

ARRAN BIRDS



Report and Checklist for 1991

Report No. 12

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LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Dr T ap Rheinalt	J Cowell	T Knight	G. Small
R Armour	W Davies & family	J Lacey	T Smith
Arran Natural History Society	M Deighton	S Lambie	D Stevenson
M Bailey	B Dick	J Larter	M Stone
D Baillie	M H Dunn	A Lawrence	I Struthers
T R Bain	P Emsley	M Liley	P Tupman
G Bannatyne	D Goldsbrough	M Logan	B Turnbull
J Barker	Dr M C Grant de Longueuil	T McManus	E Turnbull
L Baxter	A Gratton	B McFadyen	B Turner
N W Bennett	J Gratton	C McFadyen	M Voice
M Brookes	Prof N R Grist	P Mackie	R Voice
M Browell	D Hardwick	T Malin	A Walters
F Brown	J Hargan	N Marshall	D Warner
M E Burnley	G Herrieven	J Mitchell	
Dr J R T Cassels	P Herrieven	J Murchie	
L Cassels	A Honeywell	A Nicol	
H Christie	G Honeywell	C A Oliver	
A R Church	R Hope et al.	Perry family	
A Clark	M Hutcheson	B Primrose	
M Cowan	M Iutz	J Rhead	

The Isle of Arran Natural History Society thanks you for your kind support and should like to recommend to you its annual magazine, THE ARRAN NATURALIST No. 15, currently available throughout the Island.

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ARRAN BIRD REPORT 1991

Edited and Compiled
by
Margaret H Dunn
and
Tristan ap Rheinallt
for
Isle of Arran
Natural History Society
1992

INTRODUCTION

1991 was not on the whole a notable year for the success of our breeding birds. Although seabird populations in Shetland were soaring after seven disastrous seasons, our own breeding terns failed miserably. In what was reckoned to be the coldest May this century, breeding success for many songbird species was also exceedingly low.

One Golden Eagle was poisoned on Dougarie Estate while another was found dead in the Lochranza area. Peregrines did not appear to do particularly well, and although Merlins were present during the summer they were not proved to be breeding. Ptarmigan just held on to their low numbers with no young seen. Nightjars have been declining steadily since 1952, and are now one of Britain's most threatened species. For this reason alone we are lucky still to have one or two pairs. Fulmars seem to be doing marginally better, in terms of rearing young if not of nesting attempts, but for two years in succession one has become entangled in cliff vegetation and has subsequently died. It is good to note more Puffins offshore this year, possibly due to restrictions imposed on sandeel fishing and also perhaps because of the work being done to keep the rats down on Ailsa Craig. There may be even more Puffins and other seabirds in the future.

Since starting the Arran Bird Report which first appeared as a checklist in the very first "Arran Naturalist" magazine in 1978, I have been happy to be responsible for its editing for the last twelve years, and it is with regret, but with confidence, that I now place its future in the capable hands of my co-editor of 1990 and 1991, Tristan ap Rheinallt.

Grateful thanks are due to Audrey Walters for her drawing of a Shoveler, and to all those who supply information for the bird report.

Please send all records for 1992 in Voous order (as in the checklist) by December 1992 or earlier. Breeding records would be particularly welcome. All records of vagrant or occasional species (see checklist) should be accompanied by a detailed description; otherwise they are unlikely to be accepted. It may not be possible to include in the next report records sent later than mid-January 1993. The address for records is: Dr Tristan ap Rheinallt, Ashgrove, Pirmill, Isle of Arran KA27 8HP (tel. Pirmill (077085) 268).

Margaret H Dunn

ABBREVIATIONS

C - widespread and fairly common species for which no noteworthy records were submitted

* - all records given for a particular species

m - male

f - female

imm - immature

juv - juvenile

yng - young

max - maximum count

min - minimum count

terr - territory

Initials of observer concerned are generally limited to rarities and less common species

arr - arrival

N - north (direction of flight)

S - south (direction of flight)

inc - including

Jan etc - all months abbreviated

pr - pair

yr - year

nr - near

CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY

JANUARY - MARCH

The severe gales that caused such havoc on the 4th, 5th and 6th January, while being bad for the island, were good for bringing in more unusual birds. A Manx Shearwater was at Pirmill together with a Little Gull on the 4th. A Little Auk and another Little Gull flew south at Pirmill on the 5th. A Moorhen, seldom seen, was at Shiskine around the 6th and on the same day a Bewick's Swan, a first record for Arran, was at Lagg. 2 Snow Buntings were on the shore at Pirmill on the 9th. A single Ptarmigan was on Mullach Buidhe on the 12th and 30 was the most Yellowhammers seen for several years at Clachaig on the 18th. 3 Purple Sandpipers were at Drumadoon Pt on the 20th, a Red-necked Grebe graced Pirmill on the 21st, and a Coot was a surprise at Largybeg on the 24th. Nothing very noteworthy occurred in February apart from 2 Bar-tailed Godwits appearing at Machrie on the 10th and up to 2 Red-necked Grebes present between Pirmill and Catacol. Possibly the same 2 Red-necked Grebes turned up at Pirmill on the 1st March and 1 was in moult at Catacol on the 10th. Five Shovelers at Machrie on the 13th is the first positive record since I came to Arran in 1956. Two early Wheatears arrived, also at Machrie, on the 17th. A Kingfisher gave much pleasure to several lucky people at Cloyburn throughout January to March. Also during this period, Crossbills bred at Kilmory.

APRIL - JUNE

Migrants were late arriving with the first Chiffchaff not heard until the 11th April at Pirmill, and 2 Swallows at Sannox, followed by 4 Sand Martins on the 12th at Blackwaterfoot. The first Willow Warbler was at King's Cave on the 13th, when 4 Whooper Swans flew over Kerr's Port. A Bar-tailed Godwit remained at Machrie on the 14th, where also a Long-tailed Duck proved surprising. Six Purple Sandpipers were in moult at their favourite Drumadoon Point on the 21st and 3 White Wagtails put in a pristine appearance nearby in Blackwaterfoot. The first 2 Sandwich Terns were at Pirmill on the 25th, and 2 Whinchats were at Glenloig on the 27th. Two Puffins about 1 mile off Whitefarland looked splendid in their full breeding plumage on the 30th, when the first Grasshopper Warbler was also heard at Kilmory.

The Whitefarland Whimbrel was present until May 1st. The first Tree Pipit arrived at Pirmill on the 1st with the first Sedge Warblers heard at Machrie Moor on the 4th and the first Blackcap at King's Cross on the 8th. A Whitethroat was at Blackwaterfoot on the 14th while a Purple Sandpiper remained at Drumadoon Point, with a pair of Wigeon and a Bar-tailed Godwit at Machrie. Also on the 14th, a female Goosander was on Loch Tanna. The continued spread in Scotland of the Lesser Whitethroat was borne out by 1 at King's Cross on the 16th and subsequent dates, in an area favoured of recent years. Two Spotted Flycatchers were in Merkland Wood on the 25th and a Garden Warbler was at King's Cross. A late Goldeneye was still at the Wine Port on the 30th, and 3 Sanderlings were at Dougarie on the 31st.

June was relatively quiet but brightened up on the 6th by 10 Crossbills at Benlister. On Beinn Bharrain, a pair of Ptarmigan were watched for 1 1/2 hr on the 5th, but did not appear to be nesting. A Little Tern was with Sandwich Terns at Kildonan on the 12th. A Greenshank was unexpected on Brodick golf course on the 13th and 2 Arctic Skuas appeared on the Brodick/Ardrossan crossing, followed by another on the same crossing on the 14th. A Long-eared Owl was seen at Merkland on the 23rd, and 8 Puffins flew south past Pirmill on the 26th.

JULY - SEPTEMBER

July proved to be exceptionally quiet, enlivened by 2 Storm Petrels on the 1st at Pirmill. A lull followed until the 14th when 2 Crossbills appeared, this time at Lagg. Two Rooks were

unusual at Glenree on the 17th and a Greenshank turned up at Machrie on the 21st. There were many Merlin sightings in August and September, one of which was at Lochranza on the 15th August. A Moorhen was unusual on the Ross road on the 17th and a Puffin was seen off Pladda from the 'Waverley' paddle steamer on the 21st. A Kingfisher in Glen Catacol on the 20th was seen by only one observer. Another Merlin was pursuing pipits at Whitefarland on the 22nd while our wintering Whimbrel returned there also. On the 28th, a Great Skua was seen from the Brodick/Ardrossan ferry. The last Whinchat was at Corrie on the 28th and a late Cuckoo was at Catacol the same day, oblivious to the rhyme which says "away he must"! A Goshawk was exciting as it chased prey at Dougarie on the 29th. Ten Reed Buntings was a fair number at Glen Sannox on the 30th and 2 Bar-tailed Godwits were at Torrylinn on the 31st.

