea-lochs on Islay, at Loch Crinan (Mid-Argyll) and at the four main freshwater lochs on Tiree.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L.Gruinart	0	73	70	28	3	25	n/r	80	194	43	40	1
L. Indaal	2	7	11	49	83	44	63	21	83	67	12	10
L. Crinan	1	2	33	10	9	34	163	104	31	20	0	32
Tiree	n/r	18	40	n/r	176	284	76	0	0	1	16	0

COMMON GULL *Larus canus* Faoileag 0590
B W P Widespread and common breeding species. Breeding recorded in 45% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

The highest count during the early part of the year was 879 at Loch Indaal Islay on 16th Feb, and numbers at Loch Gruinart Islay peaked at 416 on 18th Jan. The only sites other than those in Table 27 with counts exceeding 100 birds were: Loch Caolisport Mid-Argyll (464 recorded during NEWS count 25th-30th Jan), Port Ellen Islay (200+ on 28th Feb), Loch Sween Mid-Argyll (max. 107 on 15th Mar), and Balephetrish Tiree (170 on 25th Apr).

Breeding. Recorded in 6 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (38%). In the Argyll part of the SAMS study area, 978 -998 pairs were noted breeding at 32 colonies (one to 336 pairs in size). Breeding success was measured at 27 colonies holding 897 pairs, which fledged 622 young. At 10 of these colonies where mink were removed before the breeding season, 641 pairs fledged 538 young (0.839 young/pair). At the other 17 colonies, where mink were not controlled, 256 pairs fledged 84 young (0.328 young/pair). Thus mink control raised fledging success by 2.56 times. Elsewhere, 10 pairs are considered to have bred on the Treshnish Isles *Mull* (2 broods of young found); and no dead chicks were found from 38 active nests on Sanda Island *Kintyre* indicating a good breeding season. The colonies on hill lochs in the Eredine/Ederline forest area *Mid-Argyll* were largely deserted by mid-Jun with no sign of successful breeding.

In autumn the only records of numbers in excess of 100 (excluding Table 27 sites) were roost counts made at Loch a 'Phuill *Tiree* (104 on 10th Oct) and Breachacha beach *Coll* (686 on 31st Nov).

Table 27. Maximum monthly counts in 1998 of Common Gull at two sea-lochs on Islay, at Loch Crinan (Mid-Argyll) and at the four main freshwater lochs on Tiree.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L.Gruinart	334	879	220	46	40	117	n/r	159	368	255	112	238
L. Indaal	416	322	97	313	121	119	119	271	272	70	114	140
L. Crinan	75	80	63	0	3	10	46	55	17	16	25	65
Tiree	n/r	186	201	n/r	26	49	20	0	5	12	34	51

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LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus fuscus* Faoileag bheag 0591
S P Widespread breeding species, generally present from Mar to Sep. Breeding recorded in 20% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). A few remain in winter.

Up to 3 birds were seen on *Islay* at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart, on Oronsay *Colonsay* and at the entrance of West Loch Tarbert *Kintyre* during Jan–mid-Feb. Returning birds appeared on *Tiree* from late Feb and numbers built up during the first 2 weeks of Mar. By 29th Mar 33 were at Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll*, and there were 62 at Loch a 'Phuill *Tiree* on 11th Apr and 40 in Loch Indaal *Islay* on 26th Apr.

Breeding. Recorded in 5 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (31%). In the Argyll part of the SAMS study area, approximate counts were made at 11 sites: together they held 780-920 pairs. Two of the sites held single pairs: at the other nine sites, colony size ranged from 20 to *ca* 400 pairs. Many chicks fledged at the 3 largest colonies. There were 96 active nests (*cf* 66 in 1997) on Sanda *Kintyre* in June and pairs are still colonising new areas. Elsewhere, 5 pairs bred on the Treshnish Isles *Mull*, and 277 individuals were counted at 3 colonies on Oronsay.

Of 738 passing Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* in Sep-Oct, 434 (59%) were aged as adults. Most birds had left by the first week in Sep; there were no records after 4 at The Laggan *Kintyre* on 17th Oct and one there on 22nd Oct.

HERRING GULL *Larus argentatus* Faoileag an sgadain 0592
B W P Widespread and abundant breeding species. Breeding recorded in 33% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Some evidence for immigration into Argyll in winter; colour-ringing studies have shown that these birds are probably from the Clyde and NE England.

During the early part of the year, the only counts exceeding 200 birds were at Loch Indaal *Islay* (max. 261 on 15th Feb) [Table 28], Eilean Aoghainn *Mid-Argyll* (max. 276 on 21st Mar), and Loch Caolisport *Mid-Argyll* where 329 were recorded during the NEWS count 25th-30th Jan.

Breeding. Recorded in 11 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (69%). In the Argyll part of the SAMS study area, 5,128 pairs were noted breeding at 45 sites (colony size 1-*ca* 500 pairs). 37 of these pairs (< 1%) were at colonies of less than 10 pairs. Breeding was monitored at 16 colonies of ten or more pairs each, holding a total of 1,964 pairs. 799 young were reared to flying. No young fledged at 6 of these 16 colonies, with a total of 987 pairs (50%). Mink were definitely responsible at 5 of the sites and probably at all 6. Some relatively large colonies failed completely because of mink, notably Eilean nan Caorach (404 pairs) and Inn Island (281 pairs), both off Lismore. A third colony close to Lismore, Eilean Loch Oscair, held 81 pairs and also failed completely because of mink. This is the third successive mink-caused whole-colony failure at this colony, which has declined from 287 pairs in 1994. Other counts of breeding birds came from: Treshnish Isles *Mull* (181 nests, *cf* 97 in 1997), Oronsay *Colonsay* (450 individuals counted at 3 colonies) and from Sanda Islands *Kintyre* where 710 active nests represent considerably less than half the number breeding there a decade ago.

In autumn, the highest counts were: 301 at Loch Indaal on 6th Sep, 469 at Loch Gruinart on 9th Sep [Table 28], 500+ at Loch Feochan *Mid-Argyll* on 21st Sep, 665 at Loch a 'Phuill *Tiree* on 6th Dec, and 300 at Loch Gilp *Mid-Argyll* on 8th Dec. No other site recorded numbers exceeding 200 birds.

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Table 28. *Maximum monthly counts in 1998 of Herring Gull at two sea-lochs on Islay and at Loch Crinan (Mid-Argyll).*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L. Gruinart	56	165	195	49	144	161	n/r	93	469	36	98	7
L. Indaal	209	261	152	120	129	17	38	159	301	140	202	222
L. Crinan	66	86	168	34	61	33	33	96	89	23	5	83

YELLOW-LEGGED RACE (YELLOW-LEGGED GULL) *Larus (argentatus) cachinnans*
V No previous accepted records for Argyll. Now treated as a separate species by many authorities (inc. British Birds) but not yet accepted as such by the BOU.

An individual seen roosting with Herring Gulls at Soa Point *Tiree* on 23rd Feb was identified as belonging to the Mediterranean race *michahellis* [A.M. Hachenberg, A. J. Leitch]*.

ICELAND GULL *Larus glaucoides* Faoileag liath 0598
W Scarce but normally at least 5 records annually, and sometimes many more.

A total of about 15 birds was recorded during the early part of the year. At Oban *Mid-Argyll* a 2nd winter bird was seen on several dates from 6th Jan to 10th Mar and one seen on 1st May described as 2nd winter/3rd summer could have been the same individual. Two 1st winter birds were seen there on 24th Feb and one 1st winter was present 4th-14th Apr. On *Islay* a 1st winter bird present at Bowmore in Dec 1997 was seen throughout the winter and, when last seen on 22nd Apr, was described as being in 1st summer plumage. Other *Islay* records included a 1st winter at Port Ellen 8th Mar-22nd Apr, two 1st winter birds at Octovullin on 22nd Mar, and a 'near adult' at Kinnabus on 13th May. *Tiree* had a 2nd winter at Hynish 18th Feb-29th Mar and a 1st winter at West Hynish on 28th-29th Mar. A 2nd winter bird at Loch a 'Phuill *Tiree* 19th-27th Apr might have been the same individual as that seen at Hynish earlier. On *Mull* 1st winter birds were at Tobermory on 24th Feb-22nd Mar and at Loch Spelve on 5th Mar and 24th May, while 2nd winters were at Loch Buie 27th & 30th Mar and at Scarisdale Rocks 27th & 31st Mar.

There were 5 records in the second half of the year: 1st winter birds at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 19th Oct and at Bowmore *Islay* on 30th Dec, a 2nd winter bird at West Hynish *Tiree* on 18th Nov and, in the Oban area, a 1st winter at Moleigh rubbish dump on 30th Oct and around the harbour on 17th Dec.

GLAUCOUS GULL *Larus hyperboreus* Faoileag mhor 0599
W Scarce but normally at least 5 records annually, and sometimes many more.

There was a total of about 14 records during the year. On *Tiree* there were 1st winter birds at: Mannal on 24th Jan, West Hynish on 8th Feb, Carnan Mor on 8th Mar and Loch a 'Phuill on 25th Mar. Some or all of these records could refer to the same bird. A 3rd winter bird was seen at West Hynish on 28th-29th Mar and (another?) at The Reef on 21st May. A 2nd winter bird was at Holy Loch *Cowal* on 15th Mar. On *Islay*, 1st winter birds were at Octovullin on 22nd Mar and at Ardmores Point on 5th Apr, a 2nd winter was at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve on 14th May, and the wing of a 1st winter bird was found at Corran Bay on 27th Mar. *Mull* had at least 3 individuals: a 1st winter at Tobermory on 21st Mar, a 4th winter/adult at Loch Beg on 30th Mar, and a 2nd winter/summer in the Sound of Mull off Tobermory on 28th Apr.

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An unusual summer record was a 2nd year bird seen regularly in Campbeltown Loch *Kintyre* in Jun and Jul.

Apart from an unaged individual in Loch Indaal on 10th Nov, none was reported during the latter part of the year.

1997 A 1st winter bird was at Port Ellen *Islay* on 29th Dec.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus marinus* Farspag 0600
B W Common and widespread. Breeding recorded in 22% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

The only sites with counts of more than 50 birds during the early part of the year were the head of Loch Feochan *Mid-Argyll* (170+ on 18th Feb) and Loch a 'Phuill *Tiree* (max. 136 on 15th Mar).

Breeding. Recorded in 8 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (50%). In the *Argyll* part of the SAMS study area, 338-354 pairs were noted breeding at 37 sites (colony size range 1-68 pairs). 18 of these sites held only single pairs. The breeding success of 228 pairs at 25 colonies was monitored: they fledged 289 young (1.26 young/pair). Other counts of breeding birds came from *Treshnish Isles Mull* (136 AON), *Sanda Islands Kintyre* (32 active nests) and *Oronsay Colonsay* (10 individuals at breeding colony).

Of a sample of 302 birds passing *Machrihanish SBO Kintyre* 18th Sep-12th Nov, 228 (75%) were non-adults (mostly 1st winter).

During the latter part of the year, counts of more than 50 birds came from: Loch *Crinan Mid-Argyll* (max. 69 on 9th Aug), head of Loch *Feochan* (220 on 30th Oct), Loch a 'Phuill (max. 385 at roost on 1st Nov), and Loch *Gilp Mid-Argyll* (max. 88 on 14th Dec).

KITTIWAKE *Rissa tridactyla* Ruideag 0602
B P Strictly marine. Main colonies are on Islay, Colonsay, Treshnish Isles (Mull) and Tiree.

The only record for the early part of the year away from the islands was a 1st summer bird at *Inveraray Mid-Argyll* on 25th Apr. On 30th May, 105 were bathing and collecting grass and mud at Loch a 'Phuill *Tiree* and ca 1,000 were loafing in *Kiloran Bay Colonsay* on 7th Jun.

Breeding. There were 674 nests on the *Treshnish Isles Mull* (cf 735 in 1997). On *Colonsay*, the *Uragaig* sample colony totalled 121 pairs (cf 96 in 1997), and the sample ledge at *Pigs Paradise* held 14 nests (cf 16 in 1997) with a mean clutch size of 1.86 (cf 1.75 in 1997). A single nest on *Glumimore* was the first breeding record on the *Sanda Islands Kintyre* since 1994.

In Aug, 122 passed *Frenchman's Rocks Islay* in 5 hrs on 25th and 368 in 2.5 hrs on 27th. Significant counts later in the year included 200 roosting on rocks on *Oronsay Colonsay* on 30th Aug, ca 2,000 feeding off the W coast of *Tiree* on 23rd-25th Oct, and ca 2,000 passing inshore off *Machrihanish SBO Kintyre* on 9th Nov during a westerly gale.

SANDWICH TERN *Sterna sandvicensis* Stearnag mhor 0611
B P Very rare and irregular breeding species. Uncommon passage migrant.

The first definite record of the year was one at *Portnahaven Islay* on 19th Apr. Ones or twos were seen at *Campbeltown Loch Kintyre*, *Loch Indaal Islay* and *Tayinloan Kintyre* during the following week, with 5 at *Blairmore (Loch Long) Cowal* on 28th

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Apr. In May, singles were seen at Tayinloan *Kintyre*, Balemartine *Tiree*, Loch an Eilein *Tiree* and Campbeltown Loch.

Breeding. There were no indications of breeding in Argyll. The only summer record was 2 birds at Vaul Bay *Tiree* on 20th Jun.

Autumn passage was more marked with one at Loch Riaghain *Tiree* on 21st Jul, 2 off Dunoon *Cowal* on 4 dates 25th Jul–14th Aug, 2 at Hynish *Tiree* on 27th Jul with 3 there on 16th Aug, 6 at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 12th Aug, one at Campbeltown Loch on 20th Aug, 2 at Sorobaidh Bay *Tiree* on 29th Aug, one Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* on 30th Aug, and 3 immatures at Loch Gilp *Mid-Argyll* on 31st Aug. In Sep, one was at Loch Indaal *Islay* on 2nd and an adult with 2 juvs was in Machrihanish Bay *Kintyre* on 10th. The last of the year was one flying S past Machrihanish SBO on 11th Oct.

COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo* Stearnag 0615
S P Locally common breeding species, considerably more numerous than Arctic Tern, at least on small islands close to the mainland. Breeding recorded in 14% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

The first birds of the year were on *Tiree* with 3 at Loch Bhasapol on 3rd May, followed by 2 at Loch an Eilein on 5th. One at Garmony Point on 14th May was the first report from *Mull* and 7 were at Loch Indaal *Islay* on 17th May.

Breeding. In the Argyll part of the SAMS study area, 826 pairs were counted breeding at 9 sites (colony size 1-649 pairs). They fledged 476-495 young, ca 400 (81-84%) of these at the largest colony (cf 695-915 young from 889 pairs at 7 sites in 1997). Only 4 of the colonies held more than ten pairs. Mink are now controlled annually at the largest colony and it is likely that this has ensured its continued existence after mink killed hundreds of young there in 1989 and in some later years. Elsewhere, annual mink control has attracted Common Terns back to breed in at least one sea-loch. At South Shian (Loch Creran) *N Argyll*, 3 pairs bred on an adapted mussel raft and fledged 5 or 6 young. Elsewhere, 20 pairs were present in Crossapol Bay *Coll*, at least 3 pairs were breeding on *Colonsay*, birds were recorded in the season on *Tiree* but breeding was not confirmed, a single juv. fledged from the few pairs which nested at Machrihanish *Kintyre* and, on *Islay*, a pair attempting to breed at RSPB Loch Gruinart was washed out by high tides. The traditional mixed Common-Arctic colony on Sgeirean na Giusaich, Treshnish Isles *Mull* was vacant in late Jun and showed no signs of having been occupied earlier in the season.

Four were at Oronsay *Colonsay* on 2nd Jul and passage had begun in earnest by 24th Jul when 22 passed Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* in 3.5 hrs, followed by 55 in 3.5 hrs on 27th Jul. No juveniles were noted among the Machrihanish birds. The only other records at this time were from Hynish *Tiree* where 2 were seen on 28th Jul and one on 31st Aug was the last of the year.

ARCTIC TERN *Sterna paradisaea* Stearnal 0616
S P Locally numerous breeding species. Breeding recorded in 25% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Confusion with the last species has tended to lead to over-recording of Arctic Tern and under-recording of Common Tern at colonies.

The first birds of the year arrived on 24th Apr when one was seen on The Reef and 3 at Loch an Eilein *Tiree*. Twenty birds were present in Loch Indaal *Islay* on 17th May but by far the highest count at this time was 380 in Gunna Sound *Tiree* on 20th May.

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Breeding. In the Argyll part of the SAMS study area, 112 pairs bred at 7 colonies (1–34 pairs in size) and fledged 60–84 young (*cf* 96–126 young from 270 pairs at 11 colonies in 1997). Only 4 colonies held more than 10 pairs. On *Islay*, 27 pairs were breeding at a site in Loch Indaal and 5 pairs attempting to nest at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve were washed out by high tides. *Tiree* had 105 pairs breeding on the Reef and pairs are known to have bred at several other localities on the island. A colony on *Colonsay* held at least 45 pairs in mid Jun, 20 pairs were present at *Coll* RSPB Reserve and a pair on Sgeir an Eirionnaich, Treshnish Isles *Mull* in late Jun were, from their behaviour, possibly breeding.

The peak count later in the season was 340 on rocks off Hynish *Tiree* on 22nd Jul. Numbers passing Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* were relatively low: 16 in 3 hrs on 24th and 34 in 3.5 hrs on 27th Jul were all adults. On 28th Jul 34+ were seen passing Tayinloan *Kintyre* and the last birds reported were 10 off Crossapol *Tiree* on 31st Aug.

LITTLE TERN *Sterna albifrons* Stearnag bheag 0624
S P Scarce breeding species confined to Islay, Tiree and Coll. Scarce elsewhere on migration.

The only records early in the season were from *Tiree*, where one was at Balephetrish on 6th Apr followed by 2 on 11th Apr.

Breeding. On *Coll*, there were 4 pairs at two colonies. A complete census on *Tiree* located 48 pairs breeding in 4 colonies: all but 10 pairs were on The Reef. Only 7 chicks are known to have fledged, with coastal sites suffering much disturbance from walkers and, to a lesser extent, from vehicles. Although many eggs hatched at the main colony on The Reef, the chicks disappeared before fledging. Common gull predation and adverse weather conditions are thought to have been the main reasons for failure here. 35–45 pairs bred on *Gunna Coll* where a minimum of 10 young are thought to have fledged [RSPB]. The maximum count at The Big Strand *Islay* was 30 individuals on 21st May.

The only autumn records away from *Tiree* were 3 over Oronsay *Colonsay* on 13th Jul and 2 adults passing Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 12th Aug. The last birds reported were 2 juveniles at Gott Bay *Tiree* on 19th Aug.

GUILLEMOT *Uria aalge* Eun dubh an sgadain 0634
B W P Highly colonial, locally abundant breeding species. Adults with small young appear on the sea far from colonies in late summer; regularly seen in sea-lochs in winter.

Breeding. In all 6,791 birds were counted on the Treshnish Isles *Mull* in late Jun (*cf* 7,516 in 1997). On Sanda Islands *Kintyre*, an estimate of 2,600 birds was made in late Jun and the numbers of young present again indicated an excellent breeding season. A total of 92 birds was recorded on the new sample cliff at Uragai *Colonsay* (*cf* 128 in 1997).

At Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* this species was more numerous than Razorbill with 632 recorded flying past in 30 hrs watching 11th–25th Oct.

(See below for movements of auks (Guillemot/Razorbill) past sea-watching sites.)

RAZORBILL *Alca torda* Falc 0636
B W P Locally common breeding species, although less numerous and with smaller colonies than Guillemot. Regularly seen in sea-lochs in winter.

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Breeding. The 1,589 birds counted on the Treshnish Isles *Mull* in late Jun represent a further increase here (cf 1,348 in 1997, and 850-1,000 in 1996). The estimate of 3,000 birds on the Sanda Islands *Kintyre* in late Jun was similar to 1997 and the good numbers of young present again indicated an excellent breeding season. A total of 20 birds were counted on the new sample cliff at *Urugaig Colonsay* (cf 26 in 1997).

An adult ringed on Lunga (Treshnish Isles) *Mull* on 28th Jun 1994 and found, a victim of oiling, at Bognor Regis, West Sussex on 10th Feb 1997 was released after cleaning 8 days later at Berry Head.

At Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre*, this species was less numerous than Guillemot with 228 recorded flying past in 30 hrs watching 11th-25th Oct.

See below for movements of auks (Guillemot/Razorbill) past sea-watching sites.)

AUK sp. (GUILLEMOT/RAZORBILL)

In addition to the above, 1,350 Guillemots/Razorbills, unidentified as to species, were recorded flying S past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* in 30 hrs during 11th-25th Oct.

