



a million
voices for
nature

the tern

Newsletter of the North Ayrshire RSPB Local Group



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august 2011

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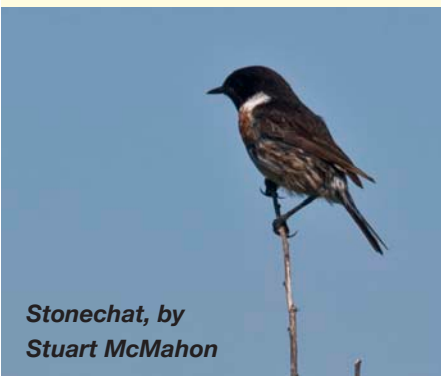
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CalMac Ferry Update

So far this year, aboard the Ardrrossan to Brodick ferry crossing, the group have raised over £250 in donations (including money collected from pin badges) and made four new memberships. There are still the last couple of weeks worth to be counted.

On the non-business side there have been a great selection of birds and sea animals seen in the harbours and on the crossing including black guillemot, manx shearwater, sandwich tern, sparrowhawk, porpoise, basking shark and minke whale.

Child to RSPB Volunteer: "I know two gulls, an eagle and a seagull." Well at least it's a start!



Stonechat, by
Stuart McMahon

The Wild West

By Vallerie Firminger

It was long overdue for Hilary and I to revisit my favourite part of Scotland – the north-west coast, so the end of May we headed off in the motorhome to tour for three weeks.



Driving up the shore of Loch Lomond we saw a golden eagle which was to be the first of a total of 15 seen on our tour. Our first destination was Applecross over the "pass of the cattle" staying for three nights amid some challenging weather for us and the birds. A "fire" on a hillside turned out to be a waterfall being blown up the hill as the wind caught the falling water – such was the wind on our arrival. Long-tailed and Arctic skuas skirted the coast relishing the challenge of the strong winds. The calls of cuckoo and willow warbler were heard at every stop and this happened every time, bar one stop, over the three weeks as we moved about. I pitied the poor pipits.

Further north we encountered the rugged scenery of Torridon with mountains rearing in front of us with snow lying in the corries and Shieldaig tucked along the shore of Loch Torridon. Unfortunately the

results of fires in early spring this year covered many hectares along our route, destroying habitat and wildlife. It is hoped nature, in time, will recover and regenerate. Our destination was Big Sand along the peninsula west of Gairloch in Wester Ross. We were now in "diver" territory and four black throated divers hugged the shoreline as we made our way to the campsite.

Walking was on the list to revisit a circular walk called "Fairy Lochs" – three miles in length past five tranquil lochs and wonderful views of the surrounding mountains. Red and black throated divers were seen on several of the lochs and then as we were about to make our way up the side of a tumbling burn, I looked up to see a white-tailed sea eagle just above our heads. What a thrill that was – just it and us and it was to be our only sighting. Golden eagles were seen regularly around the campsite, riding the ridge behind us every day.

Editorial

By *Laura Montgomerie*

Welcome to the new-look North Ayrshire RSPB Local Group newsletter. Along with the redesign, we also have a name - one that corresponds to our own group logo, which features a sandwich tern.

In this edition, find out what you missed out on with a write up on our group trip to Speyside, find out about the ringing of birds in Lithuania, find out what the West coast of Scotland holds, find out what happens when red kites leave their nests and find out what has happened to our farmland birds.

Remember we are always looking for new voices to be heard (or seen, I guess!) in the content of the newsletter, so if you have any funny stories or interesting photos to share, just give me an email at laura@narspb.org.uk or a call on [0141 770 4920](tel:01417704920) and we can see about getting your addition into a future edition.

Strathbeg Trip

We will be journeying north again this year for our autumn weekend trip, this time to the northeast corner of Aberdeenshire and the RSPB Loch of Strathbeg reserve. The planned weekend will run from Friday 21 October to Sunday 23 October and will be a two night DB&B stay at a hotel yet to be confirmed.

It is hoped that we will have a minibus for this outing and the trip will involve the travel north on the Friday, stopping as and when required. The Saturday will be spent at Loch of Strathbeg and its environs and again the Sunday will include some stops at various coastal locations on our journey back home.

If you are interested in joining this trip, then please include your name on the sheet at the September or October indoor meetings, or contact Marco McGinty on [01475 674695](tel:01475674695) or marcomcginty@yahoo.co.uk.

