

EDITOR

Janet T Hall, Druim Mhor,  
Craignure, Isle of Mull PA65  
6AY

Tel: 01680 812441

Email:

oystercatcher@dee-emm.co.uk

WEBMASTER

Andy Oldacre

webmaster@mullbirdclub.org.uk



PRESIDENT  
Alan Spellman

HON MEMBERS  
Simon King  
Pam & Len White  
Stuart Gibson

# “THE OYSTERCATCHER”

*The Isle of Mull Bird Club Newsletter*

[www.mullbirdclub.org.uk](http://www.mullbirdclub.org.uk)

March 2009

## PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION WINNERS

**O**ur Photographic competition was a great success and we hope to make this an annual event so watch out for announcements in the newsletter. The following is a list of the winners, with just a couple of photographs.

Overall winner in all categories: Andrew Kirkham, Carnforth (picture of Heron).

2nd winner in Water category - Arthur Brown (Black tailed Godwit)

3rd Winner in Water category - Steve Kirk (Great Crested Grebe)

Humorous winner Meg Davies, Clitheroe (Nuthatch)

2nd equal Debby Thorne (Swallow feeding) and Brigitte Marthaler (Swans)

Winner in the Perched category was Scott Gates (Starling)

2nd Monica Wilson (Chaffinch)

3rd Les Garnett (Stonechat)

Thanks also go to Sue Hall for organising the competition and hopefully, as I said, we will make this an annual event.



## DAY ON IONA

By Norman and Gill Greatholder

*First of all may I apologise for Norman and Gill as they sent me this article for inclusion in the last newsletter but I did not receive it at the first attempt.*

**O**n the 24th May we arrived on Mull for our regular spring holiday. We have done this for a number of years and mainly stay at Gorteen. We fell in love with Mull some years ago and always came with our two collie dogs but sadly they are no longer with us. We acquired a new blue merle collie and named him Skye (after Frisa Skye in memory of Mull and he has seen his namesake). We saw a total of 89 species in 6 days, which included Hen Harrier seeing three females having a difference of opinion. At Spelve we saw short eared owls, Puffins on Loch na Keal and many more, For the first time on Mull we saw Osprey at Lochdon and Slavonian Grebe on Loch na Keal. Other species were Golden Plover and Spotted Flycatcher. On the 28th we had our usual trip to Iona for the Corncrakes and we saw 2 and heard about 12. Also 12 Rock Doves which bring us to the following escapades. (1) A frail Senior Citizen approached and said what a lovely dog we had and went on to say that she missed her little dog terribly, we replied that we knew how she felt as we had lost our 2 dogs recently, she gasped "Oh No I have not lost him I just could not bring him with me" (awkward moment followed, we thought she was going to faint) (2) after several hours on Iona we have only heard Corncrakes, we normally do not have a problem seeing them, to make matters worse every birdwatcher we met had seen at least 1. A non-birdwatcher then asked us if we had seen any, No we said, she then replied pointing " you are in the wrong place, there are 100's down there" we knew they were doing well but that is some increase from 32 calling males! Anyway we went "down there" (3) approximately 10 people were watching these Corncrakes with us when 2 more birdwatchers, arrived and stood by us. One of the men turned to us and said that they had seen a Black eared Wheatear by the farm buildings, we queried this and the other birdwatchers looked perplexed and the man repeated his statement adding that there was a pair of them. He had seen the species previously in the Med so knew what he was talking about. ( could this get any better - it did) he then added that they were feeding young and what's more one has just landed on the fence in front of us. Needless to say it was a common wheatear as little interest was forthcoming the two men walked off. We think that there must have been something in the drinking water on Iona that day.

## RED KITES IN THE MIST .....

By Janet Hall

**E**leven intrepid explorers set off on Saturday 14th February for an off island trip to Argaty, the Red Kite Centre just outside Doune. 4 of us decided to go from Craignure and 7 from Fishnish unfortunately the 7 who decided to go from Fishnish did not get the treat that the 4 from Craignure saw. As we were waiting for the Craignure to Oban Ferry, it was absolutely bucketing it down with rain I might add, someone spotted a pod of dolphins. They were at the ferry terminal and extremely close, we think there were about 4/5 of them and they gave us a wonderful show of diving and coming out of the water and

generally splashing about in fact the ferry waited for them to swim a little further away before she came in to dock.



