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“THE OYSTERCATCHER”

The Isle of Mull Bird Club Newsletter

www.mullbirdclub.org.uk

June 2008

A FIRST FOR MULL

The first ever Nuthatch on Mull was found on the morning of 10th April 2008 by Andrew Mortley in his garden. It was feeding on peanuts. There have been 5 accepted records from Argyll and none previously from Mull or indeed the islands so this is quite significant. There have also been a number of unconfirmed reports over the years from the Argyll mainland.

This is a big step for this attractive little bird and is an indication of how the climate is changing, bringing some of our 'southern birds' further north, and I am sure that this movement will continue. So the next few years could bring us other species.



Photograph courtesy of Andrew Mortley

SOMETHING TO MAKE YOU.....SMILE



This photograph was sent in by our President Alan Spellman who snapped it over Lochdon. Which leads me to.....

PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION RUN BY SUSAN HALL

We are running a bird club competition open to all members. The pictures will be judged on content not photographic prowess so even the point and press brigade whom I am a proud member of will stand a chance of being a winner. The photographs can be colour or black and white. If possible I would like photographs emailed to me but prints can be handed in to me any time before the closing date of the 1st of December. 2008. There will be three classes.

1. Perched Birds
2. Birds and Water
3. Humorous

I will choose three photographs from each category which will be displayed at our social evening for the club members to vote for. I feel this will be a fairer way of choosing a winner as we will have a wide variety of tastes to please

Please email me your photographs to:

varutt@btinternet.com

Susan Hall

A QUINTET OF UNUSUAL GULLS VISIT OBAN

A quintet of unusual gulls was recorded in Oban during the second half of Winter 2007/2008 : Scandinavian HERRING GULL; a 1st W. immature GLAUCOUS GULL; a 1st W. immature ICELAND GULL; the ever - faithful adult RING-BILLED GULL; and a strange individual which consistently showed the characteristics of two species (and may be a hybrid) and which was dubbed the 'Oban Gull'. Most could be seen at the George Street foreshore, which is situated next to Oban's main thoroughfare or opposite the town's Cathedral, where gulls assemble to drink, bathe, preen and loaf around. Scandinavian HERRING GULLS are the nominate race (*Larus argentatus argentatus*) of the birds that we are used to seeing here in Oban and Mull (ssp. *argenteus*). They have darker upperparts and are often larger than local Herring Gulls. Although a common Winter visitor to Northern and Eastern coasts from Norwegian waters, comparatively few (only 1% - 2% of local flocks) make it over to the West Highlands. However, very few birdwatchers are looking for them in Argyll, so there may be more to be found ! In recent years, sightings of GLAUCOUS GULLS have become rather scarce in Oban during the Winter months, with a greater likelihood of birdwatchers finding the smaller ICELAND GULL in the harbour area, especially during the period Jan. - March. However, Winter 2007/2008 proved somewhat disappointing, as only a single bird (of both species) was recorded during this time. Not only that, but both the birds that were recorded proved to be somewhat enigmatic, although the 1st W. immature Glaucous Gull did fly over the roof of my house on one memorable occasion ! Oban's temporary resident RING-BILLED GULL remained for the duration of it's fourth winter on the town's George Street foreshore, where it continued to roost in the evening with up to 100 Common Gulls. During the day, it could be seen (again, in the company of Common Gulls) at Dunstaffnage Bay, some 3.5 miles to the North-East of Oban. The most puzzling gull to be seen in Oban last Winter was, undoubtedly, a bird which has largely defied identity, as it consistently showed characteristics of two separate gull

species : nominate 'argentatus' Herring Gull, as well as Caspian Gull ! The pro-Caspian Gull features initially set local gull-watchers' hearts racing, such is it's rarity in Scotland, but closer scrutiny revealed this bird to be either a small, female 'argentatus' (Scandinavian) Herring Gull (showing Caspian Gull-like features) or, **I n d e e d a P O S S I B L E H Y B R I D ('A R G E N T A T U S' H E R R I N G G U L L X C A S P I A N G U L L)**. Apparently, a zone of hybridity for these two species exists in Poland, so the possibility of it being a hybrid, although rare, does exist. 95% (if not more !) of all the gulls found in Oban belong to the West European race of HERRING GULL ('ARGENTEUS'). Over 200 of these fascinating birds throng the harbour and esplanade area on a daily basis, offering those interested an excellent opportunity to discover for themselves the wide taxonomic complexity that this species offers. Quite simply, no two birds are the same. Some, of similar age, can even look remarkably different to one another. And, here the fun (and the head scratching) begins ... !

