

Mute Swan *Bygnus olor*.

Refer to Birds of Arvan.

As Gibson says a few pairs nest. It should be noted that Gray does not mention this bird.

Status: Present all year. A few pairs nest.

References: Birds of Arvan (Page 12)

Bewick's Swan. *Byzonus bewickii*

2 adults and 1 first year seen Loch Tanna early January 1946 with Whoopers (3 adults 2 first year) and in flight once.

3 adults 1 first year seen with Whoopers (3 adults 3 first year) in flight twice at end of ~~January~~ December 1947 and on ground near Machrie early January 1948.

2 adults 3 first year seen with Whoopers (4 adult 3 first year) twice in flight and once on sea at North Sannox early January 1941. These may be the same birds seen Loch Ryan 23rd January (Scottish Bird Report)

2 adults 3 first year seen with Whoopers (2 adults 3 first year) seen on ground at Millstone Point, on sea at North Sannox and three times in flight early October 1942. Reported, but not seen by me, twice at Loch Tanna at this time.

Seen with Whoopers, smaller size, slightly dumber and "goose-like" shape and slightly shorter neck can usually be made out in reasonable conditions, but if seen alone or under poor conditions might well be taken for whoopers. The rounder head and different beak of the Bewick's are impossible to differentiate in flight unless very close and even at rest and at close range are none too easy, especially as Bewick's beaks vary so much. The beaks of immatures are impossible to identify in my experience. This possible confusion with Whoopers suggests that Bewick's may be less rare than I think.

Does not remain on the Island more than a few days

Status: Rare autumn and winter visitor. Almost always with Whoopers.

- References: Gray in Bryce (Page 306 - under "Hooper")
McWilliam (1928) (Page 73)
McWilliam (1936) (Pages 86-89)
Scottish Bird Report 1971 (Page 125)

Whooper Swan. *Cygnus cygnus*.

Refer to Birds of Arran.

These can turn up almost anywhere, particularly in the northern half of the Island. I have the impression that these birds do not spend the whole of the ~~the~~ winter on the Island but leave for a few days at a time.

Status: Regular winter visitor in small numbers.

References: Birds of Arran (Page 12)
Gray in Boyle (Page 306)
McWilliam (1928) (Pages 72-73)
McWilliam (1936) (Page 86)
Atkinson - Willes (Page 185)

geese - general.

While large numbers of geese fly over or near to Arran, particularly in autumn, the skins are usually very high, from observation from the peaks, often over 3000 feet up and identification is, at least to me, impossible. Most of my identifications have, therefore, been made of small parties, anything from singles to fours and, very occasionally more, which occur on the Island, usually when flocks are passing over. I assume that these are largely family parties and often one at least of the birds has appeared to be wounded or otherwise distressed. They are, of course, very wary and difficult to approach and all such records in the notes are from the rare occasions when positive identification has been possible. I have also been able to examine a number of birds which have been shot and brought to me for identification. As will be realised no estimate of numbers occurring in flight can be given.

Blearly, apart from the Grey Lags and White-fronts, the remaining geese are, on the ground at least, almost wholly "accidental", in more ways than one, and I do not feel that they are really Arran birds apart from the purely record sense.

Pink-footed goose

Anser brachyrhynchus

I have identified this bird once from a shot bird, twice small parties on ground and four times in flight. Probably regular in flight.
First occurrence - shot bird 1932 late September. All in autumn.

One reported near Brodick 11th April 1968 (Scottish Bird Report) while not the first occurrence is the first spring occurrence reported.

Status: Uncommon winter visitor, usually seen only in flight

References:- McWilliam (1936) (Page 89)
Atkinson Willes (Page 177)
Scottish Bird Report 1968 (Page 316)

Bean goose

Anser fabalis

I have only been able to identify this bird once when one, out of a flock of four, was shot in the North end of the Island in late January 1943 (The fire-power of an entire platoon, including 3 Brens and sundry sub-machine guns and rifles at a range of about 75 yards attained only one hit and that almost certainly a ricochet!)

Birds of Ayrshire refers to this bird as being a regular winter visitor in large flocks, including Fairlie sands and McWilliam (1936) refers to it as being the commonest "grey" goose in Ayrshire, but Atkinson-Willes shows a marked decline, the only flock of any size near Ayr being in Kirkcubright.

Status: Very rare, only one known occurrence

References:- McWilliam (1936) (Page 89)
Atkinson-Willes (Page 255)
Birds of Ayrshire (Pages 127-128)

White-fronted goose. *Anser albifrons*

Refer to Birds of Arran.

Small numbers seen in winter, usually with Grey lag, but sometimes small parties on their own on rougher ground. All the white-fronts which I have seen have been of the Greenland race, I have examined two dead birds closely and am sure of this point. Gibson states that they winter on Arran, but I feel it more likely that they are visitors from the larger flocks in Kintyre, I have certainly seen small parties flying to and from the Kintyre district at various times in the winter.

Status: Small parties seen in winter. These are of the Greenland race.

References: Birds of Arran (Page 12)
Atkinson - Willes (Page 261)
McWilliam (1936) (Page 88)

Lesser White-fronted Goose. *Anser erythropus*.

I have only one record of this species, a bird found dead on Mach Down at about 150 feet on 3rd October 1969. Though cold the bird was quite fresh and I could see no signs of injury. The bird was clearly identified from size, greater area of white on head than White-fronted Goose, yellow round eye and wings extending beyond tail.

This species though still rare, is said to be increasing.

Status: Very rare, is only known to have occurred once.

References Hollom (Page 58)
Atkinson - Willes (Page 173)

Grey Lag Goose

Anser anser

Refer to Birds of Arran

Atkinson - Willes states (1963) that wintering flock is in excess of 1000, a marked increase since Gibson's 1956 figure of 200. Probably Howard Walker can give the present day numbers, I have little up-to-date experience.

While the flocks are mainly on the west side of the Island, small numbers, usually pairs, but sometimes more, may be seen from time to time during the winter on the north and east coasts, usually in flight.

Status: Wintering flock has increased to over 1000 in west of Island and frequently flighting to Loch Nuis and Loch Sanna. Small numbers occur in other parts of Arran

References: Birds of Arran (Page 12)
Gray in Bryce (Page 306)
McWilliam (1936) (Page 88)
Atkinson - Willes (Page 185)

Canada Goose. *Branta canadensis*

I have only four occurrences for this bird. A single in flight near Kildonan - Christmas 1937. A pair with grey legs near Blackwater-foot February 1943 and singles in flight, Merikland 30th September 1957 and Lochranza 2nd October 1968. I would assume that these are stragglers from the feral flock in Dumfriesshire.

Status: Very occasionally seen in autumn and winter usually single birds

References: Atkinson - Willes (Page 191)

Barnacle Goose. *Branta leucopsis*

I have only identified this bird once from a specimen which somehow succeeded in strangling itself in a rabbit snare in North Sannox in October 1944.

Status: Rare accidental, only one known occurrence

References: McWilliam (1936) (Page 89)
Atkinson - Wilkes (Page 264)
Birds of Orkney (Pages 128-129)

Brent goose.

Branta bernicla

I have only one occurrence for this bird. On 20th October 1946 a flock of twelve were seen on the sea off the mouth of the North Sannox Burn. They were exceptionally tame and were observed at a distance of about 30 yards. There had been heavy overcast for a day or two and the birds appeared to be completely lost, flying to and fro in and out of the mist on taking off. All the birds appeared to be of the pale-bellied form. I feel that their presence was due purely to the weather conditions which had caused them to get lost.

It is interesting that this bird was at one time very common, particularly at Fairlie, a decline having set in in 1930 and one would assume that it would occur at least occasionally in Arran in those days though I know of no records.

One reported near Brodick 11 April 1968 (Scottish Bird Report) while not the first occurrence is the first spring occurrence reported.

Status: a very rare accidental only occurring twice since 1929. May have been commoner in former years.

1974 note: One Brent, believed to be of dark-bellied race, seen on sea between North and South Sannox Burns. It appeared to be distressed and was seen floating dead on low water.

References: McWilliam (1928) (Page 74)
McWilliam (1936) (Pages 90-91)
Atkinson - Waller (Page 182)
Birds of Ayrshire (Pages 129-130)
Scottish Bird Report 1968 (Page 316)

Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*.

Refer to Birds of Arran.

Still increasing. Very common on west coast from Lochranza southwards.

Since 1929 at least there has always been a pair at Merkland and some years ago another pair appeared and nested a short distance to the north. This increase continued until at one time there were six pairs breeding between Merkland and the North Sannox Burn but there are now only three pairs.

This year (1993) the Merkland pair which had been seen with ten young on the sea had the number augmented to 17. This is obviously a case of another brood joining up, but it is odd that only one male and one female were seen thereafter. While I have not previously seen as big an augmented brood as this before, I have seen what were obviously joined-up broods and always only one pair of adults in attendance with no sign of the other parents in the vicinity and no sign of any change-over of adults. Does changing-over of parents take place once a brood has joined with another or does one pair abandon their brood altogether? The Handbook and other authorities which I have consulted are silent on the point.

Gibson refers to small parties off-shore in autumn and winter but my experience is that all the birds have left by early September at the latest and do not return before November at the earliest and more usually in January or February. It is possible that birds seen between these times may be wintering migrants from elsewhere. Thom (1969) suggests that coe between Bardross and Petersburgh may be main wintering site.

Status: Very common breeding species especially on the west and south coast
Increasing.

References: Birds of Arran (page 12)
Gray in Boyle (page 306)
MacWilliam (1936) (Page 91)
Parslow (1943) (Pages 47, 192, 224-225)
Thom - Wintering Duck in Scotland's Breasted Birds 1969 (Page 435)

Wigeon

Anas penelope.

Refers to Birds of Arran.

First nest shown to me by Paton 1938. This was the first that he had seen and, so far as I can ascertain no other local inhabitant had seen nesting wigeon before that date. This nest was on the slopes of Maol Donn behind bars at about 150 feet. Apart from another nest which Paton showed me in North Glen Sannox - 1947 or 1948 on the north side of the Burn and about 200 yards from it, roughly half a mile above the old bridge to the cottage, the other nests have all been found by me by chance, one 1965, one 1967, two 1969, one 1971, two 1972 and one possible identification of duck with young 1973. The 1965 nest and one of those in 1969 were both on Maol Donn further to the north than the 1938 nest, the first at about 200 feet the second at about 100 feet. The 1967 nest and the other 1969 nest were both in North Glen Sannox, the 1967 nest at about the same elevation but perhaps 200 yards nearer the cottage than the 1947/48 nest, the 1969 nest about 300 yards to the south of the main road and not far from the junction with the North Sannox cottage road. The 1971 nest was at about 150 feet half way between Sannox and Barrie and the two 1972 nests were at about 250 feet and almost due west of Barrie School.

A duck was seen with four young on 1st June 1973 not far from the site of the 1972 nests but as the range was about 150 yards and the birds were very active and partly hidden by young bracken and had hidden themselves before I could get closer, identification was not positive, though almost certainly so from bill size and rounded head etc. I could find no trace of a nest, particularly at the 1972 site.

As in my experience, the Wigeon is very similar to the Teal in being extremely secretive during the nesting season and, even in years when I have known of the presence of nests I have seen either no birds or only the odd bird on the wing they may well be present and breeding in years when this is not suspected.

Wigeon continued

Copy field notes of 1972 occurrence -

Behind barrie. Wigeon Female reddish-brown. Bill small grey or blue. Head rounded, light under chin, hint of eyestripe through dark eye. Light streak under wing, trace of green speculum. Smaller than Mallard. In flight white belly, pointed tail. Other female similar but showed green/black speculum on dragged wing - distraction? Male, muddy head, yellowish crown. Short blue beak. Head rounded. Buff chest, grey back, white streak under wing, white patch near dark tail - pointed. In flight white belly, black pointed tail, white wing patches. No calls heard. Birds only seen on ground for a minute or so before taking off. Dragged wing on second female may only have been caught in bracken and not distraction. Only one male seen - polygamy? First nest 8 eggs in bracken near marsh, lined grass and down. Below of eggs cream. Second nest forty yards from first - 6 eggs as above but slightly smaller. Females returned to nests 10 minutes after I left site, Drake five minutes later. June 4, 1972. 13:50 pm. Showery. S.W. Wind. Cool. About 250 ft west of barrie school. Later note: 250 ft is height - not distance from school which is about a quarter of a mile.

