

**MACHRIHANISH  
SEABIRD & WILDLIFE  
OBSERVATORY**

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# **THE MACHRIHANISH SEABIRD / WILDLIFE OBSERVATORY**

## **2002 - 2004 REPORT**

**BY EDDIE MAGUIRE**

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# MACHRIHANISH SEABIRD & WILDLIFE OBSERVATORY

## INTRODUCTION

The Machrihanish Seabird & Wildlife Observatory hide was officially opened by Col Hector MacNeal of Lossit Park Estate on 11<sup>th</sup> Sep, 1993.

The MSWO is situated on the NW tip of the low-lying Uisaed promontory at Lossit Park; it juts out W well over 1 km into the Atlantic. The configuration of the coastline to the N presents a 17 km long leading line from Glenacardoch Point (Glenbarr) to Machrihanish village ensuring - when conditions are right - a steady passage of birds just after dawn. Many fly close to, & often over, the point as they exit Machrihanish Bay on their way S.

Locally, the MSWO provides an unrivalled source of wildlife information & has exerted a positive influence on the tremendous growth of interest in bird migration & the marine & coastal ecology of Kintyre.

For a broader appreciation of this work, including a range of published material & all wildlife enquiries, contact -

Eddie Maguire (warden)

Tel: 07919 660 292

Systematic sea-watching at the MSWO - situated at Uisaed Point (pronounced 'Oositch') on the western outskirts of Machrihanish (NR628209) - includes monitoring regular movements of seabirds, wildfowl, waders & passerines passing the site during certain months of the year. With a few exceptions, *all* individual birds flying past are identified & logged.

Daily observations from the MSWO over the years has revealed that many species tend to have a discrete time period during which most individuals move south during autumn. This may vary from year to year by only a few days. Using this information it is possible to suggest a typical pattern for the timing of seabird movements (& passage of other species) through this area.

Studies / observations by the warden have resulted in publication of the following papers...

- 1) Balearic Shearwaters off SW Kintyre, Argyll 1992 – 1997.
- 2) Occurrence off Leach's & Storm Petrel off western Scotland.
- 3) Flight identification of Grey & Red-necked Phalarope.
- 4) Sporadic late autumn occurrences of Pomarine Skua off western Scotland.

See Bibliography.

The MSWO is a very sturdy purpose-built viewing facility; it is comfortable & very well equipped with an extensive reference library, wall charts, a recent sightings board & other information. The design is based on an RSPB standard hide although the recommended specifications were greatly increased to confront the elements. A very practical feature is the concrete floor; this prevents any vibration affecting tripod-mounted optical & digital equipment – especially during severe gales (or when visitors move around).

Apart from long hours scanning the sea / logging seabird movements regular maintenance & many important improvements were also made to the site. Recent major improvements include complete insulation of the facility, an electricity supply & top of the range 'digiscoping' equipment. In addition, a lot more supportive input was appreciated from many interested local folk & visitors.

### **Sponsorship 2002 - 2004**

The MSWO attracted significant sponsorship including Serc<sup>o</sup> Aerospace (Defence Estates Scotland), McFadyens Contractors Ltd (Campbeltown) & Machrihanish Marine Farm Ltd. In addition, we are in the process of receiving substantial awards from Scottish Natural Heritage & Whelk.

Col Hector MacNeal & family (Lossit Park Estate) have encouraged sweeping changes that will allow further improvements to this unique wildlife viewing point & increasingly important visitor attraction.

### **Visitors to the MWSO**

During 2004, the MSWO experienced many more visitors interested in various aspects of the marine & coastal ecology of Kintyre. These included...

- ◆ School parties & Special Needs groups on environmental education trips
- ◆ An upsurge in the numbers of tourists interested in general wildlife viewing
- ◆ Genuine increases in the numbers of committed birdwatchers - particularly sea-watchers & birders with digiscoping equipment.

The MSWO is now manned on a daily basis from Easter to October.

### **OCCURRENCE OF RARE / IRREGULAR SEABIRDS 2004**

#### **AN APPEAL TO WEST COAST SEAWATCHERS...**

Information on the extraordinary weather-related occurrences of rare / irregular seabirds off W & NW Scotland & Northern Ireland during autumn 2004 was requested from serious seawatchers in Ayrshire, Islay, Coll, Tiree, the Outer Hebrides & Northern Ireland & the cumulative totals from these seawatching stations are truly amazing...

<b>Leach's Petrel</b>	<b>1,600+</b>
<b>Grey Phalarope</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>Long-tailed Skua</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Sabine's Gull</b>	<b>83</b>

A site by site analysis of some truly astonishing numbers, including peaks & limiting dates of occurrence along with all observers who submitted data are presented in a series of short notes in this report.

See **Contents** & also **acknowledgements**.

## AUTUMN 2004

Seawatching at the Seabird Observatory during autumn 2004 was exhilarating & one of the best on record, not only for the presence of many scarce seabirds, but for the remarkable persistent passage of some irregular species. Frequent SW > NW strong winds, often accompanied by squalls, blasted record totals of Grey Phalarope (12), Little Gull (10), Sabine's Gull (13) & a few exceptional movements of Leach's Petrel to the coastline of SW Kintyre. A grand total of 225 Leach's were logged on 9 dates during Sept with the best occurrence being 119 on 21<sup>st</sup>. In addition, 3 juvenile Long-tailed Skua put in a welcome appearance with singles in Aug, Sept & Oct – what a haul!

Many other interesting species / events occurred including a Great Crested Grebe, 4 Balearic Shearwater, a probable Cackling Canada Goose, another long-staying Mediterranean Gull, an unprecedented late autumn passage of Arctic Tern, a single Little Auk & an unprecedented movement of over 400 Common Swift drifting slowly >NE in mid-August.

## ABOUT THE SYSTEMATIC LIST

In the species accounts below, English & scientific names are as in the latest *Argyll & Scottish Bird Reports*; the sequence of species follows the Voous order as in the same reports. As the Argyll Bird Club Committee have done & following the practice of the *Scottish Bird Report* the official English names as adopted by the British Ornithologists' Union have been used.

Supplementary casual observations for other seasons are also included along with important records from The Laggan farmlands & other birding hotspots in Kintyre. The Laggan refers to the roughly triangular area west of Campbeltown, bordered by the B843, the A83, & Machrihanish Bay.

A significant part of this area forms Campbeltown Airport (Defence Estates Scotland) along with the extensive Machrihanish – Westport dune system & the famous links golf course.

The list that follows is not exhaustive; only species for which significant records were accumulated during 2002 - 2004 have been included.

An asterisk indicates that all records are given.

## SYSTEMATIC LIST 2002 - 2004

### RED-THROATED DIVER

### *Gavia stellata*

**2004.** 17 >S on 13<sup>th</sup> & **88** >S on 21<sup>st</sup> Sept. 31 >S on 6<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**Note.** **Isle of Islay** - a record one-day total of **164** >S Frenchman's Rocks on 21<sup>st</sup> Sept 2004 (Tristan ap Rheinallt pers. comm.).

### BLACK-THROATED DIVER \*

### *Gavia arctica*

**2002.** One on 16<sup>th</sup> February.

**2003.** Three records all >S. 2 on 22<sup>nd</sup> Sept, one on 1<sup>st</sup> Oct & 2 on 14<sup>th</sup> Nov.

**2004.** One >S on 6<sup>th</sup> Oct was the sole record.

**GREAT NORTHERN DIVER***Gavia immer***2002.** 10 on 24<sup>th</sup> Feb. 8 >N on 18<sup>th</sup> May.

June – one present most of month.

**2003.** 12 on 8<sup>th</sup> Jan. Regular sightings of one's & two's June – Aug with 5 on 25<sup>th</sup> July. Sept - regular, max 6 >S on 8<sup>th</sup>.**2004.** 2 on 9<sup>th</sup> Aug, one >S 27<sup>th</sup> Aug, one >S 25<sup>th</sup> Sept & 7 >S on 15<sup>th</sup> Oct.**SLAVONIAN GREBE \****Podiceps auritus***2004.** One >S on 27<sup>th</sup> Aug.**GREAT CRESTED GREBE \****Podiceps cristatus***2004.** One Machrihanish Bay on 26<sup>th</sup> Sept & presumably the same bird on 5<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> Oct.**NORTHERN FULMAR***Fulmarus glacialis***2004.** 280 >S / 5 hrs on 11<sup>th</sup> Sept included a northern dark morph.**MANX SHEARWATER***Puffinus puffinus***2003.** 650 >S / 2 hrs on 19<sup>th</sup> Aug. 1,400 foraging in rafts offshore on 3<sup>rd</sup>, then 4,500 >S / 5 hrs (pm) on 8<sup>th</sup> Sept with peak of 63 per minute at 16:30 hrs. Many were 'stopping off' & forming feeding rafts that attracted many other foraging seabirds to the area. No significant movements later.**2004.** 2,300 >S 07:00–11:00 hrs on 27<sup>th</sup> Aug.**CORY'S SHEARWATER \****Puffinus diomedea***2003.** One on sea foraging with Manx Shearwater then >S on 8<sup>th</sup> Sept.