Stuart Gibson

PROFILE

BY STEVE KIRK MEMBER FROM DONCASTER

Why an interest in birds?

There is such a wide variety of them. Migration, breeding habits, habitats, they are so fascinating to me.

Who do you admire in the bird world?

I admire Doug Simpson, he is the Yorkshire Red Kite project manager, he is dedicated to all birds, also he does conservation work with Peregrine Falcons, as well as Red Kites, and has just been awarded the M B E for his conservation work.

What do you like about birding?

I find it very exciting, you never know what you are going to see, I like to be out in the country side, and I can find birds to watch where ever I am.

What do you dislike?

I do not like the persecution of raptors, and the shooting and trapping of birds in other parts of world. I do not like birders who deliberately flush birds just so they can see them, or annoy others when they are looking at a rare migrant, e.g., private residents of houses etc.

Favourite reserve?

I must say that Blacktoft Sands is my favourite reserve, near Goole East Yorkshire.

Which was your favourite foreign holiday.?

Well if I may count Scotland as foreign, it's got to be the Isle of Mull.

What is your favourite bird?

My favourite bird is a Golden Eagle, they are so majestic.

How do you see the future?

I think climate change will affect birds greatly in time, breeding habits, migration patterns, more different birds breeding in UK. And perhaps some species that we have now, could disappear, I also think that the persecution of raptors will increase. Especially if more large raptors are introduced in certain areas of the country, e.g. White tailed sea eagles, and Red Kites.

Steve Kirk Doncaster Yorkshire.

CHAIRMAN'S VIEW

At the time of writing spring has sprung on Mull, the weather is fantastic and getting warmer and grass is starting to grow, soon I will have to see if the lawn mower still works after its winter hibernation. In the fields, on the hills and the roads on Mull new lambs are appearing daily joining the new calves born only last month. On the roadsides primroses are everywhere now and in the woodland the Wood Anemonies are brightening up the land after the dark winter days. However what makes spring for me is birdsong, firstly as the clocks go forward and our resident song thrush begins to sing at first light then

the blackbirds join in and soon all the garden birds are singing as if to welcome the return of spring. As spring goes on the resident birds are joined by the migrant birds returning and there is birdsong everywhere, you do not have to know which bird sings which song but just listen and enjoy. As Simon Barnes writes let us not ask what we can do for birds but think what birds do for us, how much duller our lives would be without them.

Seeing the first Swallow of the year gives everyone a lift in fact if they are late arriving we get into a mild panic, has anyone seen a swallow yet? We ask and if someone has and you haven't you feel somewhat cheated as if you had somehow missed out. Hearing your first Cuckoo of the year makes us all feel that bit better and I know from talking to people who hear Cuckoos on Mull and say I have not heard a Cuckoo for years where I live how much they are missed. Birds make life so much better for us all and we do not realise it until they are not there. Recently in the news there was a story of a radio station which had gone bankrupt, so instead of music they started playing birdsong and had 500,000 listeners a day, proving the point that although we might not realise it we all need birdsong and birds in our lives. During Wild Isles week on Mull the bird club is organising 2 events a dawn chorus walk and a bird count I hope both will be well attended, the walk just for peoples' enjoyment and the count to help the B.T. O. with their valuable atlas work. It is good to put back a little and repay birds for all the enjoyment they give us even if we don't realise it at the time. Enjoy the birds

Arthur



Out of my way, I have an important list to deliver for the bird count

PHOTOGRAPHIC PROFILE

From time to time I have photographs sent to me from different people who are Bird Club Members but also people who are not bird club members. This set of photographs were sent to me by Steve Kirk whose friend this is. I thought they were so good that I would like to put them in the newsletter and there is also a short write-up of the gentleman concerned. Ed

My name is Chris Bower and I am in my late fifties and a divorced lone parent of four boys. I was born in Wakefield, West Yorkshire, and with the exception of a year living and working in Devon I have stopped around the Wakefield area all my life. I am an early retired senior manager. Up to my retirement I was responsible for the provision of all the support required by local councillors and to a limited extent local MP's and Euro MP's. This work covered a very wide and diverse number of responsibilities and I was very much " in the trenches " with the politicians. Hence taking early retirement as soon as possible!! I spent my early (and happiest) years of my life living in the country on my parents small-holding, surrounded by fields and woodland. Since then I have maintained an interest in nature in particularly wild life. Inevitably through education, career and family pressures, the interest dwindled a little bit - although, I have always kept a pair of bins in my car. About six years ago for various reasons I started bird watching again. After a couple of years or so I started digiscoping. Couldn't get on with this so I used a Canon 300d through a scope via an adapter. I did this for about a year and had a few pictures published in the Yorkshire Post. I then bought a Canon 20d plus a Tamron 200-500mm lens and have never got tired of taking wildlife pictures since. I take pictures because I love the beauty of wildlife no matter what form it takes. I am a great believer that the welfare of the wildlife comes first, and particularly dislike manic twitchers and photographers who will do anything no matter what the cost to creature involved. I am now very much into macro photography and love looking into the world of insects and spiders. The equipment I currently use is:- Canon 20D, Canon 40d, Canon 400mm f5.6 L, Tamron 200-500mm zoom, Tamron 90mm macro lens (superb lens) Tamron 28-300mm, Kenko 1.4 TC."