The breeding sequence is very odd. No breeding is known to have occurred before 1938 and since then has occurred in 8 out of 35 years, but 6 of these occurrences have been in the last 9 years. One possible explanation is the succession of open winters which, while not directly affecting birds like the wigeon which are not present or land to any great extent in winter, might have an indirect effect on vegetation, insects etc which might be of advantage. In the case of the wigeon this would seem unlikely. My own view, which is purely guesswork, is that a pair nested in 1965, were successful, and they or their offspring have returned since

Wigeon continued

them to breed. They may or may not have been present in 1966, 1968 and 1970 when no nests were seen. As 2 nests have only been observed twice there would not appear to be any great increase. Breeding success has not been observed. It will be interesting to see whether they continue to return or whether this is merely a case of what might be called sustained sporadic breeding. Not observed in 1974

Status: Common in winter with large flocks off shore. Has bred sporadically and more frequently in recent years.

References: Birds of Orman (page 11)
Atkinson - Willes (page 185)
Mc William (1923) (page 46)
Mc William (1936) (page 72)
Parslow (1973) (page 38)
Birds of Ayrshire (Pages 133-134)

Teal. *Anas crecca*.

Refer to Birds of Arran.

This bird gives me great difficulty in estimating breeding numbers.

Firstly:- I find that Teal usually nest in places in the moors which, being off the beaten track, are hardly ever visited by man and, within these areas, select an inconspicuous little hummock usually surrounded by bog.

Secondly:- I take the view, after many hours of watching Teal, that the females, while breeding, are almost wholly nocturnal in feeding and, when undisturbed are virtually never seen on the wing in daylight during this period. The drake is almost equally secretive at this time.

Thirdly:- While an undisturbed nest site is often used for several successive years, presumably by the same duck, I have never known a site from which a duck has been flushed to be used in following years - except as after-noted. They do not desert in the year of disturbance but may feel that the site has become unsafe. I have only known two sites which were re-occupied, in one case five years after disturbance and in the other nine years but these may well have been fresh birds. This is admittedly an opinion based on too small a sample, as relatively few sitting birds have been flushed by myself and, of course, on Arran there would appear to be many suitable nest sites for teal available for relatively few birds and this behaviour may well not occur in other localities. Pator, who saw a great many more Teal nests than I, also thought that this post-disturbance change of nest site

Teal - continued.

site occurred.

Fourthly: - For the above reasons it is impossible to estimate breeding with any degree of accuracy. As an example in 1936 Paton and I knew of at least eight occupied teal nests in my area but, apart from four birds flushed off nests, only once was a drake seen on the wing in daylight during the nesting season and not one single duck!

I have dealt with these points at some length as it seems to me that they may also apply to other species of duck which are thought to be irregular e.g. Wigeon and also to Shoveller which, though fairly regular may occur in greater numbers than is at present thought. As a further example of the difficulties involved Paton and I once visited the mouth of the North Sannox Burn at about 2 a.m. in May 1937 in bright moonlight. The place was alive with duck and, despite difficulties in identification by moonlight, we identified with certainty 16 Teal, 4 Shoveller, 4 Wigeon and over 30 Mallard. When we showed ourselves after about half-an-hour we reckoned that well over a hundred ducks blasted off. As we had that year, only discovered 3 teal pairs, 1 pair of Shoveller and Wigeon were quite unknown as breeders until the following year it will be appreciated that the possibilities of undetected breeding are disturbing! Not all these birds were necessarily breeding in Arvon. Smaller concentrations have been seen from time to time at night at the mouths of this and other burns, marshes etc and in flight.

While it is, as mentioned above, very difficult to assess numbers, I think, and local opinion agrees, that in my area numbers have

Seal - continued

have dropped in the last twenty years though there are still one or two pairs - and possibly more, left. The Machrie and Blackwaterfoot areas were, as stated by Gibson, always the strongest nesting areas for this duck and while, this is still, I think the case, such information as I have been able to gather suggests some decrease. Parslow suggests a general decrease.

Status: Fairly common breeding species, mainly behind Machrie and Blackwaterfoot. Appears to have been some decrease in recent years. Also occurs as migrant, mainly in autumn.

References: Birds of Arran (Page 11)
Gray in Bryce (Page 306)
Atkinson - Willes (Page 185)
Parslow (1973) (Pages 36-37)

Mallard

Anas platyrynchos

Refers to Birds of Arran

While this is still the commonest nesting duck in Arran, it is locally outnumbered by Eiders and Shelduck.

In my own area an interesting change in distribution of the Mallard has occurred. ^{Before the war} I made rough counts of breeding Mallard from Merkland to North Sannox on a number of occasions and tallied at least 30. In 1946 I made a similar count of 35, these counts being all on the raised beach area. It is emphasised that these were rough counts and mallard nests are not always the easiest things to find so that there may well have been up to 50% more. While no attempt was made to carry out counts of birds nesting inland of the raised beach area, there were certainly very few and both Paton and I considered that for every bird nesting inland there were two to three on the raised beach. In 1960 there had obviously been a considerable decline in the number of nesting birds in the shore area a rough count giving a total of ten and two more detailed counts both yielding fourteen. Though even the detailed counts must assuredly have missed the odd bird there had clearly been a disastrous fall in numbers. I was quite at a loss to account for this and must confess that it was not until three or four years later that I realised that the inland nesting birds had increased markedly. I have not found any method of making any reasonably accurate count of the inland nesting birds as the area is much larger than the raised beach and the nests can be in the oddest places even in trees or at the top of a cliff on Maol Dorn (Howard Walker pers. com.) but at a guess the proportion of inland to shore breeding birds is now at least two to one, a reversal of the previous position. It is difficult to account for the change in distribution. Local opinion is that the Eiders drove some of the Mallards away but, while the Eider increase has coincided

Mallard continued

coincided with the decrease in shore breed Mallards I can see no causal connection. There can be no, or only a minimal, competition for food as these birds have very different feeding habits. I have seen no antagonism between Eiders and Mallards, even when very close together and with or without young. While there is a possibility of competition for nest-sites, there would appear to be no shortage of suitable vacant sites and I cannot recollect any instance of an Eider nesting in a site previously occupied by a Mallard. In any event the Mallard is a most adaptable bird and I cannot think that the nest-site question can have any bearing. The other factor which has coincided with the decline in shore-breeding Mallards has been the increase in seaweed and mussels (and presumably other organisms) mentioned in my letter to Gibson of 15th September 1972, but, while it appears likely that this has helped the Eider to increase I cannot see any adverse factor as regards the Mallards, indeed they are often seen "working" the beds of weed at high tide mark and I would have thought that this change would, if anything, be beneficial. I can see the possibility that whatever environmental change is responsible for the seaweed-mussel increase, whether pollution or otherwise might be detrimental to Mallards, but this has obviously not been the case in the shore feeding birds, indeed they seem to thrive on it. The remaining shore-breeding Mallards appear to breed as successfully as ever and I have found no dead birds. Again I doubt whether human disturbance, though always a factor to be considered, is particularly adverse as regards Mallards. Predation, particularly by gulls and rats, seems the remaining factor for consideration. This undoubtedly does occur and gulls seem more active in pursuit of ducklings of all kinds in recent years, both gulls and rats take eggs and, though I have not observed rats attacking ducklings I have heard of one case in Arvon and no doubt this

Mallard - continued

this does happen. Though both these predators occur inland there is a much higher concentration in the coastal area and there may, therefore, be some advantage to the Mallards in moving inland and I incline to this explanation. This is, however, pure speculation and presumably the cause is a complex one made up of a number of factors.

I would emphasise that "counts" have been rough ones, but have been made as far as possible in a consistent manner and are, I think sufficiently accurate for the purpose of showing changes in relative numbers. While it is particularly difficult to assess numbers in the inland area I think that the total number of mallards including both shore and inland breeders has increased slightly over the 1946 figures in my own area.

Status: The commonest breeding duck. Large flocks off-shore in winter.
A few pairs nest on Holy Island and Pladda

References: Birds of Arren (Page 11)
Gray in Bryce (Page 306)
Atkinson - Willes (Page 185)

Pintail - *Anas acuta*.

Male seen by Paton April 1947 and female seen by me early October 1969. Both on lower slopes of Maol Donn.

Though a notoriously erratic breeder, there has never so far as I know been any suggestion of breeding on Arran and, indeed, it appears to be very rare.

Status: Very rare accidental

References: Mc William (1928) (Page 76)
Mc William (1936) (Page 93)

gadwall - *Anas strepera*

1 Drake - Markland 1948, April

1 Duck - Mullstone Point 1949 March.

Pair - Sannox golf course - May 1958.

This is a bird which I have never seen myself and all the occurrences were reported to me by Paton. I am perfectly satisfied with his descriptions and that the birds were in fact gadwalls.

Status: Very rare accidental.

References: Mc Williams (1928) (Page 75)
Mc Williams (1936) (Page 91)
Birds of Anshire (Page 132)

Shoveller. *Spatula clypeata*.

Refs to Birds of Arran.

This bird is, so far as I know, almost wholly associated with the area known locally as 'the Widow' between Brodick and Lorne (Rhubha Sabach on O.S. Map). This is an interesting area with saltings on the seaward side of the road and a fairly densely wooded area on the landward side with a good deal of bog, some of which is fairly deep. While the widest part of the saltings area from the Brodick end is seldom rewarding, largely because of human disturbance, the narrower area to the north extending towards the remains of an old harbour is of considerable interest. There are a surprising number of channels and pools amongst grass, wild iris etc which are largely out of view from the road and, as the ground is pretty wet and the smell can be rather overpowering, these channels are seldom disturbed. They largely dry out at low tide except in very wet weather but fill up as the tide rises. They contain a great deal of decomposing seaweed and are bottomed with rich mud and, when filled with water, contain a vast number of small invertebrates etc. It is in these channels that the Shovellers feed. Until the young are hatched such feeding is almost wholly at night or at dawn or dusk and, as noted under Seal, Shovellers do flight to such places as the North Sannox Burn at night. In the words these birds are almost wholly nocturnal until the young are hatched and largely so even when they have young with them. The nests which I have seen have been on the slope above the raised beach area on the landward side of the road and usually within a couple of hundred yards either side of the old ruined cottage. The nests are very difficult to find as they usually have grass or old broken arching

Shovellers - continued.

arching over them and the most useful method of finding them is to work your way along the slope and hope for the sitting bird flushing. Though they sit tight they do go off when you are about ten feet away from the nest. They rise very quickly indeed, like a teal, and when I discovered the three nests in 1972 I had three ducks rocketing off almost simultaneously in an area about 125 feet long which was confusing to say the least! I have only seen the hatched young in the salttings and usually in the early morning or at dusk and occasionally by moonlight but they may return to the landward side of the road during the bulk of the day, if so I have not seen them there. Though Shovellers were known to nest in this area long before I started visiting Avon in 1929 they are not often seen, partly because they appear to be largely nocturnal, at least in the breeding season and partly because they are very difficult to see in the overgrown channels. There even the drake can easily be mistaken for a mallard when all you see is the top of his head and the back and, of course, the drake has a very long eclipse period. The duck in similar circumstances is even more easily mistaken for a female mallard. While the enormous bill is very distinctive, when seen, in my experience the shoveller, when active spends most of its time with its bill immersed engulfing food and the bill is then largely out of sight. With these points in mind it is not surprising that this bird is so often missed.

It is difficult to say whether this bird is a regular nester or not. I have records of nests found in 1930, 1932, 1938, 1949, 1971 and 1972 but, apart from 1973, these were the only years when, so far as I can recall, I looked for shoveller nests. 1972 was the only year when I have found or suspected more than one nest. Certainly young have been seen.

