

# The Scottish Ornithologists' Club

Scotland's Bird Club

Highland Bird News No 116

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## Editorial

With the 2011 breeding season all but over, it will be interesting to have feedback on breeding success in the Highlands. Here on the south side of Inverness, Willow Warblers, Chiffchaffs and House Martins appear to have done well. I have seen several broods of Bullfinch but Wrens remain thin on the ground. The local Sparrowhawks and Buzzards have fledged young as usual, though the Long-eared Owls which bred last year did not return to the same site in 2011. A long day on the high tops of the Cairngorms in early July produced more singing cock Snow Buntings than last year, but only three Dotterel, all cocks, two feeding together and another off two eggs, but no chicks. The highlight was finding three adult Purple Sandpipers together without, however, any evidence of breeding.

The field work on the 2007 – 11 Atlas has been completed, though late records of proof of breeding will still be welcomed. Appropriately, the topic for our first meeting of the new season, on 13 September, will be a final update from Branch Member Bob Swann, Scottish Organiser for the Atlas.

Inside this issue, you will find full details of the Indoor Meetings and the Field Trips which have been arranged for the coming session. The Branch Committee commends these to you and hopes all will be of interest.

You will also find articles on a variety of subjects, including the Spring Conference, Club President David Jardine's very interesting talk on the island of Lios Mor (Lismore) following the Branch AGM in April and a Short Note on a pair of Great Tits improving the thermal insulation of their nest.

Under the heading 'Recent Reports' you can read of the rarer birds which have been reported from various places in the Highlands during late Spring and early Summer. These must surely inspire us all to be out and about, looking and listening, for there will undoubtedly be other good birds to be found.

This Newsletter is for you, the members of The Scottish Ornithologists' Club in Highland Branch. Contributions for future issues will be welcomed.

*David Bain, Editor*

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## Scottish Birdwatchers' Conference – 19 March 2011

As 2011 sees the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Scottish Ornithologists Club some branch members decided to attend the SOC organised Scottish Birdwatchers' Conference at North Berwick in March. 3 members built it into a birdwatching weekend with a visit to Vane Farm on the way south and again on the way north. We also had a look at one or two sites in the Musselburgh/Aberlady area.

Congratulations must go to the local SOC branch for arranging an excellent programme. It was superbly varied, starting with a most interesting talk from Bryan Nelson on Gannets based on his extensive studies on Bass Rock and ending with a breath-taking film of the birds of Roslin Glen made by Neil Grubb. In between these items, Roy Dennis gave us a biography of George Waterston who was such a leading light in both the SOC and the Fair Isle Bird Observatory. There were talks from the BTO on BirdTrack and on joint SOC/BTO projects in Scotland such as the Bird Atlas. A large part of the afternoon was devoted to Aberlady Local Nature Reserve, which has been in existence for 30 years. All 3 wardens who had been in charge of the reserve over those 30 years gave a report of their time there – 3 very different people with different perspectives on the subject. It was so interesting to hear the story of a reserve – how knowledge has grown, how the habitat has changed and how the bird life has altered. There are over 500 species of plants on the reserve and the bird list stands at 271 (Ian Thomson, the second warden, saw 220+ of these). The tern colony of 30 years ago has now gone as have the breeding Eiders but the numbers of visiting Pink-footed Geese and Grey Plovers have blossomed. All in all, a day that held one's attention at all times.

Now for the birds: the 3 birders clocked up a list of 78 species over the weekend. Along with swans, geese, ducks and Great-crested Grebes, Vane Farm produced 7 species of finch, Coal, Blue, Great and Long-tailed Tits plus a couple of very smart male Reed Buntings. A variety of ducks and waders (plus some early Chiffchaffs) were found at Musselburgh lagoons, while on a sea watch we saw Common & Velvet Scoters, Long-tailed Ducks and Eiders. The highlight personally was finding my first Scottish Nuthatches in Gosford Park near Waterston House (a permit for visiting the Park can be obtained from Waterston House).

*Ann Sime.*

## BTO Bird Survey Techniques Course at Kindrogan Field Studies Centre

The BTO is running a 2½ day residential course from Friday 7 – Sunday 9 October 2011 at Kindrogan, which is near Pitlochry.