Chris Bower



All Photographs taken by Chris Bower

As off-island club members, Sandra and I live in a village named Blackrod in Lancashire, the origin of the name Blackrod comes from roman times meaning 'Bleak Road', it is between Bolton, Chorley and Wigan (or between Manchester and Liverpool). We are 300 miles south of Oban by road, and it's position is on the western outskirts of Bolton, it gives us easy access (5-10 minutes by car) to the lovely moorland area 'The West Pennine Moors' a part of this is the Rivington and Anglezarke area which is referred to by many people as a miniature lake district due to the fact that it includes six reservoirs. We take walks in this area but also enjoy visiting other – not too distant – areas. Amongst these areas are:- Leighton Moss RSPB Reserve and Morecambe Bay, Marshside RSPB Reserve at Southport and the Ribble estuary, Martin Mere – Wildfowl and Wetland Trust, now more famous through the Spring-watch and Autumn-watch television programmes Mere Sands Wood Reserve at Rufford, a Lancashire Wildlife Trust site, The Trough of Bowland in North Lancashire, Wigan Flashes which is also a Lancashire Wildlife Trust site, and Pennington Flash Country Park at Leigh – this is about 8 miles south of where we live. I have chosen this latter area to report on as 'MY PATCH' due to the diversity of wildlife to be seen there.

Pennington Flash Country Park.



The description 'Flash' is an area of water, on this site the water covers 70 hectares (173 acres). The entire country park spreads over 200 hectares (about 500 acres). It was farmland towards the end of the nineteenth century and was crossed by a railway and a stream. By 1905 mining subsidence caused the land to sink and a large lake was formed. Originally the flash was larger than it is today. It was partially filled with colliery waste from local mines (all now closed), one side of the water being filled to prevent regular flooding of a nearby road and property. The site was developed during the 1960's and 70's for recreation and conservation, and was officially opened in 1981 as the country park we enjoy today. The site is being continually developed and managed by Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust on behalf of Wigan Council. It is bounded on the north side by the Leeds / Liverpool Canal, and by a major road system on the east side. On site is an information point (with toilets), and it has a ranger service all year round, and has 3 pay and display car parks (£1 all day). Other facilities include picnic and recreation areas, including a large grass area for the children to kick a ball around and play on, a 9 hole golf course and shop, a children's play area with swings, slides, etc, horse riding, angling, sailing and windsurfing through the local sailing club – this is limited to the west side of the flash, hot and cold light refreshments are also available. Most important to us is the network of tracks and paths, which are always kept in good condition, offering a range of short to medium length walks around this extensive nature reserve area. The footpaths go all the way round the 'flash' with a 3 miles circular tour, with quite a number of side tracks going through small wooded areas, and open farmland areas and with easy access to the path by the side of the canal.

Pennington nature reserve boasts 7 bird watching hides, all with wheelchair access. At the northern end of the water are a few small islands, scrapes and a 'spit' (a long finger shaped piece of land jutting out into the water). At the North West corner are a few small areas of water inter linked to each other and the main flash by little streams. It is at this North / North West corner that we enjoy most for our bird watching visits, six out of the seven named hides are in this area with the other one being at the side of the main open water. As you meander along the pathways you will find several wood carvings, mainly positioned at the edge of the woodland areas. These include a two foot high carving of a woodpecker on the stump of a tree, a Capercaillie, a Sparrow, a Snail, a Hedgehog and a Kingfisher, also one of a man, or part of him, as he appears to have his head and body stuck in the ground with only his waist and two legs sticking up in the air above the ground surface, but the most impressive one is a full size carving of a man who has his binoculars up to his eyes, they have positioned this at the entrance to the main hide, Horrock's hide, he is

looking out over the main expanse of water. A typical visit would start by parking the car (the car park is right by the side of the main stretch of water) and finding yourself amongst about 50 or more of both Canada geese and Mallard plus around 15-20



Mute swans, they are always on the narrow strip the land in front of the car, they are used to being children and they think that every car that arrives them, (a bit like your chaffinches at Loch Buie), a Coot and Black-headed gulls may be among see fairly big numbers of Coot around here, they to find as they are on Mull.



of footpath that is fed by visiting has come to feed few Moorhens, them. Yes, you will are not as difficult



Examples of the wooden carvings to be found at

Pennington.