There was more action in September, particularly towards the end of the month. One or 2 Bar-tailed Godwits were at Kildonan during most of the month, and the last White Wagtail was at Dougarie on the 5th while a female Goosander kept company with Mergansers at Machrie. A light south easterly breeze brought a Sooty Shearwater to Pirmill on the 12th. A female Scaup was at Brodick on the 13th. The first 3 Wigeon accompanied by 12 Teal arrived at Machrie on the 15th plus 8 Golden Plover. A Ptarmigan was on Beinn Bharrain on the 20th and the only Grey Plover of the year was at Machrie on the 22nd. At Pirmill there were several sightings of Arctic Skuas on 23rd, 24th, 26th and 27th. A Leach's Petrel was moving slowly in a westerly gale at Pirmill on the 24th and obligingly 'hanging' in the wind. A Great Skua arrived also at Pirmill on the 25th. The only 2 Redstarts seen this year were at Clauchan Glen on the 26th. A total of 21 House Martins, rather scarce this year, were still present in Brodick on the 27th. A Greenshank was still at Machrie on the 28th and 30th and a few Bar-tailed Godwits were still scattered throughout the island with 1 at Kildonan on the 29th and 30th, and 1 at Cleats on the 30th.

OCTOBER - DECEMBER

October began with some interesting seabird passage at Pirmill when on the 1st 9 Arctic Terns flew south, another followed on the 2nd and 2 more on the 3rd. A Little Gull and a Pomarine Skua occurred on the 3rd to liven things up. A possible Long-tailed Skua was with 4 Arctic Skuas again at Pirmill this time on the 7th; unfortunately it flew past too quickly to be positively identified. Winter migrants became obvious on the 13th with 12 Greylag Geese and 30 Redwings at Machrie, also 30 Redwings at Thunderguy and 7 at King's Cross; an exceptionally large group of 13 Great Northern Divers arrived at Imachar. Meanwhile on the 13th, 20 Swallows were still present at King's Cross and an immature or female Merlin was at Machrie where a male turned up on the 15th. A rare sighting for Arran was a single Black Grouse near Loch Cnocan Loch on 14th. Unusually, 3 Long-tailed Ducks appeared close in at Drumadoon on the 15th, while a single Knot was close by and a Blackcap was at Torbeg. Skuas were again to the fore on the 17th with 2 Arctic Skuas at Pirmill. A Snow Bunting was at Machrie standing stones on the 18th and a late Wheatear on the 19th and 23rd. Other Snow Buntings turned up on Beinn a'Chliabhain and at Kerr's Port, while there were 4 sightings of Bramblings between the middle and the end of the month. Another Long-tailed Duck was at Pirmill on the 22nd, while on the 28th, a Water Rail at Clauchlands and a Glaucous Gull at Brodick finished off an exciting month.

By comparison, November was quiet, though whether this was due to a lack of birds or a lack of observers is debatable. A single Brambling was still at Gortonallister on the 4th. An unusual sighting on the 8th was of a Golden Eagle apparently flying in off the sea at Porta Leacach. Two Ptarmigan were seen on Goatfell on the 9th, with a single there later in the month. For the second winter in succession, Waxwings put in an appearance during November: following 4 in Whiting Bay on the 12th, another 2 in Shiskine from the 19th attained fame by featuring in

the pages of the 'Arran Banner'. In the meantime, an early Shelduck returned to Clauchlands on the 16th, while the Natural History Society goose count on the 17th found no geese but encountered at Machrie a Goosander and a Snow Bunting by way of compensation.

No fewer than 17 Short-eared Owls at a roost on the 5th December must have been an impressive sight, while a count of 40 Ravens in Glen Chalmadale on the 7th was quite unprecedented. On the 8th, the monthly Birds of Estuaries Enquiry count clocked up a total of 140 Wigeon for the island, and 270 Greylag Geese were at Shiskine. A Jack Snipe was seen well at Penrioch on the 10th, while the next day found 3 Parmigan on Goatfell. Little of note was reported after this date, but the end of the year found 4 Shelduck already at Clauchlands, 2 Little Grebes wintering in Lochranza, and the Whitefarland Whimbrel still on site for its second successive year.

M H Dunn

Summer Migrant Arrival Dates

Wheatear Machrie/Tormore 17 Mar
 Swallow Sannox 11 Apr
 Chiffchaff Pirmill 11 Apr
 Sand Martin Blackwaterfoot 12 Apr
 Willow Warbler King's Cave 13 Apr
 Common Sandpiper Merkland 16 Apr
 Cuckoo String road 19 Apr
 White Wagtail Blackwaterfoot 21 Apr
 Sandwich Tern Pirmill 25 Apr
 Whinchat Glenloig 27 Apr
 House Martin Pirmill 28 Apr
 Grasshopper Warbler Kilmory 30 Apr

Tree Pipit Pirmill 1 May
 Sedge Warbler Torbeg 4 May
 Blackcap King's Cross 8 May
 Swift Fallen Rocks 13 May
 Wood Warbler North Sannox 13 May
 Whitethroat Blackwaterfoot 14 May
 Common Tern Thunderguy 21 May
 Arctic Tern Dougarie 23 May
 Garden Warbler King's Cross 25 May
 Spotted Flycatcher Merkland 25 May
 Nightjar - 20 Jun

(NB Manx Shearwater, Whimbrel and Lesser Black-backed Gull all recorded in winter)

ADDITIONS TO 1990 REPORT

Mediterranean Shearwater The record of a Balearic Shearwater at Corriecravie on 14 Oct 1990 (TapRh; see last year's report) has been accepted by the SBRC, and becomes the first Arran record of this species, newly 'split' from Manx Shearwater.

Lesser Whitethroat M singing in scrub Kildonan 3 May 1990 (B Averis); same or another singing May/Jun about 1/2 mile further W (JR).

Pied Flycatcher 2 singing males, Kildonan and Dippen, 3 May 1990 (B Averis).

ARRAN BIRDS 1991

SYSTEMATIC LIST

compiled by Tristan ap Rheinallt

Red-throated Diver Breeding: Records of singles or pairs were received from 8 potential breeding sites, though it is not likely that nesting was attempted at all of these. Breeding was confirmed at only 1 site (corresponding to Site 2 in 1990), with 2 young on 5 Aug; breeding did not occur at the other successful 1990 site.

Other records: Present along the coast all year round, with highest counts all from the west coast between Pirmill and Blackwaterfoot: 5 or more regularly at Pirmill Mar - Aug, with a max of 10 on 22 May; 5 Machrie 27 Sep; 10 Blackwaterfoot 15 Oct.

Black-throated Diver Seen in all months of the year, though less numerous Jun - Aug, with many of the individuals seen then being non-breeding first-summer birds. Most frequent on the west coast between Lochranza and Blackwaterfoot.

Highest counts: 14 Kings Cave 11 Apr; 7 Tormore 27 Sep; 6 Machrie 8 Dec. There appears to be a regular wintering flock in the Machrie - King's Cave area.

A pair called in briefly at one of the Sail Chalmadale lochans on 20 May (DH).

Great Northern Diver Winter/spring: Many records Jan - May, mostly from the west coast between Pirmill and Machrie. Highest counts: 5 Machrie 21 Jan; 6 Imachar 24 Jan; 5 Rubha Airigh Dhughail 14 Apr, 9 on 22 May. Still a few birds lingering into June: 1 Dougarie 2 Jun, 1 Thunderguy 5 - 7 Jun, 1 Rubha Salach 6 Jun.

One mid-summer record: a first-summer bird at Dougarie on 11 Jul (TM).

Re-appeared in Sep, with a juv at Machrie on 15 and 25 Sep. Larger numbers in Oct, with a group of 13 newly-arrived birds at Imachar on 21 Oct being the largest recorded since at least 1980. 5 at Pirmill 22 Oct may well have been part of this group; no other high counts Oct - Dec.

* **Little Grebe** Winter/spring: Up to 2 wintered at Lochranza until at least 15 Feb, and probably also at Cordon (2 on 10 Mar). These are fairly regular sites, but 1 at Porta Leacach on 9 Mar, seemingly driven off after attempting to join groups of Eider and Wigeon, was more unusual.

Autumn/winter: 1 Rosaburn Brodick 27 and 29 Aug is an early return date; 1 still present Brodick 15 Nov. 2 Lochranza 27 Oct to end of year.

* **Red-necked Grebe** Up to 2 seen between Catacol and Pirmill until 1 Mar, with 1 still present 10 Mar, probably refer to the same birds present since mid-Dec 1990.

Fulmar Breeding: the apparent decline continues with only 108 prs recorded. Although no counts were received from certain sites, a comparison of 1990 with 1991 for those sites counted suggests a decline of about a third. However, lack of consistency between years in the dates of the counts raises doubts about the validity of the comparison.

A fairly dark (intermediate phase) individual was present at the Machrie colony on 20 May (cf a similar bird there in 1986). Also at this site, an individual was seen caught in brambles on 21 May, but eventually succeeded in freeing itself, unlike - presumably - the one seen dead in the cliff vegetation on 5 Sep (as on 21 May 1990).

A total of 8 yng were seen mid- to late Aug, 4 at Machrie, 2 at Catacol, and 2 at Bennan.

No large coastal movements were recorded.

* **Sooty Shearwater** 1 N Pirmill 12 Sep, at moderate range in a light SE breeze (TapRh), is only the second record since 1980.

