

Machrihanish Seabird Observatory (MSBO) August Records 2013

Compiled by Eddie Maguire (warden)



Pomarine Skua (pale phase / possibly sub-adult) on 9th – Eddie Maguire

Review of the month...

Large numbers of **Gannets** (300-800) foraging off MSBO are customarily a May-September wildlife spectacle off MSBO. This year only small numbers (<100) have been foraging intermittently around the point: this strongly suggests that sand-eels have been exceptionally scarce in this area this year.

The **Common / Arctic Tern** colony at Machrihanish was suddenly deserted early (see July Report) and all species of terns and auks have been noticeably very scarce (especially **Sandwich Tern**) or indeed totally absent (large auks) this month in Machrihanish Bay. **Razorbills / Guillemots** with accompanying chicks finally appeared offshore on 31st (normally chicks are 'piping' off the point from mid-July) and there was an exceptionally disappointing / unprecedented lack of inshore **Manx Shearwater** passage. Could all these abnormal events be linked to the shortage of sand-eels locally or merely a coincidence, due to fine, mainly calm, weather conditions, or, possibly, a combination of both?

An **Osprey** >S on 4th and **Bonxie, Pomarine and Arctic Skuas** were photographed close to MSBO.

Corncrakes were calling near Campbeltown late July-6th August and also at Carradale late July-16th August.

A rare visitor was a **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** found by Southend 3rd / 4th – the third Kintyre record (see image in **List of Selected Species**).

BBC 2 'Landward' presenters / film crews in Kintyre

Landward presenters / film crews were on the peninsula for three days 12th-14th August filming and highlighting a selection of quality 'things to do' that Campbeltown and surrounding areas have to offer visitors.

The programme's main presenter **Dougie Vipond** and film unit visited MSBO on 13th. A short feature about the Observatory was filmed and will be included in the programme to be aired at 7pm on 25th October 2013.

This 30min programme will be entirely dedicated to Kintyre.

List of Selected Species

Teal

Two on 24th (Kevin Hamilton).

Northern Gannet

The largest foraging party noted off the point was only c. 70 on 18th.

The first juvenile of the year >S on 31st.



Adult Gannet (punching the sea to assist take-off) – Kevin Hamilton

Black-throated Diver

An adult >S on 13th.

Grey Heron

Campbeltown Loch: 10 birds attended the high tide communal roost by Glenramskill Jetty on 11th (Marjory Frazer).

Corncrake

Stewarton; one calling regularly at The Moy 21st July – 6th August (Donald McKinven / Tony Lambert / Malcolm Cook et al / pers. comm.).

Carradale; one calling regularly – especially just after dawn – between Tormohr and the golf course 'late July' – 16th August (Stuart Downie pers. comm.).

Osprey

One >S on 4th.

Hen Harrier

A ringtail >NE at Kilkivan, Machrihanish on 16th (Dave Milward / Jo Goudie).

Sparrowhawk

The first bird seen on the shore this autumn occurred on 27th. There were two sightings on 28th then singles on 30th-31^s (bird on latter date caught a Twite)



Sparrowhawk – Eddie Maguire

Peregrine

Adults and juveniles appeared on nine dates and a juvenile was seen taking a Starling on 26th.

A juvenile was photographed with Oystercatcher kill on Kinloch Green, Campbeltown on 12th (8am) and was found there again still feasting at the remains of the carcase on 13th (4pm).



Juvenile Peregrine with Oystercatcher kill / Kinloch Green / Campbeltown – Eddie Maguire

Merlin

One on 31st.
First of autumn.

Lapwing

Five >N on 23rd.
A scarce passage visitor.

Golden Plover

Singles >S on 16th and 28th.
The first appearances this autumn.

Ringed Plover

Southerly movements: 30 on 3rd, 18 on 15th, 35 on 17th, 33 on 18th, 48 on 19th, 29 on 20th, 17 on 23rd. Small numbers >S to end of month.

Dunlin

The highest daily totals >S included 40 on 1st, 90 on 2nd, 50 on 3rd, 85 on 4th: small numbers >S daily to 31st.

Sanderling

The highest daily totals >S included 65 on 1st, 120 on 3rd, 41 on 4th, 22 on 15th, 60 on 17th, 54 on 18th, 26 on 19th, 35 on 21st. Small numbers >S daily to 31st.



Buff-breasted Sandpiper / by Southend – Grant Edmondson

Buff-breasted Sandpiper (Nearctic)

One was found / identified on the beach adjacent to the golf course at Brunerican Bay, Southend on 3rd. Still present / photographed on 4th (Grant Edmondson pers. comm.).