From the car park you can take a short walk (about 400 yards) to the main hide –

Horrock's hide – named after one of the local ornithologists from the Leigh Club who died a few years ago. On the way you can easily divert to the visitor centre, which has toilets and a notice board that shows what has been reported in the previous few days. The Horrock's hide is the coldest and draughtiest hide on the estate, it looks out over the wide expanse of water, and it always appears to have a facing wind. Some of the birds I make reference to are dependant on time of year in some cases. From this hide you will certainly see Canada geese, Tufted duck, Lapwing, Cormorant, Mallard, Coot, Black-headed gull, Herring gull, Magpie, Moorhen and Mute swan. You are also likely to see Shelduck, Teal, Redshank,

Woodpigeon, Oystercatcher, Great crested grebe, Goosanders, Red breasted mergansers and Heron. Of course anything is possibly going to turn up, I will elaborate on that later. Golden plover, Scaup, Common scoter, Iceland gull, Yellow-legged gull and a Red kite were seen in January this year. The Red kite was a first for the area.

A short walk again from here takes you to the B.N.F.L. hide, this overlooks a small patch of water on which Coot, Tufted duck, and Teal are regulars, with Woodpigeon, Dunnock and usually 3 species of tit – long tail, blue and great. This is the hide that we have been lucky enough to watch Kingfisher, but they tend to be very secretive. Heron and Shoveler are regularly seen, the water here is rather shallow. Walking on round the northern end of the reserve brings you to the Teal hide, this doubles as an educational area, on the walls are charts for the children to learn more about what there is to see and what is in the water for the wildlife to feed on. The stretch of water in front of this hide is a bit larger and deeper than at the last hide, so you get ducks on here such as Shoveler, Gadwall, Goosander, Tufted, Goldeneye, and Little grebe, it is deep enough for the diving ducks. Again with the regulars such as Mallard, Coot and Moorhen everywhere, and Magpie, Woodpigeon and Carrion crow flying over. Taking in another short stroll brings you to two small hides both overlooking small ponds, on which a few of the types of wildfowl I have previously mentioned could be seen. In between these two small hides is a much bigger one, and one that has a very different outlook. It is Bunting hide and overlooks, not water, but an area that has been cleared of trees in front of the hide but surrounded with moderately dense shrubs and small trees. In the 'clearing' are about a dozen feeders, of varying types – hanging nut feeders, table feeders, hollowed out stumps of trees all kept filled with food for the small birds. You get very good close views of birds such as:- Bullfinch, Reed bunting, Willow tit, Great / Blue / Coal and Long tail tits, Robin, Blackbird, Chaffinch, Dunnock, Greenfinch, Great spotted woodpecker, Moorhen, and Coot again, Magpie and Mallard come looking for easy pickings, as do the Grey squirrels (not 'Red' I am afraid). If you are very lucky a Water rail may show itself from under the shrubs, Firecrest was seen recently and Siskin, Goldfinches and Redpoll are not uncommon. As I write this article, I have been to Pennington this afternoon and from the Bunting hide I had a Sparrowhawk zoom in from the right hand side, of course everything scattered very quickly, the Sparrowhawk disappeared into the trees on my left and flew away in the direction it came from with what I thought may be a Reed bunting, it all happened so quickly, and I was the only one in the hide to see it. The variety of small birds to be seen at this hide makes it a favourite; we often start and finish our walk here. As you are walking along the paths there is bird song everywhere, especially spring and summer. You are almost certain to see 3 of the tit family – Great, Blue, and Long tail, Robins seem to be everywhere, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Stonechat, Chiffchaff, Willow warbler and the Wren which is sometimes hard to see in the undergrowth. Magpies, Carrion crows and Kestrel are likely to fly over at some stage of the walk, with possibly the occasional Buzzard – we don't see many of them just in our area, but not far away. Woodcock was reported earlier in the year. At the northern most end of the path there is a small reed-bed on the main 'Flash', last winter (2006/2007) a Bittern spent a few weeks, but catching sight of it was another thing, they are very secretive. I mentioned earlier that anything can turn up, of course with our hobby that applies virtually anywhere, but in my case always seems to happen either just before I get there or just after I leave. We get the winter thrushes passing through, Redwing, Fieldfare and Brambling. In the record books at Pennington over recent years are entries of over 230 different species, these include from the North American direction – Ring-necked duck, Blue-winged teal, American wigeon, Canvasback, and Lesser scaup; whilst vagrants from Europe have included Spotted crane, Little egret, (although they are becoming a bit more common now), Spoonbill, Whiskered tern, White-winged black tern and Marsh warbler.

