

ISLE OF EIGG BIRD REPORT, 2016

INTRODUCTION

Following my retirement as SWT Ranger on Eigg this 2016 Bird Report is the first joint effort production incorporating the efforts of both myself & my SWT replacement Dean Jones. As can be seen from the following text much of the breeding bird survey work was carried out by Dean & a good deal of the information contained in this report has been taken from his records.

Unfortunately though due to a combination of my enforced absences from the island & the SWT's insistence on limiting the Eigg Ranger position to a seasonal post only there are significant gaps in the 2016 recording year. This is particularly the case for the usually productive period of late August & September.

Summary

During the course of the year a total of 127 species were recorded on the island with 77 species known to have bred or have made a serious breeding attempt.

Overall 2016 was a pretty mixed year for breeding birds. Successes included 2-3 pairs of Red Throated Divers rearing young, 2 pairs of Hen Harriers breeding successfully, Golden Eagles raising a lone chick & many passerines benefitting from the relatively benign weather of the early summer. Amongst the latter Wrens, Song Thrushes & Willow Warblers had particularly outstanding seasons & raised exceptional numbers of young.

There also remains the intriguing possibility of White Tailed Eagles becoming regular breeders in the near future with a pair now resident around the SE of the island.

Unfortunately though a number of species encountered serious problems during the breeding season. Buzzards & some other raptors continued to face difficulties due to the now long term scarcity of Rabbits (will their numbers ever recover??).

More serious though was the disastrous season suffered yet again by gulls, terns & other shorebirds such as Oystercatchers. Inevitably this was due almost entirely to predation of eggs & chicks by Brown Rats & was most in evidence on Castle Island where hardly a single chick was raised.

Given the long history & ongoing nature of this problem it is surely time that some steps were taken to address the situation, in particular on Castle Island. This is discussed further in the following report & at some length in Dean Jones Annual Report for the SWT. Let us hope that these deliberations will at last lead to some action.

In general 2016 proved a less than vintage year for migration though there were a few interesting records.

The year got off to a good start with an over-wintering Firecrest being found in the Lodge Grounds in February. Other early year records included good numbers of Pink Footed Geese on passage, a long staying Brambling & a single Yellowhammer.

Spring produced a single Brent Goose in May, an offshore flock of 6 Common Scoter, the islands 3rd Osprey record, the usual passage of Whimbrel & a couple of Iceland Gulls.

Another 6 Common Scoters were recorded offshore in mid-summer while that season also produced the islands 3rd Red Kite, a long staying Corncrake & a Great Spotted Woodpecker in August.

Autumn migration was less well documented than usual but produced good numbers of Whooper Swans, passage flocks of Brent & Barnacle Geese, the usual passage of Sanderling, several Jack Snipe in October, a Dipper at Kildonan, a noticeably heavy movement of Fieldfares in October & a couple of Brambling.

As usual winter was rather quiet but it did produce a couple of Iceland Gulls & a very late Greenshank in December.

Acknowledgements

As stated above a good deal of the content of this report was provided by 'Derry' Dean Jones, the SWT's 2016 Eigg Ranger. I am grateful to him for all his contributions throughout his stay on the island.

As always I am also grateful to the large number of people who passed on bird records & observations during the course of the year. Without their input many interesting records would have been lost.

SPECIES LIST

Whooper Swan

A flock of 31 flying north over Galmisdale on March 14th (E Weldon) was the only spring record. Autumn passage from Oct 29th with nine records of passing flocks between then & Dec 7th. Max counts of 30 on Oct 29th & 23 on Oct 31st (both E Weldon). Three seen swimming in Laig Bay on Dec 7th (B Cormack).

Pink Footed Goose

Two spring records of passage flocks – 45 flying north on Apr 14th & 150 moving north on Apr 20th (JC, D Jones, P Saunders, C Carr, D Wiggin, E Weldon). No autumn passage reported but a single bird was present with the resident Greylags between Oct 21st & the years end (JC)

Greylag Goose

15+ breeding pairs located with at least 30 young raised to adulthood. First eggs seen on Apr 15th. Resident birds present throughout with max counts of 121 on July 23rd, 76 on Oct 20th & 69 on Nov 10th. A flock of 39 flying north high over Laig on Apr 8th (D Jones) were probably genuine migrants.

Barnacle Goose

One record; a flock of eight flying NW over Kildonan Point on Oct 18th (JC).

Brent Goose

Two records, both involving pale bellied birds. A single bird around the SE Bays on May 5th – 6th (JC, D Jones) & a flock of 17 at Laig Bay on Sept 19th (B&S Gardner).

Shelduck

Four pairs + one 'spare' male present during the breeding season with three pairs known to have bred & hatched 5-6 young. Probably a very low survival rate amongst the chicks though some were thought to have been moved away from the island by their parents soon after hatching.

