

Machrihanish Seabird Observatory

Warden - David Millward Assistant Warden - Jo Goudie

Photo of the month

Common Scoter

This small, squat sea duck can be seen passing the observatory mainly in the Autumn and Winter. It seems to be on the increase by us but the RSPB has it as a Red Listed bird.

Males are black with silvery underwings while the females are dark brown with a paler cheek.

Photo
Jo Goudie



October Report 2023

October has been an interesting month that was very dependent on the weather. Some days were quiet with very few birds being seen but other days threw up some interesting surprises brought in with the wind or squalls. It is good to see the migrants returning and I always enjoy seeing the Redwings and Fieldfares again. Shame I haven't had chance to photograph them. It is also nice to see the return of the Whooper Swans, they look so fabulous as they fly in.

The observatory will not be open every day of the week now as it is quieter, and we take this time to explore the area. If you do want to visit when we are open, please drop me an email or message through Facebook and we will be there if we can.

Best regards

Jo Goudie



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Photos by Jo Goudie unless otherwise stated
List of Selected Species for October 2023



Female **Red Breasted Merganser** fishing close to the observatory on the 1st.

Red Breasted Merganser – 1st – 2, 6th – 2, 10th – 1, 14th – 2.

Black Guillemot – 10th – 2, 18th – 7, 23rd – 2.

Guillemot – 1st – 3, 10th – 10, 11th – 30, 13th – 1, 15th – 3, 18th – 1, 25th – 5.

Razorbill – 1st – 7, 8th – 1, 10th – 4, 11th – 14, 13th – 3, 14th – 1, 15th – 1, 18th – 2, 25th – 1, 28th – 1.

Curlew – 1st – 4, 6th – 1, 8th – 1, 10th – 4, 11th – 4, 13th – 1, 14th – 5, 15th – 8, 17th – 5, 18th – 2,
22nd – 1, 24th – 4, 25th – 2, 28th – 3, 29th – 1.

Dunlin – 1st – 4, 18th – 3, 28th – 2.

Manx Shearwater – 1st – 2, 8th – 1, 10th – 1, 11th – 2, 18th – 2.

Greylag Goose – 14th – 5, 22nd – 8, 24th – 7.

Numbers are now gathering on the fields around the Moss Road and Drumlemble.



Kittiwake, large numbers seen passing at the beginning of the month.

Kittiwake – 1st – 53, 6th – 1, 11th – 3, 14th – 2, 18th – 6, 24th – 2.



Robin – 1 seen hanging about the observatory garden along with a visiting Wren.

We also have visiting **Goldfinch** and **Chaffinch** in front of the hide as we put seed out. It seems to have been a bumper breeding year for Chaffinch as there have been lots of large flocks feeding on the beach vegetation. Also, a lone **Duncock**.

Fieldfare (10th – 3) and **Redwing** (10th – 7) also appeared this month but they only pass quickly through. One of the places to see them in flocks is along the Moss Road.

Unusual flock of **Greenfinch** (15th – 12) seen on plants by the Machrihanish Golf Hut.



Female **Wigeon** – 1 seen on 6th.



Brent Goose

Brent Goose – Great sighting from the Ugadale Hotel of 3 being chased by a **White-Tailed Eagle** on 13th. Unfortunately, no camera but also seen by a golfer to confirm.

Brent Goose – 10th – 1, 13th – 3, 15th – 2, 17th – 2, 18th – 2.

Barnacle Goose – 6 seen flying past Islay, very distant on 11th.



Grey Wagtail

Grey Wagtail – 1 in front of the observatory on 13th.



Red Throated Diver – still with its summer plumage and red throat.

Red Throated Diver – 1st – 12, 6th – 5, 8th – 8, 10th – 8, 11th – 3, 15th – 4, 18th – 2, 22nd – 3, 23rd – 2, 24th – 2, 25th – 2, 28th – 2.



Red Throated Diver juvenile



Great Northern Diver

Great Northern Diver – From the observatory 22nd – 3, 29th – 1. Good to see them back. On the Campbeltown side 1 seen on the 21st and 6 seen at the Tayinloan Ferry point on the 25th.

Red Knot – 1st – 1, 8th – 10, 15th – 4, 29th – 1.

Redshank – 1st – 1, 8th – 4, 11th – 1, 14th – 2, 15th – 1, 17th – 2, 18th – 1, 23rd – 1, 24th – 2, 25th – 128th – 5.

Ringed Plover – 1st – 6, 8th – 1, 10th – 3.

Sanderling – 1st – 5, 14th – 1.



Grey Plover showing diagnostic black “armpit” An infrequent visitor.

Grey Plover – 15th – 2, 17th – 1.



Little Egret – usually seen on the Campbelltown side, unusual to see it by the observatory.
1 seen on the 24th.



Common Scoter flock – 1 male, 9 female

Common Scoter – 1st – 4, 10th – 2, 22nd – 1, 24th – 5, 28th – 10.



Female Teal – this flock of 8 flew in on the 28th.



Goldeneye pair – this is duck that overwinters by the observatory.
Last year we had around 10.



Sandwich Tern – a surprise fly past (28th – 1)
I thought all the Terns would have been gone by now.



Rock Pipit & Yellowhammer
Another surprise visitor, not seen one here before. Also on the 28th.



Kestrel – caught hovering near Tayinloan



Otter sprainting his favorite rock on the 1st.



Dolphin – 4 possibly 6 seen on the 1st.



Herring Gull with crab



Mute Swan family. We were wondering if the cygnets had the ability to fly yet and I guess this answers the question.

Whooper Swan – 11th – 1, 14th – 2, 25th – 10.

Our volunteer, Patrick counted 32 on the 29th on the Moss Road.

At Stinky Hole and coast on the 21st we spotted 50+ **Curlew**, 4 **Dabchick**, 1 **Great Northern Diver**, 1 **greenshank**, 10+ **Red Breasted Merganser**, 20+ **Redshank**, 20 **Teal**, 11 **Turnstone** and 3 **Wigeon**.

By Drumlemble Pond on the 24th we spotted a male **Hen Harrier** and 1 **Magpie**.

Also 2 **Hen Harrier** flew in from the Islay direction over the sea and headed over to the Gauldrons on the 23rd.



On the 31st we took a trip to Oban as I had seen through Facebook that a large amount of **Waxwing** had been seen there for several days. They are winter visitors, travelling here from Scandinavia when the food supply there runs low. Some winters there are only a hundred or so across the UK, but in other years they arrive in their thousands - an event known as an irruption. I have always wanted to see them and this was the perfect opportunity. I was not disappointed.



Waxwing with a hoverfly