Note the large movement of Manx on this date &amp; the record number of Balearic Shearwater too. Many of these birds were 'stopping off' &amp; forming large rafts that may have attracted this big shearwater to the area.

This record constitutes the third for the Machrihanish Seabird Observatory &amp; (about) the eighth for Argyll.

**BALEARIC SHEARWATER \****Puffinus mauretanicus***2002.** All records in Aug – singles on 8<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> with 2 on 24<sup>th</sup>.**2003.** An excellent showing with total of 18 birds on only 6 dates 19<sup>th</sup> Aug (1) – 9<sup>th</sup> Sept (2) with 3 >S on 3<sup>rd</sup> Sept & record one-day total of 8 in huge rafts of foraging Manx Shearwater on 8<sup>th</sup> Sept (see Manx Shearwater numbers on this date).**2004.** Singles >S on 20<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup> Aug then 11<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> Sept.

This species has been recorded every year 1992 - 2004 (except 1993) with 60 autumn records (Aug -Nov) involving a total of 102 birds.

**SOOTY SHEARWATER \****Puffinus griseus***2003.** Aug – one on the sea on 8<sup>th</sup> with 2 on 9<sup>th</sup> then 11 >S on 21<sup>st</sup>.Sept – 7 >S / 4 hrs on 4<sup>th</sup> & 4 >S on 9<sup>th</sup>.**2004.** 13 >S on 27<sup>th</sup> Aug & one on 18<sup>th</sup> Sept.

A poor showing in recent years.

**EUROPEAN STORM PETREL** *Hydrobates pelagicus*

**2002.** Recorded many dates 8<sup>th</sup> June (1) – 2<sup>nd</sup> Oct (4 >S) with main period early Aug – early Sept & highest count 30+ on 5<sup>th</sup> Aug.

**2003.** Obvious presence offshore 4<sup>th</sup> July (18) – 16<sup>th</sup> Sept (27) with 38 > 1 / hr on 18<sup>th</sup> Aug & 24 >S on 9<sup>th</sup> Sept.

**2004.** Recorded on many dates 18<sup>th</sup> June (2 or 3) – 21<sup>st</sup> Sept (4 >S) with 18 offshore on 18<sup>th</sup> June, 28 >S / 2 hrs on 10<sup>th</sup> Aug & 26 >S / 3 hrs on 27<sup>th</sup> Aug. 4 on 21<sup>st</sup> Sept & one on 6<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**LEACH'S STORM PETREL \*** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*

**2002.** The only record was one >S on 6<sup>th</sup> Nov.

**2003.** 6 >S / 2 hrs from 12:25 hrs on 13<sup>th</sup> May (rare spring record).

2 >S on 19<sup>th</sup> Sept. Oct – total of 36 >S on 4 dates 6<sup>th</sup> (14) – 10<sup>th</sup> (18) with 3 on 7<sup>th</sup> & one on 8<sup>th</sup>.

**2004.** 2 >S on 27<sup>th</sup> Aug. A total of 217 birds >S on 8 dates between 14<sup>th</sup> (39) - 26<sup>th</sup> Sept (1) with 11 on 18<sup>th</sup>, one on 19<sup>th</sup>, 28 on 20<sup>th</sup>, 119 on 21<sup>st</sup>, one on 22<sup>nd</sup> & 17 on 25<sup>th</sup>. Later - 6 >S on 5<sup>th</sup> & 26 >S on 6<sup>th</sup> Oct.

\* A grand total of 1,600 birds were reported at seawatching stations in W & NW Scotland & N. Ireland during autumn (mainly Sept) 2004. Ramore Head (on the N Antrim coast) logged an amazing record one-day total of around 500 (See 'Occurrence of Leach's Petrel off W & NW Scotland & Northern Ireland during autumn 2004' in this report).

**NORTHERN GANNET** *Morus bassanus*

**2003.** The first juvenile was offshore on 23<sup>rd</sup> Sept followed by singles on 29<sup>th</sup> Sept & 6<sup>th</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**2004.** Only 4 juvs were logged - 2 >S on 21<sup>st</sup> Sept & singles >S on 2<sup>nd</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup> Oct.

**WHOOPEER SWAN** *Cygnus cygnus*

**2002.** Oct – 40 on 23<sup>rd</sup>. Nov – 18 on 6<sup>th</sup>.

**2003.** 12 adults >S on 23<sup>rd</sup> Sept. Oct - 17 (including 6 juvs) >S on 7<sup>th</sup> & 7 adults >S on 14<sup>th</sup>.

**2004.** Oct. The Laggan – 15 adults at Westparkfergus on 6<sup>th</sup>. Two remained in the area and were still present on 29<sup>th</sup> Oct. 15 >E on 8<sup>th</sup> Nov.

**PINK-FOOTED GOOSE \*** *Anser brachyrhynchus*

**2002.** 3 on 18<sup>th</sup> & one on 22<sup>nd</sup> Oct.

**2003.** 12 >E on 19<sup>th</sup> Sept & 41 >S on 6<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**2004.** 65 >S 25<sup>th</sup> Sept, one on 28<sup>th</sup> Sept & one in off the sea on 19<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE** *Anser albifrons*

Greenland race *A. a. flavirostris*.

**2004.** 37 in-off-sea on 6<sup>th</sup> Oct. 800 few NE high over The Laggan at dusk on 19<sup>th</sup> Oct en-route for upland roost site(s).

## **CANADA GOOSE**

### ***Branta canadensis***

**2002.** The Laggan. A small dark individual seen at The Lintmill with White-fronted & a few Pink-footed Geese on 17<sup>th</sup> Oct was identified as Richardson's Canada Goose *B c hutchinsii* & 2 small dark birds (race uncertain) accompanied a flock of *Branta* geese that arrived in the Laggan on (or around) 21<sup>st</sup> Oct (see Barnacle Goose).

**2003.** Smerby / Peninver area; max 36 'giants' on 20<sup>th</sup> July.

The Laggan. The small 'dark' birds - race uncertain - but presumed either Richardson's Canada Goose or Cackling Canada Goose *B. c. minima* that arrived on 21<sup>st</sup> Oct last year stayed all winter & were still at The Laggan with the flock of c. 60 *Branta* geese until at least early April.

What is thought to be the same birds (now 55 – 60) & one small dark Canada Goose, presumed again to be Richardson's Canada Goose or Cackling Canada Goose returned on about 11<sup>th</sup> Oct & probably wintered..

**2004.** A small, very dark individual that arrived at Westparkfergus, The Laggan, on 6<sup>th</sup> Oct was identified (later) from a very poor digital image as Cackling Canada Goose. The bird arrived with a group of now c. 74 *Branta* geese including c. 40 Barnacle Geese; the rest were presumed Barnacle x Canada parentage.

## **BARNACLE GOOSE**

### ***Branta leucopsis***

**2002.** A flock of c. 60 *Branta* geese that arrived in The Laggan on 21<sup>st</sup> Oct included many (c 35%) presumed Barnacle x Canada hybrids.

**2003.** The Laggan. The flocks of 60 *Branta* geese (with many Barnacle x Canada hybrids amongst them) present from Oct 2002 were still at The Laggan until at least early April. What is thought to be the same birds, c. 60, returned on about 11<sup>th</sup> Oct & probably wintered.

At the Observatory; Oct – 21 >S on 7<sup>th</sup> & 7 >S on 10<sup>th</sup>. Nov – 2 >S on 14<sup>th</sup>.

**2004.** 69 >S on 6th Oct.

The flock of 'branta's', now increased to c.74 birds, appeared back in The Laggan at Westparkfergus on 6th Oct. About 60% were this species & the remainder were judged to be of Barnacle x Canada parentage.

## **BRENT GOOSE**

### ***Branta bernicla***

**2003.** 6 >S on 19<sup>th</sup> Sept, 7 off-passage 5<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> Oct & 11 >S on 6<sup>th</sup> Nov.

**2004.** 4>S on 7th Aug was the earliest record. One on shore 30th Aug – 5th Sep. 9 >S 19th Sept. Small numbers regular off-passage 23rd Sept – 29th Oct (2 – 5 daily at zosteria in Machrihanish Bay). 55 >S on 30th Sept & 145 >S / 5 hrs 6th Oct (largest skein only 33).

## **COMMON SHELDUCK**

### ***Tadorna tadorna***

**2002.** Breeding. 3 prs present two were successful with first (b/2) on 23<sup>rd</sup> May (down to b/1 a few days later). An additional 10 adults appeared (briefly) on 6<sup>th</sup> June. The other brood (b/6) appeared on the late date of 2<sup>nd</sup> July (second attempt?) just four days before b/1 fledged!

**2003.** Breeding. B/3 on 28<sup>th</sup> May followed by b/4 on 16<sup>th</sup> June.

**2004.** An excellent breeding season at Machrihanish with three broods totaling 28 ducklings! B/12 on 23<sup>rd</sup> May was the earliest / largest, followed by b/7 on 27<sup>th</sup> May & b/9 on 10<sup>th</sup> June (most of these ducklings fledged).