Shovellers - continued.

seen by myself and by Paton and other locals in many years when nests were not recorded though I certainly do not have breeding records every year. This does not, however, mean that breeding or attempted breeding does not occur regularly, partly from the difficulty in seeing the birds mentioned above and partly from almost certain predation causing loss of eggs and young. I have twice seen a young Shoveller chick being taken by a gull - black-backed, greater once, herring gull once. This year (1973) for a particular reason I made a most thorough search of the whole Widows area, without finding a trace of Shoveller, but it is interesting that a drake was seen amongst sea-weed at Sannox at 1-30 p.m. one day and a female was flushed from a small pool packed with young tadpoles behind the highest of the old head-dykes midway between Borrie and Sannox two days later. This daylight feeding activity is most uncharacteristic of Shoveller during the breeding season and I suspect that a pair probably nested at the Widows and lost either eggs or young to predators, possibly rats or gulls and that this explains the change in behaviour. This is, however, pure speculation. It is, of course, possible that Shovellers may nest elsewhere in Arran, but I have no suggestion that this is so either from my own experience or that of others.

I would prefer that this nesting site be kept reasonably confidential. The area is fairly small and disturbance increases the risk of predation, there are many gulls in the area. While the numbers are very small and not of any real importance as regards total U.K. population, they have been breeding in Arran for many years and I would be very sorry to have them disappear for good.

I would mention that, apart from Shovellers, I have heard, but not seen both

Shoveller - continued

both Water Rail and Spotted Brake on one or two occasions at the Widows on the landward side of the road and the salttings are one of the very few places where I have seen Spotted Redshank and Curlew Sandpipers

Note: The local name for Shoveller is "Spoonbill"

1974 Note. The Widows area searched in detail at the end of May, without any result. A dark Shoveller was, however, flushed on two different days in a totally different area. No nest was found. It is interesting that Shovellers were seen by Paton and myself at this place on a number of occasions before the war though no nests were ever found. Whether breeding occurs here and whether these are the Widows birds I do not know, but I shall keep an eye on the situation

Status: Uncommon but at least one pair breeds, probably in most years

References: - Birds of Arran (Page 11)
Atkinson - Walker (Page 185)
McCWilliam (1928) (Pages 76-77)
McCWilliam (1936) (Pages 93-94)
Parslow (1973) (Pages 40, 191, 221)
Birds of Ayrshire (Pages 134-135)

Pocharod *Aythya ferina*

Refer to Birds of Arran

I have never seen this bird in summer

Gray refers to this bird being met with in the Lochs in Arran, but
I have never seen it except on the sea

Status: Fairly regular winter visitor, small flocks off-shore

References: Birds of Arran (page 11)
Gray in Bryce (page 307)

Red-crested Pochard. *Netta rufina*

One beautiful drake seen at the Widows 3rd June 1965. This was clearly an escape, not only completely out of its normal range but also having a broad light coloured ring on its left leg. (Only seen through water and actual colour not known, not possible to see whether right leg was ringed) The bird was also very tame allowing an approach to within ten feet.

This is mentioned purely for interest as it is clearly not a proper record. It is also an example of the great deal of assistance I receive from the local population as I was informed of the bird by one of the bus-drivers who had spent twenty minutes watching the bird himself and then an equal length of time searching me out to tell that there was a "bloody queer duck with a bloody red head" at the Widows. As his passengers had by this time become openly mutinous I turned down his well meant offer to turn the bus and retrace his journey to take me there and made my own way to the Widows!

Tufted Duck. *Aythya fuligula*

Refer to Birds of Arran.

As Gibson says - regular off-shore in winter in small numbers. Single birds do turn up from time to time in summer and of these I have the following records. Drakes - Loch Tanna early May 1938, Lochranza 4th June 1949, North Sannox 20th August 1948, South Sannox 29th May 1962, Widdows 1st June 1965 and a recently dead and partially eaten bird found Misol Down 27th May 1970, Ducks - Boat House, Brodick 4th July 1939, Loch-na-Daric 12th June 1948 and on sea off Millstone Point 20th September 1956. These were all single birds seen only once and were, I assume, non-breeders.

Gray refers to this bird being occasionally procured on lochs, but does not state the time of year.

Status: Regular off-shore in winter, usually in small numbers, though I have twice (1948 and 1971) seen flocks of over forty. Single non-breeding birds seen in summer but only rarely.

References: Birds of Arran (Page 11)
Gray in Bryce (Page 304)
McWilliam (1928) (Page 97 and 98)
McWilliam (1936) (Page 94-95)
Birds of Ayrshire (Pages 136-137)

Scaup.

Refer to Birds of Arran.

Apart from a single bird seen in one of the channels in the saltworks at the Widows in early May 1946 (a drake) strictly a winter bird on the sea so far as I am aware.

Gray's reference suggests that Scaup were found on lochs, presumably inland, which may, of course, have been true in his time, but is not the case now.

Status: Small flocks regularly seen off-shore in winter

References: Birds of Arran (Page 11)
Gray in Boyce (Page 309)

Eider *Somateria mollissima*

Refer to Birds of Arvon

Definitely the success story of recent years. Before the war one would go a long way to see an Eider but by 1942 there were at least 50 breeding ducks between Morkland and North Sannox and winter flocks between these points were about 50 Sannox Bay, about 50 off north end of barne and two smaller flocks of about 25 each off the Widows and to the North of Morkland - these numbers are I think reasonably accurate as of course, the birds are frequently diving or flying off and the flocks are not always present at these points, but when the flocks were formed numbers were reasonably constant. This year (1943) the position is, however, different as flocking has been relatively rare, in small numbers and not in the same places. The numbers of birds appear to be roughly the same though this has been difficult to estimate. While this may be due to weather conditions, a factor which is causing considerable local concern is the greatly increased degree of trawling and clam dredging which is taking place very close inshore. I understand from divers that the sea bottom up to low water mark is like a ploughed field. Clearly this must have a considerable effect on bottom living fish and shell-fish and it is to be feared that the eiders might be adversely affected. Breeding numbers appeared to be well up to normal, indeed a count on 4th June yielded 64 nests or broods on sea, higher than any previous counts, but the 1943 count was much more detailed than previous rough counts and I had some assistance so that I would consider actual numbers probably comparable with previous years.

Mortality is very high in the young birds once they have hatched,
hearing

Lider - continued

herring gulls seeming to me to be the principal predators, though, of course, black-backs take their share. From observation of a number of broods or combined broods, the rate of loss would appear to be about one duckling per day till one young bird is left for each two adult females. There are, of course, variations in the proportions surviving but this would seem to be the average. The surviving chick seems usually to survive but I have no recent knowledge of subsequent mortality. Subject to my remarks above regarding fishing activities the Lider appears to be still increasing, but the rate of increase seems to be slowing down. I have the impression that predation by gulls is increasing. Paton's first record of nesting was in Hamble Bay in 1935 and I saw two nests there in 1936 in his company. Baxter and Rentoul mention the spread of mussels to Kilbrannan Sound "a few years prior to 1953" which antedates but appears to confirm my own views on the spread of mussels and seaweed as affecting this and other birds.

Status: common and increasing. Breeds

- References: Birds of Anson (Page 11)
Gray in Bryce (Page 304)
Birds of Scotland (Pages 279 & XXXI)
McWilliam (1928 page 79)
McWilliam (1936 pages 96-97)
Passlow (1943) (Pages 44-45, 192, 222-223)

King Eider.

Somateria spectabilis

Single drakes seen off Millstone Point 24th December 1946 and off mouth of North Lanna Burn 31st December 1971. The latter bird may well be the same bird as that seen at the River Irvine at about the same time - see Scottish Bird Report 1971.

Though outside Arran waters, a male and female seen off Hantroston when crossing from Gairnie to Arran just before Christmas 1938.

A drake was reported to have been seen between Borrie and Brodick early in 1973 but I have only second-hand information regarding this. Howard Walker may have more information.

According to Scottish Bird Report 1972 a drake has been seen in SW Scotland in recent years, but whether a single bird is involved I cannot of course say.

Status: Very rare winter bird.

References: Scottish Bird Report 1971. (Page 122)
Scottish Bird Report 1972 (Pages 339-340)

Long-tailed Duck. *Clangula hyemalis*

Seen very occasionally in winter. I have only three personal records, all single drakes - Millstone Point 28th December 1938, Blackwater-foot 2nd February 1942 and off the Sandstone Quay, Barrie 2nd January 1972. I have only a handful of reports from locals of what is almost certainly this bird and it is clearly very rare.

Status: Very rare winter visitor

References:- McWilliam (1928) (Pages 78-79)
McWilliam (1936) (Page 96)
Birds of Ayrshire (Page 138)

Common Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata*

Refer to Birds of Arvan.

Not uncommon in small numbers from September to May. Often associates with Eiders and may be missed in flocks of the latter. This bird is said not to like as rough water as the Velvet Scoter but I have seen it in very high seas and never in a flat calm.

Status: Not uncommon in small numbers off-shore, September to May

References: Birds of Arvan (Page 11)
Gray in Bryce (Page 309)
Birds of Arshire (Pages 139-140)

Velvet Scoter *Melanitta fusca*

Refer to Birds of Arran.

Seen from time to time but usually well off-shore and in rough seas so may easily be missed. I have only seen this bird between September and late May.

Status: Probably fairly regular but difficult to identify as usually well off-shore and in rough seas. Only autumn to late Spring

References: Birds of Arran (Page 11)
Birds of Scotland (Page 440)
Ipsay in Boyce (Page 307)
Birds of Argyshire (Page 140)

Velvet Scoter *Melanitta fusca*

Refer to Birds of Arran.

Seen from time to time but usually well off-shore and in rough seas so may easily be missed. I have only seen this bird between September and late May.

Status: Probably fairly regular but difficult to identify as usually well off-shore and in rough seas. Only autumn to late Spring

References: Birds of Arran (Page 11)
Birds of Scotland (Page 440)
Gray in Bryce (Page 307)
Birds of Ayrshire (Page 140)

Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*.

Refer to Birds of Annon.

I have seen occasional birds and even a pair as late as 5th June, but this appears to be a habit of this bird and there would not appear to be any suitable breeding habitat.

Status: A few seen off-shore in most winters and occasional birds seen until early June.

References: Birds of Annon (Page 11)
Gray in Bryce (Page 307)

Smeu. *Mergus albellus*

Refer to Birds of Arran.

My only personal sighting of this bird is that of a "red head" shown to me by Paton on the shore just north of Barlo on 29th December 1938. The bird had been dead for a few days and had been partially eaten, probably by rats, but was still clearly identifiable. Paton was sure that this was the same bird which he had seen on a number of occasions up to a week before it was found dead, swimming and diving between Millstone Point and Merkland. The only other occasion, that I know of, on which a Smeu may have been seen in Arran was in 1913. Paton was sure that his father had spoken of an unusual white duck seen shortly before the first was and, though one or two men vaguely remembered such a bird only Robbie Kelso remembered the occasion at all clearly. He said that the duck was very small, about the size of a teal, all white except for a few bits of black and that he and some of the other men had watched the bird for about half-an-hour swimming and diving "like a merganser" between the Ferry Rock and the Port. He could not remember where the touches of black were on the bird were and when shown the picture in Boward's book was "pretty sure" it was the same bird. Robbie was very cautious about these things, but while I am reasonably sure that the bird was a drake Smeu I do not think that there is sufficient evidence to make this an acceptable record. What is of importance is that no one had seen a bird like it before which indicates its extreme rarity in Arran. The occurrence was in February 1913.

Status: Very rare winter visitor. Only one positive occurrence

References: - Birds of Arran (Page 12)
Birds of Scotland (Pages 451-452)
McCWilliam (1936) (Page 98)
Birds of Ayrshire (Page 143)

Red-breasted Merganser. *Mergus serrator*.

Refer to Birds of Arran

Appears to be increasing in numbers.

In October 1972 I saw one flock of thirty plus in Brodick Bay and one of fifty plus in Lamnish Bay and Bremner of the National Trust told me that he had seen another flock of forty plus off Blackwater-foot.