After this treat, we docked on Oban and set off on our intrepid journey. We stopped on Loch Lubnaig for a cuppa and a greylag goose



waddled up to greet us, and was fed with little scraps of hot cross bun, well it's nearly Easter. Four of us then proceeded to the Antiques showroom at Doune for lunch, and then on to Argaty. We had started off with rain and then as we neared Doune the mist just appeared, visibility was, to say the least, pea soup, We trundled up the to hides and the warden gave us a little talk and then proceeded to feed the kites, quite away from the hide itself into the mist and we just about saw the red kites circling above. None of them came down to take the food that had been put out except a crow. It was extremely cold in the hide and we saw very little. We proceeded on our way back to Oban and stopped off and had a very nice fish supper at Tarbet. We were all treated to belly laughs on the boat by Rev Tony so the day was not completely wasted. If you do decide to visit Argaty, and I have to say that it is well worth it but pick a better day for your journey. The highlight of ours was the Dolphins in

Craignure Bay.

This is what we could have seen had the weather been better.



Blue Chaffinch



Canary



Berthelot's Pipit



Chukar Partridge



Tenerife Blue Tit

## A TRIP TO THE SUN

By Alan Spellman

Judith and I went to Tenerife in the middle of February to find some sunshine, and that we certainly did. It was blue skies and lovely and warm with temperatures between 20c and 25c every day. It was our first trip to this volcanic island just off the west coast of Africa and whilst it was not a "birding holiday" I still managed to smuggle my binoculars and camera into my luggage. Tenerife's position makes it a little isolated and away from the main migratory routes from Africa to Europe and the majority of birds moving both north and south take the shortest water crossing and use the Straits of Gibraltar as their main route into Europe. The Blue Chaffinch (*Fringilla teydea teydea*) is endemic to Tenerife, nothing like a numerous as our European Chaffinch. They live in the pine woods and feed on pine seeds and have evolved an especially strong beak to enable them to break open the pine cones to get to the seeds. This bird was photographed at 2,000 metres. It is slightly larger than our Chaffinch and is a lovely slate blue-grey colour which, in the bright sunshine changes to this lovely blue. Also in the same area I found the Canary Blue tit (*Parus caeruleus teneriffae*-group), almost identical to our Blue tit except that its back is a slate grey-blue rather than the greenish blue of our European bird.

Another endemic species is the Berthelot's Pipit (*Anthus berthelotii*) which is very like our own Tree Pipit, indeed that's what I thought it was until I checked the books. I found this bird at 2,786 metres. Yellow legged Gull was another 'common' species here, it replaces our Herring Gull and has bright yellow legs (the clue is in the name) I also saw Turnstone, Sanderling and a single Whimbrel on the coast. Other sightings included lots of European Serin (*Serinus serinus*). It is a small short-tailed bird, 11-12 cm in length. The upper parts are dark-streaked greyish green, with a yellow rump. The yellow breast and white belly are also heavily streaked. The male has a brighter yellow face and breast, yellow wing bars and yellow tail sides. The song of this bird is a buzzing trill, very familiar in Mediterranean countries. We saw the Chukar Partridge (*Alectoris chukar*) which inhabits open, rocky, dry mountain slopes, hillsides and is hunted by locals. It is very like the Red legged Partridge which used to be a common bird in the UK until farming practices changed habitats and reduced populations.

Other species seen on our trip were, Chiffchaff, one nest building in the garden, and Blackcap, a male regularly singing each morning and evening. There were many Plain Swifts (*Apus unicolor*) flying high and fast. The only Raptors were Common Buzzard, Sparrow Hawk and Kestrel. Our list also included: Great Spotted Woodpeckers, Great Egret, Carrion Crow, Blackbird, and yes we did see Canary, but not the bright yellow and orange birds you see in cages. Our bird was rather dull, a small greenish yellow finch but with a beautiful song.