BLACK GUILLEMOT *Cephus grylle* Gearra-breac 0638
BW Common coastal breeding species. Breeding recorded in 38% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

Breeding. In the Argyll part of the SAMS study area, 85 adults were seen at 16 sites (numbers of adults at each site varied from 1 to 19). 6 large young were seen from 4 broods (3 sites), and the outcome of two clutches at one site was unknown. In 1998 no Black Guillemots were seen at 7 former sites: Dubh Sgeir, Lismore; Fladda, Sound of Luing; Belnahua, Sound of Luing; Eilean Inshaig, Loch Craignish; Eilean nan Coinean, Sound of Jura; Eilean Fraoich, Sound of Jura and Liath Sgeir Mhor (near Crinan). Mink predation of seabirds had definitely occurred at the first six of these and very probably at all seven. The large colony near Gigha (81 birds in 1997) was not visited in 1998. Elsewhere, the 188 individuals seen on the Sanda Islands *Kintyre* in late Jun may indicate recovery after the low point (attributed to the depredations of mink) of only 155 birds in 1997. Numbers on the Treshnish Isles *Mull* (44 individuals) had returned to a more typical total after only a single bird was seen in 1997 (cf 30 pairs in 1996).

At Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* the first juv. appeared on 28th Jul and 54 flew past S in 7 hrs on 16th Aug. No large post-breeding flocks were reported.

LITTLE AUK *Alle alle* Colcach bheag 0647
W Irregular, usually seen during sea-watches or after severe gales.

In the early part of the year, the only records were of a lightly oiled bird found dead at Sorobaidh Bay *Tiree* on 15th Feb and 8 flying through Gunna Sound *Tiree* on 20th Feb.

Later in the year, single birds were reported from: Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* on 11th Oct, Bailemartine *Tiree* on 21st Oct and 7th Nov, Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 29th Oct and 9th Nov, and off East Kames (Loch Fyne) *Mid-Argyll* on 20th Nov. The last of the year was one found dying in a garden at Ganavan (Oban) *Mid-Argyll* on 18th Dec.

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PUFFIN *Fratercula arctica* Buthaid 0654
B P Very localised breeding species with main colonies on Sanda (Kintyre) and Treshnish Isles (Mull). Occasionally recorded in winter.

The first reported birds of the year were 4 off Gunna Sound *Tiree* on 14th Apr.

Breeding. On Treshnish Isles *Mull*, 1,662 pairs were counted in late Jun-early Jul (*cf* 1,866 in 1997). On the Sanda Islands *Kintyre* 240 birds were counted in late Jun, mostly on Sheep Island and Glunimore, and the 4 accessible nests that are monitored all contained well-grown young.

Up to 11 were seen passing off Hynish *Tiree* from mid-Jul to the end of Aug. The last of the year on *Tiree* were 2 flying past Aird Cornaigmore on 14th Oct. One seen off Tralee Beach *N Argyll* on 25th Dec was an unusual mid-winter record.

ROCK DOVE *Columba livia* Calman creige 0665
R I Resident breeder except in Cowal, most numerous in the islands. Breeding recorded in 33% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Large flocks often gather on arable fields outwith breeding season. Feral Pigeons recorded from most areas, but no information on population size.

During the early part of the year, the only sites with counts exceeding 50 birds were: Sunderland Farm *Islay* (120 on 7th Jan) and Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* (60 on 25th May).

Breeding. The sharp decline in numbers on the Sanda Islands *Kintyre* continued and only single pairs on Glunimore and on Sanda were found, (*cf* 4 pairs in 1997; and ten or so pairs in former years). A single pair was noted in a cave on Lunga (Treshnish Isles) *Mull*.

Flock counts during Jun included: 102 at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve on 5th, 27 at Port Mor *Colonsay* on 6th, 35 at Fidden *Mull* on 9th, and 74 at the Airport *Tiree* on 17th.

Flocks of more than 50 birds in the latter part of the year were reported from: Middleton *Tiree* (56 on 18th Aug), Barrapol *Tiree* (83 on 29th Aug), Heylipol *Tiree* (max. 102 on 4th Oct) and Scarrabus *Islay* (68 on 18th Oct). On 23rd Nov 250 birds were counted on *Tiree* between Heylipol and Crossapol.

Records of Feral Pigeons came from: Dunoon *Cowal*, Kiloran Bay *Colonsay*, Tayinloan *Kintyre*, Connel *Mid-Argyll* and Oban *Mid-Argyll* (32 in harbour area on 9th Dec).

WOODPIGEON *Columba palumbus* Calman fiadhaich 0670
B W Common resident breeding species except on some islands, such as Mull, where more numerous in winter. Breeding recorded in 48% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

A group of 20 birds was seen roosting in a single tree at Bishop's Glen (Dunoon) *Cowal* on 20th Feb. One at Cornaigbeg *Tiree* on 28th Apr was outside the normal range for this species.

Breeding. Recorded in 7 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (44%) (*cf* 4 of 16 in 1997).

A small influx was noted in Nov, when flocks of 30-60 birds were reported from several locations in *Cowal* and *Mid-Argyll* where the species is not normally numerous.

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COLLARED DOVE *Streptopelia decaocto* Calman a chrios 0684
B P Sparse but widespread distribution throughout Argyll. Evidence of continued immigration involving small numbers of birds each spring. Breeding recorded in 23% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

The only count in double figures during the year was 10 at Imeraval Islay on 28th Feb.

Three at Heylipol Tiree and 5 at Crossapol Tiree on 29th Apr, as well as 6 flying N at Balemartine Tiree on 29th May, were probably spring migrants. Three birds were seen flying across Gunna Sound from Tiree to Coll on 26th May.

Breeding. Recorded in 1 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (6%). Birds were present at Crossapol throughout the year (max. 9 on 13th Aug), but there was no reported evidence of breeding.

TURTLE DOVE *Streptopelia turtur* Calman tuchan 0687
P Scarce, but several records annually. Majority recorded during May-Jun.

There were only 2 reports of spring migrants: one at Balemartine Tiree on 17th May and one at Rockside Islay on 24th May.

CUCKOO *Cuculus canorus* Cuthag 0724
S P Common. Main host species is Meadow Pipit. Breeding recorded in 41% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

The first bird of the year was calling at Loch Don Mull on 20th Apr. The next records were at Kilmartin Mid-Argyll and Easter Ellister Islay on 23rd Apr, and birds were widely reported during the following week.

Breeding. Recorded in 12 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (75%), (cf 9 of 16 in 1997). There were 3 territories in CBC plots at Tainish NNR Mid-Argyll (as in 1997).

One seen at the N end of Iona Mull on 16th Jun was the last reported bird of the year.

BARN OWL *Tyto alba* Comhachag 0735
B W Scarce breeding species, but probably under-recorded. Breeding recorded in 11% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). All records required.

Breeding. In Cowal 10 of 17 nests located were on crags and no fledging details were obtained; the other 7 pairs (nesting in boxes and buildings) fledged 20 young [DA, AF]. The Forest Enterprise scheme, in West Argyll District, monitored 60 barrels put up for Barn Owls from Loch Awe to Kintyre. They located 15 successful pairs which reared a minimum of 37 young [Forest Enterprise: BB, JW, AM]. A survey of nesting sites in Kintyre estimated an average of 30 breeding pairs per annum during 1995-98; during this period, 75% of the nests located were in buildings, and the average success rate was 78.4% (where success is defined as at least one young fledged from a brood). In 1998, 20 occupied territories were located on non FE land, from which 8 successful pairs produced a minimum of 17 fledged young [R. A. G. Angus 1999]. On Islay, 29 sites were checked of which 16 held pairs and one a single bird; at least 47 eggs were found in the 13 clutches examined, from which 34 young are believed to have fledged. Brood size at fledging was below the long-term average, probably because of cold wet weather during the rearing period [MAO].

Single individuals were reported from 4 sites on Mull at 2 of which the birds were, unfortunately, dead. A bird ringed as a nestling on Islay in July 1997 was found

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dead at Gullane, east of Edinburgh, in March 1998, an unusually long distance for a Barn Owl [MAO].

TAWNY OWL *Strix aluco* Comhachag dhonn 0761
R Widespread and common, but absent from Tiree and Coll. Breeding recorded in 43% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

Breeding. In the Glen Branter study area *Cowal*, 44 pairs laid at least one egg each. Only 25 of these pairs reared any young (total 35 fledged), while 8 failed at the egg stage and 11 at the chick stage. The high failure rate was attributed to falling vole numbers and poor April weather. Nine pairs elsewhere on *Cowal* were monitored: 2 of these pairs failed and 7 pairs reared a total of 15 young [DA, AF].

Other records during the year came from: *Cowal* (2 sites), *Islay* (5 sites), *Mid-Argyll* (5 sites) and *Mull* (5 sites).

LONG-EARED OWL *Asio otus* Comhachag adharcaiche 0767
R P W Very scarce, but almost certainly under-recorded. All records required.

Breeding. Two fledged broods with at least 3 young in each were found on *Colonsay* on 13th Jun [DCJ/JJ]. One pair reared 2 chicks in an old crow's nest near Otter Ferry *Cowal* [DA, AF]. There was a report of calling chicks being heard on *Danna Mid-Argyll* in Jun but no further details were obtained.

One was disturbed from a roost on *Aros Moss Kintyre* on 28th Sep.

SHORT-EARED OWL *Asio flammeus* Comhachag chluassach 0768
B W P Widespread breeder. Numbers fluctuate and distribution varies with abundance of small rodents, especially field voles *Microtus agrestis*. Breeding recorded in 30% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Widespread emigration in autumn.

More than one observer remarked on the paucity of sightings of this species during the year. There were no reports until Apr, when birds were recorded on *Mull* at Scoor (one on 4th), *Glen Aros* (one on 11th and on 17th) and *Glen More* (4 on 17th and singles thereafter). The only other records at this time came from *Islay*, where there were 2 at *Bolsay* on 13th Apr and singles at *Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve* on 22nd Apr and 5th May.

Breeding. Recorded in 1 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (6%). Six breeding sites were located on *Cowal*: one pair failed, two pairs reared 6 chicks, and the outcome for the other 3 pairs is unknown [DA, AF]. An adult was seen carrying prey at *Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve* on 6th Jun; and what appeared to be a family party, of up to 5 birds, was seen from the road between *Kennacraig* and *Claonaig Kintyre* on several dates in Jul.

Singles were seen on *Mull* in late Jun, over the sea off *Duart Point* on 24th and at *Loch Spelve* on 26th; and 2 were hunting at *Octofad Islay* also on 26th. *Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve* had one or two birds on three dates in Jul.

Later in the year, a roost on *Aros Moss Kintyre* held 5 birds on 28th Sep - these birds were roosting in willow scrub (*Salix*) up to ca 2 metres from the ground; one bird was on the coast near *Benderloch N Argyll* on 25th Oct; and one was hunting over *Danna Island Mid-Argyll* in early Nov.

SWIFT *Apus apus* Gobhlan mor 0795
S P Localised breeding species, mainland only; natural nest sites have been used in *Kintyre*. Breeding recorded in 4% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Regular

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passage migrant in all areas.

The first birds were seen at Connel *Mid-Argyll* on 10th May, followed by singles at Dunoon *Cowal* on 13th, The Reef *Tiree* on 14th, and Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* also on 14th. Five were seen flying over Lochgilthead *Mid-Argyll* on 15th, 3 over Blairmore (Loch Long) *Cowal* on 18th, and one at Croggan *Mull* on 29th.

Breeding. In Campbeltown *Kintyre* 8-10 pairs were present at the usual breeding sites and 35 were counted flying over the town on 27th Jul. Up to 12 were seen regularly in Dunoon *Cowal*, and up to 6 over Lochgilthead. The only record from Oban *Mid-Argyll* was 15 over the harbour on 5th Jun.

During Jun and Jul, up to 5 birds were also reported from Oronsay *Colonsay*, *Islay*, *Mull* (inc. Treshnish Isles) and *Tiree*.

Following the 15 migrants flying over Skerry Fad Fell (Machrihanish) *Kintyre* on 15th Aug, there was a gap until 31st Aug when 2 were in the Loch Gruinart area. Finally there was a series of Sep records: singles at Loch Bhasapol *Tiree* on 2nd and 7th, one at Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* on 2nd, 2 at Port Charlotte *Islay* on 3rd, one at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve on 4th, 2 at Cornaigmore *Tiree* on 5th and, lastly, one at Balemartine *Tiree* on 8th.

KINGFISHER *Alcedo atthis* Biorra cruidein 0831
W P Most records are in autumn and winter, and these may represent dispersing juveniles.

Single birds were seen over Loch Etive near Connel *Mid-Argyll* on 7th and 18th Feb and again, later in the year, on 12th Dec. One was seen near Ardoran (Loch Feochan) *Mid-Argyll* on 18th Sep and, on *Islay*, one was at Loch Ballygrant on 23rd Oct and again on 12th Nov. The last bird of the year was at Holy Loch *Cowal* on 20th Dec.

BEE-EATER *Merops apiaster* 0840
V Only 4 records for Argyll: 2 near Ballygrant (Islay) in Jun 1981, one at Lochgoilhead (Cowal) in Jun 1986, one at Lochdon (Mull) in Jul 1993 and one at Fidden (Mull) in May 1995.

The lucky finder of the bird at Tynacoille *Islay* on 11th Jun was treated to close-up views of it catching and eating a large insect (probably a bumblebee). He and his companions (who had only been birding for a year) were able to see the bright red eyes without the aid of binoculars [MAO]*.

HOOPOE *Upupa epops* 0846
P Scarce. Recorded in 10 of the 18 years 1980-97 with a total of about 18 records: more often in spring than in autumn.

One was flushed from the roadside near Cornaigmore *Tiree* on 28th Apr. After apparently disappearing, it was relocated at almost exactly the same spot 3 weeks later on 21st May. It was observed going to roost at nearby An Airidh on 21st and 22nd May and was last seen on 23rd [AJL/MW].

WRYNECK *Jynx torquilla* Geocair 0848
V Only 3 records since 1980: one at Bousd (Coll) on 13th Oct 1984, one on Sanda (Kintyre) on 6th Oct 1987 and the latest at Torlochan (Mull) on 9th-10th Jun 1991.

On the afternoon of 4th Jun, two visitors from Wales heard an unfamiliar call from beside the Kilmartin Burn, near Slockavullin *Mid-Argyll*. When they caught sight of the bird, they were fairly sure it was a Wryneck but telephoned the bird

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recorder to obtain confirmation. Fortunately it was still there calling and clearly visible the following morning, when its identity was confirmed. It was last seen on 6th Jun [R&DM/PD/JHa]*.

1997 One was seen near the Forestry Commission office at Cairnbaan *Mid-Argyll* on 11th Sep [P. Quelch]*.

GREEN WOODPECKER *Picus viridis* Snagardach 0856
R. Rare but recorded regularly in Cowal during 1992-94 and 1996-7. All records required.

Singles were seen in *Cowal*, at Knap, Gairletter and Glen Fyne during Mar and one was in the Glenbranter area from at least Mar-May. Recorded for the second year in succession in Barcaldine Woods *N Argyll*, where 'yaffling' was heard on 23rd Apr and an adult was seen on 18th Jun.

Breeding. A brood of at least 2 young were heard calling for food at Escart *Kintyre* during late Jun-early Jul. Adult birds have been recorded here in the past, but none was seen on this occasion. Although breeding has been suspected in *Argyll* in the past, this is the first confirmed record.

One was seen near Ardentinn *Cowal* in Sep, and birds were seen and/or heard at Tiroran *Mull* on 5 dates between 8th Sep and 30th Oct.

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos major* Snagan daraich 0876
R Widespread on the mainland and Mull. Breeding recorded in 31% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

Breeding. Recorded in 2 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (13%) (*cf* 1 of 16 in 1997). Drumming was heard at: Bellanoch, Minard Woods, Moine Mhor NNR and Tighnahanoran – all in *Mid-Argyll* - and at Skipness *Kintyre*. Adult birds were seen at nest holes at a site on *Colonsay*, in alder carr by Crinan Canal *Mid-Argyll*, at two sites in Tainish NNR *Mid-Argyll*, and at Sutherland's Grove *N Argyll*.

Other records during the year came from *Mid-Argyll*, at Achabreck and Glen Croe; also from Blairmore *Cowal*, Bridgend Woods *Islay*, Port Righ *Kintyre*, Grasspoint and Pennygown on *Mull*, and Connel Airfield *N Argyll*.

SKYLARK *Alauda arvensis* Uiseag 0976
B W P Widespread and common breeding species. Breeding recorded in 79% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Emigration of many birds in winter, with remaining birds mainly in coastal and low-lying localities.

The only counts exceeding 50 birds during the early part of the year were 200 at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* on 25th Jan and 131 in Whitehouse/Cornaig area of *Tiree* on 7th Feb.

Breeding. Recorded in 11 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (69%) (*cf* 12 of 16 in 1997). Only one territory was identified in the coastal CBC plot at Tainish NNR *Mid-Argyll* (*cf* 5 in 1997). Elsewhere, 5 singing birds were holding territories on Lunga (Treshnish Isles) *Mull* in Jun, and 6 pairs were found on Sanda Islands *Kintyre* (*cf* 3 in 1997). A whole-island survey of Oronsay *Colonsay* on 24th May revealed a total of 186 birds.

In the latter part of the year, numbers on stubble fields at Cornaigmore *Tiree* rose from 110 on 3rd Oct to a peak of 350 on 7th Oct, falling to 45 by 17th Dec. The only other locality with a count of 50 or more birds was Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve (max. 211 on 5th Nov).

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SAND MARTIN *Riparia riparia* Gobhlan gainmhiche 0981
S P Uncommon and localised breeding species. Breeding recorded in 24% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). All breeding records required.

The first birds of the year were 3 at Claggain *Islay* on 30th Mar, and 3 were excavating nest holes at Killbeg *Mull* on the 7th Apr. By the end of Apr, birds had also been reported from *Islay*, *Kintyre*, *Mid-Argyll* and *N Argyll*.

Breeding. Recorded in 1 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (6%). Numbers again increased at the two large colonies from which counts of nest holes were received, viz. 110 at Kilmichael Glen woodyard *Mid-Argyll* (a new record count, cf 100 in 1997, and 52 in 1996) and 314 at North Connel sandpit (cf 245 in 1997, and 173 in 1996). Birds also bred at Little Eachaig River (nr Dunoon) *Cowal* (15-20 nest holes), at Kilchiaran *Islay* (15 nest holes), near Tervine Fish Farm *Mid-Argyll* (ca 6 nest holes), at Laggan Bridge *Islay* (6+ pairs, no count of nests), at Gorten *Mull* (12+ birds, no count of nests), and at Killbeg *Mull* (no count).

Parent birds were still feeding young at Kilchiaran on 1st Sep, and the last birds seen were 4 there on 15th Sep.

There were no reports during the year from *Coll*, *Colonsay*, *Gigha*, *Jura* or *Kintyre*.

SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica* Gobhlan gaoithe 0992
S P Widespread and common. Breeding recorded in 76% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

The first record of the year was one at Balephetrish *Tiree* on 28th Mar, followed by singles at Claggain *Islay* on 30th Mar, at Ardchonnell *Mid-Argyll* on 4th Apr and at Quinish *Mull* on 8th. The main arrival occurred during the week 18th-25th Apr, when birds were widely reported. Late movements were again reported from the Portnahaven area of *Islay* where 300 were seen on 13th Jun.

Breeding. Recorded in 7 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (44%) (cf 9 of 16 in 1997, and 3 of 21 in 1996). A pair at Tiroran *Mull* successfully raised 3 broods of young, the last of which did not leave the nest until 22nd Sep.

The only count of more than 50 birds was 55 at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* on 20th Aug.

Most birds had left by the end of the first week of Oct, and the last seen on *Islay* was a single at Bruichladdich on 24th Oct. The last record of all was one in Tobermory *Mull* which stayed from 1st to 6th Nov.

HOUSE MARTIN *Delichon urbica* Gobhlan taighe 1001
S P Common breeding species on mainland; less numerous on the islands and no recent breeding records from Colonsay, Tiree and Coll. Breeding recorded in 48% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

The only Apr records were on *Tiree*; the first at Balinoe on 23rd, followed by 2 at West Hynish on 24th and one at Balemartine on 29th. The main arrival took place from 6th to 14th May. Four birds seen at Mannal *Tiree* on 31st May were late spring passage migrants or wandering birds.

Breeding. Recorded in 1 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (6%).

Seven birds were seen at East Loch Fada *Colonsay* on 7th Jun. The species is normally scarce on the island.

