

Isle of Eigg Bird Report

2019

INTRODUCTION

Overall 2019 was a pretty average year for bird recording on the island with a total of 130 species occurring of which 78 species bred or made a serious breeding attempt.

The breeding season too was (with the odd notable exception!) pretty much in keeping with recent years. Once again the spring-early summer weather left a lot to be desired with the bright but bitterly cold April & May followed by a dismally wet & windy June. These conditions caused problems for a number of species ranging from Hen Harriers to terns & divers plus some of the smaller summer migrants.

Sadly many coastal breeding species had another dismal season with hardly a gull present on Castle Island & Oystercatcher productivity at an all time low. The lack of coastal breeders was depressingly illustrated by a visit on June 28th to the now almost barren West Cliffs, a site once alive with breeding Fulmars & gulls.

Other breeding failures included Golden Eagles which again suffered from a lack of prey species (will Rabbits ever return to Grulin & Struidh??) & Whinchats of which, for the first time on record, no breeding pairs appeared on the island. Also of concern is the continuing scarcity of breeding Snipe & the sudden current decline in the Lapwing population.

Nonetheless there were some success stories with none more so than the first successful breeding of White Tailed (Sea) Eagles on the island since the mid 1880s. Another notable island record was of Little Grebes breeding for the first time since 1963 whilst a variety of smaller species also had very productive seasons.

Migration was typically patchy with a rather disappointing spring & early summer producing only the expected passage Whooper Swans & Pink Footed Geese plus a couple of Canada Geese, a pair of Tufted Ducks, a Jack Snipe, a Great Spotted Woodpecker and a lone Brambling.

Late summer – autumn proved more productive with more passage Whooper Swans & Pink Footed Geese, a couple of Barnacle Geese, the first Leach's Petrel since 2008, two records of

Knot, a couple of Jack Snipe, both Bar & Black Tailed Godwits, a Pomarine Skua, Little & Iceland Gulls & the islands second Yellow Browed Warbler.

Typically mid-summer was pretty quiet & more notable for the huge influx of Painted Lady butterflies than for birds. However a couple of Crossbills in late June was a good island record.

Acknowledgements

As always, I am indebted to the large number of people who passed on bird records or observations during the course of the year. As stated in previous reports this information adds substantially to the accuracy of these bird reports & many of these records are acknowledged in the following text.

As per last year Norah Barnes was employed as the SWT ranger & I would thank her for the information regarding breeding divers, Golden Eagles etc that she passed on to me.

Could I however, conclude with a request for the future. As I am sadly no longer able to cover large areas of the higher ground could I ask anyone visiting these areas to take the time to pass on any observations that they may make particularly with regard to breeding birds. Could I also ask that anyone observing something unusual or noteworthy to please pass the information on to me as soon as possible either by email or phone.

John Chester

SPECIES LIST

Whooper Swan

Three spring records of northbound flocks between March 27th & April 5th, max of 44 on March 27th (C Bull). In autumn four records of passage flocks between Sept 19th & Oct 25th with max of 10 on the latter date. A group of seven spent a stormbound day at Kildonan Bay on Oct 6th (JC). Late record of two flying south between Arisaig & Eigg on Dec 12th (R Dyer)

Greylag Goose

Another very productive breeding season with 20+ broods recorded & many young raised. First goslings seen on the Kildonan Braes on May 3rd (C Carr). Common throughout with autumn population estimated at 110-120 birds. Counts at Kildonan of 101 on Oct 2nd & 95 on Oct 25th.

Pink Footed Goose

Spring passage between April 4th & 22nd with flocks of 80 over Kildonan on April 4th (JC), 100 over Struidh on Apr 9th (N Barnes) & 140 over Kildonan on April 22nd (JC).

The first autumn record of 20 over Sandavore on Sept 5th (J Robertson) was followed by a further five sightings between then & Oct 1st. Max counts of 200 on Sept 28th (J Robertson) & 70 on Oct 1st (C Booth, P Carr).

Two stragglers were present with the Greylags at Kildonan on Oct 7th with one remaining until Nov 5th (JC)

Canada Goose

Two birds at Kildonan Bay on April 18th (JC) was the years only record.

Barnacle Goose

A single record of two birds passing west over Kildonan Bay on Oct 19th (JC).

Shelduck

Three breeding pairs present with one pair at Laig Bay successfully raising five of the seven chicks hatched. Young first seen on June 11th (B Cormack). Adults present from Feb 2nd (JC) until late July with last record of two presumably passage birds at Kildonan Bay on Aug 18th (B&S Gardner).