*This species breeds in the Canadian High Arctic: it is now regarded as a scarce migrant to the British Isles rather than a vagrant (**Birds of Argyll**).*

*This is the 3rd Kintyre record: previous occurrences - singles were at RAF Machrihanish Airfield 7th-16th September 1974 (personal observation) and Killean (just S of Tayinloan) on 20th June 1987 (**Birds of Argyll**).*

Red Knot

Southerly movements: three on 4th, one on 16th, one on 17th, 3 on 19th, one off-passage on 23rd, one on 27th and 2 on 31st.

Common Sandpiper

Southerly movements: twelve singles on 4th. Seven singles on 10th. Ones and twos daily to 21st. Loose flock 8 on 25th.

Curlew

Small numbers regular on southerly passage: maximum count was a total of 74 on 21st.

Whimbrel

One off-passage on 1st. Southerly movements: Four on 3rd, 6 on 10th, 2 on 13th, 4 on 17th, 16 on 18th including flock 15, 4 on 19th and one on 20th.

Bar-tailed Godwit

Southerly movements: Three on 13th. Flock 9 on 17th. Two on 19th. Flock 11 on 20th. One on 28th.

Black-tailed Godwit

Flock 5 Machrihanish (golf course) on 1st, flock 8 >S on 4th, one on 18th and flock 10 off-passage on 23rd.

Redshank

Southerly movements: 10 on 1st, 55 on 2nd, Light passage daily to end of month with maximum count of 70 >S on 18th including flock 41 (latter count from photograph).

Greenshank

Three flew S (calling) high over MSBO on 2nd. Singles >S on 15th and 28th.

Bonxie

Southerly movements: first bird of autumn on 13th, 3 singles on 17th, 2 on 18th, one on 27th. A total of 5 singles >S / 3hrs on 31st (Westerly force 5 / squalls).



Bonxie – Eddie Maguire

Pomarine Skua

A brisk westerly blow pm on 9th conveyed an early autumn pale, possibly sub-adult close to MSBO (see image above).

Arctic Skua

Pale phase (p) / dark phase (d). All records refer to adults.

Singles >S on 3rd (p), 4th (d), 12th (p), 17th (p), 19th (d) and 2 on 31st (1p / 1d).



Arctic Skua (pale adult) – Eddie Maguire

Black-legged Kittiwake

The first juvenile appeared on 16th (very much later than normal). The first autumn arrival of juveniles varies from year to year and probably depends largely on weather, and possibly also, movements of adults. First arrivals in late summer / early autumn over the last two years occurred on 5th August 2012 and 27th July 2011.

A total of c. **600** were loafing on the shore then >S early evening on 17th (Kevin Hamilton pers. comm.).

A total of **40** juveniles >S / 5hrs on 29th (very few adults were seen on this date).

A total of 170 >S / 1hr on 30th: 87 (**51%**) were juveniles.

Ageing samples from c. 200 birds >S / 6hrs on 31st revealed 46% (91) juveniles.



Black-legged Kittiwake (juvenile) – Eddie Maguire

Sandwich Tern

All records - adults unless stated. One >N on 1st. One Machrihanish Bay on 2nd. Southerly movements: one and a juvenile on 4th, one on 9th, 2 on 11th, 2 on 17th, flock 10 on 23rd, and an adult and a juvenile on 26th. Two >N on 31st.

Remarkably scarce summer/early autumn this year with no usual daily presence.

Common Tern

All records: three adults >S on 3rd. One adult >S on 5th.

This species was present in small numbers all month in Campbeltown Loch.

Long-eared Owl



Long-eared Owls: adult and owlets at Westrioch / by Aros Moss / June 2013 – Kevin Hamilton

The 'heart-breaking' begging calls of fledged youngsters (at least 2) were heard at dusk and later from Shore Cottage, just N of Peninver during 18th – 22nd (Lindsey Holland pers. comm.).

This record follows successful breeding (b/3) by Aros Moss this year (Kevin Hamilton pers. comm.).

Barn Owl

One was seen by Machrihanish Holiday Park / Machrihanish Water on 15th (Dave Milward / Jo Goudie).

Common Swift

One in off sea on 1st.

Six >S on 5th (Kevin Hamilton).

Burnside Square, Campbeltown: one on 6th and last 2 on 8th.

Another poor season for the Campbeltown population with no early August assemblages over the town.

Northern Wheatear

Considered Greenland types were on the point on 12th (1), 14th (1), 17th (1), 18th (2), 19th (1), 21st (1), 23rd (1).

Chiffchaff

One MSBO garden on 15th.

Magpie

Two were present all month around the Grammar School area of Campbeltown (Malcolm Cook et al / pers. comm. / see additional details of this apparently resident 'pair' in MSBO July report).

Jay

Ru Stafnish (SE Kintyre): 4 birds on 21st (Kevin Hamilton).