At Kintallan *Mid-Argyll*, 26 were counted gathering on telephone wires on 3rd Sep and by 19th Sep, when a few were seen at Tayinloan *Kintyre*, most had departed.

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There were late records from Otter Ferry Cowal (3 on 22nd Oct) and the head of Ardmaddy Bay *Mid-Argyll* (2 on 11th Nov).

TREE PIPIT *Anthus trivialis* Riabhag 1009
S P Common breeding species on the mainland. Also widespread on Jura and Mull, but very scarce on Islay. Breeding recorded in 54% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

Two at Tighnahoran (Loch Caolisport) *Mid-Argyll* on 10th Apr were the first, followed by singles at Loch Sween *Mid-Argyll* on 13th and at Tainish NNR *Mid-Argyll* on 15th. However, birds were not widely reported until late Apr when, e.g., one was at Lagavulin *Islay* on 29th.

Breeding. Recorded in 6 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (38%) (*cf* 5 of 16 in 1997). At Tainish NNR *Mid-Argyll*, there were 12 territories in the woodland CBC plot (*cf* 15 in 1997, and 10 in 1996); and an adult with 2 juvs at Claggain *Islay* on 1st Jul was an unusual breeding record for the island.

The last birds at Dunoon Cowal were recorded on 23rd Sep; and a late straggler was on The Reef *Tiree* on 21st Oct.

MEADOW PIPIT *Anthus pratensis* Snathag 1011
B W P Abundant breeding species. Breeding recorded in 94% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Emigration of many birds in winter, with remaining birds mainly in coastal and low-lying localities.

The 50+ seen at Minard *Mid-Argyll* on 9th Apr and 45+ at Connel *Mid-Argyll* on 11th Apr were presumably returning to breed on higher ground.

Breeding. Recorded in 15 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (94%) (*cf* 14 of 16 in 1997), making this, unsurprisingly, the most widespread breeding bird recorded by the BBS in Argyll. At Tainish NNR *Mid-Argyll*, there were 6 territories in the coastal CBC plot (*cf* 5 in 1997) but on Sanda Islands *Kintyre* numbers were down again to 20 pairs (*cf* 25 pairs in 1997, rather than the usual 40 or so).

Birds moving S later in the year were seen at Heylipol *Tiree* (150 at end of Aug) and High Lossit *Kintyre* (800 passing in 4 hrs on 18th Sep).

ROCK PIPIT *Anthus petrosus* Gabhagan 1014/2
R P W Common resident breeding species. Breeding recorded in 67% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Scarce passage and winter visitor elsewhere.

Breeding. Recorded in 3 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (19%) (*cf* 2 of 16 in 1997). The number of pairs on the Sanda Islands *Kintyre* was down again, to 24 compared with the usual 30.

A flock of 30 birds near Culdampf (Iona) *Mull* on 13th Nov may have been migrants.

YELLOW WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava* Breacan buidhe 1017
P Scarce and less than annual; recorded in 12 of the 18 years 1980-97. Birds of the Blue-headed race M. f. flava occur from time to time, and there has been at least one record of the Grey-headed race M. f. thunbergi (in 1985).

Just two records this year: single juvenile/females at Kilmartin *Mid-Argyll* on 29th Aug and at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* on 5th & 6th Oct.

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GREY WAGTAIL *Motacilla cinerea* Breacan bain tighearna 1019
B W P Widespread breeding species. Breeding recorded in 61% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Some emigration in winter.

Breeding. Recorded in 1 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (6%).

Reported only from Cowal, Islay, Kintyre, Mid-Argyll and Mull during the year.

PIED WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba yarrellii* Breach an t-sil 1020
B W P Widespread and common breeder. Breeding recorded in 87% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Emigration from most areas in winter. Returning birds generally arrive late Feb to early Mar; departure Aug-Oct.

A roost of 25 birds was found in the harbour area of Oban Mid-Argyll on 24th Jan, and 50+ were recorded on Tìree during a goose census on 30th-31st Mar.

Breeding. Recorded in 7 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (44%) (cf 6 of 16 in 1997). Four pairs were found on Sanda Islands Kintyre (as in 1997).

Flocks of 22 birds at Claonaig Kintyre and 20+ at Ruanaich (Iona) Mull on 13th Sep, as well as 20+ at gathering on boats at Dunstaffnage Mid-Argyll on 20th Sep, were presumably migrants. There were several records from sites in Kintyre during Nov-Dec.

WHITE WAGTAIL *M. a. alba*

P Usually recorded in spring. Extent of autumn passage obscured by identification difficulties.

The first bird of the year was at Ardnave Point Islay on 21st Apr, followed by one at Balemartine Tìree on 23rd Apr. On Oronsay Colonsay, one was present on 24th Apr, followed by 7 on 25th, while on Tìree 7 were at Vaul on 26th Apr, 6 at south end of Sorobaith Bay on 28th, and passage reached a peak with 47 at Loch a 'Phuill on 2nd May. Also on 2nd May, 10 were seen at East Ardskenish Colonsay, and on 10th May one was at Claddach Islay and 6 were recorded at Loch an Eilein Tìree. One at Calgary on 29th May was the only record from Mull.

In autumn, the first birds at Machrihanish SBO Kintyre were 3 on 8th Aug and the max. count was 8 on 18th Sep. One there on 28th Sep was the last of the year. The only other records at this time were from Tìree, where a male was at Loch Bhasapol on 26th Aug and 3 were at Croch House (Caolas) on 28th.

DIPPER *Cinclus cinclus* Gobha uisge 1050
B W Widespread, though scarce on Islay and Colonsay; absent from Tìree and Coll. Breeding recorded in 34% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

Breeding. Recorded in 2 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (13%) (cf 1 of 16 in 1997). Confirmed breeding records came from Slockavullin Mid-Argyll, Knock Mull and Ardyne Burn (Toward) Cowal (2 pairs).

Up to 7 birds were roosting under Knockstapplebeg Bridge (Southend) Kintyre during Dec.

In addition to these, birds were also reported during the year from Cowal (2 locations), Kintyre (one location), Mid-Argyll (9 locations) and Mull (7 locations).

WREN *Troglodytes troglodytes* Dreathann donn 1066
B W Very common, although numbers fluctuate. Breeding recorded in 84% of 10 km

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squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

Breeding. Recorded in 11 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (69%) (*cf* 9 of 16 in 1997). Recovery continues at Tainish NNR *Mid-Argyll*, with a total of 53 territories in the CBC plots (*cf* 40 in 1997, and 28 in 1995). On the Sanda Islands *Kintyre* 13 pairs were found (*cf* 11 in 1997).

At Aros Moss CES *Kintyre*, 7 were ringed inc. 3 immatures [N. Brown 1999].

DUNNOCK *Prunella modularis* Gealbhoonn nam preas 1084
B W P Widespread and common, except some islands. Breeding recorded in 55% of 10 km squares (*BTO Atlas, 1988-91*).

On *Tiree*, where this species is scarce, singles were at Balemartine on 5th Jan, Tìree High School on 13th Jan, Vaul on 26th Apr, and at Scarinish on 14th May and 7th Oct.

Breeding. Recorded in 6 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (38%) (as in 1997). A total of 3 territories were identified in the Tainish NNR *Mid-Argyll* CBC plots (*cf* one in 1997); and a pair was again found on Sanda Islands *Kintyre* where the species is only an occasional breeder.

Five birds were ringed at Aros Moss CES, inc. 2 immatures [N. Brown 1999].

ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula* Bru dhearg 1099
B P Common. Breeding recorded in 79% of 10 km squares (*BTO Atlas, 1988-91*). Heavy autumn passage in some years.

Breeding. Recorded in 10 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (63%) (as in 1997). At Tainish NNR *Mid-Argyll*, numbers again fell, to a total of 15 territories in the CBC plots (*cf* 22 in 1997, and 10 in 1996). On the Sanda Islands *Kintyre*, 6 adults were ringed but no resident pairs found.

At Aros Moss CES, 10 were ringed inc. 8 immatures [N. Brown 1999].

Evidence of an autumn influx was noted from late Sep onwards. On *Tiree* 10 were at Balemartine on 21st Sep, and a total of 45 for the whole island was estimated on 4th Oct. At least 20 were noted on Iona *Mull* on 13th Nov. (There were reports of a large fall of continental birds on the east coast in late Sep-early Oct).

REDSTART *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* Ceann dearg 1122
S P Common breeding species in relatively open woodland, except *Islay* where scarce; absent from *Colonsay, Tìree* and *Coll*. Breeding recorded in 37% of 10 km squares (*BTO Atlas, 1988-91*).

The first bird of the year, at Tainish NNR *Mid-Argyll* on 21st Apr, was followed by one at Gortantaoid *Islay* on 24th. The species was generally distributed by the first week in May.

Breeding. Recorded in 1 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (6%) (*cf* 2 of 16 in 1997). At Bonawe *N Argyll*, from 4 pairs that bred in nestboxes, clutch size was 7 in each of 3 nests and undetermined in one (mean 7.0); 1 brood was predated in the manner of Pine Marten *Martes martes*, but 16 young fledged from the other 3 nests (4.0 fledged/pair laying). In *Mid-Argyll*, there were 6 territories in the woodland CBC plot at Tainish NNR (*cf* 8 in 1997) and breeding was also reported from Minard Woods.

Six autumn migrants were recorded at Asgog Loch *Cowal* on 3rd Sep; and late birds were at West Hynish *Tìree* on 5th Oct and Machrihanish Airfield *Kintyre* on 8th Oct.

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WHINCHAT *Saxicola rubetra* Gocan 1137
S P Widespread and common breeding species. Breeding recorded in 74% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

After the first of the year, at Torlochan Mull on 28th Apr, birds were widely reported during the next week and 'several' were singing on the North Moss at Moine Mhor NNR Mid-Argyll on 30th Apr. One singing in gorse at Taynish NNR Mid-Argyll, also on 30th Apr, was the first record there since 1990.

Breeding. Recorded in 4 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (25%) (*cf* 8 of 16 in 1997). On Colonsay, 9 pairs were located (*cf* 9 in 1997); and 10 territories were identified on Machrihanish Airfield Kintyre.

Territorial pairs, singing males or family parties were also recorded from Islay (3 sites), Kintyre (one site), Mid-Argyll (10 sites) and Mull (8 sites). Two adults were ringed at Aros Moss CES [N. Brown 1999].

Most had left by the beginning of Sep, but late birds were at West Parkfergus Kintyre on 1st Oct and at Cornaigmore Tiree on 17th Oct.

STONECHAT *Saxicola torquata* Clacharan 1139
R P W Widespread, but resident population can decline dramatically as a consequence of severe winter conditions. Breeding recorded in 70% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Some emigration may take place in winter.

Breeding. The first pair with recently fledged young were at Easter Ellister Islay on 7th May (same date as 1997). Recorded in 4 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (25%) (*cf* 2 of 16 in 1997). Numbers on Colonsay (inc. Oronsay) continued to recover with a total of 33 pairs located (*cf* 27 in 1997, and 8 in 1996). Three pairs were located on Sanda Islands Kintyre, and at least 5 pairs were found in the Loch Gorm area of Islay. In addition to the above, there were reports of pairs/family parties in the breeding season from Islay (3 sites), Mid-Argyll (4 sites), Mull (11 sites), and from Tiree (9 sites).

Later in the year, pairs were reported from 2 sites on Jura on 5th Oct and as being 'widespread and quite common' on Coll on 29th Nov.

WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oenanthe* Bru gheal 1146
S P Common breeding species. Breeding recorded in 83% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

The first record was a single on Oronsay Colonsay on 20th Mar, a relatively late date. In the following week, there were several records from Islay, Mull and Tiree, and then 15 birds on Oronsay on 30th Mar and 13 at Balemartine Tiree on 3rd Apr. On Tiree, in May, 42 in the Beinn Hough area on 3rd and 30 in the Loch a 'Phuill area on 10th were possibly late migrants.

Breeding. Recorded in 9 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (56%) (*cf* 7 of 16 in 1997). On Lunga (Treshnish Isles) Mull an estimated 12 territories were established on the main part (N) of the island in late Jun-early Jul. Of 41 birds trapped, 25 were juveniles and 3 were retraps from the 25 birds ringed in 1997. Fifteen pairs were located on Sanda Islands Kintyre (as in 1997) and at least 20 pairs were found around Machir Bay Islay on 6th Jun. A nest containing young was found at East Loch Fada Colonsay on 10th Jun.

Up to 10 birds were reported from various sites on Islay, Oronsay, Jura and Mull during the first week of Oct, with the last singles at Loch an Eilein Tiree on 22nd Oct and at Cluanach Islay on 25th.

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GREENLAND WHEATEAR *O. o. leucorhoa*

P Apparently rare, but probably greatly under-recorded.

Individual birds on *Tiree* in mid-May were considered to be of this race, as was a single on Oronsay *Colonsay* on 11th Sep.

RING OUZEL *Turdus torquatus* Dubh chreige 1186

S P Very localised upland breeding species. Breeding recorded in 7% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). More widespread, though scarce, on migration. All records required.

The only record of a of spring passage migrant was one at Loch Buie *Mull* on 15th Apr.

Breeding. In *N Argyll* 3 singing males were recorded in the Glas Bheinn Mhor-Beinn nan Aighenan area on 3rd May; and a pair, inc. a singing male, were in Glen Noe in Jun. In Oct a 1st winter bird was at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 7th and one was seen on the *Mull* of Oa *Islay* on 24th. A very late male bird was at Lochdon *Mull* on 19th Nov, and an even more surprising winter record was the bird seen and filmed on a camcorder at Cruachan Reservoir *N Argyll* on 29th Dec.

BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula* Lon dubh 1187

B WP Widespread and very common breeding species. Breeding recorded in 77% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

Breeding. Recorded in 6 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (38%) (cf 5 of 16 in 1997). A total of 4 territories were recorded in the CBC plots at Tainish NNR *Mid-Argyll* (cf 5 in 1997), an estimated 20 pairs were on *Tiree* in Apr, and a single pair was found on the Sanda Islands *Kintyre*.

An noticeable influx took place in mid-Nov when flocks of birds were seen in *Mid-Argyll* feeding on the large berry crop.

FIELDFARE *Turdus pilaris* Liath thruisg 1198

W P Abundant on autumn passage, but relatively few winter.

All the reports during Jan-Feb came from the islands. On *Islay* flocks of 20-80 were recorded at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve on 5 dates between 5th Jan & 4th Feb, and 120+ were near Foreland House on 28th Feb. A flock of 55-60 were at Carnan Mor *Tiree* on 25th Jan and, elsewhere on the island, 83 were counted at Sandaig on 1st Feb, 106 were at the W end of the island on 6th Feb, and 85 were at Mannal on 18th Feb. Approx. 20 were with Redwings at Balmeanach *Mull* on 1st Feb. Small flocks were reported during Mar from *Islay* and *Tiree*, and 60+ were at Barnakill *Mid-Argyll* on 2nd. Records during Apr all came from *Mull* inc. 40+ at Aros on 5th, 20 near Ledmore on 7th and 7 at Crannich on 16th. The last birds of spring were singles at Gortantaoid *Islay* on 1st and 2nd May.

The first birds of autumn were at Ardentinnny *Cowal* on 18th Oct, but numbers really built up from the end of Oct and into Nov. Flocks of 100 or more were seen at: Bridge of Orchy *N Argyll* (200 on 30th Oct), Kilmartin-Lochgilphead *Mid-Argyll* (ca 500 on 2nd Nov), Braevallich *Mid-Argyll* (ca 200 on 6th Nov), Kilmore-Seil Island *Mid-Argyll* (ca 2,000 on 11th Nov), Loch Ederline *Mid-Argyll* (ca 100 on 11th Nov), Bonawe *N Argyll* (600+ on 15th Nov), Kintallan *Mid-Argyll* (300+ on 24th Nov), N of Tarbert *Mid-Argyll* (200+ on 29th Nov) and Lurignich (Appin) *N Argyll* (ca 1,000 on 29th Nov). After this only small numbers were reported in Dec, from *Cowal*, *Mid-Argyll* and *Tiree*.

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SONG THRUSH *Turdus philomelos* Smeorach 1200
B W P Widespread and common. Breeding recorded in 72% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

Breeding. Recorded in 9 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (56%) (cf 10 of 16 in 1997). At Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll*, there was a total of 6 territories in the CBC plots (cf 11 in 1997, but only 5 in 1996), and 2+ pairs were found on Sanda Islands *Kintyre*.

At Aros Moss CES, 8 were ringed inc. 5 immatures [N. Brown 1999].

Small numbers (up to 10 per flock) were involved with the influx of thrushes in mid-Nov.

REDWING *Turdus iliacus* Sgiath dhearg 1201
W P Abundant on autumn passage, but relatively few winter. Occasional individuals recorded in late spring. Bred on Mull in 1991.

The only Jan reports were 3 at Corran Bay *Islay* on 21st and 30+ near Kilninver *Mid-Argyll* on 31st. Small flocks of up to 50 birds were reported from various locations in *Islay*, *Mull*, *Mid-Argyll* and *Tiree* during Feb with a max. of 83 at Sandaig *Tiree* on 1st. Numbers built up during Mar, especially on *Islay* where there were 200+ at Bridgend Woods on 6th and 400+ there on 14th. The highest count elsewhere was 78 at Crossapol *Tiree* on 22nd. The only Apr records were a single at Connel *Mid-Argyll* on 14th and 17 at Scarinish *Tiree* on 18th.

The first bird of the autumn was at Balemartine *Tiree* on 30th Sep. There were a few records early in Oct (inc. 60 at Ballygrant *Islay* on 8th) but numbers began to build up from 12th when 70+ were at Connel *Mid-Argyll*. Counts of more than 100 after this were made at: W coast of *Tiree* (max. 480 on 17th Oct), Lochdon *Mull* (max. 300 on 24th), Connel (400+ on 22nd), Ardbeg *Islay* (2,000+ on 29th) and Kintour *Islay* (100+ on 31st). Smaller numbers were reported with Fieldfare flocks through Nov and the only counts exceeding 100 birds were in *Mid-Argyll*: 100+ at Crinan Wood on 13th, 210 at Kintallan on 24th and 100+ at Duntaynish on 24th. The flock at Duntaynish was still there on 1st Dec, but few birds were reported after this (max. 30 around Scarinish *Tiree* on 20th Dec).

MISTLE THRUSH *Turdus viscivorus* Smeorach mhor 1202
B W P Widespread but thinly distributed breeding species. Breeding recorded in 43% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Many birds emigrate in autumn.

Small numbers were seen with Fieldfares and Redwings on *Islay* in early Mar.

Breeding. Recorded in 3 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (19%) (as in 1997). There was one territory in the woodland CBC plot at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* (cf 2 in 1997). Elsewhere records of confirmed breeding came from *Colonsay* (one site) and *Mid-Argyll* (one site).

In late Oct and Nov, small numbers were again seen with other migrant thrushes, but the only counts of more than 10 birds were 15 at Moine Mhor *Mid-Argyll* on 2nd Nov and 12 at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* on 5th Nov.

GRASSHOPPER WARBLER *Locustella naevia* Ceileiriche leumnach 1236
S P Localised breeding species in all areas, good densities occurring in many young conifer plantations. Breeding recorded in 26% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

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The first reeling bird was heard at Ardnaskie (nr Taynuilt) *Mid-Argyll* on 18th Apr; and one at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* on 21st was the earliest arrival on record there. The next was not until 27th Apr when one was at Carnan Mor *Tiree*, but in the week following birds were widely reported from *Cowal, Islay, Mid-Argyll, N Argyll* and *Mull*.

Breeding. Recorded in 2 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (13%) (*cf* 4 of 16 in 1997). At Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* there was a total of 4 territories in the CBC plots (as in 1997) and several others were noted elsewhere on the reserve. Five singing males were found on *Colonsay* in Jun (*cf* 2 in 1997), and other reports of singing males after mid-May came from *Islay* (10 sites), *Cowal* (1), *Mid-Argyll* (9), *Mull* (2) and *N Argyll* (2).

At Aros Moss CES, 5 were ringed inc. one immature [N. Brown 1999].

A bird was still reeling in Dunoon *Cowal* on 24th Jul, and late males were heard on 1st Aug at Loch Gorm *Islay* and at Lower Carron (nr Minard) *Mid-Argyll*.

SEDGE WARBLER *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* Glas eun 1243
S P Locally common. Breeding recorded in 41% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

The first singing birds were at Loch Bhasapol *Tiree* on 26th and 28th Apr, and the first at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* was on 29th. After this, singing birds were reported from *Cowal, Mid-Argyll* and *Mull* during the first week in May.