Alan Spellman

# A DAY OUT .....

## IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

Andy Oldacre

One of the [very few] things that I miss about leaving the West Midlands is birding with old friends. Earlier this year, in February, I had the opportunity to revisit two of my favourite reserves down there. Diana had made arrangements to go shopping with her daughter in Birmingham so off I went with my pal Rob to the West Midland Bird Club's reserve, Ladywalk. Pools created from sand and gravel extraction within a loop of the River Tame now form most of the reserve. Woodland surrounds the area on three sides with the river forming the other boundary. Access to the reserve is through an industrial estate which was built after the demise of Ham's Hall Power Station in 1992. Rob and I arrived at the reserve car park and started our walk along the entrance road. Flanked by the River Tame on one side and the huge grey "box" that is the West Midland's distribution depot for the Sainsbury supermarket chain on the other we started to observe the numerous ducks on the river, including Mallard, Teal, Shoveler and Tufted Duck. A couple of Mute Swans floated by on the river and several Wren, Blue Tit, Great Tit and Blackbirds voiced their calls from the scrub that only partially shields one's view of the "box". As we approached the main entrance gate a familiar [but unexpected] voice started up from the depths of the undergrowth. The first Chiffchaff of the year! Actually I suspect this was a more northerly resident simply sheltering here in our warmer Winter climate. Inside the gate, and now walking along a small tributary of the Tame, surrounded by mainly Willow trees, the familiar voices of a Robin or two filled the air. We decided to visit the Sainsbury Hide first. Named after those wonderful people of the aforementioned "box", they did donate the large part of its cost. The hide is approached through woodland, managed for the benefit of the wildlife of course, but still showing evidence of the flooding from the previous year. Great piles of debris, from up river, adorned the lower trunks and the ground was still damp, even muddy, in places. Quietly now as we get near to the feeders, just outside the hide. We climbed the steps on this elevated hide for views across the reserve, its lakes and pools. The feeders were full of birds just now: Goldfinch, Greenfinch [those weezy calls!], Chaffinch, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Dunnock, House Sparrow and Reed Bunting. Several pale, female, Pheasant were pecking at the spilled seed on the ground and a Great Spotted Woodpecker announced its presence before we even saw it. Over on the pools were a good variety of ducks, a few Lapwing and part of a large colony of Cormorant. Moorhen, Coot and a small number of Redshank made up the list so far. Setting up my telescope, on a hide clamp I'd not used in a while, I spotted a Gadwall male lurking on one of the small islands. This was another first for the year and then that stranger [on Mull] a Magpie! My annual list was growing rapidly. We moved on to the River Walk Hide. With the River Tame on our right once more we ambled along through the woodland, negotiating the muddy track and listening for birds. Being able to identify birds by their song is almost essential in woodland and a great help at any time. Over the years I have gradually learned the calls of a fair number of the common species and so Long-tailed Tit and Dunnock begin to stand out by their voices, along with Great and Blue Tit. Along another tributary of the Tame a Grey Wagtail appears briefly and a handful of Black-headed Gull shriek along the river. Finally reaching the River Walk Hide [re-built after another generous donation from local businesses] we get a panoramic view of every pool on the reserve. Up until this last year Bittern have over-wintered on the reserve and it was from the viewpoint of the River Walk Hide that as many as three or four Bitterns could be seen at once. No such luck for Rob and I today. However we did add several other species for the day including Oystercatcher, Shelduck, Green Woodpecker, Canada Goose, Grey Heron, Little Grebe, Goldeneye, Goosander, Kestrel, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Woodpigeon, Song Thrush and Carrion Crow. Having exhausted most of the possibilities at Ladywalk we decided to move on to the Kingsbury Water Park. Just a few miles away the area was created from yet more gravel workings. An expansion is planned when the current gravel workings are finished. Kingsbury is a string of pools with high banks along which are footpaths. Several hides have been built and along with huge numbers of Gulls and Ducks the reserve offers the possibility of rarities of all kinds. Its position in the landscape funnels in passage birds during Spring and Autumn and breeding for the common species. But before all that our early start to the day demanded that we stop for lunch! It was not long before the local populations of Canada and Greylag Geese noticed too. Fortunately, just then, a local family turned up with several loaves of bread [from Sainsbury I think!] and proceeded to distract the gathering crowds of Geese from our lunch. More evidence of last years floods as we walked along to the first hide but on the water a Great Crested Grebe came to our notice. For me of course a bird I'd not seen in quite a while. A really majestic bird, sailing across the surface like he owned the place! From the hide our view was of a shallow lake dotted with gravel islands lined with flocks of Lapwing, Common Gull, small groupings of Shelduck, Mallard and Teal. Putting my 'scope to good use again we soon added Redshank, more Gadwall and two illusive Common Snipe. Yellowhammer visited the feeding station and Grey Heron potted about looking for a meal. A species that used to be relatively common in the area a few years ago was Ruddy Duck [*Oxyura Jamaicensis*]. A native of North America it became established in the wild in the UK, particularly in the West Midlands, most likely from wildfowl collection escapes. The Ruddy Duck was chosen as the symbol/logo for the West Midland Bird Club. Since the Ruddy Duck became so numerous that examples were turning up on the Continent and inter-breeding with the native White-tailed Duck [*Oxyura Leucocophala*] and effectively wiping them out the Ruddy Duck has been on the hit-list of the conservationists. A programme of extermination was put in place and now they are very uncommon. We did manage to spot a pair though, very well camouflaged! In the far distance, over a housing estate, flocks of several hundred Woodpigeon were looking to roost. Smaller gatherings of Starlings were doing the same thing in the gathering dusk as we finally left the reserve. A wonderful day catching up with species not regularly seen on Mull and with a fellow birder.