Manx Shearwater Following records at Pirmill on 9 and 16 Dec 1990, 1 (or possibly 2) were at Pirmill on 4 Jan. Dec and Jan records in Scotland, and indeed in the UK as a whole, are infrequent.

Otherwise, the first spring record was of 1 at Pirmill and 20 at Sliderry on 24 Apr. The highest total recorded was only 100, from the Ardrossan/Brodick crossing on 9 Sep, making 1991 the poorest year since 1987 for this species. Last record: 7 Brodick/Ardrossan 4 Oct.

* **Storm Petrel** Pirmill: 2 on 1 Jul was the only sighting (TapRh) and represents a huge decrease by comparison with 1990, despite similar intensity of observation.

* **Leach's Petrel** 1 S Pirmill 24 Sep in W gale (TapRh).

Gannet Following a single at Whiting Bay on 29 Dec 1990, further singles were seen at Lamlash on 3 Jan and Pirmill on 4 Jan, with records from all coasts in Jan and Feb. On the west coast, there was a large arrival on 21 Feb, with over 100 present at Pirmill.

No high counts were recorded this summer; indeed, some observers commented that the species seemed unusually scarce. Last record: 1 Hamilton Rock 8 Oct.

Cormorant No confirmed breeding since 1982, though present all summer. Highest counts: 11 Whitefarland 25 Aug; 17 Clachlands 22 Sep.

Shag Breeding: at least 14 nests and 12 yng Holy Is 29 Jun. Highest counts: 50 Machrie 21 Jan; 50 Pladda 29 Sep; 70 Drumadoon Pt 15 Oct; 50 Hamilton Rock 24 Oct; 70 Lamlash 10 Nov.

An immature caught by accident in a lobster creel near King's Cave on 10 Sep (GB), had been ringed on 26 Jun 1991 as a nestling on Sanda.

Grey Heron Breeding: only 6 occupied nests were reported this year, and only 3 yng. Poor observer coverage may largely explain the apparent decline, but the Merkland colony seems to have been steadily decreasing for a number of years now.

Other records: Individuals and groups of up to 6 birds present around the coast, with an unusually high count of 12 at Lochranza on 30 Sep.

* **Mute Swan** Wintering birds: 3 Whiting Bay to end Mar; 2 Lamlash to 11 Apr. Summer records: 4 N Pirmill 16 Jun; pr Lochranza late Jun. Autumn return: 2 N Pirmill 1 Oct; pr Whiting Bay 13 Oct subsequently increased to 4 birds, present to end yr; pr Lamlash 28 Oct; 1 Lochranza 28 Oct.

* **Whooper Swan** 3 Kildonan 6 Jan; 26 over High Clachaig 18 Mar; 30 N over Brodick Country Park 25 Mar; 4 E over Kerr's Port 13 Apr. No autumn records.

* **Bewick's Swan** A single bird in a field at Lagg on 6 Jan was, perhaps surprisingly, a first record for Arran (JR).

Greylag Goose Winter/spring: No more than 150-200 recorded Shiskine/Machrie Jan - Mar. 50 still present 15 Apr, last noted 21 Apr. Records from elsewhere: 12 Glen Rosa 6 Jan; 200 N Holy Isle 30 Mar; 65 N Auchencairn 14 Apr.

Autumn/winter: First of autumn heard over Brodick late evening 26 Sep (nos unknown). Main arrival mid-Oct, with 12 S Machrie 13 Oct, 15 E Porta Leacach 15 Oct, 10 S Pirmill 15 Oct and 24 S on 22 Oct. In the Shiskine Valley, 25 on 15 Oct, building up to 150 on 22 Oct, then 270 by 8 Dec.

Shelduck The first of the year was not noted until 11 Jan at Clauchlands. The largest group in spring was of 19 birds at Kilpatrick on 9 May.

Breeding: A total of 19 prs were seen to have 141 yng, the first being noted at Blackwaterfoot on 14 May. Additional prs present did not produce yng, eg only 1 of 3 prs at Clauchlands did so. Young at certain locations (eg Clauchlands, where a complete brood of 11 had disappeared by 22 Jun) suffered heavy predation, while others (eg Cleats) apparently did not. It would be interesting to know the cause of this variation.

A late juv was still present at Machrie on 15 Sep, whereas the first returning bird was noted at Clauchlands on 16 Nov, nos there building up to 4 by 15 Dec, which is earlier than normal.

Wigeon Winter/spring: Highest counts: 37 Clauchlands 2 Feb, 32 on 7 Mar; 37 Machrie 21 Jan, 32 on 10 Feb. Also reported from Cleats (6 on 18 Jan), Kildonan (15 on 9 Mar), Whiting Bay (13 on 19 Feb). Late spring records: 1 Whitefarland 6 May, pr Machrie 14 May.

Autumn/winter: First 3 Machrie 15 Sep. Nos building up to end of yr, with highest counts (all 8 Dec); 70 Machrie, 30 Clauchlands, 24 Kildonan, 13 Whiting Bay.

* **Teal** Winter/spring: 6 Cleats 18 Jan; 7 Machrie 21 Jan, 50 on 10 Feb, 6 on 24 Mar, 1 on 14 Apr; 60 Port na Feannaiche 31 Jan.

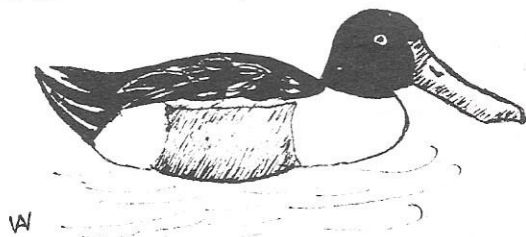
Breeding: no records, but 4 reported flying off from the small lochan on Holy Is 29 Jun (BP).

Autumn/winter: First 12 Machrie 15 Sep, building up to 41 on 13 Oct, then only 25 on 8 Dec. Only other record 8 Kilpatrick 29 Sep.

Mallard **Breeding:** Only 3 prs noted, with a total of 15 yng. Aggregations of moulting males recorded at Machrie (11 on 14 May), Port na Feannaiche (13 on 16 Jun), and Wineport Brodick (20 on 1 Jul).

Outside the summer months, groups of 10-20 regularly present at Brodick, Lochranza, Machrie, Port na Feannaiche, Cleats, and Clauchlands. Highest count 40 Machrie 13 Oct.

* **Shoveler** 5 Machrie 13 Mar (JC) is the first record for 35 years or more.



Shoveler (M)

* **Scaup** F/imm Brodick 15 Sep (BMcF, CMcF) is the first record since 1986.

Eider Winter/spring: There was a clear build-up of nos along the west coast between Jan and Mar, with max counts of 550 at Machrie (17 Mar) and 400 at Pirmill (30 Mar). These are far and away the highest totals recorded on Arran, at least in recent years, but it is difficult to assess to what extent the 1991 situation was unusual. Numbers in autumn were much lower.

Breeding: the first yng were noted on 29 May at Hamilton Rock. Records during mid- to late Jun totalled 27 f with 83 yng, a figure similar to 1990 but certainly not representing a complete count. A moulting flock of up to 70 males was at Machrie in Jun and Jul.

* **Long-tailed Duck** First-summer m Machrie 14 Apr (TapRh); 3 (1 f and 2 dull f/imm) Drumadoon Pt 15 Oct (TapRh); ad m Pirmill 22 Oct (TapRh).

Goldeneye Singles and groups of up to 10 present round coasts Jan to Mid-Apr and Oct to end of yr. Max count 19 Dougrie 31 Jan. Last spring record unusually late: f Brodick 30 May. One inland record, of a bird at Loch Nuis 20 Nov.

Red-breasted Merganser **Breeding:** 4 or 5 f reared a total of about 21 yng. Moulting flocks between late May and mid-Sep at Pirmill (max 92 on 16 Sep) and Machrie/Tormore (max 60 on 24 Jul), with smaller nos elsewhere. One inland sighting of 4 Loch lorsa 1 Jun.

* **Goosander** F Loch Tanna 14 May (JR,ARC); f with Mergansers Machrie 5 Sep (TapRh), same or another 17 Nov (ANHS).

Hen Harrier **Breeding:** birds showing territorial behaviour at many widely scattered locations, but reports of confirmed nesting received from only 2 of these. 5 juvs seen at 1 site. Winter sightings from all over the island.

* **Goshawk** An adult was reported at Dougrie on 29 Aug (description and sketch supplied), and watched at close range (NB). This is the 2nd record since 1980, the other being in Sep 1989.

Sparrowhawk At least 9 terrs but presumably many more; 1 pr reared 3 yng. Pronounced peak of records Aug and Sep, with several individuals hunting along the shores.

A male killed on striking a window at Blackwaterfoot in Aug was found to contain 11.4mg/kg of the pesticide residue DDE in the liver tissue; although 'at the higher end of the background range found in this species', such a concentration would not be associated with the cause of death (Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department (SOAFD) post-mortem report) (MI).

Buzzard **Breeding:** about 22 occupied terrs and probably many more. Success reported from only 1 site, in the Blackwaterfoot area, where a pr reared 2 yng, 1 of which left the nest on 11 Jul and the other on 18 Jul. Highest count: 9 Shiskine 13 Aug.