The course will look at general survey principles before examining several methods in more detail. Using BTO surveys as examples for the theory sessions and out in the field, you will quickly get a comprehensive overview of survey methods and discover just how easy and enjoyable they are! There will be plenty of time for everyone to get to grips with the methodologies during extensive field sessions looking at woodland and farmland birds, increasing attendees' skills and confidence. Black Grouse, Dippers and Common Crossbills are just some of the local highlights.

The cost of the course, including full board and lodgings is only £175 (a discount of 20% is available to people who have joined the BTO in the last year).

For further details see the training pages on the BTO website:

<http://www.bto.org/news-events/training>

Information on Kindrogan FSC can be found at: <http://www.field-studies-council.org/kindrogan/>

For any queries about the course, please contact James Bray – either by email [james.bray@bto.org](mailto:james.bray@bto.org) or telephone 01786 750050.

To book a place on the course, please contact Robin Anderson at BTO Scotland ([robin.anderson@bto.org](mailto:robin.anderson@bto.org)) or telephone 01786 750050.

## Exploring the Big Garden, Lios Mor (Lismore)

David Jardine, current President of the SOC rounded off the winter series of talks with a report on several visits to Lismore where he did 9 Atlas tetrads. Lismore, situated in the Firth of Lorne, is just outside the Highland recording area.

He had visited Lismore for the previous Atlas and agreed to re-cover it for the current Atlas. Before he went he did some research on the avifauna and found it was a very unwatched island: while Fair Isle has had 350 species, he could only find records for 122 on Lismore. However, there were a number of interesting historical records such as a Spotted Crake in 1870 and a Glossy Ibis in 1913.

To get to Lismore you can get a ferry from Oban (50 minutes) or on the foot ferry from Port Appin (10 minutes) which runs every hour in summer. If travelling from the north it is worth stopping at Loch Laich, near Castle Stalker, where you can watch for waders. On the crossing look out for Great Northern Divers, Black Guillemots and Eiders.

The island is 10 miles long by 1 mile wide and offers a good series of walks, cycling and a fine cafe. Due to its geology, mainly limestone, it is a mecca for botanists. The island is always green, rarely gets frost, and is mild and moist. With its strategic position defending the Firth of Lorne, it is interesting historically with three defensive castles at Achadun (bishops palace), Coeffin 13th century and the Iron Age Tirefour Pictish broch. Historically, mining was a prosperous industry, providing for the various limekilns; mining is still prevalent at the Glensanda quarry on Morvern where workers live on Lismore and travel to the site by boat. There are a number of fish-farms around the coast providing employment. At one DJ found his first Black-headed Gull, after 12 visits to the island. There has been a decline in the island nesting gulls and terns over the last twelve years due to mink, as shown by Clive Craik.

Pastoral farming is the main land use, with many sheep and cattle; the areas of rougher ground provides for Grasshopper Warbler. As there is little heather, Stonechats are rare and are outnumbered by Whinchats. There is a small population of Twite; one of which was colour-ringed and was seen briefly and tantalisingly in April and then seen well again in June. It was a bird which wintered in NE Scotland, ringed by Grampian Ringing Group. Lismore is good for geese – Greylag and Canada breed (along with one (feral) Barnacle Goose). In winter the island supports over 200 Greenland White-fronted Geese.

The island has several fresh-water lochs, which are highly calcareous with interesting plants; these provide for Whooper Swans, various duck and even Coot and Moorhen, both of which are rare in Argyll.

Port Ramsay with its limekiln workers cottages is well worth a visit as it has some estuarine habitat attractive to waders; DJ also showed pictures of some of the breeding waders and asked the audience to identify them from pictures of the young – they were Lapwing, Oystercatcher, Snipe, Ringed Plover and Common Sandpiper. It is not known if the hedgehogs on the island impact on the waders.

Buzzards, Peregrines and Kestrel were proved to breed and Sparrowhawks were also present in summer. In winter White-tailed Eagles and Hen Harriers were found hunting; but as yet, there are no records of Merlin for the island.

Other wildlife on the island includes seals, Otter, and Brown Hare, but no rabbits. During the breeding season visits he saw nine species of butterfly including good numbers of Marsh Fritillary.

So was Lismore, which is situated at the head of the Firth of Lorne and accessible via the Great Glen and the Sound of Mull, a good migration watch-point? To date, Great and Arctic Skuas have been seen but, unlike the other end of the Great Glen, there are no reports of Pomarine or Long-tailed Skuas, but this may be because nobody has spent time looking at the correct time of year in suitable conditions. There are records of Manx Shearwater and Leach's Petrel, so further visits may be worthwhile. Interestingly DJ saw a very late Swallow heading south on 22 November, suggesting the island may indeed be a fly-way, which merits further watching.