### Listing of species seen:

Little Grebe, Great Crested Grebe, Cormorant, Grey Heron, Mute Swan, Canada Goose, Shelduck, Wigeon, Gadwall, Teal, Mallard, Shoveler, Pochard, Tufted Duck, Goldeneye, Goosander, Ruddy Duck, Kestrel Pheasant, Moorhen, Coot, Oystercatcher, Lapwing, Redshank, Snipe, Lesser Black-Backed Gull, Great Black-Backed Gull, Black-Headed Gull, Woodpigeon, Great Spotted Woodpecker

Green Woodpecker, Grey Wagtail, Pied Wagtail, Wren, Dunnock, Robin, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Chiffchaff Goldcrest, Long-Tailed Tit, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Reed Bunting, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, House Sparrow, Starling, Magpie, Carrion Crow

Andy Oldacre

## TAKE A FEW MINUTES..... Arthur Brown

**A**s I sat down to write an article about a field trip in December I glanced out of the office window and stared in thought at the birds in the garden and the views of Loch Cuin beyond, it was mesmerising. There were Chaffinches scurrying about busy, busy, too numerous to count, I looked at them closely to try and find a Brambling, I did not see one but it really did not matter the chaffinches were enough by themselves. Blue Tits are waiting patiently for a space on the peanuts before diving in and feasting for as long as they can. They are then replaced by a Great Tit or a splendid Greenfinch in its fine new summer finery. The Coal Tits in and out of the feeders in the blink of an eye carrying off a little bit of food to savour or to hide for later if it's lucky. A blackbird appears out of nowhere and lands on the bird table in front of the window joining an affronted Robin already there. 4 Rock Doves land on the telephone wires and check out the garden for any danger, our cats or a possible visit from the local Sparrowhawk, everything seems OK so they fly down scattering the Chaffinches everywhere. I check out our little Quince bush and sure enough our resident pair of Dunnocks are skulking there being watched intently by an inquisitive rabbit. All this happened within a couple of minutes and it brightened up a relatively dull day completely, so take a few minutes out of each busy day to look at nature and it will brighten your day considerably.