Golden Eagle Two eagles were found dead in the spring. The first, a male found in Glen Scaftigill in March, was next to a Red-legged Partridge bait, on which it had been feeding. In a post-mortem examination carried out by SOAFD, both the eagle's liver and its stomach contents were found to contain large quantities of chloralose, showing clearly that it had been poisoned.

The second bird, also a male, was long dead when found in the Lochranza area in May. According to the SOAFD post-mortem report, 'a hole (4mm diameter) was noted in the breast-bone, indicating the possibility of a gunshot wound'. However, the report also pointed out that the poor condition of the corpse prevented a more comprehensive investigation of the cause of death.

This second bird was apparently the male of the Site 1 pair, the female of which very quickly mated again, but did not breed successfully. No reports were received regarding breeding at Site 2.

Outside the breeding areas, birds were seen at Auchencar (21 Mar), and frequently in the Goatfell/Glen Rosa area. Also an interesting record of 1 apparently flying in from the sea at Porta Leacach 8 Nov.

Kestrel Breeding: 10 prs noted, 3 with yng. 1 albino/leucistic bird A'Chruach 9 Oct.

Merlin About 20 records in total, the majority concentrated in autumn and only 5 before mid-August: Kilmory 24 Feb, Imachar 4 Apr, Boguille 2 Jun, and records from Gortonallister in May, Jun (and also Aug, Sep) which might suggest breeding nearby. Most autumn records on or near the coast between Lochranza and Shiskine, also Cleats, King's Cross and Whiting Bay. Inland, 1 f near Loch Cnoc an Loch 14 Oct.

Several additional records of 'possibles' emphasise that caution is needed when identifying this species on the basis of brief views.

Peregrine Breeding: probably attempted at 6 sites, known to be successful at 3 but unsuccessful at 1. Possibly as many as 6 further terrs for which no evidence of breeding attempts. Seen more widely autumn with coastal records away from breeding sites eg Machrie, Thunderguy, Clauchlands.

Also an interesting observation of 1 flying with a Feral Pigeon in its talons at Sannox 27 May, pursued by a Common Gull and a Great Black-backed Gull which apparently caused it to drop its prey. The dove flew off and was later found in a weakened condition hiding under a restaurant table (MCGdeL).

Red Grouse Many more records than 1990, mainly in Jan and early autumn; may represent a genuine increase. Bred Sail Chalmadale, Maol Donn, Cnoc Ballygown. Counts: 5 North Glen Sannox 22 Jan; 5 Loch Tanna 26 Jan; 9 Beinn Tarsuinn area 25 Jul; 8 Urie Loch 5 Aug; 6 Creag na h-Iolaire 5 Aug; 10 Boguille 26 Aug; 5 Coirein Lochain 20 Sep; 5 Beinn a'Chliabhain 10 Oct.

* **Ptarmigan** A good number of records this yr, most from Goatfell and North Goatfell, where 1 end Feb, 1 on 26 Aug, pr on 16 Oct, 9 Nov, 1 on 28 Nov, 3 on 11 Dec. Also 1 Mullach Buidhe 12 Jan. In the western hills, a pr on Beinn Bharrair 5 Jun were watched for 1 1/2 hr but no nest was located; also 1 Bealach an Fharaidh 20 Sep.

* **Black Grouse** 1 m nr Loch Cnoc an Loch 14 Oct (TS). Only 2 records of this species 1986-1991, both at the same location by the same observer.

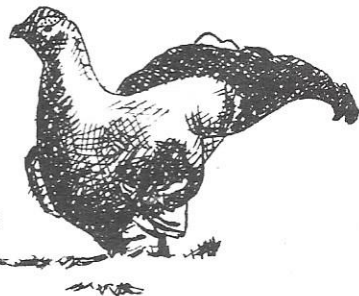
Black Grouse (M displaying)

Red-legged (x Chukar) Partridge Usual concentration of released birds Machrie/Dougarie.

* **Grey Partridge** 2 nr Machrie Farm 18 Sep (BMcF, CMcF) were almost certainly captive-bred.

Pheasant Nested Machrie, Lamlash.

* **Water Rail** 1 Clauchlands 28 Oct (per AW).



* **Moorhen** 1 Shiskine early Jan (JL); 1 heard calling Rodden Shiskine 25 May (TapRh); 1 Ross rd 17 Aug (AL).

* **Coot** 1 Largybeg 24 Jan, appeared to be in poor condition (AN). Of 4 records since 1981, 3 have been in the month of January.

Oystercatcher Breeding: only 16 terts noted; first yng seen 10 Jun. Winter months: regular counts of 50 or more at Whiting Bay, Lamlash, Machrie, Whitefarland, Kildonan. Max 100 Machrie 17 Mar.

Ringed Plover Winter/spring: main concentrations (highest count, date) were: Whiting Bay (70, 20 Jan); Machrie (30, 15 Jan); Lamlash (20-30); Brodick (21, 11 Jan).

Breeding: 15 reported terts but the true total must be much higher. Still 1 unfledged yng Pimmill 15 Aug.

Autumn/winter: main concentrations Whiting Bay (120, 28 Aug); Torrylinn (106, 13 Oct); Machrie (90, 24 Aug); Brodick (80, 28 Aug); Blackwaterfoot (50, 13 Aug); Lochranza (27, 25 Aug); Whitefarland (25, 22 Aug); Clauchlands (25, 24 Oct). Aug is clearly the best month for this species, the total no of birds on the island exceeding 500 at the end of the month.

Golden Plover. Winter/spring: 1 Dougarie 15 Jan; group of 7 at 500m altitude on Beinn Tarsuinn (Gleann Diomhan) 26 Jan; 2 Machrie 10 Feb, 1 on 14 May; 2 Dougarie 17 May; 2 Clauchland Hills 25 May.

Breeding: 4, perhaps 5 terts were reported but this is hardly likely to represent a complete count. No young reported.

Autumn/winter: Present Machrie 15 Sep to 19 Oct, max 12 on 13 Oct; 2 Whiting Bay 17 Sep; 3 Pimmill 24 Sep; 1 Thunderguy 12 Oct; 1 Glen Rosa 5 Nov.

* **Grey Plover** 1 Machrie 22 Sep (TapRh). Only 3 records in the last 3 yrs.

Lapwing Breeding: only 6 terts, 2 yng, is exceptionally low, but many traditional locations seemingly not checked. Highest counts: 55 Cordon 13 Jan; 40 Dougarie 15 Jan; 90 Sliderry 18 Jan; 35 Dougarie 7 Dec.

* **Knot** 1 Clauchlands 24 Aug (AW); 1 Whiting Bay 29 Aug (MHD); 1 Drumadoon Pt 15 Oct (TapRh).

* **Sanderling** 3 Tormore 27 May; perhaps the same 3 Dougarie 31 May; 1 Whiting Bay 28 Aug; 2 Blackwaterfoot 19 Sep.

* **Purple Sandpiper** 3 Drumadoon Pt 20 Jan; 6 in moult at the same location 21 Apr, decreasing to 1 in summer plumage on the late date of 14 May. No autumn/winter records.

Dunlin Scarce as usual Jan-Apr, with only 2 records (1 Machrie 10 Feb, 1 Clauchlands 17 Feb). Several coastal records late May - early Jun, with the last 2 at Blackwaterfoot 11 Jun. No evidence of any breeding attempts.

Autumn/winter: First 1 Drumadoon Pt 13 Jul, then several records through to Oct. Highest counts: 10 Torrylinn 31 Aug; 14 Kildonan 30 Sep. No records for Nov and Dec.

* **Jack Snipe** 1 North Glen Sannox 22 Jan (GS); 1 Shiskine 13 Feb (TM); 1 Penrioch 10 Dec (GS).

Snipe Breeding: about 8 terts; 3 displaying birds in Torbeg area. Many sightings of 1-3 birds in winter months, with max 6 Clachlands 22 Jan.

* **Woodcock** Breeding: 10 terts. Roding at Machrie forestry 14 May (2); Monamore Glen 20 May; Rosaburn-Cladach 25 May (2); Merkland 25 May; Glen Shurig 29 May; Gleann an t-Suidhe 29 May; Glaister 29 May; Auchencairn 30 May.

Other sightings: 1 Sannox 23 Jan; 1 Clachlands 4 Feb; 1 North Sannox 10 Mar; 1 Brodick CP 19 Oct; 2 Merkland 8 Dec.

* **Bar-tailed Godwit** 2 Machrie 10 Feb, 1 on 14 Apr, 5 May, 14 May; 2 Torryllyn 31 Aug; 2 Sliderry 1 Sep; up to 2 Kildonan Sep; 1 Whiting Bay 8 Sep; 1 Cleats 30 Sep; 1 Clachlands 9 Oct; 1 Machrie 13 Oct. A good year for this species after only 1 record in 1989 and none at all in 1990.

* **Whimbrel** Winter/spring: Wintering bird Whitefarland present to 1 May but gone by 6 May; 1 Cordon 22 Mar is also very early for a migrant. 1 Clachlands 30 Apr; 2 Sliderry 16 May; 1 Blackwaterfoot 11 Jun.