**NORTHERN PINTAIL \******Anus acuta***

**2003.** Late spring. A female on 3<sup>rd</sup> June was a most unusual record.

A drake was present at the Observatory from mid Nov / throughout Dec.

**2004.** A drake wintered (possibly injured) from Nov 2003 & was present all summer (moulted). Last seen on 6<sup>th</sup> Oct.

3 >N on 14<sup>th</sup> Sept then a total of 15 birds >S during Oct including 10 on 5<sup>th</sup>.

**NORTHERN SHOVELER \******Anus clypeata***

**2004.** 3 >S on 23<sup>rd</sup> May was a rare appearance on a most unusual date.

**POCHARD \******Aythya ferina***

**2003.** A drake >S on 14<sup>th</sup> Nov.

**TUFTED DUCK \******Aythya fuligula***

**2004.** 2 >S on 8<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**GREATER SCAUP*****Aythya marila***

**2003.** A poor year with only 10 >S on 16<sup>th</sup> Sept & 7 >S on 9<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**2004.** Total of 174 >S on 10 dates 11<sup>th</sup> Sept (28) - 29<sup>th</sup> Oct (1) with peak of 88 on 6<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**COMMON SCOTER*****Melanitta nigra***

**2002.** 10 >S on 24<sup>th</sup> May & 7 >N on 8<sup>th</sup> June.

**2003.** 10 >S on 7<sup>th</sup> July, 18 >S on 18<sup>th</sup> Aug & one >S on 16<sup>th</sup> Sept.

**2004.** 4 >S 14<sup>th</sup> & 2 >S on 30<sup>th</sup> Sept. 4 on sea on 5<sup>th</sup> & 3 >N on 8<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**COMMON EIDER*****Somateria mollissima***

**2002.** A drake showing characteristics of the American race *dresseri* was found in Campbeltown Loch on 17<sup>th</sup> Oct (Chris Waltho).

**2003.** Breeding. A crèche of 12 ducklings (recently hatched) on 29<sup>th</sup> May.

A drake was still flying on 23<sup>rd</sup> June. First in-flight drake after flightless moult period was on 3<sup>rd</sup> Sept.

**2004.** The first in-flight drake after flightless moult period was on 27<sup>th</sup> Aug.

**RED-BREASTED MERGANSER*****Mergus serrator***

**2003.** The largest movement noted was only 9 >S on 5<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**2004.** 20 >S on 21<sup>st</sup> Sept, 18 >S on 6<sup>th</sup> Oct & 8 >S on 19<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**GOOSANDER \******Mergus merganser***

**2002.** A drake was at Machrihanish Water on 18<sup>th</sup> Dec.

**2003.** 2 >S on 22<sup>nd</sup> Sept & 2 >S on 7<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**2004.** One >S on 4<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**OSPREY \******Pandion haliaetus***

**2002.** One Machrihanish Water 7<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> May, 10<sup>th</sup> July & 2<sup>nd</sup> Sept. One Glenbarr on 19<sup>th</sup> May.

**2003.** One Killypole Loch, Machrihanish on 20<sup>th</sup> April, one Machrihanish Water mouth 18<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> June & one >S on 1<sup>st</sup> Oct.

**2004.** One Machrihanish Water 8<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> Sept.

**HEN HARRIER \******Circus cyaneus***

**2004.** A male was well offshore >N on 5th Sept.

**MERLIN*****Falco columbarius***

**2002.** A fledgling (down on head & mantle) appeared at the Observatory on 6<sup>th</sup> July. This bird could not sustain controlled flight & could possibly have been hand-caught! This would indicate breeding somewhere in the surrounding uplands but there was certainly no indication of this.

Later, the first migrant appeared on 23<sup>rd</sup> Aug.

**2003.** The first autumn migrant >S on 12<sup>th</sup> Aug.

**2004.** Regular sightings from 12th Aug. One in-off-the-sea on 18th Sept looked totally exhausted.

**CORN CRAKE \******Crex crex***

**2004.** One off-passage & 'crekking' in rough ground by Machrihanish Caravan Park / Golf Course on 2<sup>nd</sup> May (Davie Robertson *et al*). The second passage record from this site in recent years & by the same golfer!

**EURASIAN OYSTERCATCHER*****Haematopus ostralegus***

**2002.** Peaks - 310 >S on 31<sup>st</sup> July & 670 >S on 10<sup>th</sup> Aug.

**2003.** Peaks - 230 >S on 30<sup>th</sup> July & 415 >S on 7<sup>th</sup> Aug.

**2004.** Peak - 845 >S on 13<sup>th</sup> Aug.

'Hundreds' were off-passage at Machrihanish Water on 16th Aug then >S mainly in small parties.

**AVOCET \***

**2002.** 3 juvs >S (with Oystercatchers) on 20<sup>th</sup> Aug (see '**Avocets at the Machrihanish Seabird Observatory SW Kintyre August 2002**' in this report).

**RINGED PLOVER*****Charadrius hiaticula***

**2003.** Monthly passage peaks were – 40 >S on 20<sup>th</sup> July & 60 >S on 17<sup>th</sup> Aug. 100+ (moult flock) Machrihanish Bay Sept / Oct.

**2004.** Heavy passage late July with peak 90 >S on 29<sup>th</sup>. Monthly peaks later were – 48 >S on 6<sup>th</sup> Aug & 30 on 6<sup>th</sup> Sept. Moult flock at Machrihanish Water mouth peaked at 140 on 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct.

**EUROPEAN GOLDEN PLOVER*****Pluvialis apricaria***

**2003.** 45 >S on 10<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**2004.** 30 in off the sea on 14<sup>th</sup> Sept. 10 >S on 5<sup>th</sup> Oct & 68 >S on 8<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**GREY PLOVER \******Pluvialis squatarola***

**2004.** 2 >N on 5th Sept & 4 >S on 21st Sept.

**RED KNOT*****Calidris canutus***

**2002.** One on 12<sup>th</sup> March was unusual. Autumn passage from 27<sup>th</sup> July (1) with monthly peaks of only 38 on 12<sup>th</sup> Aug & 20 on 12<sup>th</sup> Sept.

**2003.** Passage from 16<sup>th</sup> July (17) with early peak of 63 on 21<sup>st</sup> July.

Small numbers regular later with max counts 22 on 17<sup>th</sup> Aug & 12 >S on 16<sup>th</sup> Sept.

**2004.** Autumn passage from 5<sup>th</sup> July (2) with max only 10 on 21<sup>st</sup>.  
Main Aug movements were - 115 >S on 12<sup>th</sup>, 50 >S on 14<sup>th</sup>, 120 >S on 27<sup>th</sup> & 70 >S on 29<sup>th</sup>. Small numbers Sept, max 8 on 6<sup>th</sup>.

### **SANDERLING**

#### ***Calidris alba***

**2002.** May – 35 >N on 21<sup>st</sup>. June – 3 >S on 26<sup>th</sup> (a very late spring record).  
July – 18 >S 22<sup>nd</sup> & 40 >S on 29<sup>th</sup>. Aug / Sept - good numbers regular  
Machrihanish Bay with 70+ on 10<sup>th</sup>.

**2003.** July – from 14<sup>th</sup> (25 >S) then total of 111 >S on 4 dates 20<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> with  
a peak of 50 >S on 31<sup>st</sup>. Aug – 20 on 14<sup>th</sup> & 64 on 17<sup>th</sup> were the main counts.  
Sept - small numbers >S regularly throughout month with highest count 37  
Machrihanish Bay on 10<sup>th</sup>.

**2004.** July – passage from 7<sup>th</sup> (36) then peak numbers were 130 >S on 28<sup>th</sup> &  
110 on 30<sup>th</sup>. Monthly peaks later were 90 >S on 9<sup>th</sup> Sept & 30 >S on 4<sup>th</sup> Oct.

### **LITTLE STINT \***

#### ***Calidris minuta***

**2004.** Sept - 18th (1), 19th (4), one >S on 21st & 23rd (5).

### **CURLEW SANDPIPER \***

#### ***Calidris ferruginea***

**2004.** 2 on 19th & 8 on 23rd Sept.

### **PURPLE SANDPIPER**

#### ***Calidris maritima***

**2002.** Jan – March. Up to 14 birds wintered at Machrihanish.

**2003.** 3 >S on 16<sup>th</sup> Sept, one on 8<sup>th</sup> Oct & 9 >S on 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov.

**2004.** 1 >S on 14th & 2 on 22nd Sept, then 3 on 19th Oct.

### **DUNLIN**

#### ***Calidris alpina***

**2003.** July - heavy passage with grand total of 1,440 >S on only 5 dates 20<sup>th</sup>  
(240) – 29<sup>th</sup> (190) with 650 >S on 21<sup>st</sup>. Aug – total of 1,360 >S on 6 dates 13<sup>th</sup>  
(480) – 18<sup>th</sup> (60) with 400 on 14<sup>th</sup>.