### Pause for Thought

**T**he speaker at our February meeting was our friend the Rev Tony Budell who set up and runs the charity **British Humanitarian Aid**, taking aid to the orphans and victims of the Balkan conflicts and the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in the Ukraine. The talk showed us that although maimed or deformed these children respond with great courage and determination when shown a little love and compassion. It was indeed a humbling experience to see the smiles and indeed laughter on the faces that these children produced given their desperate circumstances, some could not even talk. Tony with the help of his charity has set up **4 community centres** and refurbished **32 orphanages** to give these people hope that they are not forgotten. On one trip his organisation took a convoy of 105 vehicles of aid materials out to the Ukraine a tremendous feat you have to admit. The bird club members have given Tony bags of clothing and blankets towards his next visit and we also gave a cheque from the club. If anyone would like to contribute to these beautiful but impoverished and often forgotten people go [www.britishhumanitarianaid.co.uk](http://www.britishhumanitarianaid.co.uk)

Remember if you think you have it really bad in this country there are always those worse off than yourselves.

Tony has taken many photographs of birds and wildlife during his travels and he finished his talk by sharing some of them with us, it

was a most enjoyable, enlightening and uplifting evening. On the **Rev Tony and Pam Brown** Sunday following the meeting we took him on his own tour around the island showing him the Eagles, Otters and Deer that most people come to Mull to see



### RARE BIRDS REPORT

**A**lan Spellman of Mullbirds and our bird club president usually writes this article but he is away on holiday at the time of writing so I have taken the opportunity to go onto his excellent site and filch all his rare bird records for the winter. October -

There were 8 Pintail seen on Loch Pottie in early October and 20+ Tufted Ducks wintered on thee same Loch. On Loch Scridain a Drake Scaup was seen associating with some Eider Ducks and a Red Knot was seen at Fidden as were up to 24 Pale-bellied Brent Geese.

November - Waxwings were present for most of the month with a high count of 28 seen at Salen. 2 Long Tailed Ducks were on loch Pottie for some time during the month and a Red Kite was seen at Carsaig and stayed around for some time. 15 Short-eared Owls were seen on Eorsa, a possible winter roost, and there was an Iceland Gull at Killiechronan for most of the month.

December - The Red Kite was seen again in Glen More presumably the same bird and a Merlin was seen flying through a Tobermory garden. There were 5 Bar-tailed Godwits at the head of Loch Ba and a very late Swallow seen at Loch Beg. At the end of the month the first reported Brambling of the winter was seen at Dervaig also on the hills above Dervaig 5 Short-eared Owls.

January - A Kingfisher was seen on the lochan in Aros Park, Tobermory and the drake Gadwall is again back at Bunessan. At Killiechronan the Iceland Gull was joined by a Glaucous Gull and a Purple Sandpiper was also present here. On Loch Scridain a pair of Common Scoter were present for most of the month.

February - A Red-necked Grebe was on Loch na Keal and a very rare for Mull Coot was on a private pond at Calgary. A Whooper Swan was seen flying up the Sound of Mull from Fishnish Pier and finally a Whimbrel was present at Salen.