Breeding. Recorded in 4 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (25%) (*cf* 3 of 16 in 1997). At Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* there was another record total of 13 territories in the CBC plots (*cf* 12 in 1997). As in 1997, 29 singing males were found on *Colonsay* and a survey on Oronsay *Colonsay* on 24th May identified 16 individuals. Two pairs were found on Sanda Islands *Kintyre*, and one sang regularly in late Jun-early Jul on Lunga (Treshnish Isles) *Mull*. In addition, singing males were reported in the breeding season from *Mid-Argyll* (7 sites), *Mull* (7 sites) and one site each on *Coll, Islay* and in *Kintyre*.

At Aros Moss CES, 37 were ringed inc. 13 immatures [N. Brown 1999].

One was at Tayinloan *Kintyre* on 30th Jul, and a late bird was on Oronsay on 12th Sep.

BOOTED WARBLER *Hippolais caligata* 1256
V No previous records for Argyll.

An individual of this tricky species was found in a garden at Balemartine *Tiree* on the morning of 20th Sep and filmed on a camcorder [M. Williamson]*. As well as being a first for Argyll, this is a very rare species in Scotland as a whole and recorded less than annually.

LESSER WHITETHROAT *Sylvia curruca* Gealan coille beag 1274
S P Rare, with only 8 records in Argyll during 1980-97.

One was at Balemartine *Tiree* from 18th to 20th Sep [MW]*.

WHITETHROAT *Sylvia communis* Gealan coille 1275
S P Widespread but thinly distributed breeding species. Marked improvement in numbers during the 1980s, with good breeding densities in many young conifer plantations. Breeding recorded in 59% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

Only 2 records in Apr: the first at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* on 29th, and the

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second at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* on 30th. The next reports came from *Kintyre* where one was at Campbeltown on 5th May and one at Tayinloan on 6th. Records were not widespread until mid-May.

Breeding. Recorded in 6 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (38%) (*cf* 4 of 16 in 1997). Numbers of territories in the CBC plots at Tainish NNR were down from 7 in 1997 to 4 this year, as were numbers of singing males on *Colonsay*, down to 10 from 17 in 1997. At least 3 pairs were again found on Sanda Islands *Kintyre*; and at least 5 males were singing along the Gruline-Ulva Ferry road *Mull* on 2nd Jun. In addition to these, singing males were reported from *Mull* (14 sites), *Mid-Argyll* (3), *Cowal* (one) and *Kintyre* (2).

Most birds had gone by mid-Aug but one was at Tormisdale *Islay* on 28th Aug, an adult female was at Kintallan *Mid-Argyll* on 1st Sep, and a late juv. was seen at Lower Killeyan *Islay* on 4th Oct.

GARDEN WARBLER *Sylvia borin* Ceileiriche garaidh 1276
S P Scarce breeding species. Breeding recorded in 14% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

Arrival was early this year, with individuals at Connel *N Argyll* and Tiroran *Mull* on 28th Apr and at Benderloch *N Argyll* and Tainish NNR *Mid-Argyll* on 29th, the first ever Apr record at Tainish for this species. However, the main arrival was not apparent until mid-May.

Breeding. Not recorded in any of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (*cf* 2 of 16 in 1997). There were several territories at Tainish NNR including 3 in the CBC plots (*cf* 2 in 1997). Singing birds were also reported in the breeding season from Moine Mhor, Furnace and Minard (2 territories) in *Mid-Argyll* and from 6 localities in *Kintyre*. On the whole a good year for the species.

Two juveniles were seen near Kilmory Lake *Mid-Argyll* on 6th Jul, and a late migrant was at Balemartine *Tiree* on 17th Sep.

BLACKCAP *Sylvia atricapilla* Ceann dubh 1277
S W P Scarce breeding species. Breeding recorded in 23% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Increasingly numerous in winter.

No wintering birds were reported during the early part of the year. The first spring migrant was at Tainish NNR *Mid-Argyll* on 29th Apr, an exceptionally early date for this location. Singing males were reported in early May from Colonsay House *Colonsay* and from Bellanoch and Minard *Mid-Argyll*.

Breeding. Recorded in 2 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (13%) (*cf* one of 16 in 1997). There were 3 territories in the CBC plots at Tainish NNR *Mid-Argyll* (as in 1997). Elsewhere, a survey in *Kintyre* recorded 22 singing males at 10 sites during May-Jun; and singing males were heard at 4 sites in *Mid-Argyll*, 2 in *N Argyll* and one each on *Islay* and *Mull*.

A female/juv feeding on raspberries in Dunoon *Cowal* on 27th-28th Jul was probably a migrant. Birds on *Tiree*, at West Hynish (on 5th Oct), Middleton (on 5th Oct), Balemartine (on 17th Oct) and Loch Bhasapol (on 13th Nov) and on *Islay*, at Loch nan Cadhan (2 on 12th Nov) and Kilnaughton Bay (on 13th Nov) were probably migrants. Single males at Ballure *Kintyre* on 29th Nov, Ardentallen *Mid-Argyll* on 30th Nov, and at Connel *Mid-Argyll* on 20th Dec would most likely have been wintering birds.

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YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER *Phylloscopus inornatus* 1300
V Rare. Only two accepted previous records for Argyll: on Skerryvore in 1906 and on Islay in Oct 1998.

On 2nd Oct one was found by the roadside at West Hynish Tiree. It was not seen subsequently [A. J. Leitch]*. This constitutes only the third Argyll record of a species that is much more frequently recorded on the east coast of Scotland and in the northern isles. (There is, however, a record of one on Tiree in Nov 1996 still pending.)

WOOD WARBLER *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* Ceileiriche cille 1308
S P Common breeding species. Breeding recorded in 49% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

One at Blarcreen N Argyll on 20th Apr was the first record of the year. The next was not until 27th, when one was at Taynish NNR Mid-Argyll, but birds were widespread, at least in Cowal and Mid-Argyll, by the end of Apr. A single migrant was seen at Scarinish Tiree on 14th May.

Breeding. Recorded in 2 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (13%) (as in 1997). There were 11 territories (a record number) in the woodland CBC plot at Taynish NNR Mid-Argyll (*cf* 10 in 1997). In addition, breeding season records came from Islay (2 sites), Mid-Argyll (6 sites), Mull (7 sites) and from single locations in N Argyll and on Tiree.

There were no records after early Jul.

CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus collybita* Cailean 1311
S P Uncommon breeding species, scarce on islands. Breeding recorded in 25% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Winter records not infrequent.

The earliest arrival was one at Coullabus Wood Islay on 27th Mar. This was followed by singles at Balemartine Tiree on 28th and at Garhallow Burn (Dunoon) Cowal on 30th. By the end of the first week in Apr, the species had been widely reported from the mainland as well as from the islands. Much later, a small arrival took place on Tiree on 14th May when one or two birds were found at 4 different locations.

Breeding. Recorded in 2 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (13%) (*cf* none in 1997). Breeding season records were received from Colonsay (3 sites), Cowal (one site), Kintyre (3 sites), Mid-Argyll (7 sites) and Mull (5 sites, again inc. Iona) but, curiously, none from Islay, where the only records were of migrants.

Single birds were singing at 3 locations in the Minard Mid-Argyll area on 19th-20th Sep. Later migrants were recorded on Tiree, at Balephuil on 4th Oct and at Balemartine on 24th-25th Oct, and the last was at Bruichladdich Islay on 22nd Nov.

WILLOW WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochilus* Crionag ghiuthais 1312
S P Widespread and very common breeding species. Breeding recorded in 81% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

The first bird of spring was at Coullabus Wood Islay on 5th Apr, followed by records from Connel Airfield N Argyll, Tighnahoran Mid-Argyll and Moine Mhor Mid-Argyll on 8th Apr. The main arrival took place during the week 12th-19th Apr, when birds were reported from virtually every part of Argyll.

Breeding. Recorded in 13 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (81%) (*cf* 11 of 16 in 1997), making this the second most widespread breeding bird recorded by the BBS in Argyll. Territories in the CBC plots at Taynish NNR Mid-Argyll fell slightly

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to a total of 89 (*cf* record total of 99 in 1997). The only other count was 8 pairs located on Sanda Islands *Kintyre* (as in 1997).

At Aros Moss CES, 78 were ringed inc. 41 immatures [N. Brown 1999].

Most had left by mid-Aug and the only records after this were at: Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* (2 on 2nd Sep), Dunoon *Cowal* (on 10th Sep), Iona Abbey *Mull* (on 22nd Sep), Kenovay *Tiree* (on 4th Oct), Balemartine *Tiree* (on 10th Oct) and a very late bird seen with a Blackcap at Kilnaughton Bay *Islay* on 13th Nov.

GOLDCREST *Regulus regulus* Crìonag bhuidhe 1314
R W P Common breeding species and passage migrant. Breeding recorded in 53% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

On *Tiree* there was a series of records at various locations, involving up to 8 birds, from 7th Mar to 22nd Apr. These were presumably passage migrants.

Breeding. Recorded in 6 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (38%) (*cf* 5 of 16 in 1997), and singing birds were recorded in both woodland and coastal CBC plots at Tainish NNR *Mid-Argyll*. Family parties were recorded in Ballygrant Woods *Islay* and at Colonsay House *Colonsay* in Jun.

Flocks of 25 or more, together with tits and Treecreepers, were recorded in Minard Woods *Mid-Argyll* in late Aug-early Sep. Single birds were at Balemartine and Comaigmore *Tiree* 27th Sep-7th Oct, and 10 were seen in The Lodge plantation *Coll* on 30th Nov.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa striata* Breacan glas sgiobalta 1335
S P Widespread but thinly distributed breeding species. Breeding recorded in 53% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

The first bird of the year was at Tainish NNR *Mid-Argyll* on 13th May followed, on 14th, by singles at Clashgour (Loch Tulla) *N Argyll* and An Airidh and Scarinish *Tiree*. The species was not widely reported until 23rd-31st May when it was seen at various localities on *Mull* and in *Mid-Argyll*.

Breeding. Not recorded in any of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (*cf* 1 of 16 in 1997). At Tainish NNR *Mid-Argyll*, there was a record total of 7 territories in the CBC plots (*cf* 3 in 1997) and 4 territories were identified at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay*. In addition, breeding season records came from: *Colonsay* (2 sites), *Islay* (4 sites), *Kintyre* (2 sites), *Mid-Argyll* (10 sites) and *Mull* (3 sites). Adult birds were seen feeding young at Brainport Bay (Minard) *Mid-Argyll* on 8th Aug and near Ford *Mid-Argyll* on 20th Aug.

The last birds recorded were singles on Oronsay *Colonsay* on 28th Sep and at West Parkfergus *Kintyre* on 1st Oct.

PIED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula hypoleuca* Breacan glas 1349
S P Very localised breeder in oak woods. Increase in breeding population in recent years is attributable to the Argyll Bird Club nestbox scheme. Breeding recorded in 6% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

The first record of the year was a ringed male in Glen Kinglass *N Argyll* on 1st May while a female was already nest-building nearby.

Breeding. At Blarcreen-Bonawe 7 pairs bred in boxes. Of 6 breeding males, 5 had been ringed as chicks at Bonawe in previous years. Of the 7 females none had been ringed as chicks at Bonawe, but two had been ringed elsewhere (one at Loch Lomond, one at Loch Caolisport), suggesting that this small and isolated population

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is maintained by immigration. Mean clutch was 7.6. One brood of 7 died, apparently because only the female was feeding them; no male seen. 42 young fledged from the six other nests (6.0 fledged/pair laying). No Pine Marten predation was recorded at any of the nests (unlike 1997). An exceptionally good year. At Ardenavan (near Inveraray) *Mid-Argyll*, 3 clutches were laid in nestboxes. Two boxes were successful and reared 13 young.

Singing males were also recorded: at Glenskible (Skipness) *Kintyre* on 8th May, at Brainport Bay (Minard) *Mid-Argyll* on 16th and 23rd May, and near a nestbox at Ford *Mid-Argyll* on 1st Jun. One was at Barrs (Loch Etive) *N Argyll* on 24th Jun.

The only report of a passage migrant in autumn was one at West Hynish *Tiree* on 4th Oct.

LONG-TAILED TIT *Aegithalos caudatus* Ciochan 1437
B W P Widespread and common on mainland, local on some islands and rare on Colonsay, Tiree and Coll. Breeding recorded in 48% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Parties of wandering birds widespread in autumn.

Breeding. The species was not recorded in any BBS square (*cf* one of 16 in 1997). A single territory was found in the woodland CBC plot at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* with a fledged brood seen on 19th May. Family parties were seen on *Islay*, at Kilnaughton on 6th Jun and at Bunnahabhainn on 9th Jun.

The only large flock reported was 20 at Lochdon *Mull* on 6th Oct, but 11 were at a peanut feeder in a garden in Dunoon *Cowal* on 17th Nov.

COAL TIT *Parus ater* Smutag 1461
B W P Widespread and common except on Tiree and Coll. Breeding recorded in 62% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Some dispersal noted in autumn.

Two at Vault on 11th Jan and one there on 15th Feb were the only *Tiree* records during the year.

Breeding. Recorded in 6 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (38%) (as in 1997). There was a total of 8 territories in the CBC plots at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* (*cf* 10 in 1997).

In a garden in Dunoon *Cowal* it was considered the commonest species, with a total of 20 birds at a time during Nov and Dec.

BLUE TIT *Parus caeruleus* Cailleachag ceann ghorm 1462
R P Widespread and very common breeder; but rare on Tiree and Coll. Breeding recorded in 65% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

On *Tiree*, singles were at West Hynish on 25th Jan, Barrapol on 1st Feb and Crossapol Farm on 7th Mar, and 3 were at Scarinish on 14th Mar.

Breeding. Recorded in 5 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (31%) (as in 1997). The number of territories in the CBC plots at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* was down again to 24 (*cf* 33 in 1997, and 24 in 1996).

A single bird was seen in the hotel car park at Arinagour *Coll* on 28th Nov.

GREAT TIT *Parus major* Currac bhain tighearna 1464
R P Widespread and very common breeder; but absent from Tiree and Coll. Breeding recorded in 61% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

Single birds were seen at 4 locations on *Tiree* between 25th Jan & 19th Feb, and

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up to 2 were in the Vaul area between 14th Mar & 6th Apr.

Breeding. Recorded in 6 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (38%) (*cf* 5 of 16 in 1997). There was a total of 9 territories in CBC plots at Tainish NNR *Mid-Argyll* (*cf* 11 in 1997).

TREECREEPER *Certhia familiaris* Snaigear 1486
B W Widespread and common except on Tiree and Coll. Breeding recorded in 37% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

Breeding. Recorded in one of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (6%) (as in 1997). At Tainish NNR *Mid-Argyll*, there was a total of 5 territories in CBC plots (*cf* 4 in 1997).

One or possibly two birds around The Lodge *Coll* on 30th Nov was an unusual record for the island.

RED-BACKED SHRIKE *Lanius collurio* 1515
V Only 4 Argyll records during 1980-94: a 1st winter at Lagg (Jura) from 19th to 25th Sep 1986, a 1st winter at Kilnaughton Bay (Islay) on 31st Oct 1987, a male on Mull from 29th May to 12th Jun 1992, and a male at Dalrannoch (N Argyll) on 5th Jul 1994.

One record of this species in Argyll during the year is unusual enough but two is quite exceptional. The first was an unexpected bonus for the Constant Effort (ringing) Site at Aros Moss *Kintyre*. An adult male, trapped on 15th May, it was not seen prior to trapping or after release and would otherwise almost certainly have gone unnoticed [N. Brown]*. Two weeks later, on 1st Jun, a visitor noticed an unusual bird beside the main road near Pennyghael *Mull*. From the description provided, it was clearly a female Red-backed Shrike [D. Watkinson]*.

JAY *Garrulus glandarius* Sgraicheag 1539
R Locally distributed, mainland only. Breeding recorded in 6% of 10 km squares, mostly in Cowal (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). All records required.

Records during Jan-Apr came from 2 sites in *Cowal*: Blairmore (Loch Long) (seen regularly, inc. at a bird table) and Dunoon (2 on 24th Apr); and from 5 sites in *Mid-Argyll*: Ford (on 2nd Jan), Caol Scottish (Loch Sween) (on 19th Jan), Kilmichael Beg (Minard) (2 on 1st Feb), Cairmbaan (2 on 21st Mar), and Brainport Bay (Minard) (on 14th Apr).

Breeding. Birds were seen during May-Jun in Hell's Glen *Cowal* on 10th May, Glen Lonan *Mid-Argyll* on 12th May, Loch na Faolinn *Mid-Argyll* on 16th May, and Dunoon *Cowal* on 25th Jun.

One seen at Laggan Bridge on 12th May was the first record on *Islay* since 1982.

During the latter part of the year, birds were regularly seen at Blairmore, at Dunoon (max. 5 on 17th Jul), at Tainish NNR *Mid-Argyll* (max. 5 on 17th Sep) and in the Minard area (max. 3 on 19th Oct). Except for one at Hell's Glen on 15th Oct, all the other sightings came from *Mid-Argyll*: 3 in Kilmichael Forest on 1st Aug, 2 at East Kames during Sep, 2 in Eredine Forest on 27th Sep, 2+ at Loch Craiglin (Loch Sween) on 8th Nov, and 3 near Crinan on 13th Nov.

MAGPIE *Pica pica* Cadhag 1549
R Local in Cowal, rare elsewhere. Breeding recorded in 2% of 10 km squares (BTO

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Atlas, 1988-91). All records required.

Most records came from *Cowal*, where there were regular sightings throughout the year at Dunoon (max. 6 during Feb) and at Blairmore (Loch Long), and one was seen at Strone on 21st Jul.

Once again there were records from *Barcaldine N Argyll*: one 2nd-4th Feb and 14th-20th Feb and a tail-less individual seen 24th Feb-11th Mar. The only other record was of one present at Kilbride (nr Oban) *Mid-Argyll* from 27th Aug-23rd Oct.

CHOUGH *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* Cathag dhearg chasach 1559
R Islay is the Scottish stronghold, with smaller numbers on Jura and Colonsay and a recent toehold on Mull. All records away from Islay required.

Breeding. Following indications of decreases on Islay, a full survey of Scotland was carried out by RSPB-SNH in 1998. All but one of the 59 pairs found breeding in Scotland were on the Argyll Islands [Table 29] (*cf* Argyll and Scottish totals of 88 in 1992, 105 in 1986 and 72 in 1982). After an apparent increase in the early 1980s, numbers are now in long-term decline. In 1998 productivity was measured for most breeding pairs on Islay and Colonsay. On *Islay* 49 pairs were found in an island-wide survey (*cf* 95 at last full survey in 1986), a decline of almost 50% in 12 years. The decline was greatest, from over 20 to only 7 pairs, in the former stronghold of The Oa. Causes are being investigated. Productivity on Islay in 1998 was 1.93, little changed from the long-term mean reported there by Monaghan *et al* (1989). Low survival of young in their first winter seems to be one cause of the decline; there may be less food for the young because of changes in cattle-farming methods on Islay. On *Colonsay* the population is stable or increasing, possibly because of kelp fly larvae on the large deposits of seaweed on the beaches; and, in 1998, 2.5 young fledged per pair [RSPB, MAO].

Table 29. *Summary of Chough Survey of Scotland in 1998 (RSPB-SNH).*

Area	Breeding pairs	Prospecting pairs	Non-breeding individuals	Fledged young	1986 Breeding & prospecting prs.
Islay	46	3	35	89	95
Jura	1	-	-	2	3
Colonsay	10	4	?17	25+	7
Mull	1	-	-	-	0
Dumfries and Galloway	1	-	-	4	0
Total	59	7	52	120+	105

During the latter part of the year, flocks of more than 20 were recorded at: the N end of *Colonsay* (max. 23 on 21st Sep), *Kilchoman Islay* (max. 38 on 22nd Oct), *Ardmore Point Islay* (20+ on 8th Nov), *Oronsay Colonsay* (24 on 8th Nov), and *Rockside Islay* (31 on 6th Dec).

JACKDAW *Corvus monedula* Cathag 1560
B W Common throughout much of Argyll, but scarce on Mull and does not breed on Tiree or Coll. Breeding recorded in 40% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

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Immigration into some areas in winter, e.g. Tiree.

During the early part of the year, the only counts of more than 50 birds came from Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* (max. 203 on 27th Jan).

Breeding. Recorded in 3 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (19%) (cf one of 16 in 1997). Five nesting pairs were reported from Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve.

Five birds were seen on Oronsay *Colonsay* on 4th Jul, the first record of this species there for some time. Ca 400 birds were present at Esknish *Islay* on 29th Jun, and the max. count at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve in the latter part of the year was 100 on 12th Aug.