Status: Common. Nests at many places on shore and occasionally some distance inland beside burns, especially in north of Island. Common off-shore in winter and flocks of fifty to sixty seen.

References: Birds of Arran (Page 11)
Gray in Boyle (Page 309)
Parshlow (1973) (Pages 45-46, 204, 223)

Goosander *Mergus merganser.*

Refer to Birds of Arran.

I have seen this bird from time to time, occasionally in pairs and usually at the mouths of burns. I have three records from 1929 to 1939 and ten between 1946 and 1970. Always in autumn or winter.

A number of reports of breeding have, so far as it has been possible to check them, turned out to be red-breasted mergansers.

1974 note: A single drake seen off the mouth of the bat Burn between Barrie and Sannox on 29th May. Not seen again.

Status: An uncommon visitor in autumn and winter.

References: Birds of Arran (Page 11)
Gray in Bryce (Page 307)
Birds of Scotland (Pages 443 and 445)
McWilliam (1928) (Page 80)
McWilliam (1936) (Pages 97-98)
Parson (1973) (Pages 46-47, 187, 224-225)

Red grouse lagopus lagopus

Refer to Birds of Arran.

This bird fluctuates greatly in numbers and remains scarce in my own area very possibly because of the very considerable reduction in the amount of heather. Generally a considerable reduction since 1939.

Howard Walker can undoubtedly give up-to-date figures. 1972 reported a bad year - Scottish Bird Report.

- References:- Birds of Arran (Page 15)
Mc William (1936) (Pages 145-146)
Parslow (1943) (Pages 64-65, 228-229)
Scottish Bird Report 1972 (Page 346)
Parslow (1943) (Pages 64-65, 228-299)

Ptarmigan.

Lagopus mutus.

Refers to Birds of Arran.

Local tradition states that numbers were very large. Until 1942, so far as I am aware, not even a straggler was seen in my time.

There was a very light coloured bird on Machrie moor in 1938 which was said by some people to be a ptarmigan but Paton and I were both sure the bird was merely a very light coloured Red grouse and when the bird was shot later that year we were proved right. It is extremely interesting therefore that Mrs Dunn in the 1942 Scottish Bird Report states that no less than six birds wintered at Borrie to 31st March 1942. I have no further information on this, my usual sources of information seem to have slipped up badly on this!

Status: Extinct since 1900 and probably never common. Six birds reported to have wintered near Borrie in 1942.

References: - Birds of Arran (Page 15)

McWilliam (1936) (Pages 146-147)

Scottish Bird Report (Pages 346-347)

Black grouse. *Lyrurus tetrix*.

Refer to Birds of Arran.

Was still not uncommon in the thirties but has decreased markedly since then. Only rarely seen in my own area nowadays but at least one female nests there still. Has been seen in the forestry plantation at North Sannox on a number of occasions.

1974 note: No sign of remaining nesting here this year.

Status: Resident and breeds but now very rare.

References: Birds of Arran. (Page 15)
McWilliam (1936) (Page 145)
Parslow (1973) (Pages 64-65, 229)

Partridge

Pardix pardix

Refer to Birds of Arvan.

Now very rare though breeds at least occasionally in my own area and still commonest in the two areas mentioned by Gibson.

Status: Resident and breeds in small numbers, decreasing

References: Birds of Arvan (Page 15)
McWilliam (1936) (Page 148)
Parshaw (1973) (Pages 67-68, 229)

Pheasant . *Phasianus colchicus*

Refers to Birds of Arran.

If anything increasing. Seems to make more use of broken as cover, well away from woodland, than it used to. Is also one of the more unlikely birds which is not uncommonly seen feeding on the shore, usually amongst seaweed at high tide mark. This shore feeding usually takes place in the early hours of the morning or towards dusk when few people are about, but also occasionally at other times when things are quiet. This occurs at all seasons, including the breeding season.

Status: Resident and breeds, common, probably increasing.

References: Birds of Arran (Page 16)
McWilliam (1936) (Page 148)
Parslow (1973) (Pages 69, 231)

Red-throated Diver. *Hyavia stellata*

Refers to Birds of Arran.

Local information confirms Gray's first breeding date as about right though it may have been slightly earlier. Certainly only a year or two in it so not of any importance.

Information on present numbers breeding would be appreciated as such as I have been able to obtain suggests some fall in numbers. Parslow suggests little change. Mrs M.H. Dunn reports 3 pairs in 1972. (Scottish Bird Report)

Status: Breeding since at least 1843 (Gray). A few pairs on small hill lochs regularly. Fairly common autumn, winter and spring visitor on sea.

References: Birds of Arran (Page 9)
Gray in Bryce (Page 308)
Parslow (1973) (Page 19)
McWilliam (1923) (Page 87)
McWilliam (1936) (Page 104)
Scottish Bird Report 1972 (p 351) Mrs Dunn 3 pairs.

Black - throated Diver

Gama octeca

Refer to Birds of Arran.

Prior to 1934 seen only in autumn, occasionally in winter and in spring up to the middle of May. From 1934 onwards single birds and pairs were seen both by Paton and myself well on into June and, during the war, at least one pair was observed on a number of occasions all summer. Most of these observations were by Paton who knew this bird well and I am perfectly certain that there was no possibility of wrong identification and in particular no question of confusion with the Red-throated Diver which he knew very well indeed. In 1946 we both saw a pair of Black-throats on a number of occasions in June and Paton reported a pair with a young bird on the sea at the end of July in that year. This was the first occasion on which a young bird was seen and, though one bird of the pair was missing more often than not and occasionally seen flying inland or returning to the sea from that direction and we were convinced that breeding was taking place, there was also the possibility that the young bird had been reared away from Arran. Young birds, singles, were seen in 1948, 1949 and 1951 and a pair of adults was present every year and behaving as if breeding was taking place but we were unable to find any nesting site. Unfortunately we could not get any useful line from birds seen in flight inland and text book references to large and deep lochs made us restrict our searches to Loch Garra and the larger lochs. It was not until 1952 that I found, quite by accident, a Black-throated Diver on a small hill lochan with two eggs in the nest. Paton later reported that two young were hatched, one young bird disappearing about two weeks later, cause unknown and that, early in August, the nest site was deserted and a pair with a young bird seen on the sea the same day. While it seems probable that breeding may have taken place as early as 1946, Gibson's 1951 report is the first case of confirmed breeding. It should be noted that Paton was sure, from the behaviour of the birds, that breeding

Black-throated Diver continued.

did not take place before 1946.

Breeding undoubtedly continues in Arvan. I have seen, or had reported to me, both eggs and young at breeding sites on a number of occasions and pairs with young are seen on the sea in most years. While I have personally seen two occupied breeding sites in the same year only once, in 1960 to be exact, I have no doubt that there are at least two pairs breeding in Arvan in most years as I have seen or had reported to me in most years two pairs usually with one young each and very occasionally a pair with two young with very few years failing to produce reports of young birds. I would consider drought, which can lower the water level in the breeding lochans, to be the biggest breeding risk and I know that this caused failure to breed on at least one site in 1959. Flooding is obviously another risk though I have not observed this personally and no doubt gulls and other predators take their share. While the breeding sites are in remote spots which are seldom visited and the bird, though quite large and conspicuously patterned, is in practice not all that easy to spot at the nest site it is vulnerable there. It is said to desert readily and, of course, disturbance increases the risk of predation. I therefore feel it important that actual nest sites should not be disclosed.

Any further information regarding numbers of birds breeding would be appreciated.

This bird appears to feed almost exclusively at sea and I have hardly ever seen it in fresh water in Arvan outside breeding sites.

Status: Breeding first confirmed by Gibson in 1951 but indications are that this may have taken place since 1946. Probably at least two pairs in most years. Not uncommon on sea in autumn and winter.

Black - throated Diver - continued.

The references are interesting in showing the slow build-up of this Bird.

References: Birds of Arran (Page 9) May 1951 nest two eggs, end of July one adult one young.

Gray in Bryce (Page 307)

Mc William 1928 (p 86)

Mc William 1936 (p 109)

Birds of Scotland (p 510) Two off batcock 23rd June 1938. This it should be noted is a late date. I was with the author on this occasion.

Parsons 1993, showing extension of breeding to South Arran in 1956. (Page 19)

Scottish Bird Report 1991 p 115. Successful breeding (Dr Gibson)

Great Northern Diver *Harva immer*

Refer to Birds of Arran

Occasionally seen in summer

Status: Passage migrant and wintering bird, occasionally seen in summer.

References: Birds of Arran (Page 9)
Gray in Bryce (Page 307)
McWilliam (1923) (Page 86)
McWilliam (1936) (Page 106)

Fulmar.

Fulmarus glacialis.

Refers to Birds of Arran

I have little personal knowledge of breeding on Arran. Fulmars were certainly prospecting, but not breeding, at Dromadloon in 1946 and had started breeding in 1948, as stated by Gibson. Subsequent history not known to me: It is of great interest that Mrs Dunn in the Scottish Bird Report 1972 refers to this bird breeding at five different sites in Arran and details of sites and numbers, together with dates of first breeding, if known, would be greatly appreciated.

Birds, which would be apparently prospecting, have been seen from time to time at Maol Donn and from the Barloch northwards in recent years, but only occasionally and no sign of breeding.

Fulmars are seen quite regularly from the shore and more often when crossing to and from the mainland or in the vicinity of fishing boats.

Status: Breeding Dromadloon since 1948 in small numbers and reported to be breeding in five different sites in 1972. Seen quite often from shore.

References: - Birds of Arran (Page 10)
Scottish Bird Report 1972 (Page 333) Mrs Dunn reports breeding at five different sites.

Manx Shearwater
Great Shearwater
Sooty Shearwater

Puffinus puffinus
Puffinus gravis
Puffinus griseus

Refer to Birds of Arran for Manx and Sooty.

The Manx Shearwater is, as stated by Gibson a fairly regular visitor to the surrounding seas often in small flocks, the largest I have seen being 17 and that from a fishing boat, and single birds are occasionally seen from shore.

This and the Great and Sooty were seen by me from fishing boats in which I made a number of "voyages" before the war, though whether these were strictly in Arran territorial waters, I am not sure, certainly all three species were not more than three miles off on some occasions, they were always seen in Kilmoran Sound or off the south coast of the island. Manx were, as mentioned above common, and often in small flocks. As regards the other species I have seen 10 Great and 5 Sooty in six "voyages" of from a couple of days to a week and as one trip in 1934 yielded 5 Great and 3 Sooty they must be regarded as extremely rare even at sea in the Clyde area. (First occurrence of both Great and Sooty early September 1932) I have records of 1 Great and 2 Sooty seen from the shore in Arran (Great 1949 and Sooty 1936 and 1968) all late summer or autumn and always off the south or south west coasts. The larger number of Sooty does not accurately represent relative frequency merely that at a distance the "dark then light" flight pattern of the Great can be confused with the Manx and these suspected but not absolutely definite Greats have been excluded for this reason, the uniform dark of the Sooty avoids this confusion. All the birds seen from the shore were seen at the end of a "glide", usually when it was fairly windy and usually when there were fishing boats about.

Shearwaters continued:-

I am sure that there must be other occurrences, but I am equally sure that both the Great and Sooty are very rare in the vicinity of Arran.

Status: Manx - regular visitor at sea, often in small flocks
Great - very rare, hardly ever seen from shore
Sooty - very rare, hardly ever seen from shore.

References: Birds of Arran (Page 10)
Birds of Scotland (Page 485) Sooty near Pladda August 1936
confirmed as I was present at the time, the reporter Mr MacRae
was my uncle.
Gann in Bruce (Page 311)
McWilliam (1923) (Page 85)
McWilliam (1936) (Page 102)
Birds of Ayrshire (Pages 152-153)

Storm Petrel - *Hydrobates pelagicus*

Refer to Birds of Antrim.

Occasionally seen on crossing from or to mainland but appears to be steadily decreasing. I have seen this bird on perhaps twelve occasions from the shore since 1929, but only twice 1963 and 1970 in the past ten years. Dead bird found on shore Kildonan autumn 1946 and one at Bannox, on shore, September 1960.