In reviewing the island's avifauna; DJ had added four new species - Water Rail, Barn Owl, Grasshopper Warbler and Common Crossbill. Interestingly, for an island with little woodland he had also found Tawny Owl

which he heard calling at the same time as a Long-eared Owl. In reviewing the Atlas findings; 105 species had been found on the island in winter, reflecting its mild conditions, while only 70 had been found during the breeding season as a consequence of the relatively limited habitat diversity.

Chairman Alex Joss thanked David for his most interesting and well illustrated report.

*Sena Mackay.*

## **Recent Reports**

These notes cover the period from April through to the end of July.

8 Waxwings were seen at Insh on 12 April, the same day on which a Bluethroat was reported from a garden in Port Henderson, near Gairloch. 17 Waxwings stopped briefly at Milton of Leys on the 17<sup>th</sup>, and a Blackcap was in full song in Bellfield Park the same day. Photographs clinched a report of a Nuthatch in Talmine, near the Kyle of Tongue on the 19<sup>th</sup>. A Smew was present at Uath Lochans on the 25<sup>th</sup> and a pair of Garganey at Balnakiel on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

May began with a female Marsh Harrier seen at Moy on the 5<sup>th</sup>, then on the 7<sup>th</sup>, a first-summer drake Surf Scoter was found in Loch Dhrombaig, Assynt. An Oriental Turtle Dove turned up at Forsinard on the 10<sup>th</sup> while nearer home, a Bar-headed Goose was with Greylags at Loch Mhor, Gorthleck on the 13<sup>th</sup>. Assynt scored again on the 17<sup>th</sup> when a Franklin's Gull was found at Clashnessie. A Great White Egret was at Tain on the 21<sup>st</sup>; a Hawfinch turned up at a feeder in Invermoriston on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and Boat of Garten had both Nuthatch and Bee-eater on the 25<sup>th</sup>. A Hoopoe was reported by Loch Naver during May, the actual date not yet known.

Reports became more infrequent in June but 2 Quail were heard calling from a field of winter wheat near Balintore on the 6<sup>th</sup>, the same day as a Ring-billed Gull was found at Achmelvich beach, Assynt. A white Kittiwake was seen at Rubh'an Dunain (Assynt) on the 7<sup>th</sup> and an albino Starling reported from Alturlie Point on the 8<sup>th</sup>. Probably the same bird appeared in garden in central Inverness later in the month.

A Honey Buzzard was photographed over Dalchalm beach, Brora on 10 July, as was a Crested Tit in a garden at Gairloch on the 16<sup>th</sup>. And finally, for this issue, a Rose-coloured Starling was on Handa on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

## **Short Note**

### **Avian Home Improvements**

One morning in May, Doug Mainland, a Club member who lives near Lochinver, noticed a female Great Tit 'busy' picking away at something lying on a path in his garden. Closer investigation revealed that the 'something' was a dead Long-tailed Field Mouse. The tit was systematically plucking the fur from the back of the mouse and carrying it off, presumably to its nest. A photograph of the plucked corpse is attached separately to the email by which this issue of HBN-116 has been sent out.

Is this an unusual event or not? Comments, please, to the Editor for inclusion in a future issue.

## *SOC Trip to Coll & Tiree May 2011*

Most of us met at Sinclair and Kathleen's house on Wednesday about lunchtime. There were 19 altogether but because of various circumstances there was only the full contingent on the Friday and Saturday morning! We drove down to Oban, picking up Jean and Tony in Fort Augustus, meeting up in Spean Bridge for a bite to eat, and then on to Oban. It was nice that "Lubosh" was with us once more. He came with us to Colonsay and is staying with Sinclair for a couple of years. We birded from the minibus on the way down but got nothing unusual. In Oban we all dispersed to our various B & Bs but 14 of us met up for a lovely dinner at the new fish restaurant on the front. It was a pity that Ann could not make it as she had booked the meal.