**2004.** July – a grand total of 1,100 >S on 9 dates 17<sup>th</sup> (100) – 29<sup>th</sup> (330) with  
390 >S on 29<sup>th</sup>. Aug – 450 >S on 6<sup>th</sup>. Oct – max 98 >S on 4<sup>th</sup>.

### **RUFF \***

#### ***Philomachus pugnax***

**2002.** Rare June record - a reeve on 7<sup>th</sup>.

**2004.** One off-passage (a Reeve) on 7<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> Aug & 3 >S on 23<sup>rd</sup> Sept.

### **BLACK-TAILED GODWIT \***

#### ***Limosa limosa***

**2002.** One on 3<sup>rd</sup> July & 3 on 4<sup>th</sup> Aug.

**2003.** July – 14 >S on 17<sup>th</sup>, 3 >S on 25<sup>th</sup> & 35 in off the sea on 28<sup>th</sup>.

**2004.** Aug – One >S on 9<sup>th</sup>, 12 >S on 10<sup>th</sup> & singles on 14<sup>th</sup> & 31<sup>st</sup>.

### **BAR-TAILED GODWIT \***

#### ***Limosa lapponica***

**2002.** 2 >S on 24<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup> April & one >S on 25<sup>th</sup> May. No autumn record.

**2003.** One on 27<sup>th</sup> March. One >S on 13<sup>th</sup> June. July - 2 >S on 18<sup>th</sup>. Sept –  
3 >S on 16<sup>th</sup> & singles >S on 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup>.

**2004.** One on 31<sup>st</sup> Aug & 5 >S on 8<sup>th</sup> September.

**WHIMBREL*****Numenius phaeopus***

**2002.** April – from 10<sup>th</sup> (2) with 3 >S on 22<sup>nd</sup> & 31 >S on 26<sup>th</sup>.  
 May – 6 >N on 21<sup>st</sup> & 3 >S on 25<sup>th</sup>. July – one on 17<sup>th</sup>, 9 >S on 19<sup>th</sup> & 11 >S on 30<sup>th</sup>.  
**2003.** One on 10<sup>th</sup> June, one on 18<sup>th</sup> July, one on 7<sup>th</sup> Aug & 7 on 19<sup>th</sup> Sept.  
**2004.** April – 6 on 26<sup>th</sup>. May – 40 on 6<sup>th</sup> & 40 on 15<sup>th</sup>.  
 June – one regular 9<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> then one >S on 29<sup>th</sup>.  
 July – one >S on 1<sup>st</sup>. Aug – one on 6<sup>th</sup>, 10 >S on 12<sup>th</sup>, 8 >S on 29<sup>th</sup> & 18 >S on 30<sup>th</sup>.

**EURASIAN CURLEW*****Numenius arquata***

**2002.** A total of 844 > S (none >N) on 19 dates 14<sup>th</sup> June – 22 July were 'fresh-plumaged' juvs & highest day counts were 81 on 27<sup>th</sup> June & 140 on 8<sup>th</sup> July. This early passage suggests exodus of Scottish bred birds (?).  
**2003.** 170 Machrihanish on 14<sup>th</sup> Jan.  
**2004.** Early passage >S (see 2002) with 570 >S on many dates 8<sup>th</sup> June – 4<sup>th</sup> Aug. Again all birds seen well were 'fresh-plumaged' juvs.

**COMMON REDSHANK*****Tringa totanus***

**2003.** The first juvenile appeared on the shore on 26<sup>th</sup> June.  
 July - 35 >S on 7<sup>th</sup> followed by total of 385 >S on 6 dates 17<sup>th</sup> (55) – 31<sup>st</sup> (80) with peak of 110 on 21<sup>st</sup>. Light passage later.  
**2004.** July – passage from 2<sup>nd</sup> (8) with peaks of 44 on 19<sup>th</sup> & 120+ on 29<sup>th</sup>.  
 Aug – peaks were 140 >S on 14<sup>th</sup> & 80 >S on 27<sup>th</sup>.

**COMMON GREENSHANK*****Tringa nebularia***

**2002.** One on 12<sup>th</sup> March then singles on 9<sup>th</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup> July.  
 Inland – 2 on floodwater at Bleachfield, The Laggan on 31<sup>st</sup> July.  
**2003.** July - records from 18<sup>th</sup> (5>S) with total of 23 including flock 10 >S on 21<sup>st</sup>. Only 3 singles occurred during Aug with last bird >S on 19<sup>th</sup>.  
**2004.** July – singles on 1<sup>st</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup>, 2 on 12<sup>th</sup> & one on 29<sup>th</sup>. Six records in Aug including 2 on 3<sup>rd</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup> with at least 4 present on 10<sup>th</sup>.

**WOOD SANDPIPER \******Tringa glareola***

**2004.** The Laggan. One on floodwater at Bleachfield (with 2 Greenshank) on 31<sup>st</sup> July.

**RUDDY TURNSTONE*****Arenaria interpres***

**2002.** Up to 8 birds wintered at Machrihanish Jan – March.  
**2003.** 14 at Machrihanish on 14<sup>th</sup> Jan. Small numbers regular on passage from 20<sup>th</sup> July with 8 on 30<sup>th</sup>. 33 >S on 17<sup>th</sup> Aug & 11 on 19<sup>th</sup> Sept.  
**2004.** Late spring. One on 9<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> June. July - 3 >S on 7<sup>th</sup>, 10 >S on 21<sup>st</sup> & 85 >S on 29<sup>th</sup>. Aug - 65 >S on 12<sup>th</sup> & 30 >S on 14<sup>th</sup>. 60 >S on 13<sup>th</sup> Sept.

**GREY PHALAROPE \******Phalaropus fulicarius***

**2002.** One was on the shore near the old lifeboat station adjacent to the Observatory on 29<sup>th</sup> Dec (Hugh Nicol); the second recent winter occurrence in Kintyre (one was at Tayinloan on 8<sup>th</sup> Jan 1999).  
**2003.** The only record was one >S on 10<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**2004.** A gripping record autumn total of 12 birds >S between 30th Aug (an adult) – 21 Oct (1) including 3 on 20<sup>th</sup> & 3 on 21<sup>st</sup> Sept. The bird on 21<sup>st</sup> Oct appeared on a rather nice 'bright n' breezy' day with an onshore WSW 6-7 blowing (see '**Occurrence of Grey Phalarope off W & NW Scotland & Northern Ireland during autumn 2004**' in this report).

**POMARINE SKUA \***

***Stercorarius pomarinus***

**2003.** 3 adults >S on 13<sup>th</sup> May. A juvenile >S on 6<sup>th</sup> Oct was the sole autumn record.

**2004.** Single adults >S 27<sup>th</sup> April, & 27<sup>th</sup> Aug & a juvenile / first-winter >S on 4<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**ARCTIC SKUA**

***Stercorarius parasiticus***

**2002.** Singles on 17<sup>th</sup> May & 6<sup>th</sup> June. July - passage from 6<sup>th</sup> (2) with singles on 4 dates & 2 on 30<sup>th</sup>. Aug / Sept - total of only 15 >S on 9 dates with max 4 on 18<sup>th</sup> Sept

**2003.** 9 (8 >S / 1 >N) on 13<sup>th</sup> May.

Total only 26 >S on 12 dates 9<sup>th</sup> Aug – 22<sup>nd</sup> Sept, with peak 6 on 13<sup>th</sup> Aug.

**2004.** One >S on 10<sup>th</sup> April. One on 11<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> June.

One >S on 24<sup>th</sup> July. A total of 56 birds >S between 10th Aug (2) – 21st Sept including 7 on 18th Aug & 8 on 20th Sept.

**LONG-TAILED SKUA \***

**2004.** Three widely scattered records of single fly-by juv / first-winter birds. All flew south during W / NW (onshore) strong winds on 27th August, 14th September & 6th October (see '**Occurrence of Long-tailed Skua off W & NW Scotland & Northern Ireland during autumn 2004**' in this report).

**GREAT SKUA**

***Stercorarius skua***

**2003.** Total of only 18 >S on 12 dates 25<sup>th</sup> July – 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct with max. 6 on 21<sup>st</sup> Aug.

**2004.** Singles on 8 dates 11<sup>th</sup> June – 11<sup>th</sup> July (possibly a summering bird).

A total of 41 >S between 27<sup>th</sup> Aug (4) – 6<sup>th</sup> Oct (2) including 5 on 13<sup>th</sup> & 6 on 21<sup>st</sup> Sept.

**MEDITERRANEAN GULL \***

***Larus melanocephalus***

**2003.** Three birds. Aug - an adult moulting into winter-plumage on 13<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> then on the shore at Machrihanish village on 17<sup>th</sup> was joined by a juv / first-winter by the Lossit Gate / bus terminal on 19<sup>th</sup>. The juv was seen on two additional dates – 21<sup>st</sup> Aug & finally on 2<sup>nd</sup> Sept.

Nearly two months later - 17<sup>th</sup> Oct - an adult in winter-plumage >S past the Seabird Observatory.

These constitute the third - fifth Seabird Observatory records, the eighth Kintyre record & the tenth Argyll record.