See note on Leach's Petrel.

Status: Rarely seen from shore and appears to be decreasing.

References: Birds of Antrim (Page 10)
Gray in Boyle (Page 311)
McWilliam (1923) (Page 84)
McWilliam (1936) (Page 155)

Leach's Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*.

Refer to Birds of Anson.

One bird seen from shore off Millstone Point in autumn of 1937 and clearly identified, a storm petrel seen at the same time giving a most useful comparison. Also seen from boat at entrance to Brookick Bay autumn 1967. On each occasion strong to gale westerly winds.

Field note of 1937 occurrence: - Storm petrel seen fluttering above patch of water 50 yards off shore. Larger similar bird joined it very shortly after - a Leach. Leach - forked tail seen only once, wing coverts lighter, flight bouncing and zig-zag, quick turns. Storm - square tail not obvious, flight less purposeful - like butterfly. Birds both concentrated on patch of water about 20 yards square for about ten minutes, no sign of anything on water, not oily. Appeared to dip beaks into water at frequent intervals. No pattering of feet seen. Neither bird showed tails to any useful extent and no division in white rump of Leach seen. Useful identification points, size, paler wing coverts on Leach and flight which difficult to describe but very different in practice. Storm suggests almost aimless butterfly in comparison to Leach which bounces about and turns very rapidly appearing much more purposeful and in control. Both glide for short distances but Leach more than Storm. Conditions - visibility excellent, binoculars, wind very strong westerly. Off Millstone Point. 10th October 1937.

Not seen every winter as stated by Gray but may have been more common in his day.

Status: Very rare accidental in westerly gale conditions.

References: Birds of Anson (Page 9)
Gray in Bryce (Page 311)
McWilliam (1923) (Page 84)
McWilliam (1936) (Page 101)

Gannet - *Sula bassana*

Refer to Birds of Arran

It may be of interest that gannets have a long history of "prospecting" Maol Donn. Occasionally, but certainly not every year, they fly near the cliffs there and, very occasionally, land there but only for a minute or two. I have seen them do this on a number of occasions since 1929 and, according to Paton they have been doing this ever since his father was a young man - say 1840. It would not seem a suitable site for them and there is no tradition of their ever having nested there.

It is interesting that Gray says its appearance "generally, if not always, forbodes a storm" and this seems to be true today. Large numbers of gannets fishing close to shore often do seem to indicate a break in the weather, as does a concentration of fishing boats and it would be interesting to know what effect such weather conditions have on the obvious common factor - fish.

Status: common. Seen fishing off shore

References: Birds of Arran (page 10)
Gray in Bryce (page 309)

Booby . *Phalacrocorax carbo*.

Refer to Birds of Arvan.

Local opinion and tradition confirms that nesting has taken place in Arvan for short periods at long intervals. The nests are usually destroyed by fishermen. The usual site appears to be the Black cave at Berman Head. This would appear to have been going on for a very long time, certainly before Gray's report. It is odd that Gray, while stating that there was no breeding station in Arvan also refers to cormorants being found in caves in Arvan and I would not, myself, have expected to find this bird in caves unless it was breeding. It is suspected locally that most of Gray's information came from the keeper Halliday and in this case Gray may have been slightly confused. The booby certainly nested before Gray's time and I have heard of nesting towards the end of the century, shortly before the 1914-18 War, in 1922 and 1933 when I was shown the remains of two nests which were destroyed along with the young birds. I heard of nesting in 1947 and 1952, nests destroyed - and of the nesting in 1967 and 1968 mentioned by Gibson, I did not hear of the 1969 nesting nor have I any information regarding ~~and~~ any subsequent nesting.

While sporadic nesting, or attempts at such, have clearly been going on for a long time, it is equally obvious that breeding is seldom successful owing to interference and it is unlikely to become a regular nesting bird unless this interference stops.

Gibson (1969) notes one pair nesting on Holy Island in 1968. I have no information on any other nesting there.

While not in context I can confirm that nesting on the little
bunbrae

Bormorant - continued.

Bombae has taken place at least from time to time. I observed four nests at Long Bay there in 1938 and six in 1943. There would appear from local information that sporadic breeding took place before 1938 but numbers seem always to have been small. Smith states that several nests were reported there in 1951 but that there is no later record of breeding but here he is clearly in error as shown by Gibson (1969)

Status (Arran) Present off-shore at all seasons of the year. Breeds sporadically at long intervals. Has bred on Holy Island. While not nearly as common as the Shag, the Bormorant appears to have increased slightly in recent years.

References: Birds of Arran (Page 10)

Gibson, J.A. Population Studies of Glyptic Seabirds (Part 1, 1969)
(Page 92)

Gibson, J.A. Recent Notes on the Breeding Birds on the Breeding
Birds of some Small Butehead Islands (1969) (Page 120)

going in Bryce (Pages 289 and 308)

Smith. Scottish Bormorant Colonies - Scottish Birds (1969)
(Pages 363 to 378)

Panslow (1973) (Pages 28-30)

Shag. *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*.

Refer to Birds of Anan.

So far as I have been able to ascertain from local information and tradition the Shag has, like the booby, been an intermittent breeder in Anan for a very long time, but has been subjected to similar interference and destruction of nests. Possibly because its nest is often less obvious and harder to find, it has been more successful and more widespread than the booby.

Older reports refer to sporadic nesting at the Black Cove, Dipping Head, the vicinity of the King's Cove, between Laggan and the beach, Holy Island and ~~the beach~~. Pladda

The Black Cove seems to have been used very occasionally before about 1860 and only once - two nests in 1921 - between then and 1963. Dipping Head and the King's Cove vicinities appear to have been abandoned before the 1860's and seem always to have been intermittent. The Laggan/Beach area seems to have been used fairly frequently but not since 1938. Both Holy Island and Pladda appear only to have been used at very long intervals. Gibson deals in detail with the later position at the Black Cove, Pladda and Holy Island and I have nothing further to add regarding these places. I did make some study of the Laggan/Beach area between 1929 and 1938 when Shags were present every year. Nests were under rocks, in crevices and among boulders and very hard to find. They were much further up the hillside than I had expected. The most I have found in one year (1938) was four, but there were probably one or two more. I have only once seen eggs at a nest and once young, but whitewash, smell and the agitated grunting of the adult indicate an occupied nest. No nests have been

Shag - continued

been found in this area since 1938 and it is possible that firing practice during the war may have driven the birds away. A very careful search by Paton and myself in 1947 made us sure that there were no birds nesting that year at least. While I have not made an exhaustive search since then - this involves a great deal of time and effort - I am reasonably sure that nesting no longer takes place in this area. Numbers were always very small and Paton was of the opinion that breeding was irregular prior to 1929.

It is interesting that Parslow refers to a marked increase of the Shag in the Blyde Area whereas Bramp states that there has been no increase there. As regards Shags seen on the sea or perched on the shore, numbers fluctuate markedly from day to day, depending on weather conditions and the movement of fish and it is difficult to assess real changes in numbers, but my own feeling is that there has been little overall change since 1929.

Status: - Present all year. Breeds sporadically on Arran itself and on Holy Island and Pladda. Large flocks occur on the sea in winter, the largest - over 500 - being one reported by Gibson off Machrie on 1st January 1954.

- References: Birds of Arran (Page 10)
Gibson, J.A. Population Studies of Blyde Seabirds (Part 1. 1969) (Page 94)
Gibson, J.A. Recent Notes on Breeding Birds of Small Butechire Islands (1969) (Pages 119-120)
Gray in Bryce (Page 308)
Parslow (1973) (Pages 30-32 and 218-219)
Bramp et al. Seabirds of Britain and Ireland (1974) (Page 99)

Heron.

Ardea cinerea.

Refer to Birds of Arran.

I have not visited the Brodick Castle heronry recently but from numbers seen on shore and elsewhere the position would appear to be reasonably stable.

Small subsidary heronries appear elsewhere from time to time, but seldom attain any great size or last more than a few years. In Mid-Sannox Wood there were 2 pairs in 1934 and 1935 and 3 in 1936 and 1937 - breeding success 1 young 1934, 2-1935, 3-1936 and none 1937 when the nests were disturbed and the heronry abandoned. One nest near the Cat Burn between Sannox and Borrie has been occupied by, presumably, the same pair for some years, but breeding success, if any, not known. One pair nested on Holy Island in 1965 (Gibson)

Status: Common on shore and by burns and on moors. Breeds

References: Birds of Arran (Page 10)

Gray in Bryce (Page 304)

Gibson, J.A. Recent Notes on Breeding Birds of Small Bute Shire
Islands (1969) (Page 120)

Bittern

Botaurus stellaris

Refer to Birds of Arran.

I have only two occurrences for this bird, both in recent years.

One seen crossing road near the Rocking Stone at Sannox, 29th September 1970 narrowly missed by car. Though I was within twenty yards I was momentarily unsighted by the car and the bird appeared to have vanished. I peered in all directions through binoculars for some time before I found the bird about six feet away from me in a tiny patch of bents, beak pointing skywards and virtually invisible. When I went a little closer it adopted a threat posture, wings spread and bill pointing menacingly towards me. When I moved away it took flight to the south, head tucked back like a heron, legs sticking out behind, wing beats slow - not seen again. Time 14-30.

The second bird was seen on 3rd October 1972 at 12.10 by my wife and myself not far from the site of the 1970 bird moving slowly into some thick marshy growth off the road. It could not be found that day but the following day after a search at the same spot I saw what was almost certainly the same bird. It was moving about very slowly and only when I approached within five or six feet did it slowly and almost reluctantly adopt the "bill in the air" stance. The bird appeared to be in very poor condition, though I could see no sign of actual injury and I should not be surprised if it was in fact dying. I could find no trace of it later that day.

Status: Very rare passage migrant

References: Birds of Arran (Page 10)
Gony in Bryce (Page 304)
McWilliam (1936) (Page 84)

Little Grebe. *Tachybaptus ruficollis*.

Refer to Birds of Arran.

I have the impression that this bird is becoming scarcer. Parslow suggests some reduction in numbers.

Status: Uncommon breeding bird.

References: Birds of Arran (Page 9)
Gray in Bryce (Page 304)
McWilliam (1923) (Page 86)
McWilliam (1936) (Page 106)
Parslow (1973) (Pages 23-24)

Great Crested Grebe Podiceps cristatus.

One or two birds seen on sea in spring and autumn but only in a few years. I have six occurrences noted, all since 1946. First occurrence 28th September 1947.

Status: Rare passage migrant in spring and autumn.

References: Mc William (1923) (Page 85)
Mc William (1936) (Page 103)
Birds of Agshire (Pages 154-155)

Red-necked grebe. *Podiceps grisegena*

Very rare in my experience. Single birds seen spring 1947 and 1969 and autumn 1947, 1956 and 1960. Not an easy bird to identify except at close range. All birds seen to the north of Sannox.

Gray's reference to this bird as "uncommon" seems to infer that this bird was seen more often in his time. Gibson criticizes the use of this adjective as "far too vague" but, like almost all writers, uses it himself, so do I! I know of no really satisfactory method of describing numbers, short of actually counting the birds.

Status: Very rare spring and autumn migrant on sea

References: Birds of Arran (Page 9)
Gray in Boyce (Page 304)
McWilliam (1936) (Page 105)
Birds of Ayrshire (Page 156)

Slavonian Grebe

Podiceps auritus

Refers to Birds of Arran

Not seen by me prior to 1955. Singles seen spring 1955 and 1968 and autumn 1958 and 1965 therefore very rare. Also 1973.

I cannot understand rumours, which I have never been able to trace to their source that this bird breeds in Arran.

On 2nd October 1973. I had the opportunity of seeing this bird and also a Black-necked Grebe, Great Northern Diver and Black-throated Diver within a period of a quarter of an hour near Millstone Point shortly after 3 o'clock, the first three birds being in sight at the same time and the two grebes being within 50 yards of me giving a most useful comparison. It is very rare to see so many of these birds at close range and under excellent viewing conditions.

Status: Very rare spring and autumn migrants.