Adults present from Jan 9th with max count of nine at Kildonan on March 28th. A few birds still present in July with last record of one on July 25th (D Jones).

Teal

Small numbers present up until March 23rd & from Oct 21st, max of eight on Dec 8th. All records from the Laig area, most frequently on the 'Giants Footprint' lochan.

Mallard

Usual small breeding population with 2-3 pairs known to have hatched young. One female successfully raised four young to adulthood on the Giants Footprint lochan. First ducklings seen at the Glebe on Apr 29th (E Weldon). Present throughout with max count of 20 on March 1st.

Eider

Another poor breeding season with only four broods totalling 10+ young seen. Probably a low survival rate amongst the ducklings though some at least were moved away from the island soon after hatching. First ducklings seen on May 30th (S Heath).

First returned male recorded on March 6th with build up of numbers from late March. Max count of 25 (14M, 11 F.) at Galmisdale Bay on May 2nd (D Jones). Fast departure from early June & last record of three females on July 12th.

Common Scoter

Three records. A flock of six flying north on Apr 28th (JC), another flock of six between Arisaig & Eigg on June 17th with possibly the same six individuals in the same area on June 28th (both R Dyer).

Red Breasted Merganser

Very small numbers, max of only four, present at Kildonan Bay up until May 15th & from Oct 11th – mid Dec. A female at Laig Bay on June 5th was the only other record.

Red Grouse

The usual scattering of records of 1-2 birds from the higher moorlands but no confirmation of any successful breeding.

Pheasant

Very common throughout though oddly a distinctly below average breeding season with very few sightings of young birds reported. Widespread throughout though no significant counts. Three males & two females regularly present at Millers Cottage feeders.

Red Throated Diver

Three breeding pairs present at the hill lochans with two pairs each successfully fledging a lone chick. The third pair were found to be sitting two eggs on the late date of July 14th but the outcome of this breeding attempt is unknown.

Birds present offshore throughout though typically scarce during the mid-winter periods. One at Laig Bay on Dec 25th (S Renny) was the only end of year record.

Great Northern Diver

Birds present offshore up until May 27th & from Oct 21st. Usually 4-5 birds present with max count of seven at Laig Bay on May 9th (D Jones)

Gannet

Present offshore from March 2nd – mid November though sightings rather irregular until early June. As usual most numerous mid – late summer with max count of 180 between Eigg & Mallaig on Aug 5th. Last record of six off the SW of the island on Nov 14th (JC, D Wiggin). Mid-winter records of an imm. offshore between Jan 13th & 27th & an adult off the east coast on Dec 28th (both JC). Four dead birds found at Laig Bay after storm force winds on Feb 4th.

Fulmar

The collapse in the breeding population of this species continues with only 25 prs present on the cliff ledges (36 prs last year). This makes 2016 the poorest year on record. Productivity was again very low though chicks were observed on the 'Puffer Cave' cliffs in July. Birds present from April 9th but with a max count of only 30 at the West Cliffs on June 14th. Five between Eigg & Mallaig on Aug 11th was the last summer record but a very late bird was seen off the south of the island on Nov 14th (JC, D Wiggin)

Manx Shearwater

First returned birds heard at their burrows on Apr 4th (M McKinnon, D McFadyen) & small numbers recorded offshore from Apr 6th on. Increase in numbers during May &, as usual, most numerous June-mid August. Max counts of 2,000 between Mallaig & Eigg on June 6th & between Eigg & Muck on July 22nd (D Jones, JC). Still present in good numbers in late August.

Storm Petrel

Small numbers recorded between Eigg & the mainland throughout the summer months. First sighting on May 8th (R Dyer) & became fairly regular during July & August. One seen close inshore to Castle Island on July 10th (I Leaver).

Shag

A successful breeding season with 46+ prs nesting (much as last year) & good numbers of young fledged. Common throughout with counts of 80 at Craigard Bay on Oct 26th (D Wiggin), 173 flying to roost on Castle Island on Nov 3rd & 92 at Galmisdale Bay on Dec 19th (both JC).

Cormorant

Small numbers present throughout though often only 1-2 birds during the spring & early summer. Max count of 10 on several dates early & late in the year. Almost all records from the SE of the island.

Grey Heron

Small numbers recorded throughout though only 2-3 birds present in spring – early summer. Max count of nine in January & October.

Osprey

A bird flying west over Blar Dubh on May 18th (JC) was a 3rd record for Eigg & the first since 1994.

Red Kite

A juv. bird seen & photographed above the Saddle on June 24th (D McLean) was a 3rd Eigg record & the first since 2004.