This observer has found a definite increase in the summer distribution of this species in Kintyre over the past 5-10 years

White Wagtail

One on 8th (juvenile). Three on 17th (juveniles). Small numbers of juveniles daily from 20th then first adults (2) from 26th. Nine on 30th.

Greenfinch

Regular at feeding station – maximum 15 on 20th.

Goldfinch

Small numbers (1-7) at feeding station including 2 grey-pate fledglings on 22nd.

Linnet

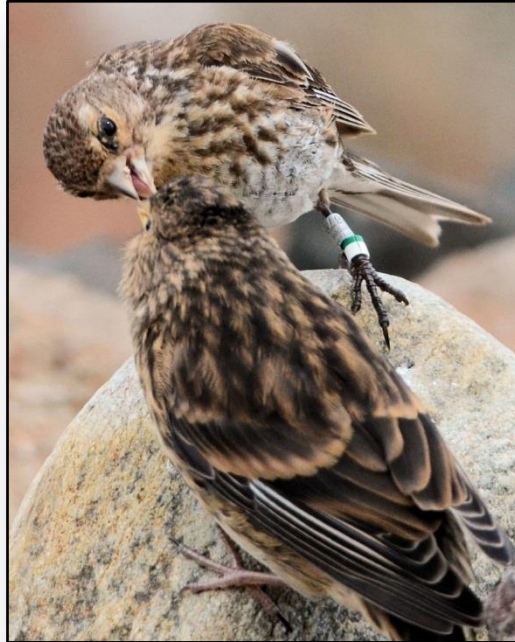
Flocks 9 on 16th and 18 on 20th.

Twite

The first birds (4) arrived at feeding station on 16th and included a bird colour-ringed at MSBO autumn 2010 (this was a male regularly feeding at least two fledglings 16th-28th / see image below).

Feeding fledglings in mid-August suggests this is a second brood.

Regular counts show slow build up at MSBO feeding station: 4 on 16th, 11 on 19th, 23 on 21st, 28 on 22nd, 31 on 23rd and 40 on 27th.



Twite: 2010 MSBO colour-ringed male feeding nyjer seed to fledgling – Eddie Maguire



Red Fox and Ragwort / Lossit Estate – Kevin Hamilton

August Moth Report 2013

Jo Goudie / David Millward

Due to the purchase of a Heath Trap it has now been possible to start recording the moths that inhabit the area of Machrihanish.

The month started well with the sighting of a Lempke's Goldspot feeding on privet flowers in a disused quarry. It was seen in full daylight and photos were taken and sent off for verification.



It is fairly common in northern England, parts of Scotland and East Anglia, this species prefers a generally damper environment.

The quarry had a few water filled scrapes with reeds which suited its needs. Large numbers of Silver Y were also seen in the same area.

19th August 2013

The moth trap was placed in the garden at the Machrihanish Caravan Park overnight. Approx 60 moths were trapped with species including :-

Silver Y

Burnished Brass

Common Carpet

Spectacle

Lesser Broad-bodied Yellow Underwing

Flounced Rustic

Common Rustic

Square Spot Rustic

Crescent

Large Yellow Underwing

Dark Arches

Rosy Rustic

Lesser Common Rustic

For me, the catch of the night was the Spectacle looking like a section of branch. The raised tufts of scales on the thorax, which resembles a pair of spectacles when viewed from the front, give it its name.



23rd August 2013

This time the moth trap was left overnight in the disused Machrihanish Quarry. Approx 40 moths were trapped with species including :-

Large Yellow Underwing
Flounced Rustic
Lesser Yellow Underwing

Iron Prominent
Yellow Shell
Lesser Broad-bodied Yellow Underwing

Common Rustic
Square Spot Rustic

I was surprised to get fewer species as I thought the varied habitats would give more variation.

Favourite of the night was the Iron Prominent.



29th August 2013

As it was a fairly calm, dry night the moth trap was placed in Machrihanish Caravan Park garden again.

Conditions were good for trapping and around 60 moths were caught. Species included a few familiar ones but a couple of new ones turned up.

Lesser Yellow Underwing
Square Spot Rustic
Large Yellow Underwing
July Highflyers

Common Rustic
Silver Y
Rosy Rustic
Lesser Broad-bodied Yellow Underwing

Flounced Rustic
Ear Moth
Dark Arches

Although the moths were the intended targets the capture of a couple of beetle species were very interesting. Both were Sexton Beetles, 2 *Nicrophorus Investigator* and 1 *Nicrophorus Humator*.



Nicrophorus Investigator with mites
© David Millward



Nicrophorus Humator
© David Millward

Sexton beetles are the undertakers of the insect world. They fly to carrion, attracted by the smell. If the dead animal is small, such as a mouse, they crawl underneath and excavate the soil so that the corpse gradually sinks into the ground. They then lay eggs nearby, and stay until the larvae hatch, and even feed them.

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