References: Birds of Arran (Page 9).
Gray in Bruce (Page 309)
McWilliam (1923) (Page 85)
McWilliam (1936) (Page 105)
Birds of Ayrshire (Pages 155-156)

Black-necked grebe.

Podiceps nigricollis

Very rare in my experience. Single birds seen spring 1949 and autumn 1955 and 1962. Like Red-necked grebe not easy to identify, all birds seen to north of North Sannox.

Also seen 1973. See note on Slavonian grebe.

Status: Very rare spring and autumn migrant on sea.

References: Mc William (1936) (Page 106)
Birds of Ayrshire (Page 156)

Red Kite

Milvus milvus.

Refer to Birds of Arvon.

I have nothing to add to Gibson's remarks except that in my youth there was a tradition of a "reddish hawk" that ate adders and this may refer to the kite.

Status: Became extinct between 1850 and 1860

References: Birds of Arvon (Page 13)
Gray in Boyce (Page 295)
McCWilliam (1936) (Page 80)

Hen Harrier

Bircus cyaneus

Refer to Birds of Arran.

According to local tradition and information given by certain very old men when I first started visiting the Island in 1929 this bird was now wholly exterminated and lingered on in the north end of the Island though reduced to one or two pairs. Paton's father had known of them all his life and Paton showed me a pair with young in 1930. This is, of course, a protected bird and in any event has a reputation for desertion following disturbance so that my visits to nests of this species are infrequent and only sufficiently close to recognize young through a telescope so that I cannot swear to breeding being annual though I have not the slightest doubt that it is. Certainly I have seen Hen Harriers in the breeding season, as well as at other times in every year since 1929.

I have no up-to-date information as to breeding numbers on the Island as a whole. I would think that they are increasing if anything. No doubt Howard Walker can give details. Mrs Dunn reports a good season in 1972.

Status: Breeds in small numbers and may be increasing.

References: Birds of Arran (Pages 13-14)

Gray in Boyce (Page 294)

McCWilliam (1928) (Page 71)

McCWilliam (1936) (Pages 79-80)

Parson (1943) (Pages 57, 192, 209, 229)

Scottish Bird Report 1972 (Page 345) Mrs Dunn.

Sparrow-Hawk *Accipiter nisus*

Refs to Birds of Oran.

A difficult bird as regards assessment of numbers owing to its habit of hunting in fairly thick cover. If anything appears to have increased slightly in recent years. Gibson refers to this bird as suffering persecution and while I know of no deliberate persecution in my own area in recent years it does have a tendency to desert if disturbed and this happened to one pair between Sannox and Bovic this year (1973) when an attempt was made to photograph the nest. Mrs Dunn reports increase in breeding population 1972.

Status: Resident throughout the Island in suitable localities, may be increasing.

References: Birds of Oran (Page 13)
Gray in Bryce (Page 295)
Parslow (1973) (Pages 53-55, 116, 192, 204, 226)
Scottish Bird Report 1972 (Page 344) Mrs Dunn.

Buzzard. *Buteo buteo*

Refer to Birds of Arran.

While Gibson's 1956 figure of at least a dozen pairs was certainly correct I have no information as to present numbers in the Island as a whole. It certainly appears to be at least holding its own in the North end of the Island. Howard Walker should be consulted as to present position. Parslow suggests an increase. Mrs Dunn reports a good year 1972.

Status: Breeds. Probably about 12 pairs nesting in trees and on cliffs.

References: Birds of Arran (Page 13)
Gray in Bryce (Page 297)
Parslow (1973) (Pages 52-53, 192, 225)
Scottish Bird Report 1972 (Page 344) Mrs Dunn

Rough-legged Buzzard.

Buteo lagopus

Refer to Birds of Arran.

Like all birds of prey this bird presents difficulties in identification but I have positively identified this bird in 1938, 1948, 1966 and 1972. All single birds in autumn. In addition I have seen on another four occasions birds which looked uncommonly like Rough-legs, but not under conditions permitting positive identification.

All the birds which I have seen have been lighter in colour than the resident common buzzards all of which are pretty dark in colour. It has always been this lightness in colour which has attracted my attention in the first place and it is perfectly possible that darker coloured birds or those seen under different lighting conditions may have escaped attention. The wings are longer and narrower but this point is difficult to pick out. The light wings with dark carpal patches and black primaries and the white tail with broad blackish terminal band are the points to look for. All the birds which I have seen, except one, have had a broad dark patch across the belly, the exception having no sign of this but agreeing in all other respects. The head is also lighter than that of the common buzzard but this is not always easy to see and, except when the bird is perched, the fully feathered tarsi are not readily seen. The Rough-leg does have more than the common but the latter does occasionally do so though for a shorter time.

In autumn 1972 a rough-legged buzzard was observed on three occasions in two days, on one occasion a common buzzard being present, and I append copies of the rough field notes taken at the time.

Rough-legged Buzzard - continued.

Time .

Field notes 1972.

a) Buzzard - Wings longer and narrower than common. Tail white with dark wide tips. Under wings and body very light or white with dark across belly. Wrists of wings dark patches. Primaries dark tips. Legs lowered momentarily when bird swooped then rose again - whitish feathered to feet which yellow. Flew low and hovered briefly with slow wing beats among scattered trees. Seen at 50 to 150 yards for six or seven minutes. Then flew south.

29th September 1972. 11-30. Sunny, cool. Fresh southerly wind. South of shelter between Sannox and Bruce. Rough-legged Buzzard.

b) Buzzard - Rough-leg. Almost certainly same bird as yesterday. Same spot. Seen about 5 minutes 50 to 250 yards. Hunting in same manner. Common Buzzard arrived, almost certainly local male. "Fight" birds flying at and round one another, mewing calls, occasionally perching about 50 feet apart. Rough-leg looked more upright and more solid when perched. Birds never closer to one another than 5 feet. With intervals when perched "fight" lasted 12 to 15 minutes. Then when both birds perched Rough-leg flew off to south and half a minute later common flew off to west. I had the impression that the "fight" was in the nature of a ritual trial-of-strength, the common defending its territory and the Rough-leg not wanting to be chased off till it was good and ready. A good opportunity to observe both birds at the same time. Apart from colour the Rough-leg definitely gave the impression

Rough-legged Buzzard - continued.

impression of being not only larger - though there is not really a great deal in it - but also more solid and tougher. 30th September 1992. 13:00 pm. Overcast. Cool. Strong S.W. Wind Barometer 9 x 35.

c) Rough-leg seen flying and hovering on moorland north of Maol Donn for a period of about 20 minutes at ranges of 150 yards upwards till the bird disappeared to the south.

The Rough-leg in my experience, and I have seen and watched it on a number of occasions in Norway, does, apart from colour which is not always a good guide, have a slightly different "jizz" difficult to describe but it does seem to me to be always a more solid and "positive" bird than the common buzzard.

Status: Uncommon passage migrant in autumn, but may be missed on occasion and hence perhaps more regular than it appears to be.

References: Birds of Avon (Page 13)
Gray in Joyce (Page 294)
McWilliam (1936) (Page 78)

White-tailed Eagle. *Haliaeetus albicilla*.

Refers to Birds of Arvon.

Tradition and memory of the old inhabitants agrees substantially with the account given by Gray in Bryce. In my youth two of the old men could clearly describe these birds which they stated were bigger than the Golden Eagle with broad wings and a very small tail, white in the case of adults, the head also white in adults and the beaks very big. They stated that the birds caught fish in their feet and were "deils for taking lambs". Though I could not get actual dates it seems clear that these birds were occasionally seen for a few years after 1841. They were clearly differentiated from the Osprey.

During the war I had some opportunity of watching these birds in Norway and, given a reasonable view, the broad-winged, short-tailed outline when soaring, the very heron-like flapping flight and the "dog-on-haunches" upright sitting position are all very distinctive. Despite this I know of no definite reports of this bird since the 1870's (apart from Finsch's report considered below). I have twice seen birds soaring which looked suspiciously broad winged and short-tailed and twice birds with a flapping heron-like flight, but these were all at a great distance or in appalling visibility and are merely suspicions at best. I have heard of a number of similar unsatisfactory reports - Paton saw a few - but in none of the cases was the observer in any way sure of the identification. The only "positive" reports I have heard have been based only on a sight of a "white" tail on such occasions as I have been able to follow the matter further I have been sure that the bird was in fact an immature Golden Eagle.

in/

White-tailed Eagle - continued.

In his book on Arran Firssoff gives an account of a White-tailed Eagle seen by him in the Gallon Rocks area in February 1949. Though he gives no detailed description, which would not expect in a book of general interest, the flapping flight sounds right though I would think that the flight was normal and not necessarily that of a tired bird. I cannot understand the reference to the bird subiding on to the waves like a seagull, which seems most unlikely, possibly the bird was catching or attempting to catch a fish and Firssoff misunderstood what was happening. I can hardly think that the three slugs with "their necks wrong but bodies untouched" had anything to do with the White-tail! These are, however, minor criticisms of what was not intended to be a report for the Records Committee and I would, myself, think that the report is valid. Firssoff is I understand still going strong and no doubt could give further details if these are required.

Even if Firssoff's report is accepted and even one or two of the other reports are in fact correct this bird is clearly very rare indeed at the present time.

Status: Bred until 1849, unsuccessful breeding attempt 1890. Though seen at intervals for a few years thereafter there has been only one subsequent satisfactory report of a single adult seen February 1949.

References: Birds of Arran (Page 13)
Young in Bayce (Page 293)
Firssoff (1951) (Pages 129-131, 215)

Golden Eagle. *Aquila chrysaetos*.

Refer to Birds of Arsen.

As far as I can ascertain from local opinion and tradition the historical position is as stated by Gibson. Like Gibson I have heard reports of three and even four pairs nesting in some years but I have not personally seen more than ^{two} occupied eyries in any one year, my earliest visit to two nests, both with young, being in 1931. In none of the cases where I have heard of more than two nests and have been able to question the persons concerned have I found that actual inspection of all has been carried out and the reports are, at least in part, dependent on seeing eagles flying to or from or perched at what would appear to be nest sites and that usually on a few occasions. The possibilities of error are, therefore, considerable. Eyries are often used in rotation in different years and, though I have no idea whether this is common or not, eagles do on occasion visit former nest sites in a year when breeding is taking place at another nest. I have myself seen this on only six occasions twice by adult birds and four times by immatures. In all these cases I checked that the nest sites visited were not in fact in use for breeding in that year. I have no means of knowing whether the adults were birds which had nested at the site in previous years or not, nor do I know whether the immatures were birds which had been reared at the nests in question. It would be interesting to know whether much, if any, use is made by the male, for roosting purposes, of an eyrie not in use for breeding in that year. The few birds which I have seen visiting old nests have only stayed a few minutes and the old nesting material showed no signs of frequent visiting. A further potential source of error in assessing breeding numbers is that eagles make great use of certain rocks and ledges as what are often referred

Golden Eagle continued

referred to as "look-outs" and visits to these sites are often regular. These sites may be used to look out for prey but in my view they are more used for resting and roosting. I have inspected a number of these sites, none of which appear ever to have been used for nesting and while there are occasionally a few old bones about these sites do not appear to be used in the ordinary way as feeding places and, indeed, the bones may have nothing to do with the eagles. While I have gone to some length in pointing out possible causes of over-estimates in breeding numbers it is perfectly possible that there may, at least in some years, be more than two breeding pairs, I have no concrete evidence either way. Howard Walker will certainly know the position in the last few years.

Status: After being exterminated about 1850 re-appeared about 1900 and has bred since then. At least two pairs in most years but actual numbers await confirmation.

References: Birds of Arvan (Page 12)
Gray in Bryce (Page 292)
McWilliam (1936) (Page 46)

Kestrel.

Falco tinnunculus.

Refer to Birds of Arran.

There has I think been a slight increase in recent years.
Mrs Dunn reports a good season in 1972.

Frequently seen hunting on the edges of new Forestry plantations.

Status: Fairly common and widespread breeding species. Appears to be increasing slightly.

References: Birds of Arran (Page 15)
Mc William (1928) (Pages 69-70)
Mc William (1936) (Page 76)
Scottish Bird Report 1972 (Page 346) Mrs Dunn.