Keep up to date online

Visit the group website at www.narspb.org.uk

On Facebook?

Join 'Say No to Hunterston Power Station' to hear how the campaign is going. Become friends with 'RSPB Glasgow' to see what is going on in Scotland. Like 'RSPB Lochwinnoch Nature Reserve' to find out what's been seen recently.

And don't forget, Marco is still looking for donations towards the legal challenge against the proposed Hunterston coal-fired power station. Donate here:

www.justgiving.com/hunterston

The Necessary Bit

UK Headquarters
The Royal Society for
the Protection of Birds
The Lodge,
Sandy,
Bedfordshire
SG19 2DL
Tel: 01767 680551

Scotland Headquarters
Ground Floor
2 Lochside View
Edinburgh Park
Edinburgh
EH12 9DH
Tel: 0131 311 6500

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds is a registered charity: England and Wales No. 207076, Scotland No. SC037654.

The RSPB speaks out for birds and wildlife, tackling the problems that threaten our environment. Nature is amazing - help us keep it that way.

The RSPB is part of Birdlife International, the global partnership of bird conservation organisations.

Black = Indoor meetings held at Argyle Community Centre, Donaldson Avenue, Saltcoats. 7pm for 7.30pm start.

Blue = Outdoor trips. For more details about outdoor trips contact **Marco McGinty** nearer the time, on [01475 674695](tel:01475674695)

Green = For more information about these events contact **Lochwinnoch RSPB Reserve** on [01505 842 663](tel:01505842663). For some events there will be a small fee.

Fri 9 September

Pardeep Chand - Baron's Haugh & Dalzell Estate: Rising from the Ashes

Sun 11 September

Fairlie and Hunterston. Meet at Fairlie car park at 10am

Sat 10 - Sun 18 September

Second-hand Natural History Book and Optics Sale

Sat 17 September

Baron's Haugh RSPB Reserve. Meet at reserve car park at 10am

Sat 17 - Sun 18 September

Amazing Autumn

Sun 25 September

Young At Heart (Adults only)

Fri 14 October

Zoe Clelland - Futurescapes: Delivering Conservation on a Landscape Scale

Mon 17 October

Wildlife Fun Day - Are You Smarter Than A 10-year-old?

Thu 20 October

Quiz Night

Fri 21 - Sun 23 October

Long Weekend - Loch of Strathbeg. More details above

Fri 28 October

Fright Night (booking essential)

Sun 30 October

Mersehead RSPB Reserve. Meet at reserve car park at 11am

Fri 11 November

Liz Leyden - Beautiful Botswana

Sat 19 November

Hogganfield Loch and Kelvingrove. Meet at reserve car park at 10am

Sat 26 - Sun 27 November

Optics Weekend

Fri 9 December

Dave Fairlamb - From the Tyne to the Solway

Sat 10 December

Festive Fun

Wed 14 December

Twilight Talk: reserve manager Zul Bhatia talks about Africa

Sat 17 December

Vane Farm RSPB Reserve. Meet at reserve car park at 11am

Mon 2 January

Saltcoats Harbour. Meet at harbour car park at 10.30am

Fri 13 January

Alastair Murdoch - Birds, Books and Bones from a Countryside Ranger of Eglinton Park

Sat 21 January

Irvine Harbour. Meet at harbour car park at 10am

Chairman's Message

By Duncan Watt

While looking forward to the start of our winter programme of meetings and field trips, I'd like to thank all the volunteers who served on the CalMac ferry back and forth to Brodick on nine Saturdays this summer, showing people birds, talking about the RSPB and recruiting new members.

During July and August, we experimented with guided bird walks out of the Scottish Maritime Museum and Puffers Cafe along the harbourside at Irvine. The RSPB has

prepared new interpretative displays for this project, which will take time to develop on a volunteer basis which will run into the winter months when the bird numbers increase. Anyone interested in joining me in this venture will be most welcome.

Our pin badge donation boxes at Eglinton Park and the Ship Inn at Irvine have raised £280 so far this year. If you know of other suitable locations for this fundraising winner, please let me know.

RSPB Central Ayrshire Branch are presenting another 'Art on the Wing'

wildlife art exhibition this year at the MacLaurin Art Gallery in the Rozelle Estate from Sunday 28th August till 25th September, 10.00 – 1700 hrs daily except Tuesdays. I will be giving a walk around the show talk on Tuesday 6th September at 2 p.m. Phone the venue 01292 443708 for details of other events during the show, which include a talk by Angus Hogg and a 'wild art' workshop by me.