Hen Harrier

Two pairs bred & successfully fledged two & three young respectively. Rather late breeding with the first fledged juvs not seen until July 22nd. Field Voles appeared to be the main prey species though Meadow Pipit remains were also found post fledging (per D Jones).

Birds present throughout though typically few sightings in the late summer/early autumn when breeding birds presumably wander off the island. Four birds (two grey, two brown) present in the early months of the year with at least three (one grey, two brown) present Oct-Dec.

Sparrowhawk

Two breeding pairs present with one pair known to have successfully fledged three young. The second pair probably also bred successfully as several juv birds were present in the autumn. First fledged young seen on June 16th.

Regular sightings throughout with birds frequently observed attacking small passerines at the various garden feeding stations. Three birds sparring with three Kestrels above the Kildonan cliffs on Oct 24th (JC)

Buzzard

5+ breeding pairs present with 3 prs known to have fledged five young. Undoubtedly the continuing lack of Rabbits was again a major factor in limiting breeding success. Present throughout.

Golden Eagle

As usual two resident pairs were present throughout with one pair successfully fledging a lone chick. The chick hatched in late May & did not fledge until the end of July (D Jones). It then remained in the An Cruachan – Blar Dubh area until at least the end of November (C Carr). The second resident pair, still including the old infertile female, seemingly made no attempt at nesting.

Golden Eagle (cont)

Territorial birds observed sparring with White Tailed Eagles on several occasions in the early part of the year. Outwith the resident birds wandering immatures were recorded on March 3rd & April 22nd.

White Tailed Eagle

Very regular sightings throughout the year with a minimum of four birds recorded (a seemingly full adult, a sub-adult with partially white tail & two imm plumaged birds). Two birds seen almost daily throughout much of the year & what appeared to be an attempt at nest building was located in late summer (D Jones). However there was no sign of any serious breeding attempt.

Interesting behaviour observed included the following. An adult & imm bird combining to attack a Short Eared Owl & drive it into the sea at Laig on Apr 20th (G Carr, S Renny), an adult bird robbing a Cormorant of its flatfish prey at Laig on May 5th (D Jones), serious but failed attacks on Herring Gulls on Sept 15th & Nov 9th (C Carr, JB Cormack, JC et al) & an imm bird feeding on a dead Otter at Talm on Nov 27th (I Leaver).

Kestrel

5-6 prs present with one pair known to have reared three young & several other pairs undoubtedly also breeding successfully. This species though remains the most difficult breeding raptor on the island to monitor due to the inaccessibility of the nest sites. Birds present throughout with three observed squabbling with three Sparrowhawks above the Kildonan cliffs on Oct 24th (JC).

Merlin

The usual scattering of sightings of passage birds during the spring & autumn periods (C Carr, JB Cormack, E Weldon et al). One over the Sgurr moorland on Feb 21st (K Harding) was the years first record.

Peregrine

At least a dozen records of single birds during the year though several of the reports undoubtedly relate to the same individuals. Birds recorded between Feb 25th (C Carr) & early November with the majority of sightings occurring in early summer.

Water Rail

At least four calling birds present in the croftland during June & July & breeding probably occurred though this could not be confirmed. Winter record of one calling from the Cuagach marshes on Dec 13th.

Corncrake

A long staying calling bird was present at Laig from May 28th (G Carr, S Renny) until early August. Unfortunately though no confirmation of successful breeding could be obtained. The only other record involved an intriguing report of two birds flushed at Howlin on July 12th (E Friers)

Oystercatcher

A very poor breeding season with 70+ territorial pairs recorded, well down on the usual 95-100 prs. Poor productivity with relatively few young raised & birds absent from several extensive stretches of the coastline which normally support numerous pairs. Heavy nest predation, mostly involving Brown Rats, reported from a series of monitored nests (per D Jones). Once again one pair bred successfully on the Kildonan Braes, the only birds to nest away from the shoreline. First fledged juvs seen on July 6th.

Present throughout though, as usual, much scarcer during the mid-winter periods when under 50 birds present. Main arrival of breeding birds late February- early March.

Ringed Plover

Eight breeding pairs present around the shoreline & a reasonably successful season with several fledged young seen. First chicks seen at Laig Bay on June 13th. Max early year count of 18 at Galmisdale Bay during January. Usual early autumn build up of numbers with max count of 34 on Sept 13th (B&S Gardner). Up to 22 present at Galmisdale Bay up until the years end.

Golden Plover

An extremely poor year with five seen on the Kildonan Braes on Apr 22nd (JC) the only record.

Lapwing

49 breeding pairs located, a healthy total though down from last years exceptional 66 prs. Breeding birds split between the croftland & the SE of the island with a pair on Castle Island being the first known breeding attempt at that location. Generally a successful season with good numbers of young raised though some nests were undoubtedly lost to the unseasonal heavy snow of late April. First display seen on Feb 27th.