**2004.** A juv / first-winter was found at a gull roost by Machrihanish Water mouth on 31<sup>st</sup> Aug. What was undoubtedly the same bird (in first-winter plumage) was logged on many dates Sept & was last seen >S on 5<sup>th</sup> Oct.

This long-stayer constitutes the sixth Seabird Observatory record (one in spring / five in autumn), the ninth Kintyre record & the eleventh Argyll record.

See '**More Mediterranean Gulls in Kintyre 2003 / 2004**' in this report.

**LITTLE GULL \******Larus minutus***

**2002.** 2 first-summer birds were offshore dip-feeding on 27<sup>th</sup> June.

**2004.** A record autumn appearance of this appealing species with 10 first-winter birds >S between 18<sup>th</sup> Aug (1) – 4<sup>th</sup> Oct (1) with one on 27<sup>th</sup> Aug, 3 on 30<sup>th</sup> Aug & 2 on 18<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> Sept.

**SABINE'S GULL \******Larus sabini***

**2002.** An adult >S on 5<sup>th</sup> Sept (Keith Hoey).

**2004.** A superb total of 13 juvs all >S during onshore W – NW strong winds between 13<sup>th</sup> Sept (1) - 4<sup>th</sup> Oct (4) with a record one-day total of 6 on 20<sup>th</sup> Sept & 2 on 21<sup>st</sup> Sept (see '**Sabine's Gull off W & NW Scotland & Northern Ireland during autumn 2004**' in this report).

**LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL*****Larus fuscus***

**2004.** First juv >S on 26<sup>th</sup> July. 3 adults at Campbeltown Airport on 15<sup>th</sup> Oct. Unusually, a juv took up residence adjacent to the Observatory in mid-Sept & was still present on 29<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**ICELAND GULL \******Larus glaucooides***

**2002.** A first-winter (faded) on 5<sup>th</sup> April (on the shore – then >S) & an adult >S on 19<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**2004.** One, a second-winter, on 5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> Sept.

**GLAUCOUS GULL \******Larus hyperboreus***

**2002.** A fourth-winter / adult was at the Machrihanish water Jan – 17<sup>th</sup> April. A third-winter >S on 9<sup>th</sup> March was followed by a second-summer >S on 11<sup>th</sup> May. A first-summer was present (intermittently) 21<sup>st</sup> May – 2<sup>nd</sup> July & an adult / fourth-winter was present at Machrihanish Water on 5<sup>th</sup> Oct to the end of the year (possibly the same bird that was noted at the beginning of the year & the previous autumn / winter).

**2003.** An adult was present at Machrihanish Water Nov / Dec.

**2004.** The wintering adult was at Machrihanish Water Jan - March.

**BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE*****Rissa tridactyla***

**2002.** The first juv >S on 5<sup>th</sup> Aug. Large numbers regular on horizon mid-Aug – Sept with 1,000's on 18<sup>th</sup> Sept.

**2003.** The *earliest ever* juv >S on 24<sup>th</sup> July. Largest movements were 1,000+ on horizon 13<sup>th</sup> Aug & 1,600+ offshore on 14<sup>th</sup> Aug. No significant weather movements Sept / Oct.

**2004.** The first juvs (2) were seen on 7<sup>th</sup> Aug. The largest movements noted were 1, 280 >S / 4 hrs on 18<sup>th</sup> Aug (including 114 juvs), 5,000 >S / 4 hrs on 27<sup>th</sup> Aug, 1,800 >S / 5 hrs on 20<sup>th</sup> Sept & 2,000 >S / 7 hrs on 4<sup>th</sup> Oct (see '**French ringed Kittiwakes at Machrihanish 2000**' in this report).

**SANDWICH TERN*****Sterna sandvicensis***

**2002.** 2 >S on 29<sup>th</sup> March (first of year). Regular throughout spring / summer with up to 10 birds in June / July. Many examined closely showed white flecking throughout black cap & were obviously immature, possibly second-summer. The first juv was offshore on 19<sup>th</sup> July.

Last bird >S on 19<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**2003.** Recorded daily late spring / summer, max. 9 on 23<sup>rd</sup> June with first juvs offshore on 22<sup>nd</sup> July. Regular one's & two's almost daily to 1<sup>st</sup> Oct then last 2 >S on 14<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**2004.** First arrivals were 3 on 2<sup>nd</sup> April followed by 6 >S on 3<sup>rd</sup>. Regular 2 - 8 birds all summer & coition seen on many occasions. First juv offshore on 21<sup>st</sup> July. Small numbers present most days Aug / Sept. A loose flock of 28 >S on 24<sup>th</sup> Aug & last birds (2) >S on 6<sup>th</sup> Oct.

Note the constancy (almost to the date) in the appearance of juvs 2002 – 2004.

### **COMMON TERN**

#### ***Sterna hirundo***

**2002.** 18 birds arrived at Big Scone islet, Machrihanish Bay on 25<sup>th</sup> May & bred with some success.

**2003.** Late migrants - 2 adults >S on 21<sup>st</sup> Sept, 2 adults & one first-winter >S on 25<sup>th</sup> Sept & single first-winter >S on 7<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**2004.** A late autumn passage occurred. Sept – 5 adults >S 16<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup>, then 8 >S on 27<sup>th</sup> (including 6 first-winter). 2 adults >S on 2<sup>nd</sup> & one first-winter >S on 5<sup>th</sup> Oct.

### **ARCTIC TERN**

#### ***Sterna paradisaea***

**2002.** One on 20<sup>th</sup> April then 42 birds arrived at Big Scone, Machrihanish Bay on 25<sup>th</sup> May (typical colony arrival date).

Second-summer birds; June – 2 on 23<sup>rd</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup>. July – singles on 3<sup>rd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup>.

**2003.** 3 fledged from Big Scone colony, Machrihanish on 25<sup>th</sup> July  
July – 48 adults >S / 3hrs on 7<sup>th</sup> July & 52 adults >S on 25<sup>th</sup> July.

Single adults >S on 23<sup>rd</sup> Sept & 9<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**2004.** Breeding At least 12 pairs bred on Big Scone Isle at Machrihanish village. A second-summer bird was present near the colony & often around / off the point 29<sup>th</sup> June – 6<sup>th</sup> July.

Extraordinary late Sept – early Oct passage with total of 180 birds >S on 10 dates 20<sup>th</sup> Sept (36) – 6<sup>th</sup> Oct (12) with peak of 72 >S on 26<sup>th</sup> Sept.

### **LITTLE TERN \***

#### ***Sterna albifrons***

**2002.** 7 >S on 11 May & 2 off-passage 12<sup>th</sup> May.

**2003.** All records late July. 7 >S on 25<sup>th</sup> & a juvenile off-passage 25<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup>.  
4 >S (1 juvenile) on 30<sup>th</sup> followed by 2 adults >S on 31<sup>st</sup>.

**2004.** One on 10<sup>th</sup> May. 2 adults >S 30<sup>th</sup> July followed by an adult feeding a juv (on passage) on 31<sup>st</sup> July.

### **LITTLE AUK \***

#### ***Alle alle***

**2003.** Three records in Oct – singles >S on 6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> then 3 on 10<sup>th</sup>.

**2004.** One on 8<sup>th</sup> Oct – a beautiful day! – two days after a NW gale.

### **ATLANTIC PUFFIN**

#### ***Fratercula arctica***

**2002.** Singles >S or on sea on 16 dates 14<sup>th</sup> June – 19<sup>th</sup> Aug with an adult & a juvenile on 9<sup>th</sup> Aug.

**2003.** A few records from 7<sup>th</sup> July (2) – 12<sup>th</sup> Aug (1) with 5 >S on 18<sup>th</sup> July.

**2004.** Seen on 10 dates 28<sup>th</sup> April – 5<sup>th</sup> Aug, max 8 >S on 29<sup>th</sup> July.

**AUK sp. (RAZORBILL *Alca torda* & COMMON GUILLEMOT *Uria aalge***

The horizon movements of the large auks (Razorbill & Guillemot) restrict specific identification; consequently, all distant parties/individuals are placed in this convenient category.

**2003.** On 8<sup>th</sup> Aug Razorbill & Guillemot littered a calm sea with an estimated 4,000+ offshore (unfledged chicks were plentiful). Majority of these birds were probably exodus of Rathlin Island population c. 20 km WSW of Machrihanish. No large-scale movements were noted later.

**2004.** The only real movement was 1,200 >S / 3 hrs on 4<sup>th</sup> October.

**EUROPEAN TURTLE DOVE \* *Streptopelia turtur***

**2002.** One at Westparkfergus, The Laggan on 6<sup>th</sup> Nov.

**BARN OWL *Tyto alba***

**2004.** One seen near the Observatory on several dates from 26th July.

**LONG-EARED OWL \* *Asio otus***

**2003.** One calling (21:20 hrs) in mature mixed woodland by the village hall, Isle of Gigha on 15<sup>th</sup> March.

**COMMON SWIFT *Apus apus***

**2002.** 18 in off the sea on 20<sup>th</sup> June & 2 >S 8<sup>th</sup> Aug.

**2003.** 27 in off the sea on 26<sup>th</sup> June.

**2004.** An unprecedented broad front movement occurred at the Observatory from 13:00 hrs on 12<sup>th</sup> Aug when a total of 441 birds >NNE / 5 hrs. Many birds (60+) were noted >S just before dusk.