ROOK *Corvus frugilegus* Rocas 1563

B W Common throughout much of Argyll, but scarce on Mull and does not breed on Colonsay, Tiree or Coll. Breeding recorded in 25% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Post-breeding influx of juveniles to some islands, e.g. Mull and Tiree.

The highest count at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* in the early part of the year was 180 on 8th Feb. No other sites reported counts of more than 100 birds. Two seen on Oronsay *Colonsay* on 21st Apr were rare visitors to the island.

Breeding. Recorded in one of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (6%) (as in 1997). Nest counts made in late Apr-early May at all 9 known rookeries on *Islay* gave a total of 336 nests (cf 314 in 1997). At Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve, there were 45 nests in one wood and 30 in another. All the Rooks in the second wood deserted, probably because of a pair of Buzzards nesting nearby; later, 23 new nests were found in a third wood [MAO]. The only other count came from Connel *Mid-Argyll*, where there were 6 nests in one of two rookeries there.

Six migrant birds were recorded on *Coll* at Arnabost on 29th Nov; and on *Tiree* 5 were seen around Caolas on 20th Dec.

Flocks exceeding 100 birds were reported from: Esknish *Islay* (300 on 29th Jun), Loch Gorm *Islay* (200 on 1st Aug), Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve (max. 180 on 9th Sep), near Stewarton *Kintyre* (100+ there on 29th Nov were representative of several hundred birds present on The Laggan as a whole), and Dunadd *Mid-Argyll* (102 on 31st Dec).

HOODED CROW *Corvus corone cornix* Feannag 1567

B W Widespread and common. Breeding recorded in 87% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

A semi-albino bird was seen at Corran Ban *Islay* on 21st Jan. The only gathering of more than 20 birds in the early part of the year was 36 between Ruaig and Caolas *Tiree* on 6th Feb.

Breeding. Recorded in 9 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (56%) (cf 6 of 16 in 1997). At least 7 pairs bred on *Colonsay*, where 5 monitored pairs reared 12 young. Elsewhere, 4 pairs were located on Sanda Islands *Kintyre*, pairs bred in both the CBC plots at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll*, and a family party with 2 fledged young was seen on Lunga (Treshnish Isles) *Mull*.

The highest count later in the year was 84 between Heylipol and The Reef *Tiree* on 7th Oct, and 54 were in a single group at Heylipol on 14th Oct. Elsewhere, 35 were at Arnabost *Coll* on 28th Nov, and 22 at Barrahornid (Loch Sween) *Mid-Argyll* on 13th Dec included 4 almost completely black *corone* type birds.

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CARRION CROW *C. c. corone*

B W Birds are spreading gradually through Cowal into Kintyre and Mid-Argyll. Breeding recorded in 13% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

Breeding. Recorded in 3 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (19%) (cf 5 of 16 in 1997). Birds were also recorded during the breeding season on Mull at Tireragan, Carsaig and on Iona.

Away from the main breeding areas, one showing 95% *corone* characteristics was at Beinn Gott Tiree on 12th Aug, and pure *corone* types were at Cornaig Tiree (on 5th Feb), Oronsay Colonsay (2 on 1st Nov), Cornaigmore Tiree (on 15th Dec) and at Salum Dunes Tiree (on 20th Dec).

RAVEN *Corvus corax* Fitheach

1572

B W Common. Breeding recorded in 75% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

No counts exceeding 20 birds were reported Jan-Apr.

Breeding. Recorded in 7 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (44%) (cf 4 of 16 in 1997). Of 6 sites checked on Colonsay, only 3 were successful, producing 12 fledged young [DCJ, JJ]. A survey in Cowal located 34 occupied territories of which 28 were monitored. Of these, 23 were successful, producing at least 57 fledged young [DA, AF]. In SW Mull, 20 occupied territories were monitored and 17 were successful, producing 40 fledged young [PHa]. A family group of 2 adults and 2 juvs. was seen on Lunga (Treshnish Isles) Mull in late Jun-early Jul [TIRG]. On Tiree, 4 of 5 breeding pairs found fledged a total of ca 12 young [AJL].

Later in the year, the only sites where counts exceeding 20 birds were reported were: Ardlarach Islay (51 on 10th May), Gott Hill Tiree (max. 72 on 6th Aug), Duart Point Mull (30+ on 13th Sep), and Tobermory Mull (70+ at the refuse dump and 25 in the surrounding area on 14th Nov).

STARLING *Sturnus vulgaris* Druid

1582

B W P Common except on Mull, where a localised post-breeding influx of juveniles occurs. Breeding recorded in 65% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

Counts exceeding 100 birds during the early part of the year were recorded on Islay (320 at Corran Ban on 21st Jan), on Tiree (max. 450 going to roost at Loch an Eilein on 15th Feb), and at Glenreasdell Kintyre (100+ on 13th Mar).

Breeding. Recorded in 3 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (19%) (cf 4 of 16 in 1997). Two successful nests were found at Tainish NNR Mid-Argyll (cf 4 in 1997) and again only one or two pairs bred on Sanda Islands Kintyre.

The highest counts during the second winter period were 300 at Ruaig Tiree on 28th Aug, 260 at Machrihanish SBO Kintyre on 10th Sep, 700 at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve Islay on 17th Sep, ca 300 on Iona Mull on 13th Nov, 650+ on Coll on 29th Nov, and up to 4,200 going to a roost in Campbeltown Kintyre during Dec.

ROSE-COLOURED STARLING *Sturnus roseus*

1584

A rare visitor, mostly in Jul and Aug, with 8 Argyll records during 1980-97 (one of these possibly involving a returning bird from the previous year).

On the evening of 28th Aug, a juvenile was found at Caolas Tiree. It later flew off to roost with Starlings at Ruaig but could not be found the following day. However on 13th Oct, apparently the same individual was relocated at Crossapol looking drenched and unwell. It was not seen again [A. J. Leitch]*. This is the first juvenile since 1980.

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HOUSE SPARROW *Passer domesticus* Gealbhonn 1591
R Commonly associated with human habitation, and distribution therefore rather localised in remote areas. Breeding recorded in 57% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

Breeding. Recorded in one of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (6%) (as in 1997).
 On 14th Aug, a partial count on *Tiree* gave a total of 166 birds of which 90 were at Ruaig. Elsewhere, the only sites with counts of more than 20 birds were Scalasaig *Colonsay* (22 on 2nd May), Iona *Mull* (35 on 13th Nov), and Arileod *Coll* (60+ on 28th Nov).

CHAFFINCH *Fringilla coelebs* Breacan beithe 1636
B W P Abundant except on Tiree and Coll. Breeding recorded in 80% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Birds commonly forage in cut hay and silage fields outwith breeding season.

The only count during the early part of the year exceeding 100 birds was a flock of 150 at Sunderland Farm *Islay* on 7th Jan. On *Tiree* single birds were at various locations during Jan-Apr, with a max. of 8 at Balemartine in Jan.

Breeding. Recorded in 10 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (63%) (as in 1997). Numbers in the CBC plots at Tainish NNR *Mid-Argyll* were down again, to a total of 28 territories (cf 32 in 1997 and 35 in 1996).

At Aros Moss CES, 11 were ringed inc. 2 immatures [N. Brown 1999].

One or two birds were at various sites on *Tiree* during Oct-Dec with a max. of 5 at Crossapol on 5th Nov.
 The only count exceeding 100 birds during the second winter period was 150 at Slockavullin *Mid-Argyll* on 26th Dec, accompanied by a few Bramblings.

BRAMBLING *Fringilla montifringilla* Bricein caorainn 1638
W P Varying numbers occur between Oct and Apr each year.

Very few records during the year. The only records during Jan-Apr were a male at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* on 4th and 13th Feb, and a female at Connel *Mid-Argyll* on 4th and 6th Apr.

In the latter part of the year, the first was one on *Tiree*, at Heylipol on 5th and at Cornaigmore on 7th Oct. Then 3 were with a small flock of Chaffinches at Connel on 26th Oct, one was at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 28th-29th Oct, and 14 were with a flock of Chaffinches at Slockavullin *Mid-Argyll* on 26th Dec.

GREENFINCH *Carduelis chloris* Glaisean daraich 1649
R W Locally common. Breeding recorded in 31% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

There was a small influx on *Oronsay Colonsay* in Jan with 8 there on 13th and 4 on 18th. No counts in double figures were reported during the early part of the year.

Breeding. Recorded in 2 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (13%) (as in 1997). On *Tiree*, there were pairs during the breeding season at Vaul and at An Airidh (2).

The highest counts during the latter part of the year were max.15 at a bird table in Southend *Kintyre* in Sep and 17 at Crossapol *Tiree* on 3rd Nov.

GOLDFINCH *Carduelis carduelis* Lasair choille 1653
B W P Localised distribution. Absent as a breeding species from Colonsay, Tiree

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and Coll. Breeding recorded in 32% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Some emigration in autumn.

One or two birds were recorded regularly on *Tiree* from 2nd Jan to 12th May and there were 3, at *Ruaig* on 17th Feb, at *Carnan Mor* on 3rd Apr and at *Vaul* on 9th May. Elsewhere, there were 2 at *Scalasaig Colonsay* on 3rd May and 3 on *Oronsay Colonsay* on 10th May.

Breeding. Not recorded in any of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (*cf* one of 16 in 1997). There was a total of 4 territories in CBC plots at *Taynish NNR Mid-Argyll* (*cf* 2 in 1997). Other breeding season records came from: *Islay* (one site), *Kintyre* (5 sites), *Mid-Argyll* (7 sites) and *Mull* (4 sites).

At *Aros Moss CES*, 5 were ringed inc. 4 immatures [N. Brown 1999].

The only counts of more than 10 birds during the latter part of the year were 20+ at *Tayinloan Kintyre* on 27th Aug, and 15 at *Kintallan Mid-Argyll* on 1st Oct. On *Tiree*, 2 were at *Scarinish* on 8th Aug, 2 at *Balemartine* on 25th Oct, and 6 at *Mannal* on 5th Dec.

SISKIN *Carduelis spinus* Gealag bhuidhe 1654
B W P Numbers fluctuate from year to year, but the breeding population has clearly increased as a consequence of coniferous afforestation. Absent as a breeding species from Tiree and Coll. Breeding recorded in 54% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

No reports of flocks exceeding 20 birds during the early part of the year.

Breeding. Recorded in 5 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (31%) (*cf* 3 of 16 in 1997). There were 3 territories in the woodland CBC plot at *Taynish NNR Mid-Argyll* (*cf* none in 1997).

During the latter part of the year, counts exceeding 20 birds came from *Glen Forsa Mull* (20+ on 14th Jul), *Machrihanish SBO Kintyre* (*ca* 60 flying S on 18th Sep), *Ballibeg* (*nr* *Lochgilphead*) *Mid-Argyll* (50 on 26th Sep), *Brainport Bay* (*Minard*) *Mid-Argyll* (max. 35 on 10th Oct), *Loch Skerrols Islay* (60 on 28th Oct), and *Inverawe N Argyll* (100 on 15th Nov).

LINNET *Carduelis cannabina* Gealan lin 1660
B W P Localised distribution. Breeding recorded in 37% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Flocking in autumn and winter.

Flocks of 100 or more were seen regularly at *Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve* *Islay* from Jan to mid-Mar with a max. of 240 on 9th Jan.

Breeding. Recorded in 4 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (25%) (*cf* 2 of 16 in 1997). There were 3 territories in the coastal CBC plot at *Taynish NNR Mid-Argyll* (as in 1997) and 4 pairs on *Sanda Islands Kintyre* (as in 1997). A survey on *Oronsay Colonsay* on 24th May gave a total of 13 individuals.

The only large flock reported in autumn-winter was 100+ near *Aros Moss Kintyre* on 28th Sep.

TWITE *Carduelis flavirostris* Gealan beinne 1662
B W P Localised breeding species, found especially on the islands. Breeding recorded in 36% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Flocking in low-lying arable and coastal areas, Aug onwards. Some evidence to suggest emigration from Argyll in autumn, although there may also be an influx of wintering birds to some areas.

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During the early part of the year, counts of 50 or more birds came from Gruinart Flats *Islay* (80 on 3rd Feb), Gott Bay *Tiree* (max. 103 on 24th Feb), Gruinart House *Islay* (80 on 3rd Mar), and Vaul *Tiree* (135 on 12th Apr).

Breeding. Recorded in 2 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (13%) (cf one of 16 in 1997). On 1st May, 32 pairs and 17 individuals were counted on *Colonsay* (without Oronsay) and on Oronsay respectively (cf 39 pairs in 1997 for *Colonsay* and Oronsay combined). A second survey on Oronsay on 24th May found 31 birds. On Sanda Islands *Kintyre* only 8 pairs were found; and on Treshnish Isles *Mull* at least 2 pairs were resident on Lunga and a flock of 14 birds seen on Fladda on 2nd Jul included 3 juveniles. Birds were also reported in the breeding season from: Iona *Mull* (3+ pairs), Machir Bay *Islay* (6+ pairs), *Mull* (mainland - 3 sites) and *Tiree* ('several pairs').

Peak passage at MachrihanishSBO *Kintyre* during the latter part of the year was 77 on 25th Aug and 40 on 26th Oct. The highest count at this time was 375 at The Reef *Tiree* on 18th Oct. Other localities with 50 or more birds were: The Airport *Tiree* (52 on 18th Aug), Sorobaidh Bay *Tiree* (74 on 22nd Aug), Ledaig Point *N Argyll* (60 on 9th Sep), Hynish *Tiree* (67 on 13th Sep), Balemartine *Tiree* (93 on 28th Sep), Kilchoman *Islay* (60 on 128th Oct), Connel *Mid-Argyll* (60 on 4th Dec), and Heylipol *Tiree* (max. 150 on 11th Dec).

REDPOLL *Carduelis flammea* Dearcan seilich 1663
BWP Localised breeder. Numbers fluctuate from year to year, but breeding population has probably increased as a consequence of coniferous afforestation. Breeding recorded in 41% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Flocking occurs in autumn and winter.

No count during the early part of the year exceeded 20 birds.

Breeding. Recorded in 4 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (25%) (as in 1997). At Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll*, there was a total of 5 territories in the CBC plots (cf 6 in 1997) and a single pair was located at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay*. Other breeding season records came from *Islay* (3 sites), *Colonsay* (3 sites), *Mid-Argyll* (2 sites), *Mull* (one site) and *Tiree* (one site).

At Aros Moss CES, 6 were ringed inc. 2 immatures [N. Brown 1999].

The only flocks of 20 or more birds were at: Inveraray Golf Course *Mid-Argyll* (84 in 2 flocks on 15th Sep), Eredine Forest (north) *Mid-Argyll* (20 on 27th Sep), and Achnamara *Mid-Argyll* (ca 40 on 8th Nov).

COMMON CROSSBILL *Loxia curvirostra* Cam ghob 1666
B W Numbers, distribution and breeding season vary depending on abundance of conifer cones. Highly irruptive species with large flocks sometimes moving to locate a new seed area, usually in summer. Breeding recorded in 16% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

The species was not recorded in any of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (cf 3 of 16 in 1997). The first report of the year was of 3 birds, inc. a red singing male, at Clashgour *N Argyll* on 20th Mar. Then from Apr to early Jun birds, inc. singing males, were reported at 6 sites on *Mull*: these records included a flock of 20 at Gruline on 25th May. Other reports in May came from Loch Avich *Mid-Argyll* (2 on 16th) and Loch Tarsan *Cowal* (2 on 19th).

In Jul-Aug reports of up to 7 birds came from Torrisdale and Skipness *Kintyre*, Kames Golf Course *Cowal*, Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll*, Sea Life Centre (Barcaldine) *N Argyll* and Kilmartin *Mid-Argyll*.

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On 20th Sep a pair with 4 juvs. (which they were apparently still feeding) were seen at Port Ann *Mid-Argyll*. In the following week, there were widespread reports from the area between Loch Fyne and Loch Awe inc. flocks of ca 15 at Gartnagrenoch (nr Bellanoch) and near Loch Glashan on 27th. On 5th Oct, 15+ birds were feeding at Corlarach *Cowal*, and on 12th Nov a male was seen in the same area, calling near a nest.

Later in the year, one flew over Brainport Bay (Minard) *Mid-Argyll* on 21st Nov, 2 were at Clashgour on 4th Dec, a flock of 10 flew over Tullochgorm (Minard) *Mid-Argyll* on 11th Dec, and a flock of 18 were seen at Lussa Loch *Kintyre* on 26th Dec.

COMMON ROSEFINCH *Carpodacus erythrinus* 1679
V Five previous records: on Iona in Jun 1989 and Jun-Jul 1990, on Colonsay in Jun 1994, on Tiree in Sep 1996 and on Oronsay in Nov 1996.

An adult male was singing at Balemartine *Tiree* on 7th Jun [M. Williamson]*. This is the same location as the female recorded on 21st-22nd Sep 1996.

BULLFINCH *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* Corcan-coille 1710
B W Locally common. Absent from Tiree and Coll and irregular on Gigha and Colonsay. Breeding recorded in 35% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

The only count in excess of 10 birds during the early part of the year was the flock of 23 at Knap *Cowal* on 5th Jan.

Breeding. Recorded in 2 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (13%) (as in 1997). Less in evidence at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* (where breeding was first confirmed in 1995), with only a single territory in each of the CBC plots (*cf* total of 4 in 1997). The only other confirmed breeding records were at Minard Castle *Mid-Argyll* and Kilmartin *Mid-Argyll*, where adults were seen with recently fledged young.

The only post-breeding flock reported was 10 at Aros Forest *Mull* on 10th Aug.

LAPLAND BUNTING *Calcarius lapponicus* 1847
P Less than annual. Most frequent in autumn, less so in spring, and very rarely recorded in winter.

One at The Laggan *Kintyre* on 29th Oct was the sole record this year.

SNOW BUNTING *Plectrophenax nivalis* Gealag an t-sneachda 1850
B? W P Has bred N Argyll in recent years. Varying numbers on passage and in winter.

Most reports for the early part of the year came from the islands. There were records from 6 locations on *Islay*, including flocks at Corran Ban (68 on 21st Jan), Ardmore Point (max. 48 on 2nd Mar) and Beinn Bheigheir (30 on 8th Mar). Elsewhere, a single was on Oronsay *Colonsay* on 8th Jan, 15 were seen on Ben More *Mull* on 22nd Feb, and a max. of 9 were at Sorobaidh Bay *Tiree* on 6th Feb. The last was a single at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* on 27th Mar.

Breeding. There was no evidence of breeding in Argyll.

The first returning bird was a male near Ishriff (Glen More) *Mull* on 3rd Oct. This was followed by up to 4 birds at various sites on *Islay* during Oct, and 11 at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 26th. Numbers increased gradually to a max. on *Islay* of 14 at Corran Ban on 8th, and 34 with other finches on the shore at Tayinloan *Kintyre* on 29th. There were also up to 2 on various dates in Nov on Oronsay. The highest

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counts were in Dec when 32 were at Corran Ban on 8^a and ca 70 between A 'Chleit and Tayinloan *Kintyre* on 27^a. Elsewhere, one was on Beinn Eunaich *N Argyll* on 5^a, and 4 were at Balephuill *Tiree* on 13^a.

YELLOWHAMMER *Emberiza citrinella* Buidheag bhealaidh 1857
B W Localised breeding species. Breeding recorded in 46% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Birds forage in cut hay and silage fields outwith breeding season. Population may be in decline and all records are welcome.

During the early part of the year, the only reports of flocks of 10 or more birds were from Sunderland Farm *Islay* (10 on 16^a Mar), Connel *Mid-Argyll* (max. 12 on 29^a Mar), and Loch Caol *Mull* (max. 10 in Apr). The latter two counts were both from garden bird tables. Other reports during this time, of up to 6 birds, came from Bunessan, Fionnphort, Lochdon and Tiroran, all on *Mull*, Ardbeg *Islay* and Kintallan *Mid-Argyll*. One seen on Oronsay *Colonsay* on 15^a May was the first record for these islands in recent years.

Breeding. Recorded in 2 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (13%) (*cf* one of 16 in 1997). Other breeding season records came from *Islay* (2 territories Margadale River), *Mid-Argyll* (2 at Kintallan and 3 singing males on Kerrera) and *Mull* (2 at Loch Buie).

The only reports during the latter part of the year were from Bunnahabhainn (2 on 10^a Oct), Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve (max. 3 on 29^a Sep) and Sunderland Farm (male on 3rd Oct), all on *Islay*; Glen Byre (one on 29^a Aug) and Lochdon (2 on 8^a Oct), both on *Mull*; Loch Crinan (2 on 2nd Oct) and Connel (max. 6 on 20^a Dec), both in *Mid-Argyll*; and West Parkfergus *Kintyre* (up to 5, Oct to Dec).