Of the birds I have mentioned as likely to see in this area; many actually breed within the estate area, and I believe that up to 9 species of warbler have bred here. Also in the record books are 20 species of Butterfly and 16 species of Dragonfly all seen in recent years.

A place that we always enjoy visiting for the variety of birds to be seen, it differs so much from Mull that has so much rugged beauty and of course the large raptors, we have nothing bigger than a Buzzard. This is the reason that we keep coming back to Mull, to enjoy that rugged beauty, watch the Eagles and mix with some very friendly people.

Birdwatching at our other local sites (mentioned earlier), you may see any or all of the following species

Anglezarke and Rivington.

Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Redstart, Blue/Great and Long-tail tits, Ringed plover, Goosander, Red-breasted merganser, Tawny owl, Tufted duck, Goldeneye, Great crested grebe, Little grebe, Coot, Ring-necked duck, Stonechat, Redwing, Fieldfare, Brambling, Blackcap, Goldfinch, Kingfisher, Green and Great spotted woodpecker, Jay and occasionally Buzzard and migrating Osprey passing through. A Red-footed falcon was seen last year.

Leighton Moss RSPB Reserve.

Bittern, Bearded tit, Marsh harrier, Avocet, Water rail, Heron, Marsh tit, Black-tailed godwit, Great crested grebe, Canada goose, Shoveler, Pintail, Pheasant, Osprey, Little egret, Kingfisher and occasionally Great white egret. Hawfinches are not far away at Sizergh Castle.

Marshside RSPB Reserve.

Avocet, Black-tailed godwit, Snipe, Pink-footed goose, Little egret, recent sightings have included Great white egret, Green-winged teal and a Glossy ibis has been resident throughout the last winter.

Martin Mere WWT.

Internationally important for thousands of wintering Whooper swans and ducks, plus Avocet, Ringed plover, Ruff, Snipe. Recent sightings have included Red breasted goose, Barnacle goose, American Wigeon, Hen harrier, Marsh harrier and Short-eared owl.

There is also a large area that is 'home' to over 100 species of rare and endangered ducks, geese, swans and Flamingos.

Mere Sands Wood.

Willow tit, Lesser spotted woodpecker, Turtle dove, Quail, Kingfisher. Among recent sightings is a Night heron.

Trough of Bowland.

An area where the conservation of Hen harriers is of utmost importance, and they appear to be doing well, we have a few Red kite on the moorland, Buzzard, Merlin and Ring ouzel are amongst the species to be seen. On the 12th of March 2003 a blue tagged juvenile sea eagle was seen at Stock's reservoir, but last year the highlight was a nesting pair of Eagle owls that successfully raised 3 young, we are hoping for the same again this year.

Wigan Flashes.

Water Rail, Willow tit, Sedge warbler, Common tern, Reed warbler. Recently Green-winged teal, Cettis warbler, Redpoll and Bittern have been seen.

A personal message from us, to all the members on the Isle of Mull - We are very grateful to you all for looking after those wonderful birds you have 'in your back garden'. It is always a great pleasure for us to keep visiting Mull for holidays.

Les and Sandra Garnett



Sunset over Pennington

NEW SERIES OF ARTICLES

In the next edition of the newsletter I am starting a new series of articles called "A day out" and I would like to invite members to send in their experiences from reserves that they have visited perhaps for the day. Any reserve, all over Britain and abroad that they think other members may be interested in. I do not want long articles but just setting out where the reserve is, what facilities there are etc. and what is to be seen. I already have one article in this category which will feature in the next newsletter. So come on all you budding writers, send me some copy.