Birds present throughout with autumn/winter counts of 74 at Kildonan on Aug 9th (JC), 90 also at Kildonan on Nov 5th (C Carr) & 76 at Laig on Dec 8th (JC)

Sanderling

Five records of smallish numbers, all from Laig Bay, between Sept 4th & 13th. Max count of 13 on Sept 11th (all records B&S Gardner)

Dunlin

Spring passage from May 5th with regular records of small numbers between then & June 27th. Max of 18 at Kildonan Bay on May 7th. First autumn record on July 23rd & regularly recorded in small numbers between then & mid-September. Max of 10 on Sept 4th. Late record of one at Galmisdale Bay on Oct 17th.

Jack Snipe

Autumn passage only with two birds flushed on Oct 11th & singles seen on Oct 12th & 24th. All records between Kildonan & the pier.

Snipe

A reasonably common & widespread breeder though the population remains well down on that of 10 years ago. First 'drumming' display noted on March 30th (D Jones). Six displaying birds present between the school & Blar Dubh on May 9th.

Birds present throughout with some passage in October. Flock of eight flying over the Kildonan Braes on Oct 12th.

Woodcock

Only 4-5 roding birds recorded (9-10 last year) with the Blar Dubh area of the forestry as usual the main site. As per normal a sizeable influx occurred during the winter periods with good numbers recorded up until late March & from Sept 10th. Counts of eight at Sandavore Wood on Jan 7th (JC), nine from beside the Kildonan Road on Nov 10th (C Carr, N Robertson, D McFadyen) & 15 flushed between the school & Laig on Dec 13th (C Carr).

Whimbrel

In spring regular sightings of small numbers, mostly 1-2 birds, between April 20th & June 2nd. Max of six on May 7th. Two autumn records, both of single birds, on July 25th & Aug 10th (JC, D Jones, D McLean)

Curlew

Two pairs bred on the Kildonan Braes with one pair known to have successfully raised two chicks. First display seen on March 29th & young fledged by the beginning of July. Present in small numbers, up to 20 birds, during the winter months with passage birds noted up until mid April & from early July.

Redshank

Small numbers present at Galmisdale Bay up until May 13th & from July 11th. Normally only 5-6 birds present but a group of 11 on May 3rd (D Jones) & a flock of 22 on July 11th (JC). Unusual spectacle for Eigg of a pair displaying at Galmisdale Bay on May 2nd.

Greenshank

A single bird present at Kildonan Bay from April 2nd - 9th was the only spring record. Similarly late summer also produced only one record, again of a single bird at Kildonan Bay, between July 25th-29th. Unusual late records of a bird at the SE Bays on Nov 11th – 12th with possibly the same individual present in the same area on Dec 3rd & 12th (JC)

Common Sandpiper

30-40 prs present & seemingly a fairly successful breeding season with good numbers of young seen. First chicks recorded on June 10th. Birds present from April 21st with main arrival at the beginning of May. Fast departure from mid-July on & last record on Aug 15th (D Jones)

Turnstone

Present in very small numbers up until May 26th & from Aug 3rd. Max count of 12 at Galmisdale Bay on May 3rd.

Arctic Skua

Only two records; both of single birds & both seen off the north of the island. Sightings on June 16th & June 30th (both R Dyer)

Great Skua

One pair attempted to breed on Castle Island but were once again unsuccessful. A nest containing two eggs was found on June 9th but the nest was empty & the adults gone by the middle of that month.

A bird flying over Sandavore on Apr 10th (D Jones) was the years first record. Sightings became regular from early May on & small numbers recorded almost daily throughout the summer months & into the early autumn. Last record of three off Kildonan Point on Oct 18th (JC)

Black Headed Gull

The usual scattering of records of small numbers between April 2nd & Nov 5th. A total of 11 sightings recorded with max count of five at Laig Bay on May 10th (D Jones). Interesting record of an adult with two dependant young at Laig Bay on July 28th (S Heath).

Common Gull

In common with the other gull species a really dire breeding season with only 31 prs located & very few young reared. Once again heavy predation by rats was a major factor with numerous monitored nests known to have been lost in this way (D Jones). First fledged chick seen on July 28th.

Common Gull (cont.)

Common throughout & usually the most numerous gull species during the winter months. Counts of 70 at the Kildonan hayfield on Jan 27th, 132 at Laig Bay on Dec 8th & 160 also at Laig Bay on Dec 13th.

Lesser Black-backed Gull

Easily the worst breeding season on record for this species with only one breeding pair found on Castle Island (14 prs last year) & no young reared. Present in small numbers from March 22nd – mid August. Max count of only eight at Galmisdale Bay on June 10th.

