

Firth of Clyde Eider News

No 1. August 2001

Produced by Chris Waltho, 73 Stewart Street, Carluke, Lanarkshire
ML8 5BY. 01555 750719. e-mail clydeider@aol.com



Introduction

The last five years or so has seen a lot of survey work of Eider in the Firth of Clyde. The results of this work is now being recognised by the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, amongst others, as monitoring a very important sea-duck population, and this will also influence the forthcoming UK strategy on seaduck monitoring.

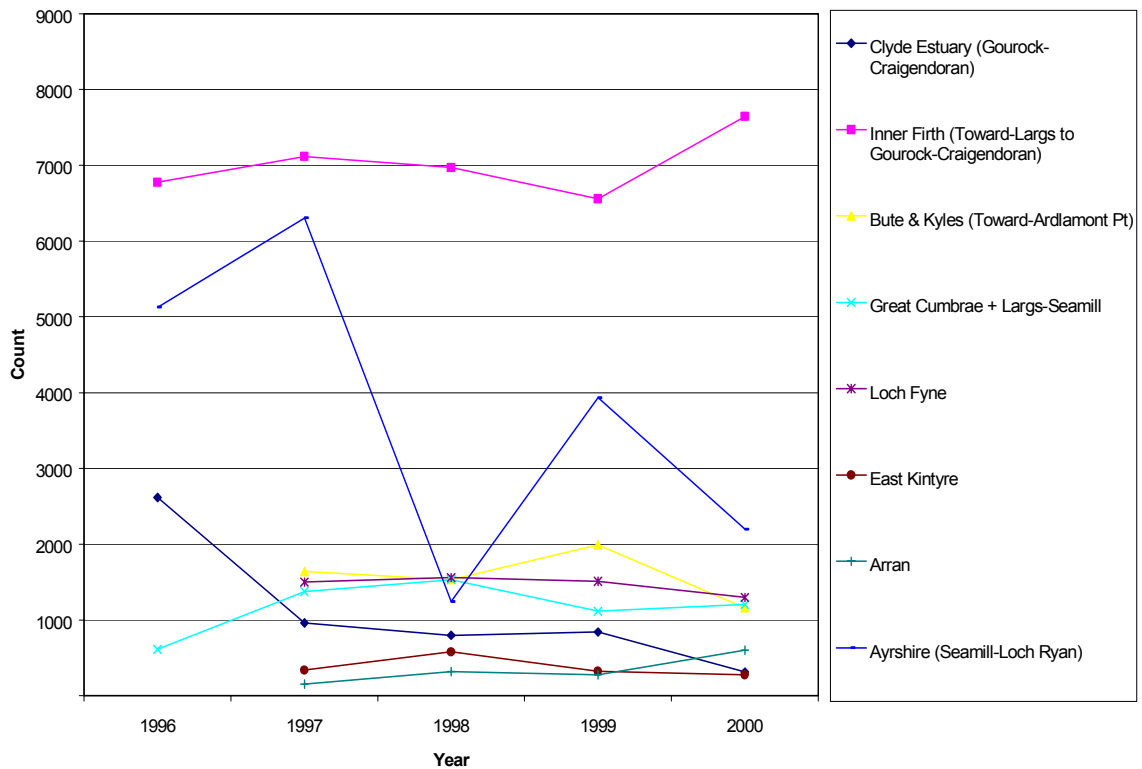
The Clyde survey work has largely been carried out by volunteers, counting their local areas. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all those people who have given their time and effort to support this work. 41 people counted last Sept. The purpose of this newsheet is to provide feedback to all counters and other interested people, with some of the most recent findings.

September 2000 results

Count stretch	Sep-00	mean 1996-9	new 5yr mean
Clyde Estuary (Gourock-Craigendoran)	313	1304	1106
Craigendoran-Kilcreggan (Gare Loch)	3877	2468	2750
Kilcreggan-Strone Point (L Long/Goil)	1539	1935	1856
Holy Loch to Toward Pt	1319	1378	1366
Gourock-Largs	908	1074	1040
Toward Pt-Strone Pt (Loch Striven)	150	350	300
Kyles of Bute (mainland) & L Ridden	239	346	319
Bute	771	913	884
Great Cumbrae	666	586	602
Outer Loch Fyne (L Gilp-Tarbert & Otter Ferry-Ardlamont Pt)	153	229	210
Inner Loch Fyne (Otter Ferry - Port Ann)	1144	1294	1256
E Kintyre (Skipness-Southend)	277	413	379
Arran	603	250	338
Gogo Burn, Largs - Fairlie Pier	255	300	291
Fairlie Pier-Seamill	285	363	343
Seamill-Saltcoats	237	744	643
Saltcoats-Stinking Rock Barassie	243	942	802
Sinking Rock-Pow Burn	419	647	602
Pow Burn-Ayr Harbour	85	272	234
Ayr Harbour-Greenan Castle	224	240	236
Dunure-Culzean	31		34
Maidens-Dipple	252	809	698
Dipple-Girvan	138	286	249
Girvan-Ballantrae	165	263	238
Loch Ryan	386	183	234
Total	14679	17589	17010

Overall, there were many fewer birds around in September 2000 than previous years, but not quite as low as 1998. However, as in 1998, the bulk of the decline can be attributed to variations along the Ayrshire coast (see graph and table below). It has been suggested that declines in Ayrshire could be attributable to improvements in quality of sewage effluents along much of that coast. However, if this is the case, it does not explain the whereabouts of the missing birds. There have been no records of mass mortality anywhere in the Firth of Clyde, so the birds have probably been displaced somewhere else.