See you all soon. Good Birding!

Ventes Ragas Ornithological Station

By Neil O'Donnell

After last year's successful trip to Nemunas Delta region of Lithuania it was a no-brainer where I was off to this year. After a volcanic ash cloud delay of a few days (which enabled me to 'luck-in' on the long-tailed skua extravaganza at Saltcoats which I would otherwise have missed) I finally reached the beautiful Baltic coast.

After a brief visit last year, I spent a few wonderful days at the ornithological station at Ventes Ragas, a small peninsula on the eastern shore of the Curonian Lagoon. It is in an ideal location for capturing and ringing birds as one of the main bird migratory pathways crosses the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea. So much so that some days there can be over three million birds flying along the Lithuanian coastline. Of these, 20-30% continue their journey along the eastern shore of the Curonian Lagoon towards Ventes Ragas.

This wonderful location was 'discovered' by the station's first bird ringer Mikas Posingis who was the Ventes Ragas lighthouse keeper from 1924 to 1944. Regular bird observations started in 1929 and ringing started in 1930. From 1929 until 2006 staff and volunteers had ringed almost two million birds. Now, between 60,000 and 80,000 birds are ringed each year and 300-400 reports are received annually from around Europe, Africa, and Asia about birds ringed at Ventes Ragas.

This year, I was lucky enough to be shown round the large array of zig-zag traps by Lithuanian birder, and station employee, Vytautas Jusys. It wasn't long before I was looking at golden oriole, blyth's reed warbler, barred warbler, lesser whitethroat and marsh warbler in the hand. It was also good to help Vytautas as he ringed each bird.

A fantastic few days in what was another incredible holiday.



Top: Blyth's reed warbler. Above: Golden oriole. Below: A mixture of tits trapped for ringing.

Photos by Pardeep Chand.



The Wild West (continued from page 1)

After four nights we moved on to the next peninsula on the east side of Loch Ewe where we camped wild for two nights at Mellon Udrigle, which boasted a beautiful white sandy beach and stunning turquoise sea colours. Loch Ewe was an important site during WW2 where merchant ships were hidden from sight before being escorted by Navy ships to Arctic Russia. In spite of protection, over 3,000 lives were lost during the struggles – a memorial stone is a poignant reminder of the cost these brave men and women paid



White-tailed eagle

to secure our freedom in such an isolated part of Scotland.

This area really deserved more time but we had to move on to our next stop near Ullapool taking us past Gruinard Bay and the Corrieshalloch Gorge. We took a short diversion to a small loch which was highlighted in a book on Birds in the North-west Highlands as a good spot to see black-throated divers. I made my way down to the lochside with bins, scope and camera and began panning the small group of islands. To my astonishment I suddenly was looking eye to eye at a black-throated diver on its nest! I can still feel the excitement and disbelief as I looked at it sitting motionless on the smallest of islands, again just it and me. It was something I never thought I would see. There are only 150 breeding pairs in Britain, all of them in Scotland and here I was looking at one of them – absolutely magic! Nothing was going to top that I was certain.

It was time now to leave Wester Ross and head to Assynt and although the scenery had been breathtaking so far, nothing prepared me for the sheer beauty of this area. Assynt has been described as beautiful, scenic, spectacular and dramatic set amongst some of the wildest and most remote mountain and coastal scenery, strewn with lochs and lochans, immense tracks of bare moorland and blanket bog and a coastline deeply indented by numerous lochs or arms of the sea, producing stunning glimpses of savage beauty at every turn.

We took a single track road passing the Summer Isles and continued to Enard Bay where we again camped wild beside a loch and burn which flowed to the sea. The only sound was the display flights of snipe as they circled above our heads. A short drive the following day through Lochinver took us to what was going to be our final destination although we didn't know it at the time. A campsite at Clachtoll, six miles north of Lochinver, was to be the spot which ticked all the boxes – beautiful bay and beach, history on the doorstep, wildlife all around, stunning scenery and sunsets, unrestricted walks along the coast.