Autumn/winter: 1 Whitefarland 22 Aug present until 31 Dec; 1 Machrie 30 Sep.

Curlew Winter/spring: highest counts 80 Machrie 21 Jan, 80 Corrie cravie 31 Jan, 65 Catacol 10 Mar.

Breeding: 7 terts inc 1 south end Holy Isle.

Autumn/winter: Flock 16 Port na Feannaiche 16 Jun, but main build-up of nos mid-Jul on. Regular flocks at several locations. Highest counts: 50 Clachlands 16 Jul; 85 Corrie cravie 20 Aug; 130 Machrie 25 Sep; 40 Cordon 9 Oct; 25 Kildonan 8 Dec.

Redshank Again no breeding records; last confirmed nesting 1988. Scarce May and Jun. Highest counts: 13 Whitefarland 3 Jan; 13 Kildonan 26 Mar; 19 Whiting Bay 8 Sep; 17 Lamlash 8 Sep.

* **Greenshank** 1 Rosaburn Brodick 13 Jun; 1 Machrie 21 Jul, 28 Sep, 30 Sep; 1 Lochranza 28 Aug.

Common Sandpiper Arr 1 Merkland 16 Apr. Breeding: 26 terts is similar to last yr; only 7 yng noted. Last 1 Brodick 15 Aug.

Turnstone Winter/spring: Highest counts 16 Whiting Bay 20 Jan; 23 Whitefarland 5 Mar; 14 Catacol 17 Apr. Last spring record 7 Kildonan 3 Jun.

Autumn: First 1 Dougarie 1 Jul may represent a summering bird. Highest counts: 21 Machrie 15 Sep; 30 Whiting Bay 22 Sep; 17 Whitefarland 7 Dec.

* **Pomarine Skua** 1 juv Pirmill 3 Oct in strong SW breeze was seen well and watched for several minutes (TapRh). This is the first Arran record of this species in many years, but intensified seawatching in autumn might be expected to produce more sightings.

* **Arctic Skua** 2 Brodick/Ardrossan 13 Jun (MH), 1 on 14 Jun (AH,GH); 1 juv Pirmill 23 Sep, 24 Sep, 1 ad 26 Sep, 27 Sep, 4 juvs 7 Oct, 2 on 17 Oct (TapRh). The best year to date for this species.



Little Gull (1st winter)

* **Great Skua** 1 Ardrossan/Brodick 28 Jul (JRTC,LC);
1 Pirmill 25 Sep (TapRh); 1 Ardrossan/Brodick
11 Oct (per DW).

* **Little Gull** 1 first-winter S Pirmill 4 Jan, another
on 5 Jan, both in very strong SW winds (TapRh);
1 first-winter S Pirmill 3 Oct, in strong SW breeze (TapRh).

Black-headed Gull Small nos present Jan-Apr, then
scarce May-Jul. For the 3rd yr in succession, no
breeding records were received. Autumn nos higher,
with counts of 50 Pirmill 23 Sep, 100+ with Kittiwakes
Pirmill 2 Oct, 30 Kildonan 18 Oct.

Common Gull Breeding: 34 nests found along W coast between Lochranza and Drumadoon.
No high counts.

Lesser Black-backed Gull 1 ad Machrie 13 Jan. Otherwise, a few from 6 Mar, with main
arrival 300 Machrie 13 Mar. No counts from breeding colonies. Largely gone by end Sep.

Herring Gull No information from breeding colonies. Highest counts: 450 Machrie 17 Mar;
350 Machrie 14 Apr; 250 Whiting Bay 10 Nov.

* **Glaucous Gull** 1 first-winter Brodick 28 Oct (TapRh), is the first record since 1986.

Great Black-backed Gull No breeding records. Highest counts: 150 Brodick 11 Jan; 60
Machrie 17 Mar; 50 Brodick 11 Nov.

Kittiwake Some coastal movement Jan-Apr; 80 S in 30 min Pirmill 4 Jan; 200 S in 30 min
Pirmill 11 Jan; 37 N 8 S in 1 hr Pirmill 24 Apr. Much scarcer May and Jun, max 26 Brodick
13 Jun; more, but still small nos, in Jul and Aug. Large nos Sep and Oct as last yr: 300
Glenashdale 19 Sep; 750 Pirmill 23 Sep, 25 Sep; 400 Glenashdale 1 Oct; 500+ S Pirmill 2
Oct; 1000+ S in 2 hr Pirmill 7 Oct; 1800 on calm sea Pirmill 10 Oct.

Sandwich Tern Spring: First 2 Pirmill 25 Apr; 2 Kildonan 26 Apr. Many records throughout
May, especially on the west coast; max 6 Whitefarland 25 May. A few remaining into Jun:
1 Brodick 2 Jun; 1 Corrie 8 Jun; 1 Blackwaterfoot 11 Jun; 4 Kildonan 12 Jun.

Autumn: first 3 Whiting Bay 16 Jul. Many records Aug, Sep; max 4 Clauchlands 28 Aug. Last
2 Whiting Bay 25 Sep.

Common Tern First 1 Thunderguy 21 May. Singles or prs seen regularly between
Blackwaterfoot and Thunderguy to 7 Jun, but no evidence of breeding. 3 Pirmill 1 Jul, 1 on
7 Jul; 1 Whiting Bay 31 Aug.

Arctic Tern First 2 Dougarie 23 May. Regular sightings Machrie to Pirmill May and Jun,
with 2 prs Dougarie 28 May, but no sign of nesting. 17 prs nesting Pladda appeared to desert
due to disturbance from dogs (MD). Scattered records Jul to Sep. Late records: 9 S Pirmill
1 Oct in strong W winds, 1 on 2 Oct, 2 on 3 Oct.

* **Little Tern** 1 Kildonan 12 Jun with Sandwich Terns (MH).

Guillemot Scarcer than the next species at the beginning of the yr: 35 S in 30 min Pirmill 4 Jan; 50 on sea Machrie 21 Jan. Nos holding up in Mar and Apr, though, and still some movement in mid-summer eg 13 S 8 N in 1 hr Pirmill 26 Jun.

More numerous Sep, Oct: 63 S 18 N in 30 min Pirmill 12 Sep; 200 N in 30 min Pirmill 28 Sep. Much more frequent than Razorbill Mar-Oct.

Razorbill Large nos remaining on west coast from late 1990 into Jan 1991. Pirmill area (augs mostly Razorbills): 110 S in 30 min 4 Jan; 350 S in 5 min 6 Jan (this large passage did not last long); 55 N in 5 min 10 Jan; 100 S in 30 min 11 Jan; 500 on sea Pirmill 21 Jan.

Much less numerous by Mar, and only a handful of records through the summer months. No large movements recorded late autumn/winter, unlike last year.

Black Guillemot Breeding: 4 prs with nests or yng, at Cock of Arran, Imachar, and Kilpatrick shore (2). Also 4 or 5 further prs probably nested. Half-grown juvs noted at Dougarie 20 Aug, Pirmill 20 Aug. Counts: 7 Brown Head 31 Jan; 9 Pirmill 24 Aug; 11 Blackwaterfoot 15 Oct; 12 Lamlash Bay 24 Oct.

* **Little Auk** 1 S Pirmill in SW storm 5 Jan (TapRh).

* **Puffin** 2 seen from small boat 1 mile off Whitefarland 30 Apr (NM); 8 S Pirmill in calm conditions 26 Jun (TapRh); 1 off Pladda 21 Aug (TapRh).

Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon Groups showing characteristics of 'true' Rock Doves noted at Imachar, Machrie, Kilpatrick, Cleats. An exceptionally high count of 34 Kilpatrick 14 Aug.

Wood Pigeon Few flocks noted: 30 Porta Leacach Sep-Dec; 41 Brodick 24 Sep; 35 Pirmill 8 Dec.

Collared Dove C

Cuckoo Arr: 1 String 19 Apr. No yng reported. 1 nr Lochan a'Mhill (Glen Catacol) 28 Aug is latest ever.

Barn Owl Breeding: Terrs at Dougarie, Kilmory, Brodick CP and Lamlash; yng reared at the first 3 of these. At Dougarie, 2 yng first flew on 5 Jul, had left nest by 8 Aug.

Other records from Porta Leacach, King's Cross, Gortonallister, Corrie, Pirmill, Shiskine, String rd; at least some of these presumably involve breeding birds.

* **Tawny Owl** 1 flushed Catstone Wood Corrie 29 May; 1 calling Whiting Bay 31 May; 1 Brodick CP 27 Jul; 1 calling Lamlash 24 Oct.

* **Long-eared Owl** Tail feather found in Clachlands forest ride, same place as seen in 1989 (IS); 1 Merkland 23 Jun, thought to have bred (DW).

Short-eared Owl Breeding: 10 to 12 terrs, at least 2 reared yng. An interesting record of 1 catching a mink nr the String rd on 15 Jun, and then forced to drop it by a Buzzard.

Autumn counts: 6 Boguillie 12 Sep, 4 Boguillie 23 Oct. In Nov, one fortunate observer found a roost of these birds, and counted them at fortnightly intervals thereafter, recording a max of 17 individuals on 5 Dec.