Teal

Small numbers present in the Laig area up until mid April & from Oct 4th. Max counts of 10 on the Giants Footprint lochan on Jan 24th & eight at the same site on Dec 12th. Outwith the wintering birds there were two records of passage birds at Kildonan Bay with three there on Sept 22nd & lone female on Oct 6th.

Wigeon

Only two records, both from Kildonan Bay. Four birds present on Sept 29th & one on Oct 13th (JC).

Mallard

At least five pairs bred in the Laig area though with a low survival rate amongst the ducklings. Nonetheless a minimum of three young were known to have survived to adulthood. First ducklings seen on May 4th. Present throughout with count of 20 on the Giants Footprint lochan on Dec 12th & winter population estimated at 30-35 birds.

Tufted Duck

A male & female present on the Giants Footprint lochan on May 22nd-23rd (N Barnes et al) was the years only record.

Eider

At least eight broods of ducklings seen at the SE Bays & probably a reasonable survival rate though the situation was again complicated by females moving their broods away from the island. First ducklings seen on June 1st & one family of four young remained until the end of August.

Birds present from March 23rd with max count of 14 males on May 6th. Most birds departed by mid July though unusually one female remained until Oct 14th.

Goldeneye

Two birds, a male & female, were present on the Sgurr lochans in December (M Merrick)

Red Breasted Merganser

Irregular early year records of a male & female at Kildonan Bay between Jan 10th & the beginning of May. Only two late year records, both of a single female, at Kildonan Bay on Nov 2nd & off the old pier on Dec 16th.

Red Grouse

Small numbers again present on the moorlands with an adult & chick seen near the Sgurr on July 23rd (N Barnes).

Pheasant

Common breeder & a reasonably successful breeding season with several records of young in June & July. Four males regular at Millers Cottage feeders in Oct-Nov.

Red Throated Diver

Three pairs present on the hill lochans but only one pair bred successfully raising a single chick. Nest flooding caused by the awful weather of June may have been responsible for the failures.

As usual birds present offshore throughout most of the year though distinctly scarce during the mid winter periods.

Great Northern Diver

Birds present offshore up until May 18th & from Oct 21st. A bird in full breeding plumage near the Perches on June 1st was the only record outwith these periods. Max counts of five at Laig Bay on April 8th (JC) & seven off the NE coast on May 7th (R Dyer).

Little Grebe

One pair bred & successfully raised three young at Laig , the first breeding record since 1963. Adult birds present from April 5th until mid Sept.

Gannet

Present offshore from March 8th though only really numerous from mid July – early October. Max count of 70 around the Perches on Oct 7th. Small numbers recorded until late Oct with the last record of one on Oct 23rd. Mid winter record of one off the SW of the island on Dec 2nd (JC).

Fulmar

Again no breeding records of this previously numerous species with the once prolific West Cliffs colony now completely deserted. Amazingly only two records, both of single birds, throughout the summer months – an inconceivable situation only a few years ago. Birds seen off the east coast on June 3rd & August 15th (JC).

Manx Shearwater

First returned birds heard at the Cleadale breeding colony on March 25th (T McLean) & good numbers reported there in late April – early May (P Carr, C Davies). First offshore sighting of two off Kildonan Point on March 28th (JC) & regular offshore in good numbers throughout the spring & summer months.

Counts of 1,000+ birds off the east coast of the island on July 23rd & 28th. These counts however were dwarfed by the enormous rafts containing an estimated 12,000-15,000 birds which stretched along the entire east coast & far off to the south on July 29th. Present in diminishing numbers in early September with last sighting of one on Sept 17th (R Dyer).

Leach's Petrel

A bird seen between Arisaig & Eigg on Oct 31st (R Dyer) was the first record since 2008.

Storm Petrel

Recorded offshore from June 30th (R Dyer) & regular, sometimes daily, sightings reported between Eigg & the mainland from late July – early September. Max count of 11 between Eigg & Muck on Sept 2nd (R Dyer). Last record of one between Eigg & Mallaig on Sept 5th (JC).

Shag

Again no island wide nest count was carried out but 32 pairs were located on Castle Island where good numbers of young were reared. Common throughout with dusk counts of birds flying back to Castle Island of 124 on Jan 15th & 173 on Nov 5th.

Cormorant

Present in very small numbers throughout, max count of only six. Almost all records from the Kildonan Bay-Perches area.