Cheers for now
ED

**FIELD TRIP TO CAERLAVEROCK
23RD/24TH OCTOBER 2008**

The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust reserve at Caerlaverock is situated on the Solway Firth near to Dumfries and is one of the 9 reserves founded by Sir Peter Scott, the only one situated in Scotland. With its proximity to the coastal region of Dumfriesshire, amongst large expanses of farmland it is a haven for many species of birds, notably the wintering geese and swans which number in the tens of thousands. Based on what was Eastpark Farm, the original buildings have been converted in to a very comfortable visitor centre with outlying bird hides and observatories. The farmhouse, alongside one of the many ponds, is available for visitor accommodation on a self-catering basis. One of the highlights being to watch Badgers foraging from the conservatory windows The Bird Club has reserved the farmhouse accommodation for a two-night stay giving members the opportunity of experiencing one of Scotland's greatest wildfowl spectacles. We plan to leave Mull on the earliest Lochaline ferry Thursday 23rd October, returning for the late Oban ferry Saturday 25th October 2008. This will give the opportunity to spend about two & half days bird watching on the reserve and in the surrounding area which could include visits to Castle Loch near Lochmaben, River Nith at Glencaple and of course the spectacular Caerlaverock Castle. Costs are based on share of accommodation, travel expenses and numbers going and so cannot be predicted exactly but are estimated at about £70 plus food costs. The farmhouse has a variety of accommodation in double, twin or family rooms with a maximum capacity of 10/12 (assuming some people are prepared to share the larger rooms). Numbers are therefore restricted and so early booking will be essential.

For more information and to book contact Mike Wagemakers on Tel: 01681 700375 Email: stay@holidayisleofmull.co.uk

**STOP PRESS
IMPORTANT
NOTICE**

IF YOU CHANGE YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS AND/OR POSTAL ADDRESS, PLEASE LET ME KNOW AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. JUST SEND AN EMAIL TO:

Oystercatcher@dee-emm.co.uk



DAWN CHORUS REPORT

BY ARTHUR BROWN

THURSDAY 8TH MAY 2008

On a beautiful spring morning at 5am 16 members and visitors met at Loch Na Keal by the boathouse all full of anticipation at what we might hear or see at this unearthly time of day. We had hardly had time to get our binoculars on when Pam spotted an Otter which came very close, a good start to the day even if it had nothing to do with birds. We began walking towards Killichronan House when a White-Tailed Eagle flew over us and up the Loch and still wasn't 5-30am, not a bad start. Canada Geese with goslings, Shelduck, Red Breasted Mergansers and Mallard were all seen around the coast and some Common Gulls were sitting on nests by the camp site. Shaun our leader picked out a Whinchat calling and sure enough there it was on a bridge wall sing in the early morning sunshine, by now Willow Warblers were singing and appearing everywhere joining the cacophony of sound from Chaffinches, Blackbirds, Blue and Great Tits, Wrens and Song Thrushes. Suddenly we heard the song of a Sedge Warbler very loud and distinct but not an easy bird to see but eventually everyone had some good views, during the walk we heard at least 5 calling birds. As we reached the big house Shaun picked up a Blackcap calling and after much patience some of us were rewarded with a good sighting, another good spot was a White-throat again located by its song everyone saw this bird which is very beautiful. Around the back of the house in a small open woodland we heard a Wood Warbler thanks again to Shaun's knowledge and eventually we all saw this amazing little warbler and heard at least two more. More highlights were to come 4 Crossbills in the top of a pine tree, Linnets feeding on the ground and a good view of the Fallow Deer. All in all a great morning and I was sorry to have to leave at 7-30am to go and do a wildlife tour I wished I could have stayed longer. Thanks to all who came I think they were well rewarded and many thanks to Shaun for his expertise, knowledge and leadership without which the morning would not have been so successful. A total of 45 bird species an Otter and

Fallow Deer were also seen.

A POEM IN PRAISE OF "OUR" BIRD

A poem in praise of our club bird, by Andy Ormandy (a voluntary worker at Caerlaverock) given to me with kind permission to print in our club newsletter..

Oyster Catcher, Oystercatcher
Catcher snatcha, Snatcha catcher
Wearing nothing but orange socks
Hopping skipping sea spumed rocks

Snatcha Catcha Catcher Snatcha

Long thin bill like a cocktail stick
Seafood snacks of cockles, mussels whelks
to pick.

A beat and a whirl of a harlequin wing
The alarm of your call is both striking and
shrill

Oyster Catcher, Oystercatcher
Catcha snatcha Snatcha catcha
Ohhh no bird can match ya !

LETTERS

Hi Jan

Lovely pictures on the front page. It's answered a niggling question of mine. We were up on Mull over New Year, travelling back on Saturday 5th January. We were in the queue for the ferry in Craignure and, as I looked out of the car window, I was convinced I saw a gull with a black end to its beak flying close to the shore over the sea. I hadn't a clue what it was and no-one else saw it - so I thought I was seeing things. I thought no more about it until seeing the picture on the front of the Newsletter. What I saw was quite definitely a ring-billed gull. So, at least on the morning of January 5th, one made it over from Oban to Mull. B e s t w i s h e s
Jenny Jeffree

DID YOU KNOW? SILENT SINGERS

Only single male Nightingales sing at night. Once they have found a partner they become silent. This silence continues until the female is about to lay her eggs, when the male sings again - most likely to maintain his hold over his mate and keep rival songsters at bay. As soon as the eggs hatch, the melodious singing ceases and both parents feed the young chicks, communicating only through harsh shrills calls
AS

STOP PRESS

An Osprey has been sighted in Lochdon. The bird has been there for a couple of days. Let us hope this is a good sign of things to come.