* **Nightjar** First record 20 Jun at Site 1 is late, as elsewhere in the UK in 1991. 2 males later churring at this location. No reports from the new site discovered last year.

* **Swift** 1 Fallen Rocks 13 May; 2 Torr Nead an Eoin 20 Jun; 1 Dippen 22-29 Jun; 2 Kildonan 6 Jul, 5 on 8 Jul.

* **Kingfisher** Last year's bird still present Cloyburn until at least 3 Mar (RA,GS); 1 Allt nan Eireannach Catacol 20 Aug (TMcM).

Skylark Impossible to estimate breeding population. Scarce or under-recorded winter months: only 1 flock reported, of 35 at Shiskine 15 Oct.

* **Sand Martin** Another very poor yr, as in the UK generally. First 4 Blackwaterfoot 12 Apr; 1 Whitefarland 13 Apr. Breeding: 4 nests occupied Auchencar, 1 new nest site Whitefarland. Other records: 6 Slidery 16 May; 6 East Bennan 9 Jun; 1 Strabane Brodick 28 Jun.

Swallow First 2 Sannox 11 Apr; 2 Blackwaterfoot 12 Apr; 1 Tormore 13 Apr. More frequent by 25 Apr, but less numerous than usual. Relatively few breeding records. Max count 300-400 Auchencairn 24 and 25 Aug. Main departure 28 Sep, but last 20 King's Cross 13 Oct.

House Martin Generally agreed to have been a very poor yr for this species. Arr: 2 Pirmill 28 Apr is exceptionally late. Only 33 occupied nests reported for the whole island, largest colony 20 at Catacol. Last 2 Lamlash 20 Oct.

Tree Pipit Arr: 1 Pirmill 1 May. 18 terrs noted. Last 1 Pirmill 29 Aug.

Meadow Pipit C

Rock Pipit C

Grey Wagtail Only about 15 terrs noted. No counts above 6.

Pied Wagtail Breeding: 4 prs noted. Large nos migrants Aug-Oct as usual; highest counts 70 Dougarie-Machrie 25 Sep, 100 Kildonan 29 Sep.

* **White Wagtail** Spring: 3 Blackwaterfoot 21 Apr; 2 Kildonan 22 Apr; 1 Cock of Arran 25 Apr; 3 Clauchlands 30 Apr; 1 Blackwaterfoot 14 May; 1 Cleats 24 May.

Autumn: 1 Bennan 23 Aug; 2 Kildonan 26 Aug; 5 Torrylinn shore 31 Aug; 8 Kildonan 2 Sep; 1 Dougarie 5 Sep.

* **Waxwing** 4 Whiting Bay garden 12 Nov (TS); 2 Shiskine 19-21 Nov at least (FB et al.). Nov records on Arran for the second year in succession, the latter location being almost identical to the one where they turned up in 1990.

Dipper 14 localities is a fairly typical no; only definite proof of breeding 1 juv Loch Iorsa 9 Jun. Coastal records virtually confined to winter months, indicating that at least some birds move downstream at this time of yr.

Wren C

Duncock C

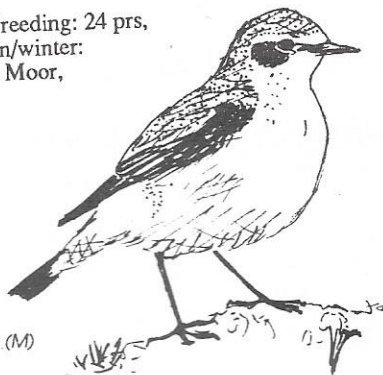
Robin C

* **Redstart** 2 juvs Clauchan Glen 26 Sep (ML).

Whinchat Arr: 2 Glenloig 27 Apr. Breeding: only 28 terrs located, 10 of these being in Glen Iorsa. Last 1 Corrie 28 Aug.

Stonechat Only 6 records Jan/Feb, all coastal. Breeding: 24 prs, 13 yng is certainly a gross underestimate. Autumn/winter: Several Oct records but only 2 in Nov (Kilpatrick Moor, Machrie Moor forestry) and none in Dec.

Wheatear Arr: 1 Machrie golf course and 1 Tormore 17 Mar. Other Mar records: 1 Pimmill 19th, pr Machrie 24th, 5 Laggan - Fallen Rocks 31st. Breeding: no realistic estimate possible. Autumn: Many Sep records, both coastal and inland. A few left in Oct: 1 Lamblash 9th, 1 Machrie 19th, 23rd.



Wheatear (M)

Blackbird C

Song Thrush C

Fieldfare Winter/spring: More frequent than the next species, with several records to mid Feb. Highest counts 200 Machrie 13 Jan, 100 Kilpatrick 12 Feb. Only 3 records subsequently: 1 Pimmill 30 Mar, 1 Machrie 30 Mar, 25 N Auchencairn 13 Apr.

Autumn/winter: An exceptionally early record of 4 at King's Cave 21 Aug (WD et al.) was not unprecedented, there having been Aug records in 1982 and 1986. Otherwise, the first autumn record was of 500-600 mixed with Redwings at Thunderguy 21 Oct. This was also the highest count, and nos declined in Nov and Dec.

Redwing Usual pattern of records with highest nos in autumn. Winter/spring: A few records in the southern half of the island; highest count 30 Kilpatrick 12 Feb. Not seen at all after this date.

Autumn/winter: arr 13 Oct, with 30 Thunderguy, 30 Machrie, 7 King's Cross. Large nos 15 Oct, with 200 Shiskine, 200 Blackwaterfoot, 80 Machrie. Nos greatly decreased Nov, Dec.

Mistle Thrush Very few breeding records received. Large flock of 24 Lochranza 12 Aug.

* **Grasshopper Warbler** Arr: 1 Kilmory 30 Apr. Singing birds also recorded at: Brathwic Brodick 1 May; Machrie Moor (2 locations) 4 May, 7 May; Kilmory 6 May; Torr Righ Mor 6 May; Kingscross 16-22 May; Porta Leacach 25 May; Auchencairn 15 Jun; Benlister 28 Jun; Clauchan Glen 25 Jul. Total 10 sites but some of the earlier birds may not have stayed to breed.

Sedge Warbler Arr: 3 singing Torbeg 4 May. A total of 28 terrs is the highest ever, but may merely reflect increased observer coverage, particularly on the west coast. Highest density in Torbeg/Tormore area, with 9 singing males. Some of the May birds were not heard again and probably represent migrants passing through.

* **Lesser Whitethroat** 1 singing Kingscross 16 May, 25 May, seen well on latter occasion (TapRh), also heard briefly 17 May (MHD). With previous records from the same location in 1987 and 1988, breeding is a possibility (see article at end of systematic list for more detail).

Whitethroat Arr: 1 Blackwaterfoot golf course 14 May. Total of 40 terrs is similar to last 2 yrs; few yng noted. Last 1 Strathwhillan 13 Sep.

* **Garden Warbler** 1 Kingscross 25 May; 1 Porta Leacach 25 May; 1 Monamore Dyemill picnic site 6 Jun, 11 Jun; 1 Port nam Balach Corrie 20 Jun. Total 4 locations.

Blackcap Arr: 1 singing Kingscross 8 May. Other singing birds: Glen Cloy; Lamlash (4 sites); Clauchlands; Merkland (2 sites); Rosa bridge; Sandbraes; Glenashdale; Porta Leacach; Ashlar Tormore; Kilmichael. Total 15 terts. Juv Whiting Bay 24 Aug, f on 30 Aug. Also 1 f Torbeg 15 Oct. F in Brodick garden 31 Dec (RV,MV).

Wood Warbler Arr: 2 singing North Sannox picnic site 13 May. Other singing birds: Glenashdale (3); Sannox; Lochranza; Catstone Wood (2); Merkland; Fallen Rocks path (2); Brodick; Monamore (3); Penrioch Pimmill (2). Total 18 terts is the highest yet, but may represent increased observer coverage rather than a genuine increase in numbers, particular as the species appeared to be absent from some usual sites eg Kilpatrick, Altachorvie. Last 1 Porta Leacach 9 Sep.

Chiffchaff Arr: 1 Pimmill 11 Apr is exceptionally late; 1 Porta Leacach 13 Apr, 1 King's Cave 13 Apr. More widespread from 15 Apr, but not very common. Even so, the 13 singing birds reported must represent only a fraction of the Arran population.

Willow Warbler Arr: 1 King's Cave 13 Apr is late, reflecting the situation in the UK generally. Also 1 Kildonan 14 Apr, 1 Kilmory 14 Apr. Widespread arrival all over the island 15 Apr, eg 9 singing birds Torbeg area. Earliest yng noted Catstone Wood 29 May. Last: 1 Whiting Bay 30 Aug, 1 Glen Sannox 30 Aug.

Goldcrest No breeding records. Only 1 group noted: 7 Brodick CP 14 Aug.

Spotted Flycatcher Arr: 2 Merkland 25 May is unusually late, but late arrival noted generally in the UK this yr. Singles and prs recorded from 20 localities, inc 7 family groups. Last 2 Kildonan 2 Sep.