Herring Gull

A desperately poor breeding season with only around 60 prs nesting, a 50% reduction on last years 120 prs & the lowest total on record. As with the other gull species very few young reared with seven fledged juvs seen on Aug 3rd the highest count obtained. Inevitably rat predation of eggs & young remains the principal reason for this population collapse with this being particularly the case on Castle Island.

Birds common throughout with max counts of 90 at Galmisdale Bay on Feb 17th, 140 at Kildonan Bay on Dec 3rd & 320 at Laig Bay on Dec 13th. These latter two counts occurred at a time when massive numbers of gulls were present at Mallaig harbour.

Great Black-backed Gull

Six breeding pairs located, much as in the past few years, but again poor productivity with only the odd fledged juv seen. Present throughout though never particularly numerous. Max count of 43 a Laig Bay on Aug 17th (D Jones).

Iceland Gull

Three records, all of first winter birds. A bird at Laig Bay on March 19th (D Jones), one at Kildonan Point on Apr 22nd (JC) & two together at Galmisdale Bay on Dec 7th (JC).

Kittiwake

Regular offshore sightings throughout the year though distinctly scarce March – May. Autumn build up of numbers at the SE of the island from mid July with max counts of 200 on Sept 12th (B&S Gardner) & 300 on Oct 18th (JC). Regular sightings of small numbers during the winter months.

Arctic Tern

At least 76 prs attempted to breed but sadly yet again suffered an almost 100% failure rate due inevitably to rat predation. Not a single chick survived at the main colony of 70 prs on Castle Island though the odd pair elsewhere did succeed in raising young. Given the ongoing nature of this problem & the resultant disastrous consequences for breeding seabirds on Castle Island it is surely time that a serious attempt was made to remedy the situation.

Arctic Tern (cont)

A regime of laying out poison bait over the winter months on Castle Island would prove effective & an organised SWT led initiative to obtain funding for this would surely be possible.

Adult birds present from May 6th (JC) with main arrival in late May. Present throughout the summer months with large numbers around the SE Bays in late July & early August. Counts of 145 on July 26th & 140 on Aug 1st. Birds present offshore until at least mid August.

Common Tern

Small numbers recorded offshore from May 9th but no attempt at breeding. Recorded throughout the summer with significant build up of numbers around the SE Bays from early August, peak count of 120 on Aug 5th. Up to 40 still present on Aug 11th.

Guillemot

Regular offshore sightings throughout with relatively high numbers present during the winter periods. Large numbers of adults & juvs seen between Eigg & the mainland during July suggesting a successful breeding season in the surrounding area.

Razorbill

As with Guillemot regularly recorded offshore throughout the year. Several adults & juvs seen between Eigg & the mainland during July. Count of 21 at Laig Bay on March 31st (D Jones).

Black Guillemot

Fairly common breeder & seemingly a reasonably successful season with several fledged juvs seen in July & August. Count of 14 off the 'Puffer Cave' on July 21st (D Jones). Birds present from Jan 27th with increase in numbers from the beginning of February. Departure from mid-late August & last birds seen in early Sept. One near the Perches on Dec 19th (JC) was the only late year record.

Puffin

Recorded offshore between May 5th (JC) & mid August but numbers generally low & no counts of any significance. Dead bird washed up at Laig Bay following a storm on Feb 4th.

Rock Dove

Common breeder around the coastal cliffs & caves. Numerous throughout with 50+ regular at Howlin & 20 – 30 frequent at Kildonan/Galmisdale in the winter periods (D McLean, JC, J&C Booth). At least two feral pigeon type birds present throughout.

Woodpigeon

Small breeding population mostly restricted to the SE woods & particularly the forestry plantation. Some successful breeding recorded with first juv seen on June 27th. Present throughout though distinctly scarce during the mid winter periods.

Collared Dove

7-10 pairs present with two pairs known to have bred successfully at the Lodge & Foresters (S&K Kean, D Jones, P Seddon, C Miller). These successes constitute the 5th & 6th confirmed breeding records for the island while at least one other pair also probably bred.

Birds present throughout with 10 – 12 individuals remaining during the mid winter periods at which time the birds were much restricted to garden feeding stations.

Cuckoo

A healthy population with 18 singing males present (15 males last year) & probably a reasonable season though oddly no young birds were reported. Adults present from April 15th (JB Cormack) with main arrival late April-early May. Departure during July with last record of one over Kildonan on July 23rd.

Barn Owl

Fairly regular records of 1-2 birds between January & May with almost all the sightings occurring in the croftland or the Sandavore-Kildonan area. Oddly, apart from a bird seen at Cleadale on July 24th (D Jones), there was not a single report after the end of May. Remains of a predated bird, almost certainly killed by a Buzzard, found on the Kildonan cliffs on Feb 27th.