The first night the owner tapped on our window to point out Minke whale and dolphins just off the bay. Every day there were two to three divers in the bay along with gannets and occasional skuas, auks, fulmars, mergansers, passing whimbrel. Ravens and eagles frequented the hills, numerous wheatears, lapwings,



Common Sandpiper

redshank, golden plovers and greylag geese were seen and heard when walking the coast to visit the 4,000 year old Clachtoll Broch - inhabited now by otters. Unfortunately in spite of trying on several occasions they remained elusive although our neighbouring camper did see one! June was a good month for wildflowers and the next bay to us was known for orchids so a visit produced Northern Marsh and Fragrant but the small Frog orchid couldn't be found on our visit.

There was so much more that needed exploring but the week was gone and it was time to think about heading home. This visit certainly produced wonderful sightings of Scotland's specialities. We decided that this area certainly deserved more time and another visit to explore the vast ever-changing landscape and its breathtaking beauty and of course the abundant wildlife on offer. I think I know where we'll be heading next year.



Red-throated diver

Visit

Sandwell Valley!

Sandwell Valley, situated just off the M5 near Birmingham, is a wonderful reserve with many facilities to offer at all times of the year.

The reserve has one hide that is only open in the morning and afternoon but also has a trail open to the public at any time. During the springtime, many migrants such as sand martin and house martin arrive from Africa. Other notable spring birds include the arrival of breeding lapwings, dunnocks and reed buntings.

Summer signals the songs of the warblers, more specifically reed, sedge, garden grasshopper and willow warblers. These, along with goldfinches, whitethroats and chiffchaffs, can be seen on the reserve. Those with a sharp eye may also spot Mediterranean gulls within the groups of black-headed gulls! Many other flora and fauna can be seen on the reserve besides the birds. Different species of dragonflies and damselflies can be seen darting around and many flowers are in bloom, such as the wild chicory.

As the season changes, a different variety of birds can be seen, including the elusive snipe and water rail. With patience, these birds can be found along amongst the reeds at the reserve. Bullfinches can be seen frequently at the visitor centre along with roosting jackdaws.

As winter approaches, so do the flocks of wintering ducks. Numerous tufted ducks can be seen along with goldeneye, wigeon and the additional migratory lapwings. Redwings and fieldfares can also be spotted picking off any berries that have been left over from autumn.

Sandwell Valley has many activities that cater for all the species throughout the year. Fortnightly guided walks start in July and continue all the way through until October. These two-hour walks are aimed at showing visitors the different species of birds and wildlife that can be found on the reserve. For more information on the tours or the reserve itself, don't hesitate to contact them on 0121 357 7395.

Arran Birding Notes

March was generally settled and dry, encouraging the arrival of the first of the spring migrants. Chiffchaff were heard in Kiscadale and in Brodick Castle Gardens on 21st, wheatear were seen on Machrie Golf Course and on Cleats Shore on 22nd and two sand martins were in Kilpatrick on 23rd March.

Winter visitors were still present including: the long staying pintail at Kilpatrick Point on 5th, a mixed flock of two hundred fieldfare and redwing at Balmichael on 6th, two greenshank at Clauchlands on 12th, twenty two whooper swans at Sandbraes on 24th and two hundred fifty greylag geese in Blackwaterfoot on 29th. Other sightings included a kingfisher on the Rosa Burn on 5th, a merlin in High Kildonan also on 9th, a great crested grebe off Whiting Bay on 11th (which is an occasional winter and passage migrant), two common scoter off Cosyden on 19th (which only had one record on Arran in 2010) and two snow bunting on Meall nan Damh on 24th March.

April was warmer and drier than April 2009. As a result, summer migrants were arriving earlier, in some cases up to ten days earlier than 2009. The April "firsts" for Arran summer migrants were: blackcap in Lamdash on 3rd, Manx shearwaters in Brodick Bay also on 3rd, swallow and willow warbler in Whiting Bay on 5th, sandwich tern at Dougarie on 7th, grasshopper warbler at East Mayish on 12th, whitethroat at Slidery on 17th, garden warbler at Strathwillan on 22nd, whinchat on the Ross Road on 23rd, spotted flycatcher in Whiting Bay on 25th and tree pipit at Kilmory on 27th April. More migratory birds were still being spotted in April, with over eighty great northern divers on 8th and over twenty black-throated divers on the 26th. Other rarities include a little grebe at Kildonan on 9th, a pair of goosander on the lorsa on 18th, a red kite in North Sannox on 22nd and two puffins in Brodick Bay on 29th May.