Eider in the Firth of Clyde - September Population Trends



Count stretch

	<u>1996</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>
Clyde Estuary (Gourock-Craigendoran)	2616	962	797	841	313
Inner Firth (Toward-Largs to Gourock-Craigendoran)	6776	7117	6969	6556	7643
Bute & Kyles (Toward-Ardlamont Pt)	571	1641	1534	1992	1160
Great Cumbrae + Largs-Seamill	612	1373	1532	1114	1206
Loch Fyne		1499	1558	1510	1297
East Kintyre		339	579	322	277
Arran		155	318	278	603
estimate for remainder of Argyll and Arran	3200				
Firth of Clyde except Ayrshire Coast	13775	13086	13287	12613	12499
Ayrshire (Seamill-Loch Ryan)	5127	6307	1242	3933	2577
Total Firth of Clyde	18902	19393	14529	16546	14679

September 2000 counters

John Burton, Tom Callan, Paul Daw, Helen & Aiden Doherty, Jim Duncan, Geoffrey Dunlop, Bob Furness, Frances Gatens, Iain Gibson, Eileen Graham, A Handley, Jackie Hart, Frances Hood, Ian Hopkins, Jean Howie, Bill & Elinor Kinnaid, Fiona Laing, Simon Lawrence, Clelland McCallum, Stuart MacFarlane, Mary McMillan, Eddie Maguire, Susan Mills, Jane Mitchell, Bob Nuttall, Liz Parsons, Crystal Paterson, Billy Planck, Livingston Russell, Kate Sampson, Tony Smith, Peter & Margaret Staley, Peter Tupman, Audrey Walters, Chris Waltho, Jim & Val Wilson, Alan Wood

Breeding Season 2001

This is a summary of some of the results from the 2001 breeding season. It is not intended to be comprehensive but to encourage observers to submit any additional 2001 records and to consider further recording in 2002.

Colony counts

More than 1100 nests have been reported this season from 15 sites.

Horse Island, Ardrrossan	509	RSPB <i>et al</i>
Burnt Islands, Kyles of Bute	400+	Bob Furness
Sgat Mor, Portavadie	79	Clive Craik, Rob Lightfoot, Chris Waltho
Faslane	90	Chris Waltho, John Simpson MOD
Eilean Buidhe South, Portavadie	9	Clive Craik, Rob Lightfoot, Chris Waltho
Garelochhead MOD Fuel Depot	5	Chris Waltho, John Simpson MOD
A814 Rhu-Shandon	3	Chris Waltho
Rhu Marina	1	Chris Waltho
Great Harbour, Greenock	7	Chris Waltho, John Simpson MOD
Eilean Buidhe North, Portavadie	2	Clive Craik, Rob Lightfoot, Chris Waltho
Duncaan Isle, Lochgilp	3	Clive Craik
Esso Bowling Terminal	1	Jim Tod
Sgat Beg, Portavadie	1	Clive Craik, Rob Lightfoot, Chris Waltho
Sgeir Port a Ghuail, Tarbert	1	Clive Craik, Rob Lightfoot, Chris Waltho
Scott Lithgow, Port Glasgow	1	Alan Wood
Barbour Cemetery, Cove	1	Chris Waltho

Reports from other sites would be welcome

Clutch size

Clutch size data has been sampled from over 350 nests at 6 colonies.

Site	Mean	Sample	Observers	Max
Horse Island	3.97	75	TPD, BZ	7
Faslane 28/5	3.84	58	CMW, BZ	9
Faslane 17/6	4.04	22	CMW, IL et al	5
Sgat Mor	4.46	71	JCAC, RL, CMW	7
Eilean Buidhe South	3.57	7	JCAC, RL, CMW	5
Duncaan Isle	4.00	3	JCAC	5
Burnt Isles	3.98	131	RWF	8

Brood rearing areas

Concentrations of broods/creches were reported from the following areas
This list is not comprehensive and records from other sites would be welcome.

site	date	Broods/creches	Number ducklings	Attendant females	observer
Great Cumbrae	10 June	51	151	79	CMW
Gare Loch	14/15 July	23	66	39	CMW
Wemyss Bay	4 July	25	75	?	ADW
L Striven-Ardentinnay	22 July	19	41	37	CMW

Late brood at Otter Ferry in August 2000

Tom Callan reported a newly hatched brood of 6 ducklings at Otter Ferry on 19 August 2000, attended by one adult female. By the following day the brood had been reduce to 2 duckling, but none were seen subsequently. This implies that the last egg was laid on 24th July and the clutch begun around the 18th July. The first brood reported there was the 20th May. This is a remarkably late brood, bearing in mind that the father should have been in the middle of its moult and completely flightless at this stage. Altogether, a very interesting record.