Long-tailed Tit Relatively few parties noted, largest being 20 Dougarie 29 Aug, 20+ Porta Leacach Oct/Nov.

Coal Tit C

Blue Tit C

Great Tit C

Tree Creeper Breeding: 11 prs recorded, 5 with yng. 1 climbing a door-frame Lamlash 7 Jan. 1 struck a window Cordon 2 Jul, later recovered.

Jackdaw Flocks of 100+ noted at several locations Jan - Apr and Sep - Dec. Max count 200 Dougarie 1 Feb.

Rook Winter/spring: Present in usual area Shiskine Jan - Apr, with 3 remaining on 4 May; max count 55 on 16 Jan (135 in Dec 1990). Also 4 Catacol 26 Jan.

Summer: An intriguing record of 2 at Glenree on 17 Jul (JRTC,LC). This is the first summer (Jun - Aug) record since 1981, when 1 was seen at Glenree on 10 Aug.

Autumn/winter: First record 3 Shiskine 12 Sep, present there to end of yr. Other locations: 8 Ross rd 22 Sep; 20 Cleats 29 Sep; 1 Imachar 30 Sep.

Carrion/Hooded Crow Very few breeding records, presumably because of lack of observer interest. On the other hand, many high counts this yr could represent a genuine increase: 62 Carrion + 28 Hooded Clauchlands Farm 12 Feb; 50 mixed Rodden 13 Apr; 100+ Carrion Shiskine 21 Aug; 65 mixed Shiskine 12 Sep; 100+ mixed Cleats 29 Sep. No counts above 50 during 1988-90.

Raven Breeding: min 15 prs recorded, 15 yng. Counts: a fairly large group (by Arran standards) of 9 at Drumaghinier 13 Sep, pales into insignificance by comparison with a remarkable group of 40 in Glen Chalmadale 7 Dec (ARC). Where did these birds come from?

Starling Flocks: 200 Slidery 19 Jul; 300+ Kilmory 4 Aug, 200 on 23 Aug.

House Sparrow Only 1 flock reported: 50 Corriecravie 23 Sep.

Chaffinch Largest flocks: 200 Machrie 11 Jan, 200 Catacol 26 Jan, 150 Brodick 27 Sep, 200 Kildonan Sep - Dec. Unusual record of a f on the summit of Goatfell 20 Nov.

* **Brambling** 1 Clauchlands 23 Oct (IS); 3 with Chaffinches Kildonan 15 Oct, 2 on 23 Oct (PT); 3 Gortonallister 31 Oct, 1 on 4 Nov (AG, JG).

Greenfinch Breeding: 12 prs. Largest flock 25 Kildonan early Sep.

Goldfinch Very scarce Jan - Apr with only 2 records. Breeding: 9 prs noted. Highest counts: 20 Whiting Bay 27 Aug; 20 Pirmill 6 Oct.

Siskin Scattered records Jan - Mar but seemingly more frequent in summer. Breeding: at least 13 prs recorded, fledged yng Gortonallister 27 Jun. Flocks of 30-40 in Aug and Sep at Auchencairn, Corrie, North Sannox, Glen Chalmadale, Whitefarland. Scarcer Oct - Dec?

Linnet Breeding: Only 9 prs reported, all on south coast Drumadoon - Clauchlands; 3 prs with yng.

Few flocks compared with 1990, but 60 Cleats 26 Aug and 2 flocks totalling 155 Machrie 25 Sep.

Twite All records from coastal stretch between Pirmill and Kildonan, except: 1 summit Beinn Bharrair 8 May; 1 summit Goatfell 6 Jun; 1 Ross rd 17 Jul.

Winter/spring: Highest counts: 13 Machrie 21 Jan; 17 Sliderywaterfoot 31 Jan; 22 Auchencar 1 Feb.

Breeding: Pr in cliff-face vegetation King's Cave 15 May, 4 prs King's Cave to Tormore 23 Jun, probably breeding but not confirmed. Also pr seen Bennan Head 11 Jun.

Autumn/winter: Flocks Blackwaterfoot, Machrie, Whitefarland. Max 45 Machrie 23 Oct.

Redpoll Only a single record before mid-Apr: 1 Corriegills 20 Mar. More frequent May to Jul, but no breeding records. Seemingly absent Sep to end of yr.

Crossbill Following an irruption into Scotland and the north of England in late 1990, a flock was regularly present at Kilmory during the first half of the yr, with a max of 16 on 17 Apr; breeding occurred (JR). Some of the birds showed characters associated with Parrot Crossbills, but a definite identification of this extremely difficult species was not made.

Outside the Lagg/Kilmory area, the following sightings were reported: 3 Smuraig forestry end Mar; 1 Brodick CP 9 Apr; 10 Benlister 6 Jun; 1 Monamore Dyemill picnic site 22 Jun.

Bullfinch Singles and prs recorded from 14 localities, mostly in spring and summer; only 1 definite breeding record, at Porta Leacach. Max 6 Brodick Castle 2 Apr.

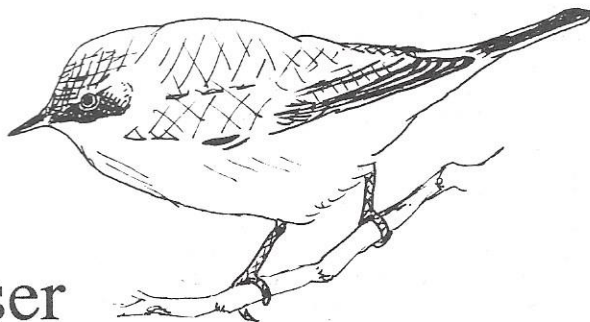
* **Snow Bunting** 2 on shore Pirmill 9 Jan; 1 summit Caisteal Abhail 23 Mar; f track to Machrie Moor standing stones 18 Oct; 1 Beinn a'Chliabhain 22 Oct; f Kerr's Port 21 Oct, 24 Oct; imm Machrie 17 Nov.

Yellowhammer A flock of 30 at Clachaig Farm 18 Jan is the largest recorded in Arran since at least 1980. On the other hand, the total of 7 singing m is the lowest since 1982; all were along the south coast between Drumadoon and Clauchlands. Highest autumn count: 7 Clauchlands Farm 28 Oct.

Reed Bunting Winter/spring: A regular flock with finches at Machriewaterfoot reached 16 individuals on 17 Mar, a high total for Arran.

Breeding: A total of 11 singing m recorded, the same as last yr, but including several new sites; the true no of prs must be higher. At least 5 terrs in the Machrie/Torbeg area. No yng reported.

Autumn: highest counts 10 Glen Sannox 30 Aug, 7 Machrie 15 Sep.



The Lesser Whitethroat in Arran

by Tristan ap Rheinallt

The Lesser Whitethroat (*Sylvia curruca*) is an elusive, though apparently increasing, breeding species in Scotland. It was not recorded as nesting at all in the original Breeding Atlas (Sharrock 1976), though it is common enough further south in Britain. Thom (1986) describes it as a scarce migratory breeder in Scotland, probably under-recorded owing to its very secretive habits, but questions whether any apparent increase is genuine. Byars et al. (1991), though, present evidence to show that it is undergoing a marked range expansion in northwest Europe as a whole, and in Scotland in particular.

In Strathclyde, occupied territories were first discovered in 1983. In their recent paper, entitled 'The breeding distribution and habitat requirements of Lesser Whitethroat in Strathclyde', Byars et al. (1991) report on the result of a survey which found 6-8 territories annually since 1985 in Ayrshire, 2-3 territories in Renfrewshire, and 1 in Lanarkshire. Unfortunately, Arran is not mentioned in their paper and, indeed, does not even appear on their map of

Strathclyde!

This short article is an attempt to redress the balance a little by examining the status of the Lesser Whitethroat in Arran.

It is certainly a long-standing member of our avifauna. For example, Gibson (1956) mentions a record on 12 May 1920 of a few individuals on Pladda (a once well-known but now sadly neglected migration 'hot-spot'). The species was also recorded earlier on by Neil Fullarton. Nevertheless, it has never been recorded as a breeding species here.

The record of a singing male in Kildonan in 1985 closed a gap of 30 years during which there were no records at all (Arran Bird Report 1985). Since then there have been several reliable records:

1. Singing male 21 and 22 May 1985, Kildonan.
2. Singing male 20 to 29 May 1987, King's Cross.
3. Singing male 26 May 1988, King's Cross.
4. Singing male 3 May 1990, Kildonan; same or another about 1/2 mile W of this, May/June 1990.
5. Singing male 16 to 25 May 1991, King's Cross.

The maximum separation of the King's Cross records is about 350 m, while that of the three Kildonan records is about 800 m. It seems likely, therefore, that the records represent only 2 or 3 territories. As a criterion for establishing breeding status, Byars et al. (1991) state that 'the presence of a pair, or of a singing male, noted on at least two occasions a week or more apart, and occupying the same territory on two or more consecutive years, was taken as evidence of regular breeding status'. Using this criterion, the singing bird at King's Cross certainly falls into this category, and I would imagine that breeding is very likely.