May was very unsettled with more than four times the rain of May 2010 and days with autumnal storm force winds. These scorched fresh foliage and blossom leaving hedges and trees in the south and west of Arran "burnt". However, the unsettled weather did bring migrating skuas and other seabirds closer to the

shore. These included an Arctic skua off Kildonan on 18th, a great skua in Brodick Bay on 25th, two storm petrels off Blackwaterfoot on 26th and two long-tailed skuas (a first in Arran) between Kildonan and Pladda on 19th May. Many other summer visitors included Arctic tern on Cleats Shore on 6th, lesser whitethroat in Auchenhew on 14th and wood warbler in Glenashdale on 26th. Breeding was well underway for many species including: woodcock roding over Lochranza on 8th, a pair of shelduck with eleven young at Carlo on 17th, ten pairs of fulmar on Drumadoon cliffs on 18th and up to twenty black guillemots at Brodick pier on 19th May.

June was cooler and wetter than in recent years. The mean temperature was two degrees lower than the last two Junes and there was five times more rain than June 2010. Reports of fledged birds included two young great spotted woodpecker in Brodick Castle gardens also on 11th, six young long-tailed tit in Glenkiln also on 12th, six young red grouse on Mullach Buidhe on 23rd and two families of bullfinch in East Bannan on 28th May. A pair of golden eagles were seen soaring over Lochranza on 9th, a pair of hen harriers over Machrie Moor on 18th, a puffin off Kildonan on 21st, a swift over High Kildonan on 23rd and a rare summer record of a merlin also over High Kildonan on the 24th.

July was dry, with less than half the rain of the previous two months and the previous two Julys. This settled spell was ideal for birds whose main priority at this time of year is raising young. Reports of breeding included: three eider with ten young at Kildonan on 2nd, fifteen pairs of nesting Arctic tern on Pladda on 14th, around twenty swallows including fledged young in Kilpatrick on 26th and a pair of spotted flycatcher with at least four young at Sannox cemetery on 27th. On Tuesday 12th July a little grebe was seen with two young on a pond in Kilpatrick. Other records include a short-eared owl on Machrie Moor on 7th, thirty Manx shearwaters in Machrie Bay on 18th, a family group of crossbills at Urie Loch on 23rd May.

A Speyside Getaway

By Susan Montgomerie

Monday began with an exchange of prisoners, sorry, passengers at Hogganfield Loch, where Dorothy and Bobby were picked up by Don and Kate Jamie and we headed down to Riddrie to pick up Laura and Hazel. The Loch got us started with pochards, tufted ducks, mute swans, greylag geese, goldeneye and mallard. There were also black headed, common, herring and lesser black-backed gulls around the new observation point and floating platform. On the way up the A80, we saw some pink-footed geese and buzzards.

We then met up with the rest of the Group at the dam at Pitlochry, where we saw goldcrest, chiffchaff, common sandpiper, pied and grey wagtail, and dipper.

It was windy at Insh Marshes and hard to find any birds, but we did get some willow warblers, chaffinches, tits, greylags with goslings, grey herons, curlews and two young roe deer bucks playfully sparring.

Near Boat of Garten, we stopped at the red squirrel viewing point that also overlooks a large pond. There were no squirrels, but we did see some oystercatchers, lapwings, redshanks, wigeon, coots and a pair of slavonian grebes building a nest in the reeds. Arriving at the quaint Victorian Nethybridge Hotel, with the eaves full of house martin nests, we found our rooms and were treated to a delicious evening meal. Afterwards, some of us went for a walk in the nearby woodlands, but no owls were forthcoming.

Very early next morning some of the group went to The Loch Garten Centre to see capercaillie. After a glorious breakfast, we headed off to Loch an Eilean and found red squirrels, redstart, song thrush, willow warblers, coal tits and a brief glimpse of a crested tit. Some of the laggards got to hear a cuckoo and a great spotted woodpecker. We picked up lunch in Aviemore and set off towards Loch Garten. At the main hide, we saw the resident pair of ospreys, EJ and Odin, with their chicks, and great excitement

occurred when another male passed by and was seen off by the pair. Walking through the woodland to Loch Mallachy we saw a black-throated diver on the far side of the loch.