Long Eared Owl

Three breeding pairs located with a minimum of five young known to have fledged in mid-late July. First display observed on Feb 26th. Birds present throughout with possibly a small influx during the winter months.

Short Eared Owl

Fairly regular sightings of single birds between late April & early July but no proof of any breeding attempt. The only records outwith this period involved single birds over An Cruachan on Feb 26th (JC) & Oct 20th (C Carr).

An injured bird which had been attacked by White Tailed Eagles at Clach Alistair on April 20th (G Carr, S Renny) was taken into care & transferred to the SSPCA centre in Inverness for rehabilitation (D Jones). A second bird also seen in the Laig area on April 20th may have been the injured birds mate (D Jones).

Great Spotted Woodpecker

A bird seen at Sandavore on Aug 20th (J Robertson) was the years only record.

Swift

Another really poor year for sightings with the only record being of a single bird flying over the pier on July 11th (JC)

Skylark

A reasonably common breeder in suitable habitat & seemingly a moderately successful breeding season. First returned bird seen on March 6th with fast build up numbers thereafter & 1st full song heard on March 22nd. Max count of 50 at Na Breachnach on March 8th. Departure from early July & scarce by that months end. Two passing over Kildonan on Oct 24th & a bird at Runcimans beach on Dec 14th were the only late year records.

Sand Martin

Three pairs bred at Laig lane with all successfully fledging young. Birds present from April 11th (D Jones) until at least mid August.

House Martin

A very poor year for sightings with only two records. A single bird over Grulin on May 25th (B&S Gardner) & two over the pier on May 29th (D Jones, Z Barton).

Swallow

30+ pairs bred & a reasonably productive season with good numbers of young raised & many pairs also producing second broods. First fledged juvs seen on June 7th. Birds present from Apr 11th (JC) with main arrival in late April. Departure from late August with last record on Sept 26th (J&C Booth).

Meadow Pipit

A very common breeder & a successful season with many young seen in June & July. First returned birds on March 20th with main arrival from late March & first song heard on March 31st. Counts of 200+ on the Kildonan Braes on April 22nd & 60 at the Kildonan hayfield on May 18th. Post breeding flocking observed from mid July & departure from mid-late September with small numbers remaining until early November & last record on Nov 9th. A group of six birds present during the first half of January was the only winter record & may have been the result of a hard weather movement.

Rock Pipit

Very common breeder around the shoreline & a very productive breeding season with large numbers of young reared. First fledged juv seen on May 18th. Count of 15 at Laig Bay on Feb 4th.

Grey Wagtail

Three breeding pairs present with two pairs known to have successfully fledged four young each. First fledged juv seen on April 24th. At least four birds present during the mid winter periods.

Pied Wagtail

Common breeder & a successful season with many young reared. First fledged juvs seen on June 9th (E Scott). Birds present from Feb 24th though main arrival not until mid-late March. Remained numerous until mid September but then fast departure & last record on Oct 17th. Late records of single passage birds at Kildonan on Nov 3rd & Dec 1st.

White Wagtail

Spring passage only with small numbers recorded fairly regularly between April 18th & May 18th. Max count of seven at Kildonan on April 22nd.

Dipper

A single record of a bird at the Mill Burn, Kildonan on Oct 31st - Nov 1st (JC)

Wren

Abundant breeder & an excellent season with large numbers of young raised. First fledged juv seen on May 4th (K Harding). Extremely common throughout & particularly numerous in autumn, probably a result of the excellent breeding season.

Dunnock

Widespread & common resident throughout the wooded areas & a productive breeding season with good numbers of young reared. First fledged juvs seen in early June. Some evidence of a late autumn influx with distinctly large numbers present in Nov-Dec.

Robin

Extremely common resident & an excellent breeding season with large numbers of young raised. First fledged juvs seen on May 18th (D Jones). Very common throughout & particularly evident in the autumn when singing birds seemingly everywhere. One seen to catch & eat a Green Veined White butterfly on May 10th.

Whinchat

Ten breeding pairs recorded, one pair more than last year but still a very low total. As usual the majority of the population occurred in the croftland. Birds present from May 6th (JC) until at least Aug 2nd. First fledged juv seen on June 29th.

Stonechat

Only four pairs located, well down on last years 10 pairs & the lowest total since 1996. It was however a productive breeding season with all four pairs double brooded & first chicks seen on June 10th. First spring record of a pair at Howlin on April 4th (M McKinnon, D Jones). Present throughout the autumn with the odd bird remaining until the years end.

Wheatear

Reasonably common breeder though population mostly restricted to the east & north coasts with relatively few pairs located elsewhere. Overall a successful breeding season with large numbers of young seen in late June. First chicks recorded on June 10th.