The next morning dawned rather damp, misty and not the best of mornings for our trip to the islands. Several Tysties (Black Guillemot) were swimming in the harbour and a Rock Pipit was feeding on the shore. However, some of us braved the weather on deck and saw a few Razorbills, Guillemots, the odd Puffin, some Shearwaters but not great flocks as we have seen other years, Gannets, Kittiwakes, possibly a Sea Eagle in the far distance, a Great Northern Diver, a Bonxie (Great Skua) and the usual Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls. It was a calm crossing despite the winds the previous week. I usually meet some one I know on these trips and I was just saying so to Carol when we bumped into Stuart Housden and friend! He only happens to be the head of RSPB in Scotland and I had met him on several occasions when I was down in Edinburgh on official business. He was the reason the RSPB warden on Coll could not show us around the island!!

We landed at Arinagour and set off west. Unusually the first bird spotted was a Cormorant, not a Starling as often is the case in the islands. We saw lots of them later on. There were many Greylag Geese, mostly paired up but only one or two had goslings. They seem to be nesting more and more in the islands. Swallows were swooping over the fields, Wheatears, a few Lapwing and Herring Gulls were all seen. We found the campsite for Lubosh but it was closed! However we were rewarded with the rasping, unmistakable sound of a Corncrake, a beautiful view of a Sedge Warbler and a real corker of a view of a Linnet, in full summer plumage with its red chest really standing out. Usually it is an lbj flitting overhead! A couple of Snipe flew over, a Skylark called as it displayed above our heads and three Goldfinch flew in their characteristic way into a small copse of woodland. A Buzzard lazily circled overhead. We went on to the RSPB reserve and stopped at the visitor centre at Totronald. Several Corncrakes were calling, so we sat quietly on the steps of the centre and out one came. It was nesting in the garden and appeared every so often, then it crossed the grassy path and we all saw it except Margaret! She did later on. A pair of Sedge Warblers were displaying in the nearby marsh, Lapwings were flying and calling in the field below – so it was a perfect picnic spot. The sun had come out although a short shower had us scurrying inside for a wee spell. I had a beautiful view of a Corncrake opposite the centre, as it called then scurried down the field, only to stop again, and call before disappearing into the yellow flag. No one was near me at the time! We sat on the viewing platform and watched another Corncrake, more Sedge Warblers, the Lapwings with young chicks of all ages and four Golden Plover. They were remarkably well camouflaged, even in their distinctive summer plumage. Some beautiful early purple orchids were flowering near the centre. We had seen fields of cotton grass, daisies, cuckoo flower, bluebells, marsh marigolds in the ditches and bogbean in the wee lochans as we drove along. All very colourful! Several fields appeared brown with the brown sedge – a phenomenon that only seems to happen in the islands.

After lunch we went on further west to the car park in the dunes at Feall Bay and Crossapol Bay. Some went to one bay and the others to the other. I went to Crossapol to the south of the island. In a field, ready for planting potatoes, we saw a mixed flock of about 40 birds feeding intently. They were Dunlin in their very smart summer plumage and Ring Plover. On our way down to the beach Margaret and I saw bloody cranesbill, storksbill, meadow rue, bird's foot trefoil and silverweed, to name but a few! The dunes themselves didn't have much birdlife but on the shore, at the beautiful beach, there was more activity. Three basking sharks were feeding off shore in an inlet a little way to our left, a Shelduck was asleep on the rocks behind them, Arctic Terns were diving into the sea near a wee group of rocks and a group of Oyster Catchers (Oyks!) were noisily feeding on the shore. A flock of Ringed Plover and Dunlin were also running back and fore with the waves, feeding on the seaweed. When we met with the other group at the bus, they reported that they had seen Fulmars but no basking sharks.

Off we went to our accommodation, the Hebridean Centre, the HQ for Project Trust which sends young people on a gap year to work in schools etc around the world in third world countries. My daughter Julia went with them to Thailand in 1998 so I introduced myself and they were very interested in what she went on to do with

her life. It was nice to see where she trained and stayed when on Coll. We were very comfortable, the food was excellent and we were made most welcome.