Wednesday was colder and wetter as we went to Munloch Bay on the Black Isle where we saw herons, redshanks, teal and shelduck. A swallow nested at the hide, yellowhammers asked for "a little bit of bread and no cheese" and a skylark sang overhead. We continued on to Chanonry Point, getting nice views of the bottlenose dolphins. There were also ringed plover, kittiwakes, gannets and common terns to be seen. We drove past the Red Kite Feeding Station at Tollie and up the beautiful isolated Strathconon Glen seeing mistle thrush, stonechat, cuckoo, kestrel, buzzard, red deer and tree pipit. On the way back, we got superb views of red kite at the Tor Achilty power station. Heading back down the A9, we paused at lay-by 151 to see if the ring ouzel was around, but instead we saw a merlin. Sand martins were seen aplenty at Broomhill Bridge near Nethybridge.

On the way to Grantown-on-Spey to get Thursday's sandwiches, a green woodpecker flew across the road and a second one was seen sitting in a small field nearby. At Lochindorb, we were challenged by a brisk wind, but we managed to see red grouse, greylags, a family of mallards and in the woodland we found chaffinches, treecreeper, crossbills and siskin. We turned off the A9 at Tomatin where we saw osprey and red kite and then into Strathdearn where dippers and a golden eagle were spotted. We had our lunch in the carpark far up the glen. In between the showers, we saw a hungry common gull, common sandpiper, wheatear and a peregrine. We headed over the Garbole/Farr road to Loch Ruthven where, from the hide, we saw slavonian grebes. In the woodlands there were long-tailed tit and redpoll. There was still no sign of the ring ouzels at the lay-by near the Slochd summit. After another scrumptious meal, we left for a special hide near Rothiemurchus. As the light fell, lamps outside the hide were slowly turned up to allow us to see the

nighttime wildlife. After a while, we were rewarded with close up views of wood mouse, voles, badgers, red deer and a tawny owl. At the last moment, two pine martens made their entrances. We walked back to the cars by torchlight, tired but elated.

Friday's first stop was the Forest Lodge, deep in the Abernethy Forest, where we had good views of great spotted woodpecker and Scottish crossbill dropping cones from the top of the tree. We identified the bird using Bob Yates' online bird ID app to compare the song. A tree pipit also gave us a great display from the top of a tree. We then went to the RSPB Abernethy woodland walk, where we got lovely views of crested tits. Our last stop was Loch of the Lowes where two ospreys, Lady and her partner, 7Y, were in residence. We also saw great crested grebe, Canada geese, goosanders, jay, reed bunting, greenfinches, spotted flycatcher, siskin and wren. Almost undetectable, a snuggle of baby treecreepers clung to the side of a tree in the crook of a branch. A real "aaaah" moment!

Some of the other interesting birds seen during the week were little grebe, red-breasted merganser, kestrel, black grouse, red-legged partridge, snipe, rock pipit, whitethroat, wood warbler, hooded crow, raven and bullfinch.

Altogether, the Group saw a very satisfying 106 species.

Did you know?

Flamingo chicks are born with grey plumage. They get their pink colour because their staple food, brine shrimp, is rich in carotene. Flamingos can range in colour from light pink to dark red depending on their food supply and flamingos with light coloured feathers are usually malnourished. Every flamingo has twelve black feathers in each wing.