**HOOPOE \* *Upupa epops***

**2002.** One at Ardell House Hotel, Machrihanish 6th - 9th May (David Baxter / Elizabeth Irwin & Eddie Maguire).

**COMMON KINGFISHER \* *Alcedo atthis***

**2004.** One at the harbour, Campbeltown on 7<sup>th</sup> July (reported by many local folk).

**WHITE WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba***

**2002.** First on 13<sup>th</sup> April then daily in small numbers with peaks 11 on 6<sup>th</sup> May & 10 on 11<sup>th</sup> May.

**2003.** Late spring - one on 9<sup>th</sup> June.

Autumn. 20 >S on 5<sup>th</sup> Aug. 8 >S on 1<sup>st</sup> Sept.

**2004.** Spring. First arrivals were 3 on 2<sup>nd</sup> April. Peak only 6 on 27<sup>th</sup> April & last of spring a single on 28<sup>th</sup> May.

Autumn. Heavy passage 9<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> Aug with at least 40 in the Machrihanish area on 13<sup>th</sup>.

**BOHEMIAN WAXWING \* *Bombycilla garrulous***

**2003.** Campbeltown. 6 Dalintober 7<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> January.

**BLACK REDSTART \******Phoenicurus ochruros***

2002. One on 19<sup>th</sup> Oct.

2003. A singing male took up temporary residence around the Good Templar Hall (now demolished), Longrow, Campbeltown from 25<sup>th</sup> April – 15<sup>th</sup> May.

**NORTHERN WHEATEAR*****Oenanthe oenanthe***

2002. Singles on 19<sup>th</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup> March.

2003. Mull of Kintyre - 2 at The Gap on 16<sup>th</sup> March.

Greenland race *leucorhoa* - singles on 13<sup>th</sup> Aug & 2<sup>nd</sup> Sept with 2 on 16<sup>th</sup> Sept.

2004. Greenland race (*leucorhoa*). July – one on 23<sup>rd</sup>. Sept - 2 on 9<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup>, 3 on 11<sup>th</sup> & 5 on 18<sup>th</sup>. 2 on 6<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**RING OUZEL \******Turdus torquatus***

2004. Mull of Kintyre. One seen / heard at The Gap on 11<sup>th</sup> June.

**COMMON RAVEN*****Corvus corax***

2002. Around 70 moulting immatures were regular between the Observatory & Cnoc Moy throughout May / June.

**TWITE*****Carduelis flavirostris***

2003. Fairly low numbers on the point with peak of only 155 on 16<sup>th</sup> Sept.

2004. Extremely low counts & peak only 40 on 5<sup>th</sup> Sept.

**SNOW BUNTING \******Plectrophenax nivalis***

2003. 3 at Westport on 3<sup>rd</sup> Jan. 30 >S over the sea on 6<sup>th</sup> Oct.

2004. Spring. A rather late female was showing well on the point 15<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> May. 2 >S 18<sup>th</sup> Sept.

**OCCURRENCE OF LONG-TAILED SKUA  
OFF  
W & NW SCOTLAND & NORTHERN IRELAND  
DURING AUTUMN 2004**

Systematic seawatching at Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, SW Kintyre, Argyll has revealed that the Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus* is an exceptionally scarce, mainly autumn, passage visitor.

At Machrihanish, & nearby, there are two spring records; single adults in May 1992 & at The Laggan in April 1995. A very recent summer / early autumn record involved a splendid adult at the Big Scone Common / Arctic Tern colony in Machrihanish Bay on 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> July 2002.

Now (including 2004), there are a total of seven autumn records (Aug - Oct); two in 1994, two in 2001 & three in 2004 involving just one adult & 6 juv / first-winter.

Note. The Machrihanish records coincide neatly with occurrences at a number of west coast seawatching stations (see below).

**OCCURRENCES OFF W & NW SCOTLAND & NORTHERN IRELAND...**

Seawatching during autumn 2004 was superb & one of the best in recent years, not only for the presence of scarce seabirds, but for the gripping numbers of some irregular species. Almost continuous rough weather from late August through to early October brought frequent W to NW strong winds; during this period, at least another 19 Long-tailed Skua were reported at many sites off West & North-West Scotland & off the N Antrim coast.

**Machrihanish Seabird Observatory.** Three widely scattered records of single fly-by juvenile / first-winter birds >S on 27<sup>th</sup> August, 14<sup>th</sup> September & 6<sup>th</sup> October.

**Ayrshire coast.** Turnberry Point. A juvenile / first-winter >S on 14<sup>th</sup> September (Angus Murray / Birdline Scotland pers. comm.). See Machrihanish data above.

**Isle of Islay.** Frenchman's Rocks (SW). A juvenile / first-winter >S on 6<sup>th</sup> October (Tristan ap Rheinallt pers. comm.). See Machrihanish data above.

**Isle of Tiree.** 3 juvenile / first-winter >S on 6<sup>th</sup> October (John Bowler / RSPB pers. comm.). See Islay & Machrihanish data above.

**Isle of Coll.** A juvenile >S off the CalMac pier on 1<sup>st</sup> September (Simon Wellock / RSPB pers. comm.).

**Outer Hebrides.** A juvenile >S at Rubha Ardvule, South Uist on 4<sup>th</sup> September (Andrew Stevenson pers. comm.).

**Northern Ireland.** A total of six records involving 12 juveniles at four sites in Antrim & Londonderry 29<sup>th</sup> August – 26<sup>th</sup> October including 7 past Ramore Head, Antrim on morning of 29<sup>th</sup> August (George Gordon pers. comm.).

Compare the late August passage date at the Machrihanish Seabird Observatory with the above record at Ramore Head during the same period & although not stated, one was also seen at this seawatching station on 14<sup>th</sup> September (see Machrihanish & Ayrshire data above)

**Eddie Maguire (warden)  
Machrihanish Seabird & Wildlife Observatory**

## MORE MEDITERRANEAN GULLS IN SW KINTYRE 2003 & 2004

The Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus* is a very scarce, but recently increasing, visitor to Kintyre (mainly in autumn) that has vagrant status throughout the rest of Argyll (& the Outer & Inner Hebrides).

Recent genuine increase in SW Kintyre is probably linked to dramatic upsurge of records throughout Northern Ireland over the past decade.

Incredibly, nine of twelve occurrences in Argyll have been in Kintyre (including six at the Machrihanish Seabird Observatory) & none on well-watched Islay!

The first Argyll & 5<sup>th</sup> Scottish record was a long-staying adult at Campbeltown Loch, Kintyre during autumn 1975 (found by the author).

The species now breeds as near as Northern Ireland (George Gordon pers comm.).

**2003.** A total of three birds all in autumn (August – October).

August - an adult moulting into winter-plumage on 13<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> was joined by a juvenile by the Lossit Gate on the latter date. The juvenile was seen on two additional dates – 21<sup>st</sup> August & 2<sup>nd</sup> September when >S past the Seabird Observatory.

Nearly two months later, on 17<sup>th</sup> October, an adult in winter-plumage flew S past the Seabird Observatory.

These constitute the third - fifth Seabird Observatory records, the eighth Kintyre record & at least the tenth Argyll record!

**2004.** A bird in juvenile plumage was found at a gull roost by Machrihanish Water mouth at 18:00 hrs on 31<sup>st</sup> August. What was considered to be the same bird, in first-winter plumage, was logged on many dates during September & was last seen >S on 5<sup>th</sup> October.

This long-stayer constitutes the sixth Seabird Observatory record (one in spring / five in autumn), the ninth Kintyre record & at least the twelfth Argyll record (see also 2004 Tiree record below).

### **Additional information on Mediterranean Gull from Western Scotland & Northern Ireland during autumn 2004.**

**Ayrshire coast.** An adult past Troon on 27<sup>th</sup> August & first-winters at Maidens on 29<sup>th</sup> August, 6<sup>th</sup> September & 3<sup>rd</sup> October. At least 2 different individuals involved here - one with a red colour-ring (combination not noted). An adult was at Doonfoot on 15<sup>th</sup> September & a second-winter was there on 10<sup>th</sup> October. Finally *the* adult was back at Barassie from 6<sup>th</sup> October (Belgian white colour-ringed bird first seen in 1999: Angus Murray / Birdline Scotland pers. comm.).

**Isle of Tiree.** A first-summer bird at The Green on 1<sup>st</sup> July then at Loch an Eilien on 14<sup>th</sup> July (John Bowler / RSPB pers. comm.).

**Northern Ireland.** Uncommon but regular & increasing visitor throughout the year to coastal areas, & occasional inland. Breeding was attempted (unsuccessfully) in Antrim in 1995, & has occurred elsewhere in Ireland since 1996. As at 5<sup>th</sup> December, a total of **86** records have been submitted for **2004** from Down, Armagh, Londonderry & Antrim - including possible breeding (George Gordon pers. comm.).