The next morning, we set off back to the ferry to pick up Ann, stopping at a little woodland. Lesser Redpolls were flying in and out, Wheatears and Pied Wagtails were on the hill, House Sparrows were nesting in the farm buildings and a Cuckoo flew past calling, then obligingly sat on the telegraph wire. Also en route we saw a family of Stonechats on a heathery knoll – 6 young and 2 very busy parents. We had very good views of them. A little bit further on, another Cuckoo was being mobbed by a Meadow Pipit. In a ditch, there was a whole lot of butterwort flowering – lovely. At the pier we saw a Great Northern Diver and Carol and Jim saw two Red Breasted Mergansers. A Linnet in its wonderful summer plumage was flitting up and down the hill and a Wren sang on the fence post. We looked around the hotel, up to the church and added Greenfinch to the list. There is a wee woodland at the Lodge so we stopped there. The first call we heard was that of a Peacock! The Lodge had two males and several females as well as the usual chickens! A Wood Warbler was heard but not seen, more redpolls, Chaffinch, a Chiffchaff was also just heard and several Willow Warblers were present in the wood.

We then drove up to the north east of the island as far as the road went. The scenery was lovely, and we were hoping to see some birds of prey, but no such luck I'm afraid. The road runs along the coast and there is a large inaccessible area with lots of lochans to the south of it. Curlew were spotted, then a group of Whimbrel – we had a lot of discussion, looked up bird books etc and we came to the conclusion they were Whimbrel because of the shape of the bill and the dark stripe on their heads. We stopped for lunch at a lovely wee bay and saw the usual Arctic Terns, gulls etc but added Common Sandpiper to the now growing list. Beside the vehicles, Sand Martins were busy excavating nesting holes in a sandy bank. At the end of the road was another beautiful wee beach – the sun was out, the colours of the sea just magnificent – another world! The wagtail on the beach was confirmed as a White Wagtail.

We drove back to the RSPB centre (as Ann had not been with us yesterday) and waited for the Corncrakes to call. We all saw them again which was great. Some of us walked back to our Project Trust centre, the rest went back by bus. It was 2 miles by the track and 24 by the road! We found red leaved saxifrage and hairy rockcress. On the way back we made a small diversion to a lovely little bay where the waves rolled in and Little Terns with their whiter appearance, quicker wingbeat and of course smaller stature than the accompanying Arctic Terns were diving in the surf. They were too far away and the wind too strong to hold the binocs steady so we could not see their yellow bills. Another lovely meal and good companionship followed.

The next day saw us on the ferry to Tiree. There were two Red-throated Divers in the bay and the Linnet and Wren were still by the pier. We said goodbye to Mike and Janet as they had to get back to Inverness for Mike's mother's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday party! We drove round to Gott Bay where John Bowler, the RSPB warden, has said that 2000 waders, including a Red-necked Phalarope were seen on Wednesday. Alas, they had moved on and also the tide was way out and so it was difficult to see the waders that were there. We moved on to the north to have a quick look at Balephetrish Bay before going on to Loch Blasapoll. There were Dunlin, Ringed Plover and Sanderling feeding among the seaweed. We saw 4 kites but they all had humans attached to them! They were racing across and in and out the bay. Tiree has become a hot spot for this sport in recent years. On Loch Blasapoll, Greylag Geese, Black-headed Gulls, Tufted Ducks, Shoveler and Mute Swans were all feeding and resting round the edges. It was still pretty wild and windy. We had lunch near the bird hide, overlooking a large reed bed. One or two Sedge Warblers rose up singing but on the whole it was quiet. We all rushed back to the bus as a rain shower poured down. We drove down the road looking at various ponds and a few of us braved the weather to go down to the lochside. We saw nothing new, apart from a pair of Mergansers, which flew off. The others in the bus, looking down on the loch spotted two Whooper Swans. Off we went back to Gott Bay, via the airport and large machair to the south of the island. Peewits, Pied Wagtails, and Starlings were abundant, then at the end, near the Dr's surgery, we had superb views of a flock of Whimbrel. There was no doubt this time! The shape of the bill, the black eye stripe and the dark stripe on the head made them unmistakable. At Gott Bay the tide was coming in and the light superb. Sanderling, Dunlin and Ringed Plover all stood out in this lovely light. A Black-throated Diver gently swam in the waves just off shore. We drove back along to Hynish, to the Hebridean Trust Centre where we were staying. Just at the bay before it, Turnstones, very handsome in their summer plumage, were feeding on the shore. A couple of Shelduck and two Great Northern Divers were also in the bay. We had a lovely meal, warm welcome and good companionship again. Communal crosswords seem to be the order of the evenings.