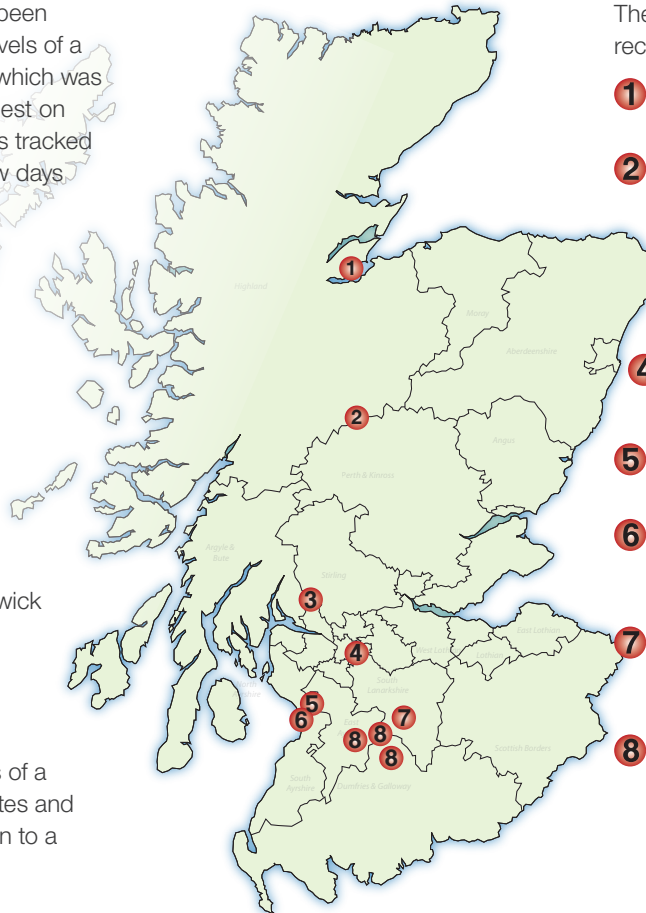


The Adventures of a Young Munloch Red Kite

Staff from RSPB Scotland have been surprised by the adventurous travels of a newly-fledged red kite. The bird which was satellite-tagged while still in the nest on the Black Isle near Inverness was tracked as far south as Ayrshire just a few days after leaving the nest.

RSPB conservation officer Stuart Benn said: "Juvenile red kites are well known for undertaking extensive travels during their first year but they usually spend some time around their home area before moving on. This bird, however, seems to have had itchy feet and has flown south almost immediately. He has spent some time near Prestwick Airport – not too far from other travellers seeking the sun and warmer weather!"

RSPB staff and volunteers regularly monitor the movements of a number of satellite-tagged red kites and their movements are uploaded on to a dedicated website:
www.eyestotheskies.org.uk



The movements of the red kite have been recorded as follows:

- 1 6 August – bird close to nest where it fledged. Munloch Bay
- 2 8 August – Coignafearn, upper Findhorn, later in woodland north of Dalwhinnie
- 3 9 August – between Stirling and Loch Lomond, later over the south side of Glasgow then to south-west
- 4 Lanarkshire where it spent the night
10 August – spent day in east Ayrshire
- 5 11 August – spent day at sand and gravel quarry south of Kilmarnock
- 6 12 August – north-east of Prestwick then stayed in north Ayrshire until the 17th
- 7 17 August – tracked south of Glasgow to the Strathaven area and then Douglas
- 8 18 to 20 August – south of Muirkirk and then did a tour down to Sanquhar across to Cumnock and then back up towards Muirkirk.

Field Trip Report

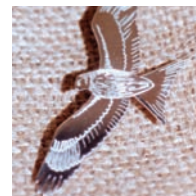
Roslin Glen - 16 April 2011

From Saltcoats and up through to Glasgow, we saw the usual herring gulls, pigeons, carrion crows, starlings, house sparrows, blackbird, lesser black-backed gull, magpie, jackdaw, rook and woodpigeon. Passing through Glasgow, I was surprised to see a buzzard hunting along the side of the M8 near Barlinnie! The group met up at Dreghorn services on the Edinburgh By-pass, to get coffee and a bun and also added wren, dunnock, robin, chiffchaff, blue tit, chaffinch and greenfinch to the day's total.

The car park at Roslin Glen sits between two nice walks. The first one we did was a wide gentle stroll through old deciduous woodland going upriver where we saw grey wagtail, dipper, willow warbler, blackcap, long-tailed tit, goldfinch, bullfinch and a large gathering of swallows and sand martins with a couple of house martins passing through on their way north.

After lunch, we tackled the more challenging north path and got great views of goosander, great spotted woodpecker, goldcrest, great and coal tits, nuthatch, treecreeper, raven, buzzard and peregrine.

In Musselburgh, by the old bridge, where we saw mute swan, greylag and Canada geese, black-headed gull, common gull, pied wagtail, meadow pipit and song thrush. Moving out to the sea walls, we saw shag, eider, long-tailed duck, goldeneye, red-breasted merganser, grey plover, common sandpiper, dunlin, oystercatcher, redshank, curlew, rock pipit and wheatear. There was also a nice little group of around 10 velvet scoter out to sea. Over the day we saw at least 64 species.