Birds present from March 26th (JC) though main arrival not until mid April. Large numbers of passage birds present late April – early May but most of these had moved on by late May. Departure from late July with small numbers still present throughout August & last record on Sept 14th (B&S Gardner)

Blackbird

A very common resident & an excellent breeding season with large numbers of young reared. Common throughout with major influx in late October. Count of 30 at Chapel Lane on Dec 10th (JB Cormack)

Fieldfare

No spring records. Autumn passage from Oct 10th with large numbers passing through in mid-late month when much more numerous than Redwing. Max flocks of 100 at the surgery on Oct 18th & 200 at Kildonan on Oct 20th. Last passage record of 40 at Blar Dubh on Nov 1st with two at the surgery on Dec 13th the only late record.

Song Thrush

Very common breeder with population noticeably high & an excellent season with large numbers of young raised. Became much scarcer in late summer when presumably most of the breeding birds move away. No significant autumn influx though small numbers present throughout the winter months.

Redwing

One at Cleadale on Feb 25th was the only early year record. Spring passage from March 10th & small numbers recorded regularly between then & Apr 20th. Max counts of 30 on March 27th & 50 on April 8th. Autumn passage between Oct 13th & 26th but numbers generally low, much less numerous than Fieldfare. Max count of 75 on Oct 20th-21st. Two at Chapel Lane on Dec 13th was the only late year record.

Mistle Thrush

As per last year four pairs were present but a poor breeding season with no sightings of fledged young. Birds present from Feb 28th & regular sightings throughout the summer months but becoming scarce in the autumn & last sighting on Nov 1st.

Grasshopper Warbler

One pair possibly bred at Cuagach but unfortunately this could not be confirmed. Singing bird first recorded on April 24th & then heard regularly from May 5th until at least mid June (D Wiggin et al). Second singing bird present May 7th-9th but then seemingly moved on.

Sedge Warbler

20+ pairs present, all in the croftland. First (4) birds recorded on May 6th (D Jones, JC) & seemingly a productive season with many fledged juvs seen in late June. Last record on July 21st.

Whitethroat

Very common & widespread breeder with population at least matching last years 60 pairs. Birds present from May 6th (JC, D Jones) with last record in mid July. Overall a very productive season with many juvs seen, first fledged young recorded on June 30th. A singing bird present on Castle Island on June 9th was a first for that location.

Blackcap

A total of 18 prs/singing males present (almost exactly as last year) & seemingly a pretty productive season with several juvs seen. First fledged young seen on July 5th. Birds present from April 26th (W Fyffe) until at least late July. Autumn records of a male at the Glebe on Oct 9th (E Weldon), a male in Millers garden on Oct 18th (JC), a male & female together at the Lodge on Oct 26th (JC) & a late male at Sandavore on Dec 5th (J Robertson).

Garden Warbler

One record; a singing bird at Pier Hill on June 9th-10th. (JC)

Chiffchaff

Three pairs/singing males present in the SE woods with at least one pair breeding & raising young. First returned bird seen at Kildonan on March 28th (JC, D Jones) & singing recorded from Apr 5th. Birds present up until at least the end of July. Autumn migrant present at Kildonan on Oct 18th-19th (JC).

Willow Warbler

Abundant breeder & a very successful season with large numbers of young fledged. First record on April 11th (D Jones) with main arrival April 15th – 20th & first fledged juv seen on June 24th. Main departure late July – early August & scarce by mid August.

Goldcrest

Common breeder in the coniferous woods & a good season with many young seen in late June – July. Present throughout with birds wandering widely in the autumn.

Firecrest

One record of a bird near the Lodge orchard on Feb 26th (JC). Presumably the same (overwintering) individual seen in this area on Nov 20th 2015.

Spotted Flycatcher

Five pairs bred all of which successfully fledged young. Birds present from May 9th (D Jones) with last record of one at Sandavore on Aug 18th (J Robertson).

Coal Tit

Common breeder & a very successful breeding season with large numbers of young raised. First fledged juv seen on June 11th. Common & widespread throughout.

Blue Tit

Common breeder but not a particularly productive season with only moderate numbers of young raised. Present & very common throughout.

Great Tit

Common breeder & a reasonably successful season with fair numbers of juvs seen from May 28th on. Very common throughout.

Long Tailed Tit

Small flock present Feb 3rd – April 13th with eight at Kildonan on March 3rd the max count. Single summer record of a lone bird in the forestry plantation on Aug 2nd. In autumn a flock was present from Oct 13th until the years end. Max count of 23 at Kildonan on Oct 18th (JC).

Treecreeper

Five pairs bred in the SE woods, exactly as per last year, with at least three pairs successfully raising young. Present throughout with birds accompanying wandering tit flocks in the autumn.