Grey Heron

Regular in small numbers around the SE Bays & at Laig though typically only 1-2 birds present in the spring & early summer. Max count of seven at Kildonan Bay on Feb 8th.

Hen Harrier

Two pairs bred in the forestry plantation but productivity was low & only a total of three young were fledged. Again the dismal weather of June may have been responsible for the small brood sizes. First display seen on April 10th (N Barnes).

Birds present throughout with up to four individuals seen off & on during Nov-Dec though there was no sign of birds occupying the communal roost site at Blar Dubh.

Sparrowhawk

Two – three pairs bred in the woodlands with at least one pair known to have successfully raised young. Regular, sometimes daily, sightings throughout much of the year with birds frequently visiting garden feeding stations. As would be expected small passerines, mostly Chaffinches & House Sparrows, formed the basic prey species though Rock Doves were also taken with surprising regularity.

Dead juvenile bird found at Cleadale on Sept 16th (N Robertson).

Buzzard

At least four pairs bred & successfully fledged a minimum of eight young. A monitored pair at Laig fledged two chicks with the young flying in mid July. Common & widespread throughout.

Golden Eagle

As usual two territorial pairs were present but sadly yet again there was no successful breeding doubtless due to the lack of suitable prey. The Struidh pair were known to have laid eggs but seemingly failed at the early chick stage.

Resident pairs present throughout with a juv bird seen over An Cruachan on March 21st the only other record.

White Tailed Eagle

One pair bred & successfully fledged two young, the first chicks to be reared on Eigg since the mid 1800s. Adult pair present throughout &, outwith the breeding season, most frequently seen between Castle Island & the Glebe area where they roosted at night.

Breeding birds apart at least one other adult & 2-3 immature birds were recorded at various times during the year. On Sept 16th an adult bird was seen to fly in from Arisaig Loch to Castle Island.

As in previous years Greylag Geese featured heavily as a prey item.

Kestrel

The usual 6-7 breeding pairs were present with at the very least two pairs known to have fledged young. Birds present throughout with the usual increase in sightings in the late summer, presumably due to the presence of juveniles.

A bird at Cleadale was observed on the ground feeding on earthworms on Jan 17th (N Robertson). One seen flying south over the sea to the east of Castle Island on Sept 8th (R Dyer).

Merlin

Three early year records; a female at Galmisdale Bay on Feb 8th, a male at Blar Dubh on March 25th & a female south by Castle Island on April 15th (JC, C Carr, E Weldon). Unusually no confirmed records during the autumn.

Peregrine

Eight records of single birds scattered throughout the year. First sighting at Kildonan on Feb 3rd (JC) & last at Galmisdale on Dec 16th (E Weldon, C Carr). Female seen taking a Ringed Plover at Galmisdale Bay on May 30th (JC)

Water Rail

Probably bred in the croftland marshes though unfortunately no conclusive evidence was obtained. Calling bird heard at Cleadale on March 31st (N Robertson). Totally bizarre record of a bird tapping on the window of Millers Cottage at 23.00 hrs on Nov 1st (JC).

Oystercatcher

Breeding population much as last years but again a dreadful & distinctly late season with most pairs not laying until late May. Breeding productivity desperately low overall with 11 pairs located around the SE Bays fledging only a single chick between them.

Birds present throughout though typically in much smaller numbers during the winter months. Main arrival of breeding birds in early March with departure from early August on.

Ringed Plover

The usual 10-11 breeding pairs present & again seemingly a reasonably successful season with several chicks seen. First full clutch of eggs found on April 8th.

As is the norm good numbers were present outwith the breeding season with early year max of 21 during January & early February. Non breeding birds departed from mid February but some very late spring passage with a flock of 21 at Galmisdale Bay on June 1st. Autumn build up of numbers from late July with peak counts of 43 on August 26th & 47 on Sept 21st. Good numbers remained until the end of the year with 21 present at Galmisdale Bay throughout December.

Golden Plover

Two at the Kildonan hayfield on April 1st (JC) was the only spring record. Autumn passage from Sept 3rd (J Robertson) with five records of 1-3 birds between then & Oct 31st. Unusually no reports of the regular autumn flock in the Loch Nam Ban Mora area.

Lapwing

A maximum of 36 pairs bred, a continuing decline from the 56 pairs of two years ago. Major declines were noted at the two main breeding areas with only 12 pairs found on the Kildonan Braes & six pairs at the Howlin grazings. Overall probably an indifferent breeding season though several young birds were seen. First display noted on March 7th (A Boden) & first full clutch of eggs seen on April 26th.