REED BUNTING *Emberiza schoeniclus* Gealag loin 1877
B W Locally common. Breeding recorded in 56% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Small flocks sometimes gather outwith the breeding season.

The only counts of 10 or more birds during the early part of the year were 10 at Killinallan *Islay* on 15^a Jan, and 10+ at Torrabus (Bunnahabhainn) *Islay* on 5^a Mar.

Breeding. Recorded in 4 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (25%) (*cf* 2 of 16 in 1997). On *Colonsay* (inc. Oronsay), 11 pairs were located (*cf* 8 in 1997, and 15 in 1996). At Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* 2 territories were located in the woodland CBC plot (as in 1997) and one was singing in the coastal CBC plot; and 5 pairs were located on Sanda Islands *Kintyre*. A male was feeding recently-fledged young at Kames Golf Course *Cowal* on 15^a Jul; and birds were also found during the breeding season at 6 sites on *Mull* and one site each in *Cowal*, *Islay* and *Kintyre*.

In the second winter period, the only flock exceeding 10 birds was 26 in a stubble field at Cornaigmore *Tiree* on 7^a Oct.

CORN BUNTING *Miliaria calandra* Gealag bhuathair 1882
R Declining resident species which is facing extinction in Argyll. Recent records on Tiree only.

The lone bird on *Tiree* was still there, at least until May. Sightings were at Salum Bay and Ruaig in Feb and at Ard Mor, Cornaigbeg and Heylipol in May, but it is thought that only one individual was involved. The last record was on 30^a May at Heylipol. Intriguingly, one was also reported at Tayinloan *Kintyre* on 28^a Jul.

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ESCAPES AND INTRODUCTIONS

This section includes species which are not on the British list or whose occurrence in the UK is EXCLUSIVELY within Categories B, D or E. Other species, whose occurrence in Argyll arises partly or wholly from introduced birds which may not or do not form self-sustaining breeding populations, include White-fronted Goose, Snow Goose, Barnacle Goose, Mandarin, Red Kite, White-tailed Eagle, Red-legged Partridge, Grey Partridge and Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon). They are dealt with in the main systematic list.

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PELICAN sp.

Category D or E. All records assumed to be escapes from collections.

An individual of unidentified species (but likely to be White) was reported on the golf course at Southend *Kintyre* by several observers during Jun.

BAR-HEADED GOOSE *Anser indicus*

Category E.*

Two were seen at Loch Ederline *Mid-Argyll* on 24th Jul.

LIST OF REJECTED RECORDS, PENDING RECORDS AND RECORDS FOR WHICH DETAILS ARE STILL AWAITED

Please note that the records below are listed for information purposes only, and do not form part of the data set for the years in question.

The following records of species on the ABRC, SBRC or BBRC lists have been rejected since the publication of *ABR 14*.

Roseate Tern	<i>Mull</i>	02/10/98	ABRC
Bee-eater	<i>Mull</i>	07-10/06/98	ABRC
Roller	<i>Cowal</i>	17/08/98	BBRC
Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Mull</i>	15/06/98	ABRC

It should be noted that the majority of records are rejected, not because the committee in question is convinced that a mistake has been made, but because the evidence provided is insufficient to fully establish the identification.

The following records of species on the BBRC, SBRC or ABRC lists are currently in circulation around the relevant committees. In some instances, a decision has been delayed pending the receipt of additional details.

Great White Egret	<i>Islay</i>	18/05/98	BBRC
Lesser Scaup	<i>Islay</i>	16/12/98	BBRC
Surf Scoter	<i>Islay</i>	29/10/98	ABRC
Black Kite	<i>Tiree</i>	16/05/97	BBRC
Honey Buzzard	<i>Kintyre</i>	08/07/97	ABRC

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below; with apologies to anyone whose name has been inadvertently omitted. I am particularly grateful to observers who sent me comprehensive reports or regular series of observations for specific areas, especially: John Halliday for records from the Tainish and Moine Mhor National Nature Reserves, Roger Broad (RSPB) for information on Raptors and Rare Breeding Species, Richard Bashford and Steve Holloway of the BTO, for BBS and NEWS survey data respectively, Rab Morton for information from the Sanda Islands, Simon Walker of the Treshnish Isles Ringing Group, Alan Leitch (RSPB) for copies of his monthly report on Tree birds, James How (RSPB) for detailed reports of birds on Oronsay, David Jardine for information regarding Colonsay, Neil Brown for data from the CES at Aros Moss, and David Wood and Margaret MacKay at SNH for Goose count data. Special thanks are due to Eddie Maguire for an advance copy of the 1998 Machrihanish Seabird Observatory Report and Malcolm Ogilvie for providing his Islay database (and a copy of the 1998 Islay Bird and Natural History Report) and for copies of WeBS count forms. Malcolm Ogilvie's database was the source of the great majority of the information about the birds of Islay used in this report.

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Contributors to this report:

D. Allan, D. Anderson (DA), G. Anderson, R. A. G. Angus, T. ap Rheinallt (TapR), Argyll Raptor Study Group, J. Armitage, B. Baird, D. E. Balmer, P. Batty, B. Baird, the late J. Blatcher, P. Blatcher, M. F. Bleaney, J. Bradfield, C. Bradshaw, S. Brennan, R. A. Broad (RAB), A. Brown, N. Brown, K. Butterworth, D. A. Calderbank, I. Cameron, E. Campbell, S. Capone, S. Carmichael, D. C. Catt, P. Charleton, J. Chipperton, J. Church, D. L. Clugston, M. Cocker, A. S. Cook (ASC), R. J. Cook, J. C. A. Craik, P. Daw (PD), J. Dawson, A. Day, M. Dean, G. M. de Mornay, G. Deplacido, D. Dick, J. Dickson (JDi), A. Doherty, D. Doig, H. E. M. Dott, A. Downe, T. Drew, W. M. Edgar, H. Embleton, A. R. Evans, R. J. Evans, R. Fairbrother, V. Fairbrother, L. Farrell, M. Finn, P. Fisher, A. French, A. Gibson, S. Gibson, J. Gordon, A. & G. Greaves, M. J. Gregory (MJG), M. & R. Gulliver, J. Hagley, J. Hall, P. Hall, J. Halliday (JHa), J. H. Hamilton, D. J. Harding, J. M. Harrison, P. Haworth, A. Herman, L. R. Hobin, D. Holding, Holy Loch Hide Log Book, J. How, J. Howard, D. Hunt, D. C. Jardine, J. Jardine, A. R. Jennings, C. M. Johnson, J. Jones, N. Kelly, K. Knott, A. Lambert, D. Lord, C. Lamont, A. J. Leitch (AJL), R. Lightfoot, A. MacDonald, J. McGlynn, W. MacGregor, L. McIntyre, C. R. McKay (CRM), M. MacKay, N. McKee, L. McLellan, A. MacMorris, E. J. Maguire, J. Manson, J. Marsh, R. & D. Marks (R&DM), T. D. H. Merrie, N. Morrison, R. A. Morton (Sanda Isles Ringing Group), G. Newall, A. R. Newton, M. A. Ogilvie (MAO), E. Oliver, A. Paterson, M. Peacock, K. Pendreigh, M. Phillips, J. & A. Plackett, E. D. Potter, M. F. Rae, F. Rennie, A. K. Rhodes, P. Robinson, F. Rout, A. Salmon, G. Scott, I. Scott, N. Scriven, C. Self, D. Shallcross, R. Shaw, D. Simpson, R. Smith, T. C. Smout, A. Spellman, P. T. & M. J. Staley, A. Steele, M. Stephens, A. Stoneham, J. Stoneham, S. Suttill, R. M. Tapply, J. Thompson, C. Toll, Treshnish Isles Auk Ringing Group, D. J. & E. M. Trigg, S. C. Votier, J. Warwick, W. E. Waters, D. Watkinson, J. Weir, J. Whittaker, M. Williamson (MW), J. Wilson, J. Wolstencroft, D. Wood, L. Wood, D. Woodhouse.

A Checklist of the Birds of Argyll

Tristan ap Rheinallt

Lenimore, Gruinart, Isle of Islay PA44 7PP

Abstract

This paper presents the first published checklist of birds for the current Argyll recording area. It includes a total of 314 species, 289 of which are in Category A (apparently natural occurrence since 1950), 12 in Category B (apparently natural occurrence prior to 1950 but not since), and four in Category C (introduced and apparently self-sustaining). A further eight species are given dual AC status and one (Capercaillie) has dual BC status. Recent taxonomic changes, as in the case of Yellow-browed and Bonelli's Warblers, have been taken into consideration when compiling the list. The main areas of uncertainty in the checklist concern the status of introduced populations (e.g. Red-legged Partridge, Grey Partridge), and the status of older records of a few species (e.g. Ivory Gull, Willow Tit, Crested Tit). A total of 65 species has been recorded from Argyll on three or fewer occasions; for these species, the date and location of each record are given. The last published checklist for Argyll was that of Harvie-Brown and Buckley (1892). Although the two lists do not cover an identical geographical area, it is interesting to note that six of our regular breeders (Mute Swan, Canada Goose, Collared Dove, Garden Warbler, Chiffchaff, Pied Flycatcher) do not feature among the 210 species recorded up to 1892.

INTRODUCTION

Despite the publication of an unbroken run of Argyll bird records stretching back to 1980 (*Argyll Bird Report* 1 to 15), no published checklist exists for the current recording area. Indeed, the last attempt at drawing up a comprehensive list of bird species in Argyll seems to be that of Harvie-Brown & Buckley (1892), who recorded a total of 210 species.

The list below represents an attempt at filling the gap. It has been compiled from a wide variety of sources. The main journals and reports consulted were: *Argyll Bird Report*, *British Birds*, *Scottish Birds*, *Scottish Bird Report*, *Scottish Naturalist* and *Annals of Scottish Natural History*. The following references were also found particularly useful: Gray (1871), Harvie-Brown & Buckley (1892), Baxter & Rintoul (1953), Jardine *et al.* (1986), Thom (1986), Elliott (1989), and Evans (1994).

When deciding whether or not records of rarities are acceptable, my decisions are generally in line with:

- Baxter & Rintoul (1953), for older records.
- Dymond *et al.* (1989) for older records of extreme rarities.
- Acceptance or rejection by the *British Birds* Rarities Committee, *Scottish Birds* Records Committee or Argyll Bird Records Committee for more recent records.

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- Publication in *Scottish Birds*, for pre-1984 records of species rare locally or in Scotland as a whole.

Readers should note in particular that several rarity records published without qualification in early *Argyll Bird Reports* were subsequently rejected by, or not submitted to, the relevant records committee or the editor of *Scottish Birds*. These records have been disregarded.

The main area of uncertainty in the list concerns introduced species, where I have sometimes experienced difficulty in deciding whether or not the local breeding population is self-sustaining (see below).

I have attempted to include all accepted records up to the end of July 1999. Records in circulation around the various records committees at the time of writing have not been included. I would be very grateful for any information that might lead to a change in the list, and for any comments about categorisation.

CATEGORISATION

The list below includes all 314 species whose occurrence in the current Argyll recording area is considered by me to relate, at least in part, to genuinely wild birds or members of self-sustaining breeding populations derived from introduced stock. Following the example of the British list maintained by the British Ornithologists' Union (BOU), this Argyll list is divided into three categories: A, B and C. These categories are defined by the BOU as follows (Holmes *et al.*, 1998):

- A. Species which have been recorded in an apparently natural state at least once since 1 January 1950.
- B. Species which were recorded in an apparently natural state at least once up to 31 December 1949, but have not been recorded subsequently.
- C. Species that, although originally introduced by man, either deliberately or accidentally, have established breeding populations derived from introduced stock, that maintain themselves without necessary recourse to further introduction.

All species that appear in the checklist below as Category A or Category C species also occur in the same category of the Scottish and British list. However, it is possible for a Category B species in Argyll to be a Category A species in Scotland and/or in Britain as a whole.

The BOU has established two further categories, though neither forms part of the British list *per se*. Category D includes species that would otherwise appear in Categories A or B except that there is reasonable doubt that they have ever occurred in the wild state. There are no accepted Argyll records of any of the species in Category D of the British list.

Category E includes species recorded as introductions, transportees or escapees from captivity, and whose breeding populations (if any) are thought not to be self-sustaining. I have not attempted to list these species, although one species regularly included in

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the main systematic list of the *Argyll Bird Report* – Golden Pheasant *Chrysolophus pictus* – apparently belongs in this category in Argyll (ap Rheinallt, 1997).

RECORDS OF EXTREME RARITIES

For species with three or fewer acceptable occurrences in Argyll, I have listed the year and location of each record. Place-names are given for mainland records, but island records are identified only by the name of the island. The area covered by the checklist is shown in the map on p. 15.

TAXONOMY

Scientific names for the species in the list below follow the most recent British list as drawn up by the BOU (<http://www.bou.org.uk/recbrlst.html>). English names, however, follow the official Scottish list as published by the Scottish Ornithologists' Club (Forrester, 1994).

THE CHECKLIST

Red-throated Diver	<i>Gavia stellata</i>	A			
Black-throated Diver	<i>Gavia arctica</i>	A			
Great Northern Diver	<i>Gavia immer</i>	A			
White-billed Diver	<i>Gavia adamsii</i>	A	Islay, 1986	L. Sween, 1987	MacPherson, 1991
Pied-billed Grebe	<i>Podilymbus podiceps</i>	A	Mall, 1998		
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	A			
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	A			
Red-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps grisegena</i>	A			
Slavonian Grebe	<i>Podiceps auritus</i>	A			
Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>	A			
Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>	A			
Cory's Shearwater	<i>Calonectris diomedea</i>	A			
Great Shearwater	<i>Puffinus gravis</i>	A			
Sooty Shearwater	<i>Puffinus griseus</i>	A			
Manx Shearwater	<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>	A			
Mediterranean Shearwater	<i>Puffinus yelkouan</i>	A			
Little Shearwater	<i>Puffinus assimilis</i>	A	Islay, 1974		
Wilson's Petrel	<i>Oceanites oceanicus</i>	B	Jura, 1891		
White-faced Petrel	<i>Pelagodroma marina</i>	B	Colonsay, 1897		
Storm Petrel	<i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>	A			
Leach's Petrel	<i>Oceanodroma leucorhoa</i>	A			
Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>	A			
Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	A			
Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	A			
Magnificent Frigatebird	<i>Fregata magnificens</i>	A	Tree, 1953		
Bittern	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>	A			
American Bittern	<i>Botaurus lentiginosus</i>	B	Islay, 1875		
Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	A			
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	A			
Great White Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	A	Islay, 1986	Seil, 1988	
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	A			
White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	A	Benderloch, 1971	Islay, 1978	Campbeltown, 1978
Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	A			
Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	A			
Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	AC			
Bewick's Swan	<i>Cygnus columbianus</i>	A			
Whooper Swan	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>	A			
Bean Goose	<i>Anser fabalis</i>	A			

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Pink-footed Goose	<i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>	A			
White-fronted Goose	<i>Anser albifrons</i>	A			
Lesser White-fronted Goose	<i>Anser erythropus</i>	A	Islay, 1980	Islay, 1986	
Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	AC			
Snow Goose ¹	<i>Anser caerulescens</i>	A			
Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	AC			
Barnacle Goose	<i>Branta leucopsis</i>	A			
Brent Goose	<i>Branta bernicla</i>	A			
Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	A			
Mandarin ²	<i>Aix galericulata</i>	C			
Wigeon	<i>Anas penelope</i>	A			
American Wigeon	<i>Anas americana</i>	A			
Gadwall ³	<i>Anas strepera</i>	A			
Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	A			
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	AC			
Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	A			
Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>	A			
Blue-winged Teal	<i>Anas discors</i>	A	Tiree, 1986	Tiree, 1998	Islay, 1998
Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	A			
Red-crested Pochard	<i>Netta rufina</i>	B	Craignish, 1862		
Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>	A			
Ring-necked Duck	<i>Aythya collaris</i>	A			
Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	A			
Scaup	<i>Aythya marila</i>	A			
Lesser Scaup	<i>Aythya affinis</i>	A	Islay, 1998		
Eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>	A			
King Eider	<i>Somateria spectabilis</i>	A			
Harlequin Duck	<i>Histrionicus histrionicus</i>	A	Islay, 1987		
Long-tailed Duck	<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>	A			
Common Scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>	A			
Surf Scoter	<i>Melanitta perspicillata</i>	A			
Velvet Scoter	<i>Melanitta fusca</i>	A			
Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>	A			
Smew	<i>Mergus albellus</i>	A			
Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>	A			
Goosander	<i>Mergus merganser</i>	A			
Ruddy Duck	<i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i>	C	Clachan, 1984	Tiree, 1987	L. Crinan, 1993
Honey Buzzard	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>	A			
Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	AC			
White-tailed Eagle ⁴	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	B			
Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	A			
Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	A			
Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	AC			
Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	A			
Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	A			
Rough-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo lagopus</i>	A			
Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	A			
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	A			
Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	A			
Red-footed Falcon	<i>Falco vespertinus</i>	A	Southend, 1990		
Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>	A			
Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	A			
Gyr Falcon	<i>Falco rusticolus</i>	A			
Peregrine	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	A			
Red Grouse	<i>Lagopus lagopus</i>	A			
Ptarmigan	<i>Lagopus mutus</i>	A			
Black Grouse	<i>Tetrao tetrix</i>	A			
Capercaille	<i>Tetrao urogallus</i>	BC			

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Red-legged Partridge ⁵	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>	C			
Grey Partridge ⁶	<i>Perdix perdix</i>	AC			
Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	A			
Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	C			
Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	A			
Spotted Crane	<i>Porzana porzana</i>	A			
Sora	<i>Porzana carolina</i>	B	Tree, 1901		
Little Crane	<i>Porzana parva</i>	B	L. Scammadale, 1911		
Corncrake	<i>Crex crex</i>	A			
Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	A			
Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	A			
Crane	<i>Grus grus</i>	A			
Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	A			
Avocet ⁷	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	A	L. Seal, 1936	Mall, 1977	Southend, 1986
Stone-curlew	<i>Burhinus oedinenus</i>	A	Islay, 1997		
Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	A	Islay, 1983		
Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	A			
Killdeer	<i>Charadrius vociferus</i>	A	Colonsay, 1984		
Dotterel	<i>Charadrius morinellus</i>	A			
American Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis dominica</i>	A	Colonsay, 1992		
Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	A			
Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	A			
Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	A			
Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>	A			
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>	A			
Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>	A			
Temminck's Stint	<i>Calidris temminckii</i>	A	Machranish, 1974	Mall, 1985	Tree, 1992
Baird's Sandpiper	<i>Calidris bairdii</i>	A	Islay, 1979		
Pectoral Sandpiper	<i>Calidris melanotos</i>	A			
Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	A			
Purple Sandpiper	<i>Calidris maritima</i>	A			
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	A			
Broad-billed Sandpiper	<i>Limicola falcinellus</i>	A	Tree, 1994		
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	<i>Tryngites subruficollis</i>	A			
Ruff	<i>Phalacrochus pugnax</i>	A			
Jack Snipe	<i>Limnocyrtus minimus</i>	A			
Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	A			
Great Snipe	<i>Gallinago media</i>	B			
Long-billed Dowitcher ⁸	<i>Limnodromus scolopaceus</i>	A	Islay, 1986		
Woodcock	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	A			
Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	A			
Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	A			
Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	A			
Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	A			
Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>	A			
Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	A			
Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	A			
Greater Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa melanoleuca</i>	A	Islay, 1985		
Lesser Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa flavipes</i>	A	L. Creran, 1951		
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	A			
Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	A			
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	A			
Spotted Sandpiper	<i>Actitis macularia</i>	A	Islay, 1984		
Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	A			
Red-necked Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>	A			
Grey Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus fulicarius</i>	A			