Saturday dawned wet and windy! Some of us looked at the new exhibition on the Treshnish Islands especially as we had been there last year. The rest started walking along the road to Balemartine. Mountain everlasting covered the rocky knolls near Hynish. Nothing new was added to the list, but it was good to stretch our legs before travelling all day. We met up at the cemetery, heard and some saw a Corncrake. Greater burdock, yellow flag and various rushes lined the wee stream from the cemetery to the sea. Then it was off to the ferry and home. Nothing different was seen. We had 83 different birds on our list and I had noted 45 different plant species. It was a very good trip and on the whole the weather stayed good. Thank you to Ann, Sinclair and Kathleen for arranging everything.

*Janet Crummy.*

### **Garden Birds on Skye**

Amongst those dedicated to 'bird lists' there are semantic arguments about what constitutes a garden bird – does it have to be seen in the garden, fly over the garden, or can be seen from the garden. I apply the last fairly wide interpretation as I am lucky, (on a good day), to be able to see for miles. What constitutes a garden is the next question? Many will regard over an acre of former croft land with a mixture of grasses, a bit of heather, some juncus, and a single mature ash tree which extends horizontally more than it does vertically, as a poor excuse for a garden. Situated at 300 feet we have a westerly exposure sloping down to the sea with little between us and America. The creation of shelter belts and formal gardening is a bit of a challenge, and the concept of a wild garden is something more natural than planned. Yes we have planted some native trees, but then there are the deer – on our acre plot the record count was 15 Red Deer before we were forced to erect a deer fence – having already failed miserably with an electric fence.

Constant wind in winter can cause problems with garden feeders so the amount of feeding we do is limited. The feeders attract the normal assortment of garden birds such as tits and finches. Goldfinch numbers have increased significantly in the eleven years we have had the house. Though House Sparrows are common on the island we are probably even a little exposed for them. Rock Doves are regular at feeders now on Skye.

Breeding birds in the garden include Wheatear, Meadow Pipit, Skylark, Pied Wagtail, Starling, Blackbird, Song Thrush and Swallow. I was amazed recently to see a Sand Martin trying to excavate a site in some exposed rock and earth where we plan to build a shed – we certainly appear to be seeing more Sand Martins and perhaps we need to try and create some sites. Twite are frequent visitors and breed nearby, however post breeding flocks seem to have declined in size in the short time we have been here. Stonechats have never bred in the garden but were frequent visitors although numbers have now significantly declined after two severe winters.

Being so near the sea a number of species including Terns, Gulls and Great Skuas regularly overfly the house. It may seem a bit of a 'cheat' to include the seabirds but 'scoping' is quite easy and with binoculars there is no problem sorting out Gannets and Manx Shearwaters. On calm days, Basking Sharks, Minke Whales and Dolphins add to the fun. It is also apparent that there is a distinct west-coast flyway with a number of species island-hopping especially on spring migration. Again the weather plays its part but we have been lucky to see nearly all the wintering goose species overfly the house as well as lots of Whooper Swans. White Wagtails and *leucorhoa* Wheatears are regular both in spring and autumn.

As far as the list is concerned, with a little bit of licence, we have recorded 86 species and unlike most conventional gardens, only a small number are attracted to feeders. Given that there is a solitary tree and no berries, a single Waxwing was one of the highlights. In April 2008 a pair of Snow Buntings spent several weeks with us, mainly on our roof. This was a real bonus and of all the houses in the village, why ours? Pride of place must go to Lapland Buntings. On two occasions I've spotted Lapland Buntings out of our window whilst making phone calls and I've now recorded them three times in spring, in 2002, 2008 and only recently in April 2011 when we had up to four for several days, so we are clearly on their return route north.

Although I'm writing this in the middle of May, it's blowing a big south-westerly out there. It doesn't help my tree growth in the quest for more cover to reach the magic 100! However there's always a chance it might blow a Pom or Long-tailed Skua over the house, and that would be some consolation.

*Bob McMillan.*

Bob has provided photographs, © skye-birds.com, of a Lapland Bunting in his garden and of a cock Snow Bunting on his roof. These are separately attached to the email covering this issue – *Ed.*

## INDOOR MEETINGS & FIELD TRIPS 2011 – 2012

All **Indoor Meetings** will be held, unless stated otherwise, at Culloden Library, Inverness, at 7:30pm on the given dates. For further information, please contact Kathy Bonniface, Branch Secretary, on 01808 511740.