Peregrine.

Falco peregrinus.

Refer to Birds of Arran.

The estimates of eight pairs breeding given by both McWilliam and Gibson agree with my own figures, but the numbers may well have dropped in line with the fall in numbers elsewhere. (See Ratchiff's paper on the subject)

I have not made any study of numbers in recent years - there has been a slight diminution in the number of sightings but not probably of any significance for as long as I can remember a pair nested on the cliffs of Maol Donn but they ceased to do so in 1964. It is not known whether this was the result of pesticidal damage, disturbance by climbers or otherwise. The birds have returned to this site, a pair being observed there on a number of occasions in both 1972 and 1973 but I have not been able to prove breeding. Mrs Dunn reports three pairs bred in 1972.

One factor which Ratchiff brings out is that while there has been an improvement in the breeding position in inland and eastern districts of Scotland this is not the case in respect of western coastal districts. It is thought that this variation may be caused by the peregrines from the latter districts feeding more largely on sea-birds and hence picking up more in the way of pesticidal residues. I would not think, however, that this affects Arran peregrines to any great extent. While I have not visited any occupied nest sites in recent years I did visit quite a few in former years and never at any time found traces of any sea-bird as prey. The birds which I have seen killed by peregrines (and been able to identify) have been wood-pigeon 12, stock dove 1, grouse (young) 1, woodcock 1, mistle thrush 4, fieldfare 2, black-bird 1, starling 1. None of the birds which I have seen killed but failed to identify looked like a sea-bird. This year, 1973,

S/

Peregrine - continued.

I found a peregrine eating a young common gull. I did not see the kill but as the peregrine is not a carrion eater I assume that it did in fact kill the gull. I still think however, that Orkney peregrines do not eat many sea-birds and local opinion supports this.

Status: Resident and breeds. Former estimates of eight breeding pairs may be on the high side in recent years but up-to-date figures require confirmation.

References: Birds of Orkney (Page 14)
Gray in Boyle (Pages 294-295)
McCWilliam (1936) (Pages 74-75)
Ratchiffe - Bird Study Vol 19 No 3 Sept 1972 page 119 et. seq.
Scottish Bird Report 1972 (Page 347) Mrs Dunbar.

corncrake

Crex crex

Refer to Birds of Arran

I am inclined to disagree with Gibson when he states that this bird was never very common. It is very difficult to assess numbers accurately with this type of bird which is much more often heard than seen and whose call is both far-carrying and ventriloquial, but certainly its call was heard ad nauseam, particularly on the west side of the Island and at the south end in the nineteen thirties and there were certainly scattered birds from Barlo to North Sannox in those days. I would say that they started to decline about 1935 or 1936 and are now very thinly distributed and probably still decreasing.

In my own area the corncrake is now only sporadic in its appearance, nesting near, but not actually in, the fields at North Sannox and very occasionally near the site of the old village in North Glen Sannox. At best there are only one or two pairs.

The position at Sannox over the last eleven years has been as follows:

1963. Adult seen with young. South Sannox. No calls whatever heard.

1964 }

to 1968 } No birds seen or calls heard.

1969 Adult seen with young. South Sannox. Calls heard

1970 Adult seen with young South Sannox but no calls heard there. Calls heard North Sannox, certainly another pair

1971 Calls heard two localities South Sannox, and adult with young seen at one locality

1972 }

1973 }

1974 }

No birds seen or calls heard.

As will be seen in 1963 and 1970 birds were present without calls/

bonerake - continued

calls being heard at all - the birds were clearly identified. This is surprising in such a normally noisy bird, but while two such occurrences do not prove anything, there would appear to be a possibility that bonerakes may be present without calling in what are thought to be blank years.

Mrs Durnn in the Scottish Bird Report 1972 mentions bonerakes as being absent from 2 regular localities.

Status. Summer visitor. Breeds. Once common but now scattered and thinly distributed in small numbers.

References:- Birds of Arran (Page 16)
McWilliam (1936) (Pages 140-141)
Parslow (1973) (Pages 71-73, 231)
Scottish Bird Report 1972 (Page 347) Mrs Durnn.

Moorhen. *Gallinula chloropus*

Refer to Birds of Arran.

Still nests in small numbers, almost always beside small streams, seems to change its nesting sites at fairly frequent intervals. Sometimes on shore, especially in winter.

Status: Resident. Breeds in small numbers.

References: Birds of Arran (Page 16)
McWilliam (1936) (Page 143)
Parshlow (1973) (Pages 73, 232-233)

Coot. *Fulica atra*.

Refer to Birds of Assam.

Gray's reference to "a few pairs in various localities" appears to have been true though I know of no authentic breeding records since about 1900. Any reports which I have heard of in my own time have turned out to be moorhens apart from an occasional single in autumn or winter.

In 1930 or 1931 the late Duchess told me that when she was a girl a pair of coot had nested on a small pond in the Bastle policies for some years but that the pond had been drained and the birds had left. She certainly knew the difference between a coot and a moorhen and I would certainly accept this report as authentic. While she could not remember the exact date when the birds left, it was certainly shortly before 1900.

Peter and I also obtained reports of pairs at Batacol near the site of Fairhaven, which was not then built; on the North bank of the Chalmersdale near Ballave; at Pimmill ~~and~~ and at Lagg. For some reason which now escapes me we seem to have taken a great deal of care in checking these reports and in every case obtained at least two independent reports and visited the sites, none of which were then suitable for coot, but clearly had been, and we were most careful to check the descriptions to avoid any error in the species involved. All the reports were from periods in the late 1800's and one reason for the birds' disappearance was plain from the remark of our principal informant who described them as "bloody good eating".

Apart from poaching the principal reason for the disappearance of this bird as a breeding species is, I think clearly loss of suitable habitat and

Loon continued.

and this is no doubt the reason for its continued absence, it seems to be common enough in the surrounding mainland and in Bute.

The loon appears to be a rare bird even on dispersal or migration. I have only seen singles three times, in autumn, each time on the shore, where for some reason they look very out of place and unhappy and I have heard of perhaps nine or ten other similar occurrences, in autumn and winter, the only inland bird seen being one bird found dead by Paton on the shore of Loch Ganna in the winter of 1940/41.

Status: Always appears to have been uncommon as a breeding bird in Arran and is not known to have bred since 1900.
Very rarely seen in autumn and winter.

References: Birds of Arran (Page 16)
Gray in Bryce (Page 305)
McWilliam (1936) (Pages 143-144)
Parsons (1943) (Pages 73-74, 232-233)

Oystercatcher

Haematopus ostralegus.

Refer to Birds of Arran.

Has increased markedly in the stretch of shore between Merkland and North Sannox since the increase in seaweed and mussels about 17 years ago. Though numbers of course fluctuate to a certain extent, particularly in the birds nesting on beaches, there used to be about six pairs in this stretch of shore while the numbers jumped rapidly to 26 pairs after the change in the seaweed etc. In the last five years there have been attempts at nesting, usually unsuccessful at the top end of the South field at Sannox and on the rough ground beyond. Gibson mentions this bird as nesting far up Glen Sannox which I had not observed myself. There have been occasional attempts at nesting quite far up North Glen Sannox, but these have so far as I know always failed. This bird has, of course, for long nested in fields as well as on the shore in other parts of the Island.

Status: Common nesting species on most parts of the shore and often in fields. Has increased markedly in some areas.
Flocks of up to 150 often seen in winter

References: - Birds of Arran (Page 16)
Gray in Bryce (Page 304)
McWilliam (1936) (Page 111)
Parolow (1943) (Pages 75-76, 192, 233)

Golden Plover. *Pluvialis apricaria*

Refer to Birds of Arran.

Very much an upland bird, seldom nesting below 500 feet. Never very common in my time and appears to have decreased, though only slightly, in the last twenty years. Though the birds themselves, away from the nest, are conspicuous enough the nests themselves are appallingly difficult to find and indeed I have never found one unaided myself. Paton had his own technique for finding them, usually successfully, but he never succeeded in teaching me the knack. Other findings have been usually by accident rather than design. I have only once seen a chick, which I actually discovered by putting my hand on it, quite by chance. Fortunately the bird, a really lovely little thing was quite unharmed. The camouflage was near perfect and though there were certainly other young birds close by I could not see them at all.

Status: Uncommon breeding resident on higher moors, probably decreasing. Small flocks on shore in winter and occurs on passage

References: Birds of Arran (Page 17)
Gray in Boyse (Page 303)
McWilliam (1936) (Page 212)
Pavlov (1993) (Pages 80-81, 232-233)

Grey Plover *P. leuciclis squatarola*.

Refer to Birds of Assam

This bird occurs irregularly on autumn passage, always in small numbers. Even Paton considered that it was only seen perhaps two years out of five. I have usually seen it on South Sannox beach. In late September 1951 I saw a party of 12 but this was quite exceptional, usually not more than three or four are seen at one time. Autumn 1942 was a good year, 3 on South Sannox beach on 29th September, 3 at same place on 6th October with 12 Knot and 5 in flight half a mile south of barrie on 9th October.

Copy field notes of 29th September occurrence:-

Waders 3. Size of Lapping. Bill dark grey or black - short. P. longer than Lapping. Upper parts mottled greyish brown - more grey than brown. Light eye - stripe. Wing bars and rump whitish. Tail barred transversely. Underside light coloured. Dark arm - pits. Legs grey. Seen at 50 to 100 feet, binoculars for about 10 minutes, standing and walking about but not feeding. Looked tired but this bird always does! Flew to South when disturbed by dog. No calls heard. - Grey Plover. 29 Sept 1942 15-30 pm. Sunny, wind fresh southerly. Loc. Sannox Beach.

This is a bird with which I am much more familiar on the East coast. I have seen it at Fairlie on three occasions and Hunterston twice, parties of 4, 7 and 5 and 12 and 14 respectively and once from the train a party of six on the beach near Ardrossan so it is, I think, ~~it~~ relatively more common on the adjacent mainland than on Assam.

Gray Plover - continued.

Status: Irregular autumn passage migrant in small numbers.

References - Birds of Ayrshire (Page 16)
Gray in Bryce (Pages 303-304)
McWilliam (1936) (Page 113)
Scottish Bird Report (1969) (page 86)
Birds of Ayrshire (Pages 169-170)

Lapping *Vanellus vanellus*

Refer to Birds of Arran.

As in other parts of Britain declined very considerably after the winter of 1963 but while there has been a partial recovery in other parts of the Island since then, in my own area there has been only one pair which nested successfully at Mid-Sunnex in 1972, but did not return in 1973. Present but nest not found 1974.

Status: at one time a common nesting species but decreased before, and especially after, the winter of 1963. Numbers appear to be increasing slowly. Though smaller than in former years flocks occur in autumn and winter and lappings also appear on migration.

References: - Birds of Arran (Page 16)
Gray in Bryce (Page 304)
McWilliam (1936) (Pages 113-114)
Parlow (1973 Pages 76-77, 232-233)

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

Refer to Birds of Arran.

No change, except that on South Lannox beach many nests are lost through disturbance. While part of this disturbance is the presence of people on the beach in increasing numbers these birds seem little affected by this and often continue sitting when only a few yards from a noisy family party complete with children dogs and a transistor radio (I have actually observed this with a family of two adults, three young children, two dogs and a radio, all extremely active about five yards from a sitting bird. The bird did leave when actually hit by a large beach-ball but returned within two minutes and I am glad to say saved the entire clutch) Not all birds are, of course, as successful and losses do occur through human disturbance. A more dangerous disturbance, however, is the increasing number of vehicles which drive along the beach usually about the spring tide mark and one van engaged on maintenance work at the measured mile post drove unerringly over five out of six nests on one trip six years ago. While I would expect about six pairs to attempt to nest on this beach, only one or two pairs will usually be successful at the present time. It would certainly be to this birds advantage to move to some of the smaller and more stoney beaches, less frequented by people and I am glad to say that the odd pair is now adopting these safer localities and this habit, if it becomes more regular, may well be of advantage to the continuance of this bird as a breeding species. The ringed plover is, of course suffering from disturbance in many parts of the country.