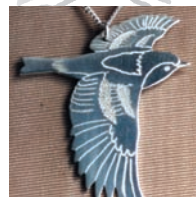


SILVERTREES

HANDMADE SILVER JEWELLERY
 by SUSAN MONTGOMERIE DA

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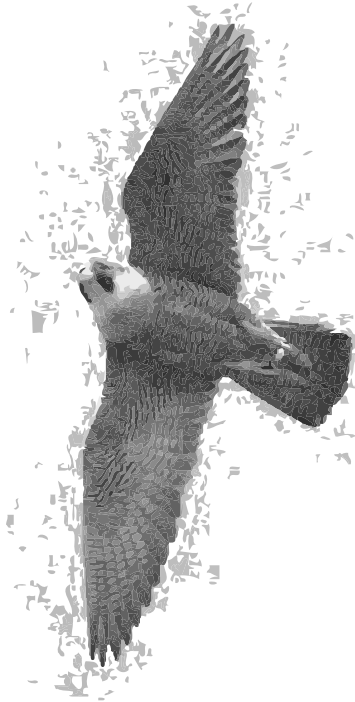
Swiftest Flight

By Hazel Montgomerie

A poem dedicated to the fastest bird in the world, the peregrine. To one specific bird I've seen many times near Hunterston.

The western waves thrashed against
the shore,
Pursued by relentless rain.
The grey cliffs lay besieged,
Battered with most disdain.
Amidst the chaos, she waits vigilantly.
Ever watching, everlasting.

Hidden in plain sight upon her precipice,
She surveys her surroundings.
Distant reeds are powerless against
the gales,
Great boulders also subject to beatings.
Unwavering, she waits for a sign.
Ever watching, everlasting.



A movement through the mist catches
her eye.

She takes to the stormy grey.
With flawless aim and swiftest flight,
She easily grasps her prey.
Despite her small victory, she
remains cautious.
Ever watching, everlasting.

A force greater than those at work today
Threatens her land.
Uncontrolled disorder encroaches
and devours,
Destroying her command.
And yet she waits.
Ever watching, everlasting.

She waits in the storm for her yang,
The one who will lift the storm.
He can bring order and balance
Back to the neutral norm.
And so she remains on the lookout,
Ever watching, everlasting.

Farmland birds in Europe fall to lowest levels

RSPB Media Release

Farmland bird populations across Europe are at their lowest levels since records began, new figures reveal.

The Pan-European Common Bird Monitoring Scheme looked at population figures for 145 of the most common bird species in 25 European countries between 1980 and 2009. The results show that farmland birds are the most threatened species group, and are at an all time low.

Half of the top ten most threatened birds across Europe are farmland birds including grey partridge, which has declined by 90 per cent in the UK, and linnet, which has declined by 57 per cent.

Conservationists say the results prove the need for reform of the Common Agricultural Policy so that it rewards and encourages farmers who put conservation measures in place on their land.

Proposals for the upcoming reform of the CAP are set to be published in October and the RSPB is concerned that it does not contain enough support for agri environment schemes which fund wildlife friendly farming measures.

Jenna Hegarty, RSPB CAP policy officer, said: "We know that farmland birds have halved in number in the UK since the

1970s, but these shocking figures show that the story is the same across Europe.

"This is no coincidence – the one thing that farmed landscapes in European countries all have in common is that they are shaped by the Common Agricultural Policy. This policy has helped farmers to produce more food, but wildlife has suffered as a result.

"Now we have an opportunity to reform the CAP and make it address today's challenges – one of which is a massive loss of biodiversity across Europe. With proper targeted funding for wildlife friendly farming and effective and efficient schemes in place we can reverse these declines and make our countryside richer and healthier for birds, plants, insects and people as well as producing food.

"I hope that these stark figures on wildlife population declines bring home to policy makers the vital importance of a CAP that works for people and nature. Many farmers are doing brilliant things for wildlife but there still isn't enough money in the pot. It's not a choice between food and birds, because we can have both."

Recent EU Budget announcements have made it clear that decision makers plan to allocate less money to Pillar

2 environmental payments, such as England's Entry Level Stewardship and Higher Level Stewardship schemes. A recent leaked CAP document has also revealed that they plan to allow member states to move money away from agri environment schemes and into other areas.

The results of the European bird population survey suggest that after missing its 2010 biodiversity conservation target, the EU will go on to miss the 2020 biodiversity conservation target unless further action is taken.

The new EU Biodiversity Strategy commits the EU to, "halt the deterioration in the status of all species and habitats covered by EU nature legislation". Although Member States endorsed the new strategy in June this year, they have yet to make any commitment to deliver the actions needed to achieve its aims.