For **Field Trips**, please meet at Inverness Retail Park, near Burger King unless stated otherwise. Weekend outings are full day, Thursday outings are morning only – which can take in lunch and thus finish around 2pm if the birding is good! The destination will be local and will be decided at the last minute, to take account of recent reports. For further information, please contact Kathy Bonniface on 01808 511740 or the Leader.

### Indoor Meetings:

#### 2011

13 September - Bob Swann – Bird Atlas 2007 – 11, the final update.  
04 October - Hannah Grist – Linking life-histories; or where to find Shags in winter.  
01 November - Chas Holt – The Wetland Bird Survey in Scotland  
06 December - Mandy Cook – BirdTrack

#### 2012

10 January - John Carruthers – Wanderings of a wildlife guide  
07 February - Ken Shaw – Western Palearctic Birder: a guide to some difficult species.  
06 March - Mike Betts – Bhutan, the unexplored east: Monasteries and Birds.  
17 April - Branch AGM & talk by Pete Mayhew (RSPB).

### Field Trips:

#### 2011

Saturday 17 September - Waders at Inver Bay. Leader TBA  
Thursday 22 September - Local Outing  
Saturday 08 October - Loch of Strathbeg & The Ythan. 8am start. (Leader, David Bain, 01463 772539)  
Thursday 13 October - Local Outing  
Sunday 06 November - Loch Fleet (Leader, Simon Cohen, 01349 830365)  
Thursday 10 November - Local Outing  
Sunday 04 December - The Black Isle (Leader, David Galloway, 01381 621126)  
Thursday 08 December - Local Outing

#### 2012

Sunday 15 January - Loch Spynie (Leader, Al McNee, 01463 220493)  
Saturday 11 February - Mid Ross (Leader Simon Cohen, 01349 830365)  
Thursday 16 February - Local Outing  
Sunday 18 March - Findorn (Leader, Alex Joss, 01463 221661)  
Thursday 22 March - Local Outing  
Saturday 21 April - Strathspey (Leader, David Jardine, 01463 731330)  
Thursday 26 April - Local Outing  
Saturday 12 May - Dawn Chorus. 5am start. (Leader, Simon Cohen, 01349 830365)

May 18 – 21 - “Uig & beyond”. This will be a weekend trip to the Uists/Western Isles, by car as opposed to being specifically led. More details later.

### Useful Contacts

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## Birding Trips

In past years, branch members interested in birding trips both within the UK and abroad have got together and organised weekend or longer trips. While some of the UK trips have been led by a member, those heading for foreign parts have been organised on our behalf through a professional tour leader, principally to take advantage of the leader's knowledge of the place to be visited and thus maximise the variety of species seen. We also enjoyed the exclusiveness of the party comprising people whom we all know.

Since the issue of HBN 115, HQ has drawn our attention to the fact that the Club does not carry insurance cover for such trips. In other words, they cannot be regarded in any way as official SOC trips. However, there is no reason why a number of us, interested in going to a particular destination, cannot approach a tour leader and sound him out on the possibility. We simply need to ensure that any arrangements made include adequate insurance cover on an individual basis. This we will do.

Tour leaders with whom we are acquainted include Mark Finn and Sinclair Dunnett. Both have suggested possible destinations for 2012, as follows:

Sinclair Dunnett: Poland – mid-May – 7 days

Mark Finn: Senegal – mid-February – 9 days  
Belarus – late April or early May – 8 days  
Canada – Grand Manan Island, New Brunswick – mid-September – 7 days

Before any planning work is done, we would appreciate some indication from branch members of their interest in a foreign trip, on a simple YES/NO basis.

For those who respond YES, which if any of the trips outlined above would be of interest, obviously provided price, time of year and trip length were acceptable?

**Please respond by email if possible to Mrs Kathy Boniface at [kathyboniface@aol.com](mailto:kathyboniface@aol.com) with the subject heading "Foreign Birding Trips 2012". Email responses by 07 September, please.**

For those without email, please complete the form below and return it to the address given.

**Detach here**.....

### Foreign Birding Trips 2012

Name:.....

Address..... Post Code:.....

Telephone No.....

I am interested in foreign birding trips: YES/NO (*Delete as appropriate*)

Trips: Poland / Senegal / Belarus/ New Brunswick (*Delete those you are **not** interested in*)

Please post this completed form to:

**Mrs Kathy Boniface  
Alt Dubh  
North End  
Tomatin  
IV13 7YP**