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Pomarine Skua	<i>Stercorarius pomarinus</i>	A			
Arctic Skua	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	A			
Long-tailed Skua	<i>Stercorarius longicaudus</i>	A			
Great Skua	<i>Catharacta skua</i>	A			
Mediterranean Gull	<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>	A			
Laughing Gull	<i>Larus atricilla</i>	A	Islay, 1974	Coll, 1998	
Little Gull	<i>Larus minutus</i>	A			
Sabine's Gull	<i>Larus sabini</i>	A			
Bonaparte's Gull	<i>Larus philadelphia</i>	A	Islay, 1975	Islay, 1975	
Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	A			
Ring-billed Gull	<i>Larus delawarensis</i>	A			
Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	A			
Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	A			
Herring Gull ⁹	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	A			
Iceland Gull	<i>Larus glaucooides</i>	A			
Glaucous Gull	<i>Larus hyperboreus</i>	A			
Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>	A			
Ross's Gull	<i>Rhodostethia rosea</i>	A	Islay, 1976		
Kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	A			
Ivory Gull ¹⁰	<i>Pagophila eburnea</i>	A	Islay, 1867	Campbeltown, 1873	Coll, 1969
Caspian Tern	<i>Sterna caspia</i>	A	Off Gigha, 1981		
Sandwich Tern	<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>	A			
Roseate Tern	<i>Sterna dougalli</i>	A			
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	A			
Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	A			
Brdled Tern	<i>Sterna anaethetus</i>	A	Tiree, 1994		
Little Tern	<i>Sterna albfrons</i>	A			
Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>	A			
Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>	A			
Brünnich's Guillemot	<i>Uria lomvia</i>	A	L. Caolisport, 1969		
Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>	A			
Black Guillemot	<i>Cephus grylle</i>	A			
Little Auk	<i>Alle alle</i>	A			
Puffin	<i>Fratercula arctica</i>	A			
Pallas's Sandgrouse	<i>Syrhaptes paradoxus</i>	B			
Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>	AC			
Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>	A			
Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	A			
Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	A			
Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	A			
Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	A			
Black-billed Cuckoo	<i>Coccyzus erythrophthalmus</i>	A	Southend, 1950		
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	<i>Coccyzus americanus</i>	A	Colonsay, 1904	Barcaldine, 1969	
Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>	A			
Scops Owl	<i>Otus scops</i>	A	Tiree, 1997		
Snowy Owl	<i>Nyctea scandiaca</i>	B			
Tawny Owl	<i>Strux aluco</i>	A			
Long-eared Owl	<i>Asio otus</i>	A			
Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>	A			
Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>	A			
Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	A			
Alpine Swift	<i>Apus melba</i>	A	Nr Mull of Kintyre 1993	Treshnish Isles, 1994	
Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	A			
Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>	A			
Roller	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>	A			
Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	A			

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Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>	A			
Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>	A			
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	A			
Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	A			
Shore Lark	<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>	A	Colonsay, ca 1920	Islay, 1976	
Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	A			
Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	A			
House Martin	<i>Delichon urbica</i>	A			
Richard's Pipit	<i>Anthus novoeseelandiae</i>	A	Islay, 1971	Islay, 1973	
Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	A			
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	A			
Red-throated Pipit	<i>Anthus cervinus</i>	A	Mull, 1975		
Rock Pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus</i>	A			
Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	A			
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	A			
Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	A			
Watwing	<i>Bombicilla garrulus</i>	A			
Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>	A			
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	A			
Duncock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	A			
Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	A			
Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>	A	Islay, 1973	West L. Tarbert, 1989	
Bluetthroat	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>	A	Saddell, 1975	Coll, 1994	
Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	A			
Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	A			
Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	A			
Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>	A			
Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	A			
Blue Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>	A	Skerryvore, 1985		
Ring Ouzel	<i>Turdus torquatus</i>	A			
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	A			
Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>	A			
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	A			
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	A			
Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	A			
Grasshopper Warbler	<i>Locustella naevia</i>	A			
Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	A			
Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>	A			
Booted Warbler	<i>Hippolais caligata</i>	A	Tiree, 1998		
Icterine Warbler	<i>Hippolais icterina</i>	A			
Barred Warbler	<i>Sylvia nisoria</i>	A			
Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>	A			
Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>	A			
Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>	A			
Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	A			
Greenish Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochiloides</i>	A	Mull of Kintyre, 1983	Sanda, 1987	
Yellow-browed Warbler ¹¹	<i>Phylloscopus inornatus</i>	A	Skerryvore, 1906	Islay, 1983	Tiree, 1998
Bonelli's Warbler ¹²	<i>Phylloscopus bonelli/orientalis</i>	A	Islay, 1976		
Wood Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>	A			
Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	A			
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	A			
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	A			
Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapillus</i>	A			
Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	A			
Red-breasted Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula parva</i>	A	Islay, 1974	Islay, 1975	

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Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>	A		
Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	A		
Willow Tit ¹³	<i>Parus montanus</i>	A	Water of Tulla, 1991	
Crested Tit ¹³	<i>Parus cristatus</i>	A	Doire Darach, 1991	
Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>	A		
Blue Tit	<i>Parus caeruleus</i>	A		
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	A		
Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	A	Dalmally, 1975	Lochgilphead, 1976
Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>	A		
Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>	A		
Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>	A		
Lesser Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius minor</i>	A	Mull, 1974	Coll, 1988
Great Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius excubitor</i>	A		
Woodchat Shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>	A	Islay, 1996	
Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	A		
Maggie	<i>Pica pica</i>	A		
Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>	A		
Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>	A		
Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	A		
Carrion/Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	A		
Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	A		
Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	A		
Rose-coloured Starling	<i>Sturnus roseus</i>	A		
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	A		
Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	A		
Red-eyed Vireo	<i>Vireo olivaceus</i>	A	Coll, 1992	
Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	A		
Brambling	<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>	A		
Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	A		
Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	A		
Siskin	<i>Carduelis spinus</i>	A		
Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	A		
Twite	<i>Carduelis flavirostris</i>	A		
Redpoll	<i>Carduelis flammea</i>	A		
Arctic Redpoll	<i>Carduelis hornemanni</i>	B	Mull, 1920	
Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>	A		
Scarlet Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus erythrinus</i>	A		
Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	A		
Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes</i>	A		
	<i>coccothraustes</i>			
American Redstart	<i>Setophaga ruticilla</i>	A	Islay, 1982	
Lapland Bunting	<i>Calcarius lapponicus</i>	A		
Snow Bunting	<i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i>	A		
Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	A		
Chirl Bunting ¹⁴	<i>Emberiza cirulus</i>	B	L Fyne, 1920	
Rustic Bunting	<i>Emberiza rustica</i>	A	Islay, 1980	Tirce, 1987
Little Bunting	<i>Emberiza pusilla</i>	A	Skerryvore, 1985	
Yellow-breasted Bunting	<i>Emberiza aureola</i>	A	Tirce, 1981	
Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	A		
Black-headed Bunting	<i>Emberiza melanocephala</i>	A		
Corn Bunting	<i>Miharia calandra</i>	A		
Brown-headed Cowbird	<i>Molothrus ater</i>	A	Islay, 1988	

Notes:

¹Snow Goose. The introduced population breeding on Mull and elsewhere would

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appear to be self-sustaining. However, since the British breeding population has not yet been placed in Category C (Vinicombe *et al.*, 1993), it was not thought appropriate to give the species Category C status in Argyll.

²Mandarin. The rapidly expanding breeding population in Cowal (Anderson & Petty, 1996) appears to be self-sustaining.

³Gadwall. Although this species is given dual AC status in Scotland as in Britain, it has been a regular winter visitor to Tiree since the nineteenth century (Harvie-Brown & Buckley, 1892), and there seems little reason to suppose that its continued presence in Argyll has depended on introduced birds.

⁴White-tailed Eagle. Note that the reintroduced population is not considered to be self-sustaining (Vinicombe *et al.*, 1993). This species therefore appears on the Argyll list solely on the basis of its former occurrence as a native breeder.

⁵Red-legged Partridge. Although evidence of breeding has been found in Argyll (*e.g.* Gibbons *et al.*, 1993), most current records seem to be accounted for by recent releases. As such, it may be that the population is not self-sustaining, and that this species should be demoted to Category E.

⁶Grey Partridge. Although the current status of this species seems comparable to that of the last one, there was at one time a healthy population of Grey Partridges in Argyll. Remnants of this population, which derived from both native and introduced birds, seem to have persisted into the 1960s or later.

⁷Avocet. Baxter & Rintoul (1953) state that: "Two Avocets were noted in Argyll in spring 1947 and 1948". I have been unable to trace these records or ascertain whether or not they occurred within the current Argyll recording area.

⁸Long-billed Dowitcher. There are also three acceptable records of unidentified dowitchers (this species or Short-billed *L. griseus*): Crinan, 1891; Tiree, 1969, Loch Riddon, 1973.

⁹Herring Gull. Yellow-legged Gull *Larus (argentatus) cachinnans*, with one accepted Argyll record (Tiree, 1998), is still regarded as conspecific with Herring Gull by the BOU and Scottish Ornithologists' Club (SOC), though treated as a separate species by many (*e.g.* del Hoyo *et al.*, 1996).

¹⁰Ivory Gull. There are several other old records of this species, but their validity seems doubtful in view of possible confusion with albinistic individuals of other gull species.

¹¹Yellow-browed Warbler. Hume's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus humei*, previously treated as a race of Yellow-browed Warbler, is now regarded by the BOU as a separate species, with only 27 accepted British records to date. The 1998 Tiree bird was certainly *P. inornatus*, but the status of the other two records has not been determined, although they too are very likely to have been this species.

¹²Bonelli's Warbler. This is another recent "split", which has produced two species that are almost indistinguishable except by call. It is not known whether the sole Argyll record refers to *P. bonelli* or *P. orientalis*. However, as with some other pairs of closely similar species, indeterminate records are being published in the *British Birds* rarities report (Rogers *et al.*, 1998), and it seems reasonable to follow the same approach here.

¹³Willow Tit and Crested Tit. The older records alluded to by Harvie-Brown & Buckley (1892) and Baxter & Rintoul (1953) seem open to doubt.

¹⁴Cirl Bunting. This apparently highly unlikely record, the first for Scotland, was published soon after the sighting (Stewart, 1920) and accepted without question by Baxter & Rintoul (1953) and Thom (1986).

DISCUSSION

Of the 314 species listed, 289 are placed in Category A only, 12 in Category B, and only four (Mandarin, Ruddy Duck, Red-legged Partridge and Pheasant) in Category C. However, the contribution of introduced birds to our current avifauna is reflected in the dual AC categorisation of a further eight species and the dual BC categorisation of the single remaining species (Capercaillie).

A total of 65 species has been recorded in Argyll on three or fewer occasions. Islands account for 73 per cent (70 out of 96) of the individual records of these rarities, with Islay being the top rarity "hot-spot" (33 records), followed by Tiree (13 records). Excluding introduced species (Mandarin and perhaps Red-legged Partridge), 38 new species have been added during the period covered by the *Argyll Bird Report* (1980 onwards). These include Ring-necked Duck, Ring-billed Gull, Bee-eater, Firecrest and Scarlet Rosefinch in addition to 33 species for which individual records are given in the checklist above.

The area defined as "Argyll and the Inner Hebrides" by Harvie-Brown & Buckley (1892) extends further north than the current Argyll recording area, and includes the islands of Rum, Eigg, Muck and Canna. On the other hand, it excludes the whole of Cowal, a portion of Mid-Argyll, and the eastern half of Kintyre. Thus the correspondence between the two areas is only approximate. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note the absence from Harvie-Brown & Buckley (1892) of six species that now breed regularly in Argyll: Mute Swan, Canada Goose, Collared Dove, Garden Warbler, Chiffchaff and Pied Flycatcher. Of these, only Garden Warbler is likely to have been overlooked in the past. Other missing species include scarce but more or less annual visitors such as Sooty Shearwater, Ruff, Green Sandpiper, Pomarine Skua, Iceland Gull, Yellow Wagtail and Black Redstart. It is debatable whether the absence of older records of these species indicates a genuine increase over the past hundred years.

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STONECHAT.

Occurrence of Leach's and Storm Petrel off western Scotland

Eddie Maguire

25 Albyn Avenue, Campbeltown, Argyll, PA28 6LX.

Abstract

All records of Leach's Petrel off Machrihanish, south-west Kintyre in Aug-Nov are given for the ten years 1989-1998. For western Scotland, examples of major occurrences of this species (>40 birds/day) are listed, together with records of exceptional numbers (>100 birds/day) of Storm Petrel. The meteorological conditions and the activity of other seabirds that accompanied major occurrences of Leach's Petrel at Machrihanish are described. The extreme weather conditions that favour inshore occurrence of this oceanic species seem not to have a similar effect on the more numerous Storm Petrel, since simultaneous sightings of the two species are infrequent. The flight behaviour of each species in severe gale conditions is described.

INTRODUCTION

Leach's Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* breeds on both sides of the north Atlantic with major colonies at Nova Scotia, Massachusetts, Maine and Newfoundland where numbers are estimated in millions! Smaller colonies occur on Westman Is. (southern Greenland) and, in the eastern Atlantic, in the Faeroes and at Lofoten (Harrison, 1989). Further south, Scotland holds the entire British breeding population. There is no accurate information on numbers, though the total is thought to be less than 100,000 pairs (Lloyd *et al.*, 1991). Only six colonies have been found and most of these are in relatively inaccessible situations including St Kilda, the Flannan Isles, North Rhona and Sula Sgeir (Thom, 1986). Its nocturnal and burrow-nesting habits make this species impossible to census accurately. The St Kilda colony is probably by far the largest (Thom, 1986).

The species is rarely seen in British waters in winter.

The Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus* breeds only in the eastern north Atlantic, from Iceland and Norway south to Iberia and possibly the Canaries, and in the Mediterranean (Thom, 1986).

Large numbers nest in Ireland, especially in the south-west, and on islands off Wales and south-west England. In Scotland, there are many breeding colonies between Shetland and Kintyre. Most of these are apparently small but the largest ones, on St Kilda and Priest Island, each hold around 10,000 pairs (Thom, 1986). The approximate total in Britain and Ireland is thought to be between 70,000 and 250,000 pairs (Lloyd *et al.*, 1991).

In Argyll, there is a modest breeding station on Sanda Island off the south-east coast of Kintyre (the only known colony in Clyde waters; Maguire, 1978) with recent estimates of 160 apparently occupied burrows (Daw, 1998). The only other known breeding colony is on the Treshnish Isles, Mull (5,040 pairs; ap Rheinalt, 1997) but more colonies surely remain undiscovered.

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Breeding birds arrive at colonies in late May and egg-laying can be as late as Jul (Maguire, 1978). Half-grown young have been found during October in boulder-field nest chambers, adjacent to the shore and almost at sea level, below the Sanda lighthouse (personal observation).

Tape-luring methods for trapping this species at mainland sites, away from breeding colonies, were devised on Kintyre in the late 1970's (Maguire *et al.*, 1980). Ringers now apply this technique during late summer to catch Storm Petrels at many headlands around Britain (especially on dark, moonless nights). This includes Tynemouth on the NE coast of England where, mysteriously, several Swinhoe's Storm-petrels *Oceanodroma monorhis* were caught - a species new to Britain and Ireland (Cubitt, 1995).

From Dec to May, Storm Petrels are rare in British waters.

COMPARISON OF FLIGHT CHARACTERISTICS OF LEACH'S AND STORM PETREL IN SEVERE GALE CONDITIONS

Most birdwatchers are unfamiliar with both Leach's and Storm Petrel; indeed, many regard Leach's Petrel as an enigma. The following comparison is based on my experience of both species at Machrihanish.

Leach's Petrel

"*The largest and most attenuated west Palearctic storm-petrel*" (Cramp *et al.*, 1998). In contrast to the Storm Petrel, Leach's Petrel looks less than confident when it eventually appears inshore near the end of a severe gale. Although buoyant, its sluggish traipse can only be described as feeble compared with the deft progression of a Storm Petrel in the same hostile conditions. Leach's glide much more than Storm Petrel, look lethargic, hug the sea and are captured with astonishing ease by Peregrines *Falco peregrinus*. A single Peregrine has great difficulty catching a Storm Petrel (Maguire, 1980). The long, narrow, pointed wings, noticeably arched at the carpal joint, impart a peculiar hunched appearance. Deep, remarkably cautious-looking wingbeats (easy to count) follow an often lengthy skim as the birds sneak, usually singly, through the trough. The lengthy tail is deeply forked and occasionally the long legs can be seen trailing below the tail or brought forward with feet dipped very briefly in a pattering or running motion. The slow progress is meandering, but at times they suddenly move much more positively, although they never look as spirited as a Storm Petrel.

Since the flight description above differs from some of the brief accounts in popular field guides and other publications, it may be useful to compare a few:

"Flight path slightly jerky and dancing" (Jonsson, 1992).

"Flight buoyant, bounding, darting" (Wallace *et al.*, 1990).

"Flight usually buoyant and graceful, weaving an irregular course between deep tern-like wingbeats and short shearwater-like glides on bowed wings with sudden, swift changes of speed and direction" (Harrison, 1989).

"Slower and lazier than Storm Petrel In full flight, sheers up from surface to produce bounding flight, often with sudden changes in speed and direction" (Harris *et al.*, 1990).

"In strong wind flight quite powerful ... gives a few powerful wingbeats, veers off, pulls up, hangs in air, etc" (Svensson *et al.*, 1999).

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My experience of Leach's Petrel at sea is restricted to land-based observations during severe onshore gale conditions. None were "bounding", "darting", "dancing" or "sheering up from surface", while I would describe the wingbeats as deep or lazy rather than "powerful". Practically all birds seen off Machrihanish (>1,000) were moving on a narrow front (staggered single file) and appeared debilitated, many struggling to maintain a distance from the shore (usually 50-100 m) whilst clinging to a massive swell with precision.

The most distinctive plumage feature at long range on this large, blackish-brown plumaged petrel is the broad greyish-white diagonal band on the inner upperwing (greater coverts and tertials). This is much more obvious than the rather restricted whitish rump.

Storm Petrel

"The smallest, darkest and the most abundant storm-petrel in the west Palearctic" (Cramp *et al.*, 1998).

Between Jul and Sep, Storm Petrels are common off the west of Scotland but are usually seen as fast moving dots on the horizon. However, fog banks and poor visibility confuse them and they stray close to headlands, scurrying past just offshore.

In severe gale conditions they are only occasionally seen inshore at Machrihanish. They impart the nonchalant impression of being more suitably adapted to a hostile marine environment than the larger and more robust-looking Leach's Petrel. With a stalwart and confident style, they proceed quickly and directly on short broad wings, although skilful-looking zigzagging adjustments are apparent as they manoeuvre impertinently around a heavy swell. Cocksure, they tilt noticeably from side to side as they perform a distinctive series of brisk purposeful wingbeats (difficult to count) lasting for usually 3-8+ seconds followed by a brief skim of 2-3 seconds. The short tail is square-ended. Their air speed seems twice as fast as Leach's and they routinely appear to have a pressing engagement somewhere south of the Bay of Biscay!

This flight description agrees with many brief descriptions in popular field guides; *e.g.*

"Flight path rather straight, close above water surface, with fast, bat-like fluttering wingbeats interrupted by short glides" (Jonsson, 1992).

"Usually seen flying low over water like a bat or hirundine.....Flight fast and fluttery, with quick, flappy wingbeats and short glides" (Harris *et al.*, 1990).

However, some authors consider that the flight action is weak; *e.g.*:

"Flight weak and fluttering, recalling a bat, with almost continuous wing action interspersed with short glides" (Harrison, 1989).

"Series of swallow-like swoops and weak flutters over the sea" (Wallace *et al.*, 1990). The last two statements must refer to the methodical dip-feeding behaviour of a Storm Petrel in relatively calm conditions. This is a fluttering action on raised wings, usually with legs dangling, as the petrel pauses briefly, or continues in this mode, to investigate a potential food source on the surface. In contrast, a sprightlier search of the sea follows this fluttering feeding behaviour; the latter is erratic and certainly a good deal slower than the strong, direct passage flight which I have described above (personal observations).

The plumage features visible at a distance are the distinctive patch of white feathers on the inner underwing (edge of axillaries and greater coverts) and the very conspicuous

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snow-white rump, lower flanks and lateral undertail-coverts. This white area is often visible at long range. In addition, at close quarters and in fresh plumage, a very narrow diagonal pale bar is often noticeable on the inner upperwing (tips of greater coverts).



Storm (left) and Leach's Petrel

METHODS

Systematic sea-watching from Uisaed Point (NR 628209) at Lossit Park Estate ca 1 km W of Machrihanish on the SW coast of the Kintyre peninsula, Argyll, has been well documented (Maguire & Angus, 1991; Maguire, 1992-1998). The topography ensures superb seawatching. To the N of Uisaed Point, a long, straight, west-facing coastline leads seabirds and other species S into Machrihanish Bay. The bay then becomes a trap and many close birds divert NW or even WSW over the low-lying Uisaed promontory at the southern end of the bay before continuing S. The trap works well, especially when a deep low-pressure system culminates in a W to NW gale. It can also be very productive just before and after a squall (a violent windstorm, usually with rain) or in poor visibility.

Movements of seabirds, wildfowl and waders past Uisaed Point were tracked systematically during specific months of the year. Observation during the autumn migration period was almost daily, usually starting at dawn, and the extent of each sea-watch was normally a minimum of three hours (Table 1). With few exceptions, all birds flying past (usually in a southerly direction) were identified and logged. Optical aids included a tripod-mounted telescope (20x and 30x; wide angle) and various binoculars (7x30 to 10x40).

RESULTS

Occurrence of Leach's Petrel off Machrihanish, SW Kintyre, 1989-1998

During Aug-Nov 1989-1998, Leach's Petrel were logged on 34 days involving 1,056 birds.