RARITY REPORT

Summary of Reports Jan to March 2008

On 12th January **Waterail** were heard calling in the Dervaig reed beds and the long staying **Iceland Gull** was still hanging around the Knock Fish Farm. Bryan Rains reported **Crossbills** feeding young at Pennyghael. Up to 12 **Great northern Diver** were found on Loch Scridain and a **Sanderling** at Uisken beach. The now adult **Ring billed Gull** was back again in Oban Harbour. A single **Pinkfoot** was amongst Greylags at Loch na Keal and a **Goshawk** was seen at Crannich by Duncan Hall. Early in February a Merlin was regularly hunting Loch Beg, and up to 14 Crossbills were at Pennyghael behind the shop. Hen Harriers were showing well throughout the month and Golden Eagles were seen displaying around the Ben More area. Three **Jack Snipe** were disturbed at Aros. At Fidden there were 6 **Grey Plover** and the drake Gadwall was picked up again in Bunessan Bay. Briefly there were two Glaucous Gull around Treshnish. There were few reports of **Whoopers** with birds at the Mishnish Lochs, Fishnish Bay, Loch Pottie and Loch-

don with a maximum of 12 birds. The only **Kingfisher** of this winter was at Fishnish on 25th and it did not stay around for long. At the end of the month Duncan Hall reported a flock of 50+ Skylarks at Crannich and there was a single **Carrion Crow** at Ardanish, seen by Mike Wagemakers. As we moved into March Anand Prasad reported a **Rough legged Buzzard** at Treshnish. Eight Canada Geese were feeding in Bowmans field by the Craignure golf course, and later in May we were found to have breeding birds confirmed with goslings at least three sites. At Fidden 4 **Reed Buntings** and good flocks of waders included 60 Lapwing, 36 Ringed Plover and 70 Golden Plover. **Whimbrel** were seen in small groups as they returned, passing through Mull. Up to 80 Barnacle Geese and 40 Whitefronts were at Fidden on 14th. Loch na Keal held up to 14 Slavonian Grebe and one bird, (perhaps injured) did not migrate with the others and remained into June, resplendent in full summer plumage. Whilst at Grasspoint, on 27th there was a single **Purple Sandpiper** Owen Tyson reported the **first Chiffchaff** of the year on 13th at Gruline and the **first Wheatear** was at Loch na Keal on 26th March.