Incidentally there is no sign of the little Ringed Plover - *Charadrius hiaticula* - on Arran, though it has reached the Blyde valley and it is presumably a possible "new" bird in the future.

Ringed Plover - continued.

Status. Common nesting species on shore, but probable drop in numbers through disturbance. Small flocks in winter and on passage.

References: Birds of Arran (Page 16)
Gray in Bryce (Page 303)
McC William (1936) (Page 112)
Parshaw (1973) (Pages 77-78, 232-233)

Dottrel *Eudromas morinellus*.

Refer to Birds of Arran.

So far as I know Macgillivray's report is the only one for Arran. McWilliam shows that this bird does appear on passage in the Blyde area so it may have been missed on Arran. It is a bird I know well from its breeding territory, but I have never seen one on Arran, which, of course, proves absolutely nothing!

Status: Only one old report of a bird on passage at Loch Kenza. Does occur occasionally in the Blyde area and should be watched for.

References: Birds of Arran (Page 17)
Gray in Bryce (Page 303)
McWilliam (1936) (Pages 111-112)

Whimbrel. *Numenius phaeopus*.

Refer to Birds of Arran.

At one time seen irregularly as a passage migrant in spring and autumn, but in last ten years seen more regularly. Numbers seen are very small the highest being six with seventeen burlew on the shore south of Morkland. It is of interest that a single bird remained in the area of the Boguille for three weeks up till the end of May in 1970, I only saw the bird myself on two occasions, but clearly the bird seen by my informant on the other occasions was a Whimbrel and not a burlew. In 1972 I saw on two successive days ^(2nd and 3rd June) on the moor below bioch-na-h'Orighe a single Whimbrel. These are, of course, very late dates and, while the birds were singles and presumably either late migrants or non-breeders this bird is tending to spread further south and clearly this is a bird to be watched.

1974 note - a single bird frequented one of the banner fields for five successive days at the end of May, beginning of June this year.

Status: Spring and autumn passage migrant, becoming more common. Single birds have been seen as late as the beginning of June.

References: Birds of Arran (Page 17)
Gray in Bryce (Page 304)
McWilliam (1936) (Page 122)
Parshaw (1973) (Pages 84, 234-235)

Parlow. *Numenius squata*.

Refer to Birds of Arvan.

Common and almost certainly increasing. Does most of its feeding on the shore even during the breeding season. Large flocks in winter. Passage migrant.

Status: Common nesting species, increasing. Often seen feeding on shore. Large flocks in winter. Passage migrant.

References: Birds of Arvan (Page 17)
Gray in Boyce (Page 304)
McWilliam (1936) (Page 122)
Parlow (1973) (Pages 82-83, 192, 235)

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*.

I have no records of this bird before 1964 when three were seen at the mouth of the North Lannon Burn and my only other sighting was of two wading in the pools between Brodick Golf Course and the beach on 29th September 1969.

Status: Only two known occurrences, both in recent years.

References: Gray in Bryce (Page 305) (Under Bar-tailed, states not seen)
McCWilliam (1936) (Page 121)
Parsons (1973) (Pages 84, 208, 234-235)
Birds of Ayrshire (Page 183)

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*.

Refer to Birds of Arran

Seems to be no change in situation since Gibson's book. Largest flock I have seen is one of twelve on South Lamma beach on 1st January 1972.

Status: Fairly regular autumn and winter visitor but not common

References: Birds of Arran (Page 19)
Gray in Bryce (Pages 304-305)
McWilliam (1936) Page 121
Birds of Ayrshire (Pages 182-3)

Turnstone. *Arenaria interpres*

Refer to Birds of Anson.

Not a bird I have seen very often myself, seems most common north of the Fallen Rocks and on the west coast. Not at any time very common, mostly spring and autumn passage and very occasionally in winter and, I think, quite rare in summer.

Status: A rather uncommon spring and autumn passage migrant seen on shore. Occasionally seen in winter and rarely in summer.

References: Birds of Anson (Page 17)
Gray in Bryce (Page 304)
McWilliam (1936) (Page 114)

Knot. *Calidris canutus*.

Refers to Birds of Oran.

As Gibson says small flocks are occasionally seen on shore in autumn and winter but not I think regularly. Apparently more common in Gray's time and local information confirms this.

Status: Small flocks occasionally seen on shore in autumn and winter but not regularly.

References: Birds of Oran (Page 18)
Gray in Buxce (Page 305)
McWilliam (1936) (Page 115)

Gull-billed Sandpiper. *Calidris ferruginea*

Refer to Birds of Anson

This bird does occur, but very rarely indeed. I have only three personal records:- two with three Dunlin at Lochranza on 20th August 1937, a single at the Wistons on 16th August 1949 and a single at the Wine Port on 27th September 1972. This last bird was, of course, very late but autumn was like mid-summer that year and migration dates generally were weird and wonderful. Admittedly I have not been much in Anson in August in recent years but at one time I was there regularly in August and, as this bird with its unusual beak, white rump and general appearance is really quite distinctive I am sure that it is extremely rare in Anson. Paton thought it only turned up every five years or so. Gray probably depended on Halliday for his information on this bird. Local information is that this bird was always rare.

Much more common in Hunterston - Fairlie area. I have twice seen singles in August the - 1936 and 1947 and a pair on the Small Burn on August 1942.

Status: A very rare passage migrant usually in August

References:- Birds of Anson (Page 18)
Gray in Boyce (Page 305)
Scottish Bird Report (1972) (Page 358)

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

Refer to Birds of Arvan.

Though fairly regular as an autumn passage migrant, numbers are small, the largest flock I have seen being ten. Very uncommon in winter, I have only seen them then twice. Brodick - December 1936 - 3 birds and Bannock 1944 - January - 5 birds. The flock of twenty seen by Gibson, January 1954 was very unusual.

Status: Autumn passage migrant in small numbers. Very rarely seen in winter.

References: Birds of Arvan (Page 18)
Gray in Boyce (Page 303)

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

Refer to Birds of Arran

Small flocks in spring and, more commonly, autumn passage. Not common in winter and Gibson's record of 30 to 40 at Kildonan on 4 January 1954 was a large one. While still nesting on the Island I have the impression that numbers of breeding birds have fallen somewhat since before the war. Appears to have been more common in Gray's time, though I have not been able to confirm this locally.

Status: Small passage flocks, more common in autumn than in spring. Not common in winter and a flock of 30 to 40 in January 1954 was a very large one for Arran especially in winter. Breeds but not commonly and numbers nesting may be decreasing.

References: Birds of Arran (Page 18)
Gray in Bryce (Page 305)
McWilliam (1936) (Pages 115-116)
Parshlow (1993) (Pages 88, 237)

Purple Sandpiper

Calidris maritima.

Refer to Birds of Arran.

Quite frequently seen on shore on passage and in winter. Usually singles, but occasionally small flocks. The flock of 18 reported by Mrs Dunn at Blacwaterfoot on 23 January 1972 was the largest I have heard of, my own largest flock was one of five at Lochranza on 8th January 1937.

Status: Not uncommon on shore on passage, particularly in autumn and in winter. Usually single birds but occasionally small flocks of up to 18 seen.

References: Birds of Arran (Page 18)
Goan in Bryce (Page 305)
McWilliam (1936) (Page 117)
Scottish Bird Report 1972 (Page 357)

Common Sandpiper. *Tringa hypoleucos*.

Refer to Birds of Arzon.

Common round shores and occasionally nests inland beside streams, if anything increasing.

Status: Common summer visitor. Nests on all suitable shores and occasionally inland beside streams. Possible increase in recent years.

References: Birds of Arzon (Page 17)
Gray in Bryce (Page 304)
McWilliam (1936) (Pages 117-118)
Parslow (1973) (Pages 85-86, 234-235)

Spotted Redshank

Tringa erythropus.

In my experience a very rare autumn passage migrant and I know of only four occurrences in Arvan, a single bird seen by Paton and myself at Lochranza 5th September 1938, a pair seen by Paton wading in a pool between Brodick Golf course and the beach and by myself in flight shortly thereafter 25th September 1945 and singles seen by myself at the Windows 28th September 1947 and at the Wine Port, Brodick 1st October 1940. While I do not pretend for a moment to have seen all the occurrences this bird is sufficiently distinct from the common Redshank, particularly in flight when the absence of white wing bar, long projecting legs and totally different call make identification relatively easy and I am sure this bird is very rare in Arvan.

The bird has occurred at Hunterston and on Bute and I have myself seen a single bird on the Small Cumbrae in autumn 1942.

Status - A very rare passage migrant in autumn.

References: McWilliam (1936) (Pages 119-120)
Scottish Bird Report 1971 (Page 137)

Greenshank.

Tringa nebularia

Refers to Birds of Arran.

This is a bird which constantly eludes me being exceptionally wary and usually disappearing at a high rate of speed when just out of range of positive identification. I have in fact only twelve positive personal identifications, but in most years I have at least one or two nearly positives and as Paton saw one or two almost every year and I have heard of other sightings I think that the Greenshank is probably regular as an autumn migrant though in very small numbers. I have only once seen this bird in Spring and all my sightings have been of single birds, though sometimes with other waders.

Status: Autumn passage migrant one or two seen on shore in most years.

References: Birds of Arran (Page 17)
Gray in Bryce (Page 304)
Birds of Ayrshire (Page 181)

Redshank *Tringa totanus*

Refer to Birds of Arran.

I have never found this bird to be very common in my own area and only once, before the war, nesting on the shore, beyond the Fallen Rocks. More a west coast bird.

Very common in winter and, owing to its habit of suddenly appearing and scaring off some other more interesting bird, something of a menace! I have never myself seen a flock of any kind in winter, always single birds.

Status: Resident and breeds. Common on migration and as wintering bird on shore.

References: Birds of Arran (Page 17)
Gray in Boyle (Page 304)
McWilliam (1936) (Page 119)
Parshaw (1973) (Pages 86-87, 235)

Jack Snipe *Hymenocryptes minimus*.

Refer to Birds of Arran.

Numbers appear to fluctuate widely from year to year. In some years there appear to be very few and occasionally it is quite common. Found in the same localities as the snipe and, like it, has been seen feeding in seaweed on shore.

Status: generally an uncommon winter visitor but in some years can be relatively common.

References: Birds of Arran (Page 17)
Gray in Bryce (Page 305)
McWilliam (1936) (Page 124)

Woodcock

Scelopax rusticola

Refers to Birds of Arran.

While certainly common and, I think, increasing this bird is virtually impossible to census. Rosting flights help to some extent and fortunately some sites are used regularly but, even with experience finding a nest takes an enormous time and probably the best system is to examine probable sites after the young have left as the white insides of the shells show up quite clearly and I found without too much difficulty six such sites at Benross in two hours last year, three of them without any difficulty as they were previously used sites and the others were suspected. Certainly it would be impossible even using this method to attain a complete count of even a relatively small area. Sometimes nest in heather or bracken well away from woodland as such, though usually near an isolated tree no matter how stunted. Another bird which feeds in seaweed at high tide mark.

Status: common breeding resident, may be increasing. Passage migrant

References. Birds of Arran (Page 17)

Gray in Bryce (Page 305)

McCWilliam (1936) (Pages 124-126)

Parslow (1973) (Pages 82, 234-235)

Snipe - Gallinago gallinago

Refer to Birds of Arvon.

Though common and widespread distribution is patchy and may well depend on feeding areas enriched by flushing. In my experience most common on areas which were at one time farmland which has now reverted to boggy moor. The sites of old dykes, even when these can only be detected in certain lighting conditions, appear to attract this bird, both as a site for nesting as these sites are relatively dry and also for feeding as the dykes themselves often hold back small pools or bogs and these are sometimes relatively rich in food. Has been seen probing drifts of seaweed on shore.

Status: Common nesting species though patchy in distribution. Passage migrant.

References: Birds of Arvon (Page 17)
Gray in Bryce (Page 305)
McWilliam (Page 123) (1936)
Parshlow (1973) (Pages 81-82, 234-235)