**Discussion...**

With at least six records of Med Gull over the past two years, Argyll has experienced an impressive upsurge of records.

The extraordinary increase in sightings at the Machrihanish Seabird Observatory recently - four records in two years - must surely be linked to the staggering, well-documented, upsurge in records that has taken place throughout nearby Northern Ireland, mainly over the past decade. These sudden increases, just a stones throw from Northern Ireland, look set to continue (see 2004 Isle of Tiree record above & 2005 Knapdale record below).

**Note.** Since submitting this paper to the relevant records committee (with descriptions) a second-winter Med Gull has been found & digiscoped by Jim Dickson at Loch Caolisport, Knapdale, Argyll on 19<sup>th</sup> February 2005.

Will this seemingly escalating development continue & will 2005 prove to be a bumper year for Med Gull in Argyll?

**Eddie Maguire (warden)**  
**Machrihanish Seabird & Wildlife Observatory**

## SABINE'S GULL OFF W & NW SCOTLAND & NORTHERN IRELAND DURING AUTUMN 2004

Seawatching during autumn 2004 was superb & one of the best on record, not only for the presence of scarce seabirds, but for the gripping numbers of some irregular / scarce species. To the delight of seawatchers, continuous rough weather from late August through to early October brought frequent W to NW strong winds along with remarkable numbers of Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini* to W & NW Scotland & Northern Ireland. A grand total of at least 83 birds were reported from many seawatching stations.

Sabine's is an irregular autumn passage visitor to W & NW Scotland usually in association with onshore gales (& Black-legged Kittiwakes) – especially in September.

**Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, SW Kintyre.** A record autumn total of 13 juveniles >S on four dates 13<sup>th</sup> September (1) - 4<sup>th</sup> October (4) including a record one-day total of 6 on 20<sup>th</sup> September.

**Ayrshire coast.** A total of 5 birds at just two sites. Troon - an adult >S on 29<sup>th</sup> August & a juvenile on 13<sup>th</sup> September. Turnberry Point - an adult on 5<sup>th</sup> September, a juvenile reported on 21<sup>st</sup> September & a juvenile on 5<sup>th</sup> October (Angus Murray / Birdline Scotland pers. comm.).

**Isle of Islay.** A total of 19 birds at three sites. Frenchman's Rocks (all >S during September). A juvenile on 19<sup>th</sup>, one adult & 3 juveniles on 20<sup>th</sup> & 2 adults & 6 juveniles on 21<sup>st</sup>.

Ardnave (NW Islay). All juveniles - one >W on 30<sup>th</sup> August & 2 >W on 23<sup>rd</sup> September (Tristan ap Rheinallt pers. comm.).

Loch Gruinart. 3 juveniles (together) on 14<sup>th</sup> September (Clive McKay / RSPB pers. comm.).

**Isle of Tiree.** A total of 3 birds on two dates off Aird including a splendid adult >W on 21<sup>st</sup> September & 2 juveniles >W on 7<sup>th</sup> October (John Bowler / RSPB pers. comm.).

**Isle of Coll.** Unprecedented influx involving a total of 9 birds (6 adults) on five dates 1<sup>st</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> September including a juvenile >N & 3 adults & one juvenile >S off CalMac pier on 20<sup>th</sup>.

There is only one previous (unconfirmed) record from Coll of a bird following the Oban ferry during rough weather on 24<sup>th</sup> May 1986, which joined the boat just off Coll & remained until it reached Gott Bay on Tiree (Simon Wellock / RSPB pers. comm.).

**Outer Hebrides.** A total of 12 birds including three adults >S on four dates 29<sup>th</sup> August (3 adults & 2 juveniles) – 20<sup>th</sup> September (2 juveniles) including 4 juveniles on 20<sup>th</sup> (Andrew Stevenson pers. comm.).

**Northern Ireland.** A total of c. 20 birds at four sites 25<sup>th</sup> July (adult in summer plumage) – 7<sup>th</sup> October (one juvenile) with most (18) at Ramore Head, Antrim on six dates including 5 on 14<sup>th</sup> September (ages of all birds uncertain but at least one adult & 2 juveniles) & 5 or 6 on 6<sup>th</sup> October (one adult & juveniles: George Gordon pers. comm.).

**Eddie Maguire (warden)**  
**Machrihanish Seabird & Wildlife Observatory**

**OCCURRENCE OF LEACH'S PETREL  
OFF W & NW SCOTLAND & NORTHERN IRELAND  
DURING AUTUMN 2004**

**INTRODUCTION...**

Seawatching off the west coast of Scotland & the N coast of Co Antrim during autumn 2004 was absolutely superb & one of the best on record not only for the presence of scarce seabirds but for the exhilarating numbers & persistent weather-related passage of some irregular species.

There was almost continuous rough weather from late August through to early October with frequent W to NW strong winds that brought remarkable movements of Leach's Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* within sight of many seawatching stations.

An amazing total of 1,600+ were seen off W & NW Scotland & Northern Ireland.

**STATUS...**

A scarce autumn passage visitor appearing in association with onshore strong to gale force winds especially when accompanied by vicious squalls. Rare in spring & at any other time.

Sustained seawatching from the Machrihanish Seabird Observatory has shown that the severe weather conditions responsible for the occasional onshore occurrence of this oceanic species off the west coast of Scotland are very precise & that September is the most favoured month of occurrence (see Maguire 1999).

A major occurrence is now considered > 40.

The Seabird Observatory holds the record one-day total for Scotland - 466 >S / 5 hrs on 15<sup>th</sup> September 1992 (Eddie Maguire / Rod Angus & Jeff Stenning).

**OCCURRENCES OFF W & NW SCOTLAND & NORTHERN IRELAND 2004...**

**Machrihanish Seabird Observatory**

One >S on 24<sup>th</sup> July. The only August record was 2 >S on 27<sup>th</sup>.

September - total of 225 >S on 9 dates from 14<sup>th</sup> (39) with an excellent major occurrence of 119 >S on 21<sup>st</sup>. The only other record was 6 > on 5<sup>th</sup> October

**Ayrshire coast.** A total of 142 off six sites 27<sup>th</sup> August – 5<sup>th</sup> October with 20 on 21<sup>st</sup> & 19 on 25<sup>th</sup> September off Turnberry Point (Angus Murray / Birdline Scotland pers. comm.).

**Isle of Islay.** A total of 215 >S Frenchman's Rocks (SW Islay) 29<sup>th</sup> August - 22<sup>nd</sup> September with a record number / major occurrence of 143 >S on 21<sup>st</sup> September.

A total of 77 >W Ardnave Point (NW Islay) 30<sup>th</sup> August – 24<sup>th</sup> September with 55 >W on 14<sup>th</sup> September (Tristan ap Rhenaultt pers. comm.).

**Isle of Coll.** A total of 42 were logged between 12<sup>th</sup> (11 >S CalMac pier) – 28<sup>th</sup> Sept including 18 off the Coll-Tiree ferry on 28<sup>th</sup> (Simon Wellock / RSPB pers. comm.).

**Isle of Tiree.** A total of 101 birds seen from three sites 3rd September (13) – 7<sup>th</sup> October (1) with a record one-day total of 44 off Aird / 105 mins 22<sup>nd</sup> September (John Bowler / RSPB pers. comm.).

**Northern Ireland.** Total of around 800 birds off 6 sites 29<sup>th</sup> Aug - 6<sup>th</sup> Oct with astonishing totals at Ramore Head, Co. Antrim of up to 500 on 14<sup>th</sup> Sept & 200 on 24<sup>th</sup> Sept (George Gordon pers. comm.).

**STORM PETREL SP.**

All-dark petrels, similar in size to Leach's, were seen from the Coll-Tiree ferry - just north of the Cairns of Coll (one >W) - on 28<sup>th</sup> June **2004** (Chris Gomersall) & one off the same ferry on 28<sup>th</sup> September **2004** (Simon Wellock / RSPB pers. comm.). It seems likely these birds were the extremely rare **Swinhoe's Storm-petrel** but views were not good enough to allow a definite claim.

\* These appear to be the first records of all-dark / dark-rumped petrels – similar in size to Leach's – off the west coast of Scotland.

**Eddie Maguire (Warden), Machrihanish Seabird & Wildlife Observatory**

**AVOCETS  
AT THE  
MACHRIHANISH SEABIRD OBSERVATORY  
SW KINTYRE  
AUGUST 2002**

**INTRODUCTION...**

A very special feature of bird migration at the **Machrihanish Seabird Observatory** during autumn - particularly August - is the predictable & often exceptional, southerly passage of **Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus* (& many other wader species).

On 20th August 2002, there was a 'fair' passage of **Oystercatcher** with over **300** logged in the first 3 hrs of observation (from 7:30 am). Many of the migrant flocks passed in tight formation - low over the rocks - immediately in front of the Observatory.

Light, sporadic passage continued well into the afternoon.