ARTHUR BROWN

## WWW. OR WET WEATHER WATCHING

**T**'was the night before Christmas (Oh no wrong one)  
T'was 2 weeks before Christmas when 9 hardly souls.... met at the Grass-point Eagle watch caravan where we had our first birds 2 **Robins** and **Red Deer**, where we all herded into Pam & Arthur's tour bus and set off down the road to our first location, Inverlussa overlooking the estuary. This proved to be a rewarding first stop with **Greenshank, Great Northern Diver, Mallard, Widgeon, Grey-lag geese, Rock Pipit, Oystercatcher, Curlew, Hooded Crow, Red-breasted Merganser, Wren, Common Gull, Herring Gull, Cormorant** and a rarity for Mull the **Grey Heron** being chalked up. Onwards up through the Ardura woods and down to Loch Spelve once again, and our next stop. Things started to get worse from here. The unthinkable happened, it started raining, Arthur took to parking in puddles, but at least he tried to make up for it by going "Woodcock Flushing". To the list were added **Black Guillemot, Eider, Shag and Song Thrush**. Two more stops before the turn off to Croggan produced excellent views of a **Red-throated Diver, Greater Black-backed Gull, Kestrel** and **Golden-eye** plus a **Common Seal**. Proceeding down towards Croggan **Fieldfare** and **Tree-creeper** were added to the list. On reaching Croggan it looked like the rain was set in for the day, so lunch was served in the warmth and dry of the tour bus. Where we played pass the parcel with boxes of mince pies, whilst having excellent views of BT Diver and a Common Gull eating a large Starfish. Three of us ventured down the track in search of an Otter which Arthur spotted earlier and were rewarded by 2 **Otters** one very close in shore. On the walk back to the bus we added **Great Tit, Blackbird** and **Coal Tit**. At this point the weather deciding to favour us and the clouds started to clear, so it was decided that we would add LochBuie onto the trip. Just after setting off we were joined by the Wagemakers and their 2 Border Terriers. So we headed off back down the road on to LochBuie adding **Raven** and **Wood-pigeon** en-route. Just as we approached LochBuie we had wonderful views of **Fallow Deer** in a field next to the road. With Bill setting a brisk pace we set along the track following the North shore of the loch, admiring the 'stoney faced' rock formation allegedly resembling Queen Victoria's profile, there was a mention that it looked more like 'Lee Evans' !! The views and light across towards Coll were magical; time was spent identifying the difference between **Rock & Meadow Pipit** and looking at possible owl roosts on the cliff face. Here we also added to the list **Raven, Pheasant, Peregrine** and a **Rabbit**. It was back to the meeting point to collect our cars and final two birds added to the list **Sparrowhawk** and **Woodcock**. Then onwards to the warmth and festive atmosphere of the Craignure Inn where teas, coffees, biscuits and a delicious Lemon Drizzle cake were served with just enough to go round with one piece left, we won't say who finished that up, but "we are watching you"!!!

A total of 37 species of bird and 5 mammals were seen. Thank you to Andy Oldacre for organising the refreshments at the Craignure Inn, and a big thank you to Pam & Arthur for the use of their tour bus and Arthur for being chauffeur for the day.

*Andy and Hazel Kirkham*

## CHAIRMAN'S VIEW

**T**his will be my last view from the chair as I step down at the A.G.M. in April after 3 years. I would like to thank the members of the club for all the support I have received during my tenure and in particular the members of the committee who like the proverbial swan have paddled like mad in the background making sure most of my mistakes go undetected whilst I carry on serenely oblivious of all the hard work they are doing behind my back.

My opinion of bird clubs is that the birds come first and I am glad that our field trips go from strength to strength with a hardcore of members prepared to enthusiastically go out in all conditions to watch the wonderful birds we have here on Mull. The scenery and companionship on these outings are things I will always treasure. Thanks should also go to local inns, hotels and members that provide us with well earned refreshment at the end of our field trips. During the past three years we have run an annual bird race every January and I hope the club continue these as I enjoy them immensely and this year despite the conditions being atrocious 72 species of birds were seen during the day. We have started to go off island for some trips now, the first being to Morvern last winter, and then to Caerlaverock in October and in February we are going to the Red Kite feeding station near Callendar, I hope this innovation shall continue as it gives the club members chance to see some birds we don't get on Mull.

The indoor meetings continue to attract good support and the circle where we sit round and discuss birds seems to have proved popular. My thanks to all the speakers who give up time to talk at the meetings without them the meetings would not be so popular. Thanks to all members who provide the refreshments at the meetings, the ladies who have done the draws, which are thankless tasks but are much appreciated by us all. Thanks to Jan for producing and editing the excellent Oystercatcher magazine, I think it gets better with each edition. Finally thanks to Pam for kicking me up the backside and making me at least do something about the running of the bird club, she has an awful lot to put up with.

Thanks for giving me the chance and time to be chairman I have enjoyed it immensely. Finally to the club and my successor whoever he or she may be all the very best.