Summary of reports April to May 2008

The first **Sand martin** was seen on 2nd April at Lochdon and a **first Common Sandpiper** also at Lochdon. A Breeding plumage **Black Throated Diver** was on Loch Frisa on 6th, at Fishnish Bay were 16 Turnstone and on Loch na Keal were counted 27 **Great northern Diver** and 40 **Slavonian Grebe** spread throughout the loch. Jan Fuller reported 2 Bullfinches attacking her plum blossom, (5th). At Lagganulva, on 8th, the **first Swallow** was seen by Pam Brown and the unmistakable call of our **first Willow Warbler** heard by Andy Oldacre. There were 8 Golden Plover in full summer plumage by Loch Spelve. A **Magpie** was in a local Lochdon garden on 2nd, and a **Eurasian Jay** was by the Eagle-watch hide, seen by Andy Oldacre on 7th. There were still about 300 **Barnacle Geese** on Inch Kenneth on 7th and a Goosander on the Mishnish Lochs. 25 **Whooper Swans** few North over Lochdon. (10th) and good numbers of Meadow Pipits arrived plus Pied Wagtail and a scattering of **White Wagtails** across the island. 10th April and great excitement at Calgary when Andrew Mortley found Mulls **first ever Nuthatch** on his feeder. The bird was seen again in Dervaig on 20th, Opposite the Church and again in Dervaig Village by Shaun McCullagh. At Glen Forsa, between 13th-16th, a **Lapland Bunting** along the road towards Kilbeg Cottage. This is only the fourth record for Mull. A **Water Rail** seen briefly at close range emerging from Dervaig reeds and calling (shrill scream) and a female **Pintail** was also there. On 14th the **first Mull Cuckoo** was seen along the Grasspoint road. Large flocks of **Redwing** were reported over many parts of the island. Off Lismore Lighthouse a single **Manx Shearwater** was seen from ferry by Mike Wagemakers. First **Sedge Warbler** at Dervaig reed beds on 16th New birds continued to arrive including 11 **Whimbrel** at Fidden and summer visitors including Blackcap, Sedge and Grasshopper Warbler, Redstart and Whitethroat all by the end of the month. **Corncrake** arrived on Iona on 26th. As May arrived **Hen Harrier** and **Short eared Owl** were now regularly seen at the Dervaig end of Loch Frisa. At Dervaig on 2nd the **female Pintail** was seen again in the freshwater by the reed bed. A summer plumaged **Black tailed Godwit** was by Killiechronan camp site. On 4th, at the Bottom end of Glen More, on the hillside, a **Ring Ouzel** was heard and seen, (the first of the year). Also newly arrived were 15 **Arctic Tern** in the sound of Mull feeding with gulls and 6 **Common Tern** at Fidden. Also 2 **Black Tern** in amongst many Common Terns and Gannets, from the Iona Ferry were reported. A breeding plumaged **Black-throated Diver** was on Loch Scridain on 5th. On Loch na Keal, a female **Common Scoter**, at Calgary a drake **Pintail** and at Killiechronan a **Canada Goose with 5 goslings**. A **Showeler** (very scarce for Mull) was on Loch Beg by the Kinloch Hotel on 9th. At Cailiach Point were 100's **Manx Shearwater**. On 11th the **Common Scoter** was still at Killiechronan, and at least 6 **Red Throated Divers** on Loch na Kea/ Loch Tuath. A very late Iceland Gull was by the north beach Iona on 12th. and a **Tree Sparrow** in the Nunnery garden. Corncrake were calling at Fidden. Martin Dyer reports a probable **Great Grey Shrike** at Lagganulva on 14th, landed in a tree then flew off with its typical bounding flight. There was a flock of 17 Crossbills in pines close to the Glenforsa Hotel and Fingal's Cave on Staffa, held 6 **Purple Sandpiper**. An **Osprey** was fishing in Lochdon at the end of the month and stayed for a week giving spectacular views. Osprey were seen also at Frisa and one at Fionnphort.

Alan Spellman



EIDER WITH MUSSEL

ISLE OF MULL BIRD CLUB

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR Y/E 31ST MARCH 2008

INCOME

Membership	665.00
Admission	169.00
Raffle	177.89
Stickers	23.00
Bank Interest	12.64
Donations	106.82
Morvern Trip	49.00
BBQ Profit	<u>25.00</u>
Total Income	<u>£1228.35</u>

EXPENDITURE

Hall Rent	112.50
Heating	19.00
Raffle	51.38
Printing, Stationery & Postage	148.85
Bus Hire	63.00
Wine	5.99
Projector repair	154.13
4 x radios	86.98
Mouse Mats	31.49
Web Space	35.00
Donations	175.00
Contribution to Hall Screen	150.00
Deposit: Caerlaverock	<u>75.00</u>
Total Expenditure	<u>1108.32</u>

Total Income	1228.35
Total Expenditure	<u>1108.32</u>

Excess of income/expend 120.03

Balances B/f 01.04.07 Bank	1021.37
Cash	<u>74.38</u>

add excess of inc/exp 120.03
1215.78

Represented by balances 31.03.08	
Bank	1163.76
Cash	<u>52.02</u>
	<u>1215.78</u>

Peter T Hall ACIB.130408
PTH/jth/accs7

Audited and certified correct from the books and papers produced

Michael E Jordan. Tobermory
Date:22.04.08

A WEE NOTE FROM THE TREASURER

As you will see from the accounts we are doing OK, and that is why we are able to keep the subs to £5 per year per member as they have not been increased for the 2008/2009 season.

Can I remind everyone who has not paid their subs they were due on the 1st April 2008. If you have not paid, would you kindly send a cheque to me, made out to The Isle of Mull Bird Club or cash and post to:-

Peter T Hall ACIB
Druim Mhor
Craignure
Isle of Mull
Argyll
PA65 6AY

Thanks. This does save the club additional printing postage and stationery costs. Renewed membership cards will only be sent out if requested. An S. A.E helps!

*Peter T Hall
Treasurer*

SUMMER EVENING SUPPER

Rather than a BBQ, Shaun and Liz McCullach have very kindly agreed to hold a supper at their home in Dervaig on a Friday in July, probably the 18th. There will be food and drink required from members; and probably a contribution and/or donation to Wings over Mull. Initially if you are interested in coming please **CONTACT ME BY THE END OF JUNE**
Tel: 01680 812441. Fax. 01680 812440.
Email: oystercatcher@dee-emm.co.uk

Peter T Hall