However, nobody has yet seen a female accompanying any of these males, and females are in fact notoriously difficult to see. Another problem is exemplified by the sequence of dates above. The latest definite date, 29 May, can be compared with the statement of Byars et al. (1991) that males stop singing and become much more difficult to locate after the end of May, singing most intensely during the first fortnight of the month. This fact may well add to the difficulty of proving breeding in Arran.

The same paper shows that breeding territories are located at less than 100 m altitude, on slopes of various orientations, in mature hawthorn scrub interspersed with a dense mosaic of bramble, dog rose, gorse and sometimes willow. The areas in King's Cross and Kildonan where the species has been recorded certainly include patches of hawthorn scrub with a tangled understorey of bramble, which seems to be associated in particular with steep ungrazed slopes above the raised beach at the south end of Arran. Searching for Lesser Whitethroats in these areas could prove fruitful.

How should one go about finding the birds? The easiest way to locate the species is by song, which is very loud and very distinctive. A quiet warble, only audible at close range, is followed by a much louder monotonous rattle, to my ear unlike the song of any other species found in Arran, though some liken it to the song of the Yellowhammer with the final 'cheese' omitted (as it frequently is by Yellowhammers themselves). When one sees it - and this proved difficult with the bird I found on 16 May 1991, though it perched obligingly out in the open on the 25th - the Lesser Whitethroat is distinguished from the Common Whitethroat principally by its dark 'mask' and the absence of chestnut in the wings. Males and females look the same. Lastly, as already stated above, early to mid-May could prove to be the best time to search.

References

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CHECK LIST

Status Symbols

R - Resident (Breeds); R* - Resident (No recent breeding records); R** - Resident (No breeding records); S - Summer Visitor (Breeds); S* - Summer visitor (No recent breeding records); S** - Summer visitor (No breeding records); W - Winter visitor; P - Passage migrant; C - Common; U - Uncommon; B* - Formerly bred (No recent breeding records); O - Occasional; V - Vagrant; I - Introduced or released; E - Escaped.

1 Red-throated Diver	RC	77 Coot	WO	153 Meadow Pipit	RC
2 Black-throated Diver	R*/PC	78 Crane	V	154 Rock Pipit	RC
3 Great Northern Diver	S**U/WU/PC	79 Gyrfalcon	RC	155 Yellow Wagtail	S*U
4 Little Grebe	WU	80 Ringed Plover	RC	156 Grey Wagtail	RC
5 Great Crested Grebe	WO	81 Dotterel	PO	157 White Wagtail (a)	B*PC
6 Red-necked Grebe	WO	82 Golden Plover	SU/WU/PU	157 Pied Wagtail (b)	RC
7 Slavonian Grebe	WO	83 Grey Plover	PU	158 Waxwing	WO
8 Black-necked Grebe	WO	84 Lapwing	RC	159 Dipper	RC
9 Fulmar	SC/WU	85 Knot	PC	160 Wren	RC
10 Cory's Shearwater	V	86 Sanderling	PU	161 Dunnock	RC
11 Sooty Shearwater	V	87 Curlew Sandpiper	V	162 Robin	RC
12 Manx Shearwater	SU/PC	88 Purple Sandpiper	WU	163 Black Redstart	WU/PU
13 Mediterranean Shearwater	V	89 Little Stint	V	164 Redstart	SU
14 Storm Petrel	PC	90 Dunlin	SU/WC/PC	165 Whinchat	SC
15 Leach's Petrel	V	91 Ruff	V	166 Stonechat	RC
16 Gannet	S**C/WU	92 Jack Snipe	WO	167 Wheatear	SC/PC
17 Cormorant	RC	93 Snipe	RC	168 Ring Ouzel	SU
18 Shag	RC	94 Long billed Dowitcher	V	169 Blackbird	RC
19 Bittern	V	95 Woodcock	RC	170 Fieldfare	WC/PC
20 Grey Heron	RC	96 Black tailed Godwit	PO	171 Song Thrush	RC
21 Spoonbill	V	97 Bar tailed Godwit	WQ/PU	172 Redwing	WC/PC
22 Chilean Flamingo	VE	98 Whimbrel	PC	173 Mistle Thrush	RC
23 Mute Swan	R*C	99 Curlew	RC	174 Grasshopper Warbler	RC
24 Bewick's Swan	V	100 Spotted Redshank	PO	175 Sedge Warbler	V
25 Whooper Swan	WU/PC	101 Redshank	RC	176 Lesser Whitethroat	SC
26 Pink-footed Goose	WO	102 Greenshank	WU/PU	177 Whitethroat	SC
27 White-fronted Goose	WU/PU	103 Green Sandpiper	V	178 Garden Warbler	SC
28 Greylag Goose	WC/PC	104 Common Sandpiper	SC	179 Blackcap	SC/WU
29 Canada Goose	R*/PO	105 Turnstone	S**U/WC/PC	180 Wood Warbler	SC
30 Barnacle Goose	WO	106 Grey Phalarope	V	181 Chiffchaff	SC/PC
31 Brent Goose	WO	107 Red-necked Phalarope	V	182 Willow Warbler	RC
32 Shelduck	RC	108 Pomarine Skua	V	183 Goldcrest	RC
33 Wigeon	S**O/WC	109 Arctic Skua	S**U/PC	184 Spotted Flycatcher	SC
34 Teal	SU/WC	110 Great Skua	S**U/PC	185 Pied Flycatcher	S**U
35 Mallard	RC	111 Little Gull	PO	186 Long-tailed Tit	RC
36 Pintail	PO	112 Sabine's Gull	V	187 Willow Tit	O
37 Shoveler	B*	113 Black-headed Gull	RC	188 Coal Tit	RC
38 Pochard	WO	114 Common Gull	RC	189 Blue Tit	RC
39 Tufted Duck	PU	115 Lesser Black-backed Gull	SC/WU	190 Great Tit	RC
40 Scaup	WO	116 Herring Gull	RC	191 Treecreeper	RC
41 Eider	RC	117 Glaucous Gull	SU/PU	192 Golden Oriole	V
42 King Eider	S**U	118 Iceland Gull	O	193 Red-backed Shrike	V
43 Long-tailed Duck	SO/WO	119 Great Black-backed Gull	B*SU/WC/PC	194 Great Grey Shrike	V
44 Common Scoter	SO/WO	120 Kittiwake	V	195 Jay	B*/PO
45 Velvet Scoter	WO	121 Ivory Gull	V	196 Magpie	B*/PO
46 Goldeneye	WC	122 Sandwich Tern	S**C/PC	197 Chough	B*
47 Snew	WO	123 Roseate Tern	B*O	198 Jackdaw	RC
48 Red-breasted Merganser	RC	124 Common Tern	SC/PC	199 Rook	B*/WC
49 Gosander	S*/PU	125 Arctic Tern	SC/PC	200 Carrion Crow (a)	RC
50 Red Kite	B*	126 Little Tern	PO	200 Hooded Crow (b)	RC
51 White-tailed Eagle	B*V	127 Guillemot	R**C	201 Raven	RC
52 Marsh Harrier	V	128 Razorbill	R**C	202 Starling	RC
53 Hen Harrier	RC	129 Black Guillemot	RC	203 House Sparrow	RC
54 Goshawk	S**/PO	130 Little Auk	PO	204 Tree Sparrow	B*
55 Sparrowhawk	RC	131 Puffin	PU	205 Chaffinch	RC
56 Buzzard	RC	132 Pallas's Sandpiper	V	206 Brambling	WU
57 Rough-legged Buzzard	V	133 Rock Dove	RC	207 Greenfinch	RC
58 Golden Eagle	RC	134 Stock Dove	O	208 Goldfinch	RC
59 Osprey	B*/PO	135 Woodpigeon	RC	209 Siskin	RC
60 Hobby	V	136 Collared Dove	RC	210 Linnet	RC
61 Kestrel	RC	137 Turtle Dove	V	211 Twite	RU
62 Merlin	RU	138 Cuckoo	SC	212 Redpoll	SC/PU
63 Peregrine	RC	139 Barn Owl	RC	213 Crossbill	RU
64 Red Grouse	RC	140 Tawny Owl	RU	214 Bullfinch	RC
65 Ptarmigan	RU	141 Long-eared Owl	RU	215 Hawfinch	V
66 Black Grouse	RU	142 Short-eared Owl	RC	216 Snow Bunting	WU
67 Capercaillie	B*	143 Nightjar	SU	217 Yellowhammer	RC
68 Red-legged Partridge	I	144 Swift	S*/U/PC	218 Reed Bunting	RC
69 Grey Partridge	B*	145 Kingfisher	R*U	219 Corn Bunting	B*
70 Quail	B*/V	146 Hoopoe	V	220 Red-headed Bunting	VE
71 Pheasant	RC	147 Great Spotted Woodpecker	R*O		
72 Lady Amherst's Pheasant	V	148 Skylark	RC		
73 Water Rail	RU	149 Sand Martin	SC		
74 Spotted Crane	V	150 Swallow	SC		
75 Common Crane	S*U	151 House Martin	SC		
76 Moorhen	RU	152 Tree Pipit	SC		

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