Site	No. ringed	Ringers
Horse Island	75	Tommy Daniels & Bernie Zonfrillo
Burnt Isles	68	Bob Furness
Faslane	49	Shona Quinn, Bernie Zonfrillo, Iain Livingstone <i>et al</i>
Sgat Mor	10	Rob Lightbody & Clive Craik
Sanda	6	Rab Morton
Total	208	



First broods reported 2001

19th May - Otter Ferry (Tom Callan)
21st May - Horse Island (RSPB)
28th May - Faslane (Clyde Ringing Group)
30th May - Gourrock Bay & Inverkip (Alan Wood)

Reports from other sites would be welcome

Ringing programme

In recent years a number of females have been caught at the nest and ringed. Prior to 2001, 107 birds had been ringed by Dave Anderson and Bob Furness at the Burnt Isles in the Kyles of Bute, and 10 by Clive Craik and Rob Lightfoot on Sgat Mor at the mouth of Loch Fyne. In addition to further ringing by these two teams, the Clyde Ringing Group (with some financial support from the Scottish Ornithologists Club) have started ringing nesting females on Horse Island (courtesy of RSPB), Sanda and Faslane (courtesy of Ministry of Defence). Over 200 females have been ringed in the Firth of Clyde in 2001. This number is more than double the annual UK total for eider in the last few years. It is hoped to maintain the level of ringing over the next few years and to extend the number of sites covered. In addition there may still be some females alive that were ringed by Colin Galbraith in the early 1980s. **Readers are asked to regularly check shorelines for corpses and to inspect birds for rings.** Any rings found should be reported to the **Ringling Office, British Trust for Ornithology, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU.**

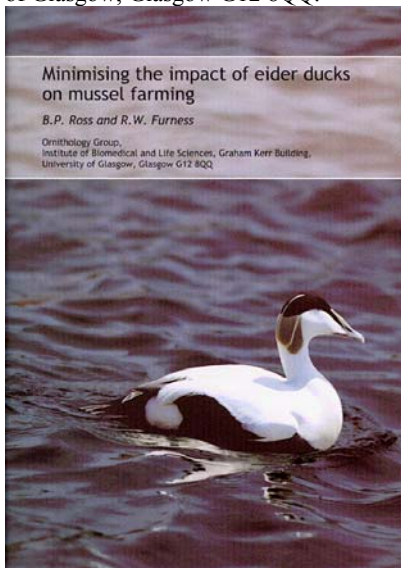
Moult Flocks 2001

All birds more than one year old undergo full wing moult during the summer. Males are generally flightless from early July to late August, and females from late July to early September. At this time birds congregate into moult flocks, and they are at their most vulnerable to oil pollution. During mid July-mid August all known moult flocks were counted. This is the first time that the Clyde moult flocks have been counted in the same year. Some 12,000 birds were counted. The following table lists all sites with more than 750 birds.

Site	No	Date	
Irvine Bay	2658	28 Jul	CMW
Loch Ryan	2002	4 Aug	CMW
Hunters Quay-Toward Pt	1435	22 Jul	CMW
Turnberry-Girvan	1263	4 Aug	CMW
Lower Loch Long	996	14/22 Jul	CMW
Otter Ferry	954	3 Aug	TC
Gare Loch	885	14 Jul	CMW
Ayr Bay	851	28 Jul	CMW
Gourock-Wemyss Bay	753	31 Jul	ADW

Minimising the impact of eider ducks on mussel farming.

Ben Ross and Bob Furness at University of Glasgow have produced a very informative 54 page booklet. This is largely based upon research undertaken by Ben for a PhD. It compares the effectiveness of non-culling techniques such as boat scaring and underwater acoustic playback, and makes a number of recommendations for the management of eider around mussel farms. There are still a number of these booklets available. For a free copy, write to Prof R.W. Furness, Ornithology Group, Institute of Biomedical and Life Sciences, Graham Kerr Building, University of Glasgow, Glasgow G12 8QQ.



First in-flight males

Eddie Maguire and colleagues at the Machrihanish Seabird Observatory, just outside the Clyde, recorded the first in-flight males following the wing moult, over seven years. These were recorded as follows

1992	27 Aug
1993	31 Aug
1994	06 Sept
1995	30 Aug
1996	22 Aug
1997	27 Aug
1998	26 Aug

Reports from sites within the Firth of Clyde would be welcome.

September 2001 counts

The proposed count period for this September is 15th to 23rd. This coincides with the WEBS count on 16 September.

If you cannot count the section you covered last year, could you let Chris Waltho (contact details at the top of this newsheet) know as soon as possible.

Supported by an Endowment Fund grant from Scottish Ornithologists' Club