78% of the birds were in Sep and 466 (44%) occurred on 15 Sep 1992.

Extreme dates of occurrence were two birds on 5 Aug 1992 and one on 6 Nov 1996. Details of major occurrences are given below (>40 individuals in a day and all spring records).

1989 77 on 7 Oct and 40 on 13 Oct.

1990 80 on 19 - 21 Sep including 3 taken by Peregrine(s).

1991 67 on 18 Sept and 48 on 17 Oct.

1992 11 on 11 May (highest Scottish seasonal record at the time) and an unprecedented 466 in 5 hrs during the afternoon of 15 Sep (the author accompanied by similarly astounded Rod Angus, Jeff Stenning *et al.*). This

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remains the highest Scottish record for a single day (see also Scottish wreck data below).

1994 70 on 10 – 11 Sept.

1997 63 on 13 Oct.

The only other spring occurrences during the period involved three records in the same year.

1994 3 on 15, 2 on 16 and one on 31 Mar.

Table 1.

Hours of seawatching at Machrihanish during Aug-Nov, 1992-1998

Year	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Totals
1992	88	76	57	-	221
1993	159	145	91	56	451
1994	101	98	-	-	199
1995	175	121	80	-	376
1996	82	80	47	27	236
1997	140	84	39	-	263
1998	34	41	60	26	161
Totals	779	645	374	109	1,907

Only casual observations were made during 1989-1991 (<100 hrs. per year).

Examples of major inshore gale occurrences of Leach's Petrel off western Scotland

14-15 Sep 1987: an impressive 170 birds were logged off Troon, Ayrshire on 14 Sep; and 141 off Ayr the following day (Hogg, 1988).

24 Sep 1991; 54 passed S in 5 hrs off Troon and 117 passed Rubha Ardvule, South Uist, Outer Hebrides (Murray, 1993).

28 Aug 1994; 69 flew south past Frenchman's Rocks, Islay (ap Rheinallt, 1995).

Record numbers of Leach's Petrel off western Scotland in May 1999

On 22 May 1999, an unprecedented 80 flew north past Aird an Runair, North Uist, Outer Hebrides and a further 42 were logged there next day (B. Rabbits, *pers. comm.*).

Further south on this date, 20 flew S past Rubha Ardvule, South Uist, Outer Hebrides (A. Murray, Birdline Scotland *pers. comm.*) and 18 flew S past Frenchman's Rocks, SW Islay, Inner Hebrides (T. ap Rheinallt *pers. comm.*). Before this, the highest spring record had been 11 on 11 May 1992 at Machrihanish.

Scottish wreck data

Late-autumn storms appear to affect this species much more than Storm Petrel. The last spectacular Scottish wreck of Leach's Petrel occurred in 1952, when over 500 dead and dying birds were picked up during Oct and Nov in 24 of the 33 Scottish counties (Wynne-Edwards, 1953).

Table 2.
Monthly totals of southbound Leach's Petrel off Machrihanish during Aug-Nov 1989-1998

Year	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Totals
1989	5	-	118	-	123
1990	-	86	-	-	86
1991	-	69	71	-	140
1992	5	495	-	-	500
1993	-	-	-	-	-
1994	12	77	-	-	89
1995	1	8	-	-	9
1996	-	3	1	1	5
1997	-	87	-	-	87
1998	-	-	17	-	17
Totals	23	825	207	1	1,056
%	2%	78%	20%	<1%	100%

Weather conditions favouring inshore occurrence of Leach's Petrel

The following describes the meteorological sequence of events that preceded each major inshore occurrence of Leach's Petrel at Machrihanish. This is an idealised sequence following the progression of a deep low-pressure system over several days until the south-west periphery covers Northern Ireland, south Argyll and Clyde. This set of meteorological conditions, although frequent at Machrihanish, produced only seven major occurrences (>40 birds) of Leach's Petrel in Sep-Oct during 1989-1998. Also included are other species associated with each phase of a storm. Most of these pass through before the arrival of Leach's Petrel. This is a synthesis of the author's experience; it does not describe an actual occurrence in every detail.

Typical progress of a low-pressure system and accompanying passage of seabirds

a) *First day.*

The leading edge of a deep, fast moving low-pressure system begins to affect the west of Scotland; the wind is blowing hard from the S.

With an offshore wind at Machrihanish, seawatching is normally poor from this NW-facing promontory.

b) *Second day.*

The depression moves NE and the wind direction changes to the SW.

Distant Storm Petrel are guaranteed whilst large numbers of other seabirds, including Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus* and Gannet *Sula bassana* along with the large auks - Razorbill *Alca torda* and Guillemot *Uria aalge* - are passing S offshore on a broad front. Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla* litter the horizon attracting a few Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus* and an occasional Bonxie *Catharacta skua*.

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c) *Third day.*

As the system progresses NE, the centre of the storm is over the north of Scotland, the lower SW periphery encompasses Northern Ireland, south Argyll, and Clyde waters. The gale veers to the W.

Heavy, broad front, passage of seabirds is now underway to the S. Close fly-bys (100-300m) include many Manx Shearwater (especially in Sep) and Kittiwake and lines of auks, along with a variety of wildfowl, swirling groups of nervous-looking waders and sometimes all three regular diver species. Squalls and poor visibility deliver many individuals well inshore or over the rocks. An odd, slow-moving, very distant Leach's Petrel could possibly emerge from the swell, but brisk, black dots (Storm Petrel) are usually now very elusive. Flocks of Brent Geese *Branta bernicla*, one or two Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus* and quite a few widely spaced Sooty Puffin *Puffinus griseus* or perhaps even a scarce, but just as dark-looking, Balearic Shearwater *P. mauretanicus* could be scaling over a lumpy sea.

d) *Fourth day.*

Finally, the gale switches suddenly to the WNW or NW before the system leaves the area *ca* 7-10 hours later.

This sudden switch in wind direction to WNW or NW is crucial in bringing Leach's Petrel to the Kintyre coastline N of Machrihanish and both events often occur simultaneously.

Suitable gale conditions may produce scarce or unusual birds. If the depression generates frequent squalls (highly desirable for productive sea-watching - especially in Sep-Oct) then other rarities, including Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius* and Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini* may appear. Most of the species involved in the final WNW / NW stages of this storm situation are usually well inshore on a narrow front passage.

It seems likely that the same principle will apply to other west-facing headlands in Argyll and in sea area Malin. However, the little information currently available suggests that there is slight variation in the wind direction producing maximum movements of Leach's Petrel and other scarce seabird species.

Exceptional occurrences (>100 birds/day) of Storm Petrel off western Scotland

There is a heavy passage/presence of wandering, non-breeding Storm Petrel off the west coast of Scotland from Jul to Sep (Maguire *et al.*, 1980). The determined seawatcher can find them well offshore, even on fine days, albeit as fast moving dots that shadow a moderate swell.

Occasionally, exceptionally large numbers are seen by land-based sea-watchers. At the Butt of Lewis (Outer Hebrides) on 29 Jun 1990, 287 flew NW and 865 flew SE, followed by 310 NW and 286 SE on 31 Jul (Dix, 1990). In 1993, 200 flew SW off Smerclate, South Uist on 3 Jun (B. Rabbits, *pers.comm.*).

Strong onshore winds in late summer can occasionally cause aggregations of birds off the Ayrshire coast in Clyde waters. One of the best-documented examples of this occurred in 1978 when 1,000 birds passed S off Ayr in 6 hrs on 27 and 29 Jul (Dennis, 1979). Exceptionally large numbers were also reported in Clyde waters during summer 1985 with a maximum of 505 flying north past Troon on the afternoon of 25 Aug (Hogg, 1986).

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At Machrihanish, the ideal weather to find Storm Petrel close to the shore is poor visibility (*i.e.* fog banks / drizzle). For example, all 178 birds logged during a 7 hr seawatch on 13 Aug 1998 were moving S on a narrow front, extremely close to Uisaed Point in a fresh southerly wind (force 5) accompanied by continuous light rain and exceptionally poor visibility. Another sizeable movement occurred off Machrihanish in 1989 when 100+ were feeding offshore on 21 Aug (Maguire & Angus, 1991).

The only Leach's Petrel reported in any of these exceptional movements of Storm Petrel were a few off the Ayrshire coast on 27 (7) and 28 Aug (2) 1978 (Dennis, 1979).

DISCUSSION

The results show that Leach's Petrels are only occasionally noted by land-based seawatchers in association with Storm Petrels. Conversely, although Storm Petrels are more numerous on the eastern north Atlantic seaboard, they rarely appear during major occurrences of Leach's Petrel. This is significant and demonstrates a striking difference in the patterns of inshore occurrence of these two species.

Hogg (1987) suggested that the major occurrence (>200 in two days) of Leach's Petrel off the Ayrshire coast in Sep 1987 involved birds from the western north Atlantic. His argument relied on (1) the adverse weather; (2) associated species included Grey Phalarope and Sabine's Gull; and (3) "very few Storm Petrel" along with "unremarkable numbers of shearwaters" and "no better than average numbers of skuas" appeared. However, systematic seawatching at Machrihanish has revealed that conditions that favour inshore occurrence of Leach's Petrel have no apparent effect on the more numerous Storm Petrel.

I hope that the information presented here will encourage others to try to predict an onshore occurrence of Leach's Petrel. Both the site and the meteorological conditions are important. The county map reveals a myriad of mainland sites where birdwatchers rarely venture. Some of these with prominent headlands look promising; *e.g.*, the west-facing coastlines of the Sound of Jura (Knapdale) and Firth of Lorne (Easdale). Watch the weather on television and listen to shipping forecasts, especially in Sep and Oct, for the prospect of a deep low-pressure system affecting the west of Scotland. When the gale direction switches and is blowing hard from the W, WNW or NW with frequent squalls, get to a promontory situated to the south of a long, straight, west-facing coastline. You might encounter not only Leach's Petrel, but also other scarce pelagic species with similar patterns of inshore occurrence.

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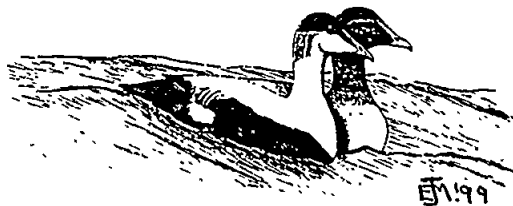
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Some examples of individual specialists among predators

J C A Craik

Scottish Association for Marine Science, Dunstaffnage Marine Laboratory,
P.O. Box 3, Oban, Argyll PA34 4AD

"At low water springs an old fisherman may be seen walking backwards along the water's edge, every now and then extending what appears to be a stick or thin rod into the sand. Investigation shows that the stick is a metal rod, perhaps 5 or 6 mm in diameter, with the tip ground into a spearhead, which the fisherman inserts into an appropriate hole, twists around and eventually pulls out with a razorshell impaled on the end. It looks very easy when observing an expert, but a novice is lucky to spear even one creature in a couple of hours!"

*The razorshell is a bivalve mollusc with long, narrow valves (shells) so that in shape it is somewhat like a large pea pod. The common large razorshell which the fisherman seeks for bait, or even a tasty meal, is the pod razor, *Ensis siliqua*, in which the two valves are straight. It lives just below the surface and has two short siphons, one for intake and one for removal of water via the hole in the surface sand. As soon as the razorshell feels a vibration on the surface it discharges a jet of water and rapidly burrows deeper by means of its foot. The rate at which it can move down through the sand is quite surprising and the explanation for our empty spear. The fisherman's footfalls disturb the razorshell, so by walking backwards he is able to observe the water ejected and note the correct hole down which to probe for his victim."*

From *The Living Seashore* by Joan M. Clayton (Warne, 1974) p.55

In the course of evolution, predatory species may acquire new methods of capture and become able to catch new kinds of prey. At the individual level, we might expect to see specialists which have mastered techniques that are rarely or never used by others of their species. This note records several instances of specialists among predators. All were encountered during work at seabird colonies on small islands along the mainland coast of Argyll and Lochaber. Gull colony sizes were based on nest counts in May.

Case 1. A colony of 204 prs Herring Gulls on Eilean Beag, Dunstaffnage, Oban (grid ref: NM889351) on 6 Aug 1999. One territory of ca 2 x 3 m contains the valves (shells) of 110 razorshells. A few other Herring Gull territories in the colony each contain small numbers (up to three), but most contain none.

Razorshells live buried in sand and are difficult to dig out because of the speed with which they can move vertically downwards. We can guess at the method by which

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this gull was able to catch them so successfully. Possibly it used the jets of water as a guide and quickly, before the razorshell could bury itself, seized the two short siphons at the top end and pulled the whole animal out, rather than grasping the shell itself. Unlike the limpet shells described below in cases (2) and (3), the upper ends of these shells were not obviously damaged by capture. Shell length was measured in a sample of 53 of the razorshells: mean \pm standard deviation (sd, a measure of the spread around the mean) were 142 ± 9.0 mm. For the reasons given in the opening quotation, I was unable to obtain a sample of local razorshells for comparison!

Case 2. A colony of 12 prs of Great Black-backed Gulls and 33 prs of Herring Gulls at Dubh Sgeir, Kerrera, Firth of Lorn (NM765253) on 19 July 1994. One Herring Gull territory contains the empty shells of 504 limpets (*Patella* spp.) in an area of *ca* 2 x 2 m. Other gull territories at the colony contain few or no limpet shells.

Case 3. A subcolony of 24 prs of Herring Gulls in a larger colony on Corr Eilean, Sound of Jura (NR677758) on 28 July 1999. One territory contains 214 empty limpet shells in an area of *ca* 1 x 2 m. An unknown additional number have fallen into cracks between and under boulders and are inaccessible. Other gull territories in the subcolony contain few or no limpets.

Limpets are notoriously difficult to remove from rocks, yet these two gulls were evidently able to remove them as a matter of routine. All the shells were intact but most were slightly chipped at one point on their edges, where the gull had inserted the curved tip of its upper mandible between shell and rock before prising the limpet away.

Limpet shells are slightly elliptical, so the maximum diameter of each shell was measured as an index of size. In a sample of 184 limpets from case (3), the mean \pm sd were 46.2 ± 6.5 mm (range 25.7 to 65.8 mm). Fifty-three live limpets measured *in situ* on nearby rocks were much smaller: 38.2 ± 5.8 (23.9 to 48.8 mm). This suggests either that the gull was selecting unusually large limpets locally, or that it was travelling to feed where limpets were larger.

Case 4. A small colony of *ca* 5 pairs of Common Terns on Bonawe islet, Loch Etive (NN001337) on 12 July 1992. One empty nest is surrounded by 33 intact but desiccated three-spined sticklebacks *Gasterosteus aculeatus*. They are so closely arranged that at first sight it seems that the nest is composed entirely of small fishes. Of three large Common Tern chicks on the island, two are on the point of flying.

Three-spined sticklebacks are common in the brackish water of Scottish sealochs. They are known to form part of the diet of Common Terns, particularly if other small fishes are scarce. They are eaten reluctantly by chicks and often refused; they may then be eaten by the adult (Boecker, 1965). At tern colonies in west Scotland, single sticklebacks are often found lying on the ground, probably having been rejected because of their sharp spines by the chick or mate to which they were offered. Whatever the explanation, the finding of 33 together like this is unusual. It seems likely that the adult tern was a stickleback specialist, since there was no evidence of shortage of

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other fishes that year.

Case 5. The small island (200x20m) of Eilean Inshaig, Loch Craignish (NM812045). A typical sealoch colony of (in 1987) 148 prs Black-headed Gulls, 49 prs Common Gulls, 32 prs Common Terns, 11 prs Arctic Terns and smaller numbers of Black Guillemots, Eiders, Red-breasted Mergansers and Oystercatchers. On 7 Jun 1987, 60 adult Common Gulls (25 males, 32 females, 3 sex not determined) and 19 adult Black-headed Gulls (11, 7, 1) are found killed by mink, most of them uneaten. A female mink and young in a rock cavern within 20 m of the Common Gull colony are killed and the predation stops, but the colony has been so disrupted by the predation that none fledge from the few remaining live chicks.

After three successive years of mink-related complete breeding failure in 1992-1994, all the Black-headed Gulls deserted from Inshaig, leaving the area completely, and all but 3 of the Common Gull pairs also left. A new Common Gull colony formed at Tucker's Island, 500 m up the loch (NM814050). In 1994, when 109 prs Common Gulls bred, 19 adults (10 males, 9 females) were killed there by a mink in late May-early June; only *ca* 10 young fledged. In 1995, 100 prs bred but there was heavy predation by mink of eggs and young (but of only one adult gull), and only 0-6 young fledged. A female mink was caught on the island on 28 Jun 1995. Both islands are now protected as part of the Mink-Seabird project and, in 1999, both showed signs of strong recovery.

These events are of interest because of the large numbers of adult gulls that were killed, possibly all caught while on eggs (both sexes of these gull species incubate). Mink live singly and territorially, so we may assume that a single mink was involved in each case. The female mink at Inshaig evidently possessed specialist skills enabling her to catch incubating gulls in considerable numbers. Possibly she shared some relevant genes with the mink that also killed a large number of adults at nearby Tucker's Island seven years later. Mink predation of gull and tern eggs and chicks is severe and widespread every year in Argyll and Lochaber (Craik, 1998), but these two instances from one small part of that large area are the only records known to me of more than a few adults being killed at a colony. (This is not true of Eiders and Black Guillemots, adults of which are more easily caught and killed at the nest.)

Case 6. Eilean Dubh, Loch Ailort, (NM749815). On 25 May 1996, near an otter spraint site by a freshwater pool on this small island, lying together in a small area, there are 174 empty shells of the edible periwinkle *Littorina littorea*, with fragments of perhaps another 10. Most have been neatly opened by means of an oval hole (*ca* 1 x 1.5 cm) in the thick shell of the largest whorl of this seasnail, immediately above the shell opening.

It is unusual to find such large numbers of periwinkle shells eaten in this way. Whichever predator opened the thick, strong 2.5 x 2cm shells in this distinctive manner was clearly a skilful specialist. Lying with the shells were pieces that had apparently been sheared off as single fragments (see drawings) before the shell contents were eaten. The consensus of expert opinion is that this predator is most likely to have been a Song Thrush. This identification needs to be confirmed by direct observation, and I

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would welcome readers' comments or opinions. In the Hebrides, Song Thrushes have been seen feeding on periwinkles, but I haven't been able to get authentic shell remains for comparison.

DISCUSSION

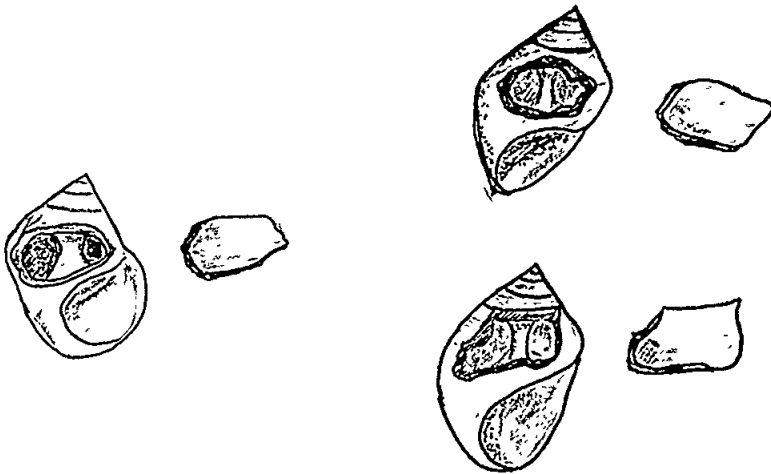
In general, these individuals were exploiting prey that was not used, or was used much less, by others of their species. The limpet-removing Herring Gulls, for example, might have had slightly better developed hooks on the end of their upper mandibles, while the razorshell-catching gull might have had a marginally longer or stronger bill. These exceptional abilities, if inherited, might be amplified by natural selection of favoured individuals, giving rise in due course to new species with modified bills. In specialist individuals we are, perhaps, glimpsing the raw material of evolution.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

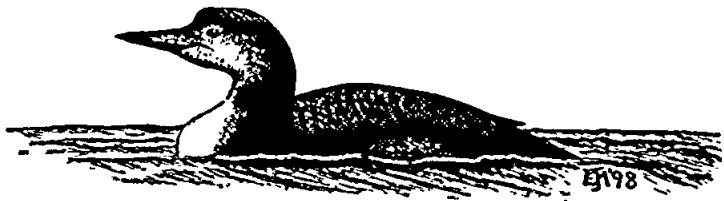
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Periwinkle shells from case (6) showing the single fragment that had been removed from each one (natural size).



Great Northern Diver in winter plumage