Jackdaw

Small breeding colony of 7 – 10 pairs at Cleadale & a fairly successful season with reasonable numbers of fledged young seen. Several counts of 20- 30 birds during the spring & autumn.

Hooded Crow

Very common & widespread breeder & a productive season with many young reared. Very common throughout with a sizeable winter roost established within the forestry plantation.

Raven

Six pairs present with five pairs breeding & fledging 17 young. First fledged juvs seen on May 31st. Present throughout & particularly conspicuous in late summer when young birds still present on the island. Count of 18 at Kildonan on July 23rd.

Starling

Fairly common breeder at Kildonan & the croftland & a good season with many young raised. Count of 50 juvs amongst a flock of 80 birds at Kildonan on July 14th. Common throughout with count of 95 at Kildonan on Feb 18th & 50+ regular in that area during Nov – Dec.

House Sparrow

Now an extremely common breeder with colonies present at most houses though Kildonan & Cleadale remain the core areas. A very productive season with large numbers of young raised & many pairs multi brooded. First fledged young seen on May 30th. Regular flock of 30 – 40 birds at Millers Cottage feeders.

Tree Sparrow

Two records. A bird at Millers Cottage feeders on April 17th – 18th (JC) maintains the surprisingly regular spring occurrence rate of this species on the island. However a bird at Galmisdale House on Dec 23rd (J Booth) was a much less expected winter record.

Chaffinch

Abundant breeder throughout the woodlands & a very successful season with many young reared. Fledged juvs seen from June 1st on. Extremely common throughout with large numbers gathering at the garden feeding stations during the winter months. Count of 90 at Galmisdale House on Jan 2nd (J&C Booth).

Brambling

Early year record of an extremely long staying male which was present at various garden feeding stations between Jan 1st & April 12th (JC, J&C Booth, I Leaver). One autumn record of a male & female present at Kildonan from Oct 18th – 23rd (I Leaver, JC)

Greenfinch

Fairly common breeder with main population in the Lodge Grounds area. Overall a reasonably successful season with several fledged juvs seen in midsummer. Present

Greenfinch (cont)

throughout though somewhat scarcer during the mid winter months when birds much restricted to garden feeding stations. Max count of 12 at Pier Cottage on Feb 6th (S&K Kean)

Goldfinch

A reasonably common & widespread breeder & a fairly successful season with moderate numbers of juvs seen. First fledged juvs seen in mid July. Present throughout with counts of 30 at Cleadale on Jan 29th (E Weldon) & 10 at Laig Lane on Dec 8th.

Siskin

A common breeder around the woodlands & a good season with numerous young seen. First fledged juvs recorded on June 16th. First (2) birds on April 4th but main arrival not until mid May. Count of 14 at the Manse Wood on June 1st. Departure from mid July & very scarce by August with last sighting on Aug 9th.

Linnet

10+ breeding pairs present with the majority of them seemingly successfully raising young. For the most part breeding population restricted to Kildonan & the croftland. Birds present from April 13th until late August with two at Kildonan on Oct 16th the only record outwith this period. Counts of 17 on July 28th & 15 on Aug 10th (JC, D Jones).

Twite

A fairly widespread breeder around the north & east of the island & in the Grulin area. Overall seemingly a successful season with good numbers of young seen in late June & July. Birds present from March 27th with main arrival in mid-late April. Departure from late September & last record of two at Laig on Oct 21st. Flocks recorded in the croftland from mid July with counts of 50 there on July 21st (D Jones) & 100 on Sept 14th (B&S Gardner). Colour ringed bird recorded at Cleadale on Apr 19th (D Jones) had been ringed at Connah's Quay, Flintshire, Wales on Feb 18th 2016.

Lesser Redpoll

A reasonably common breeder & a fairly successful season with moderately good numbers of juvs seen in midsummer. Birds present from April 7th (D Jones) though main arrival not until early – mid May. Max count of 15 at Blar Dubh on Aug 13th & last record of one on Oct 24th.

Bullfinch

A poor breeding season with only 3-5 pairs located & no evidence of any successful breeding. Recorded from April 12th & occasional sightings throughout the summer months. Seemingly some influx during the second half of October with sightings much more regular

Bullfinch (cont)

between then & late December. Counts of five near Hill Cottage on Oct 19th (JC) & 12 in the forestry plantation on Dec 15th (E Weldon).

Common Crossbill

Two records. A group of seven in the forestry plantation on March 3rd & a single female, again in the forestry plantation, between June 6th & 29th (JC, D Jones)

Yellowhammer

A poor year for sightings with a male at Kildonan on March 19th (JC) the only record.

Reed Bunting

Three pairs present in the croftland reedbeds but no proof of any successful breeding. Birds present from March 30th until late July.