Arthur Brown

## MULL WINTER NEWS

We have had a lot of Waxwings on Mull in October and so far I have missed them. There was a Dipper at Dervaig an unusual spot for this lovely bird and 2 Whooper Swans were present here for a couple of days. More bad news I am afraid; one of the 2007 White tailed Eagle Chicks from Loch Ba was found Poisoned on an estate in Angus. This is an abhorrent crime as it is indiscriminate, the perpetrators do not care what they kill and in this instance a Common Buzzard was also found dead. It is believed that both birds had taken the poison from a dead Hare, but 32 poison pieces of meat were found on the top of fence posts so this was definitely no accident. Pam and I went out on the 24th and saw 4 Golden Eagles, lots of Red and Fallow Deer, Both types of Seal, an Otter, Hen Harrier and the White Tailed Eagle father of the unfortunate poisoned chick. Finally some more tragic news on the wildlife front 3 Otters have been run over in Aros Bay in the last 4 months making at least 6 road deaths this year. If you come to this beautiful island next year please look out for Otters crossing roads, their technique leaves a lot to be desired.

A cold but dry December gave us plenty of time to get out and about doing our B.T.O. tetrads for the bird atlas and also lets us go to places we do not normally get to looking for birds. The most exciting sighting we had was of 5 Short Eared Owls together at Reudle as we were watching Golden Eagles and Red Deer; this was indeed an unexpected sighting for us in December. There were a few Redwings and Fieldfares around but they took some looking for, also there has been the usual influx of Woodcock from the continent. In the woods we have lots of Goldcrests joining the mixed Tit flocks and easier to see now there are no leaves on the trees. We can and do see all three Divers when we go out in the winter although the Great Northern is by far the most common. The weather was so nice this month that some Red Breasted Mergansers had started displaying to females always nice to witness. The cold weather brought Snipe out into the open and Pam saw one on our field with the sheep. We see White Tailed Eagles whenever we go out as the Juveniles are out looking for carcasses on the hillsides and as there are so many Field Voles this year more Hen Harriers and Kestrels are wintering on Mull than usual. Pam took some pictures of a Treecreeper in our garden, we also hear our local Tawny Owls every night and see Barn Owls fairly often in the area, we would like them to start using the Ardrioch nest boxes this year, anyway we live in hope.

After a cold but sunny start to the New Year the weather went down hill for most of the rest of the month, with lots of cloud, rain and high winds occasionally gale force. As you can imagine not the weather most conducive to wildlife watching, so we had more time to study which birds we had coming to the feeders in our garden. The main highlights for us were a Treecreeper and a Great spotted Woodpecker both of which are now daily visitors. As well as the Great, Blue and Coal Tits we have over 100 Chaffinches daily along with Greenfinches, Blackbirds, Robins, Wrens, Dunnocks, Song Thrushes, Rock Doves and Collared Doves. Nearly every day a Sparrowhawk flies through the garden and Buzzards and Kestrels fly over. At night we get calling Tawny and Barn Owls.

The estuary at Dervaig is always worth a look and we seem to have wintering Teal, and Mallards joined on some days in the month by a few Wigeon. Out on the loch are Goldeneye, Red Breasted Mergansers and Goosanders and we have seen up to 6 Little Grebes here on a regular basis. A single Greenshank and Redshank are there every day at the moment and they are joined on cold days by some Snipe. On the annual bird race 72 species of birds were recorded on a foul day which was remarkable, in our group we recorded 52 species around the North of Mull. We see Golden Eagles and White-tailed Eagles whenever we go out at the moment and Hen Harriers on most trips along with the now pairing up Ravens. Great Northern Divers are wintering around the coasts with Slavonian Grebes and a few Black Guillemots. Rarer winter waders seen around North Mull in January were a single Sanderling and a few Turnstones with the usual Ringed Plover at Calgary and 2 Lapwings with a flock of Starlings at Ensay. A report for late January a Glaucous Gull on Loch na Keal being attacked by a White-tailed Eagle.

Arthur Brown

### *STOP PRESS*

*It is very important that our records are kept up to date so if you change your postal and/ or email address please let me know as soon as possible.*

*Oystercatcher@dee-emm.co.uk*

*01680 812440  
Thanks*

*Ed*

Just a note to say thank you to all contributors to this Newsletter. Please send me your stories, however small.

Thanks once again and happy birding



Ed