At 13:22 hrs, a flock of ca. 40 birds >S approached the Observatory. When almost level with the viewing platform, where I was standing, & only about 35 – 40 metres away, it was startlingly obvious that, astonishingly, there were several **Avocets** *Recurvirostra avosetta* travelling amongst them!

**DESCRIPTION OF JUVENILE AVOCETS...**

All 3 birds looked identical.

**Size.**

Smaller than **Oystercatcher**, also slimmer, much more attenuated, owing to extensive leg projection.

**Plumage.**

Upperparts. Head; capped - forehead crown & nape black. Black / dark (irregular) / dark scapulars, secondary coverts & outer primaries, the latter forming a deep black wingtip. Traces of light brown blotching on the back - mainly around edges of very dark / black scapulars.

Rest of upperparts mainly white including rump and tail.

Underparts; chin / throat white. Rest of underparts were white.

**Soft parts.**

Eye; not noted.

Bill; slim, dull-coloured with obvious upturn.

Legs; looked dull-coloured - grey (ish) & projected well beyond tail tip.

**Flight.**

Wingbeats were deep, steady & rhythmical & wing structure looked proportionately longer & slimmer than **Oystercatcher**. Head / neck appeared rather 'hunched' when birds viewed directly in front of observer.

**Age.**

The exceptionally brief, albeit close views, with satisfactory side on views, lasted less than 15 seconds. Tail end views lasted a bit longer (ca. 30 - 40 seconds) but did not reveal any additional information.

None of the birds, when seen side on, gave the crisp appearance of adult plumage, i.e. - startling, neat, black & white appearance.

From long experience of sorting out mixed flocks of shoreline & offshore fly-by's - in view for a few seconds only (including loads of **Avocet** in SE England) - my overall confident impression was that these welcome vagrants

were all 'untidy' juveniles with traces of light blotching on the back - mainly around edges of very dark scapulars & secondary coverts.

**Weather.**

Wind direction. WSW 2 - 3. Visibility excellent. Overcast at times. Warm.

**Weather note & possible explanation for presence of Avocets in SW Kintyre.**

Although the weather was settled on this date, on Saturday 17th August - three days before this strange observation at the Seabird Observatory - a southerly gale occurred over the west of Britain.

Could these fly-by's have been displaced to the north-west by this weather situation to western Scotland from the relatively nearby small breeding population (apparently expanding) in north-west England?

Pure conjecture, of course, but a possible explanation for a truly exciting observation that involved 3 juvenile Avocets travelling south through Argyll with migrant Oystercatchers (the latter probably Icelandic origin).

With only a meagre *three* previous records - including one in Kintyre - the Avocet remains an extremely rare passage visitor to Argyll.

**Eddie Maguire (Warden)**

**Machrihanish Seabird / Wildlife Observatory**

## FRENCH KITTIWAKES AT MACHRIHANISH IN SUMMER 2000

On 28<sup>th</sup> June 2000, 160 Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*, the majority first-summer birds, were loafing on the foreshore in front of the Machrihanish Seabird Observatory for most of the morning/early afternoon. In amongst these birds, three first-summer birds were found to be colour-ringed. All colour sequences were double checked by Eddie Maguire, John McGlynn & Jimmy McCallum (visitor).

Subsequently, it was discovered that all three Kittiwakes had been ringed as chicks in summer 1999 at different colonies on the Brittany coast. Birds 1 & 3 have not been seen since they were at Machrihanish, but bird 2 has quite a history (below)!

### **Bird 2, ring sequence...**

**Left leg:** Red over Yellow over White. **Right leg:** White over Blue over Metal.

### **History...**

**1999.** Ringed at a colony at Karreg Korn, Goulien, Finistere, Brittany (48° 04' N: 4° 36' W) in June. It was last seen at its natal colony on 4<sup>th</sup> August.

**2000.** Colour ring sequence read at Machrihanish (56° 26' N 5° 45' W) on 26<sup>th</sup> June, approximately **822** km NNW.

**2001.** Seen on five occasions in three different colonies in Finistere, Brittany.

**2002.** Attempted to breed at Porzh an Halen colony Goulien, Finistere, but had definitely disappeared by 21<sup>st</sup> June.

It seems likely that these birds spent their first winter in the north Atlantic, probably somewhere south of Britain, and then moved north during spring/summer, as wandering immatures.

Is it an amazing coincidence that three colour-ringed **Kittiwakes**, all roughly from the same area of Brittany, should appear in western Scotland at the same location, on the same date and at the same time! To date (February 2005) no other colour-ringed **Kittiwakes** have been seen, although I have looked for them.

Many thanks to **David Jardine** who, with a lot of patience, finally traced the French ringer, clinched the origin of these birds and ended a near five-year mystery!

**Eddie Maguire** (Warden), Machrihanish Seabird and Wildlife Observatory.

[David Jardine was able to trace the ringer of these Kittiwakes through a Belgium website: <http://www.cr-birding.be>]

**OCCURRENCE OF GREY PHALAROPE  
OFF W & NW SCOTLAND & NORTHERN IRELAND  
DURING AUTUMN 2004**

Seawatching off the west coast during autumn 2004 was superb, not only for the presence of scarce seabirds, but also for the exhilarating numbers of some irregular passage visitors. Continuous rough weather from late August through to early October brought frequent W to NW strong winds that blasted remarkable numbers of Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius* from the Atlantic to the inshore waters of sea areas *Malin & Outer Hebrides*.

An impressive total of 94 birds appeared off the following seawatching stations in W & NW Scotland & Northern Ireland.

**Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, SW Kintyre.** A total of 12 birds >S 30<sup>th</sup> Aug (an adult) – 21 Oct (1) including 3 on 20<sup>th</sup> & 3 on 21<sup>st</sup> Sept. The bird on 21<sup>st</sup> Oct appeared on a rather 'bright n' breezy' day with an onshore WSW 6-7 blowing (Eddie Maguire / Warden).

**Ayrshire coast.** A total of 6 off Turnberry Point 21<sup>st</sup> Sept (3) - 5<sup>th</sup> Oct (1) with singles on 25<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup> Sept (Angus Murray / Birdline Scotland pers. comm.).

**Isle of Islay.** A total of 13 birds at two sites on six dates 12<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> Sept including 3 on 15<sup>th</sup>, 3 on 19<sup>th</sup> & 3 on 21<sup>st</sup> (Tristan ap Rheinallt & Clive McKay pers. comm.).

**Isle of Coll.** 2 off the pier on 12<sup>th</sup> were part of a good movement noted in NW Scottish waters (Simon Wellock / RSPB pers. comm.).

**Isle of Tiree.** A total of 16 off several island locations on 8 dates 12<sup>th</sup> Sept – 8<sup>th</sup> Oct (3) including a superb total of 6 >W off Aird / 210 mins on 6<sup>th</sup> Oct. In addition, a late bird was off Aird in a NNW 6-7 on 10 Nov (John Bowler / RSPB pers. comm.).

**Outer Hebrides.** At least 8 birds at two locations 12 Sept – 9<sup>th</sup> Oct including 3 >S on 18<sup>th</sup> Sept (Andrew Stevenson & Simon Scott / RSPB pers comm.).

**Northern Ireland.** Total of 37 off Ramore Head, Co. Antrim on 5 dates 14<sup>th</sup> Sept - 15<sup>th</sup> Oct with up to 20 there on 23 Sept & 12 on 6<sup>th</sup> Oct (George Gordon pers. comm.).

**Eddie Maguire (Warden),  
Machrihanish Seabird Observatory**

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(Paper reveals details of tape luring technique for mist-netting (mainly) non-breeding Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus* at almost any mainland promontory.

This ground-breaking technique was perfected by the author during the late 1970's at many locations around the Kintyre peninsula & also on the Isle of Arran, on the Ayrshire coast & on the east coast of Scotland at Fife Ness & finally at Portland Bill Bird Observatory in Dorset).

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS...

Many thanks to all seawatching enthusiasts in W & NW Scotland & Northern Ireland who replied so promptly to our E-mail request for detailed records on the occurrence / movements of specific seabirds during autumn 2004.

It was very evident from many of your comments that 2004 was truly outstanding, not only for a superb variety, but also for the remarkable numbers of many irregular / scarce seabirds during what could be only be described as 'a persistent weather-related inshore passage' for some species. It was a real eye opener to analyse all the detailed information - especially unearthing so much correlation in the pattern, persistence of occurrence & of course all the extraordinary record one-day totals (especially **Leach's Petrel** & **Sabine's Gull**) reported by so many seawatching stations.

## THE SEAWATCHERS

Tristan AP Rheinallt (Frenchman's Rocks - Isle of Islay)

John Bowler (Isle of Tiree / RSPB)

George Gordon (Northern Ireland Bird Recorder / N. Antrim coast records)

Angus Murray (Birdline Scotland / Ayrshire coast records).

Andrew Stevenson (Outer Hebrides)

Martin Scott (Conservation officer / Western Isles / RSPB Scotland)

Simon Wellock (Isle of Coll / RSPB)

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