Birds present throughout though sightings somewhat more irregular during the mid winter periods. Max flock counts of 42 on Feb 19th & 65 on Aug 19th were considerably lower than the norm though a flock of 60 over Galmisdale on Dec 16th (C Carr, E Weldon) was impressive for that time of year.

Knot

Two records; 13 at Kildonan Bay on Aug 9th (B&S Gardner) & a single bird at the same location on Aug 16th (JC).

Sanderling

Spring records of small numbers, 1-4 birds, between April 20th & May 31st. Autumn passage recorded from Aug 17th with eight records between then & Sept 12th. Max count of 20 at Laig Bay on Sept 3rd (JC).

Dunlin

As usual small numbers recorded almost daily on spring & autumn migration. Spring passage from April 15th – June 4th with almost all records from Galmisdale Bay & max count of 13 on May 17th. In autumn birds recorded from July 18th – Sept 26th with max of 13 at Laig Bay on Aug 11th.

Jack Snipe

One flushed at Sandavore on March 14th (N Robertson) was the only early year record. Four records of single birds in the autumn with sightings at Kildonan on Oct 7th, 14th & 24th (JC) & on the lower Sgurr moors on Oct 14th (J Robertson).

Snipe

Widespread but thinly scattered breeder throughout the wetter areas of the island but overall numbers remained distinctly low. Birds present throughout though few sightings in the late summer. Some passage during Oct – Nov when several records of small groups at the SE Bays.

Woodcock

As in the past two years only three roding birds were located, all in the forestry plantation. First roding display recorded on April 9th & last seen on July 26th.

Winter population very low both early & late in the year with only small numbers of birds seen. Autumn passage from Oct 31st & numerous during November with max count of 19 flushed from the roadsides between the pier & school on the evening of Nov 13th (D Wiggin).

Bar Tailed Godwit

Two records, both of single birds & both from Galmisdale Bay, on Aug 24th & Sept 15th (JC et al)

Black Tailed Godwit

Three records, all from the Kildonan area. A single bird on Aug 19th, three birds on Aug 21st (JC) & another single bird between Aug 23rd & 27th (JC, S Heath).

Whimbrel

In spring very regular records of small numbers (1-3 birds) between April 16th & June 4th. Autumn passage from July 22nd with five records of single birds between then & Aug 29th.

Curlew

Two pairs nested in the Kildonan Braes area with one pair known to have raised two young. Fledged young first seen on June 23rd.

Birds present throughout though only the breeding pairs seen in May & June. Early year max of 35 with birds departing throughout early-mid April. Autumn build up of numbers from early July with peak count of 26 in Aug-Sept.

Redshank

Present at Galmisdale Bay in very small numbers, usually only 1-2 birds, up until April 22nd & from July 10th. Maximum of nine on Sept 3rd. A flock of 23 at Kildonan Bay on July 22nd had been brought down by a period of heavy mist.

Greenshank

The overwintering bird at Kildonan Bay (present since mid July 2018) remained in that area until April 29th. Two summer records of single birds at Kildonan Bay on June 29th & July 8th were followed by a long staying individual which remained at Kildonan from July 25th until Oct 4th. Finally a single bird, possibly the previously mentioned individual reappearing, was at Kildonan Bay from Dec 6th until late in that month.

Common Sandpiper

Probably circa 30 pairs bred around the shorelines along with a single pair at Loch Ben Tighe. A total of nine breeding pairs were recorded at the SE Bays. Overall seemingly a pretty successful season with a series of sightings of fledged or near fledged young.

Birds present from April 15th (JC) with main arrival in early May & first display seen on May 7th. Fast departure from mid-late July & last record of one at Galmisdale Bay on Aug 16th (S Heath). A group of seven near Green Island on July 10th were probably migrants grounded by the misty conditions of the time.

Turnstone

Present in small numbers, usually only single figures, up until April 25th & from Aug 15th. Almost all records from Galmisdale Bay. Max count of only 14 on April 8th. As noted in previous reports now a much less numerous winter visitor than was previously the case.

Arctic Skua

A bird off the south of the island on June 14th (R Dyer) was the only spring record. Four autumn records between Aug 16th & mid Sept with a group of five seen off the south of the island on Sept 15th (R Dyer). Late bird off the Perches rocks on Oct 9th (JC).

Pomarine Skua

One record, a bird seen to the east of Castle Island on Sept 5th (R Dyer).

Great Skua

One pair bred on Castle Island & raised two young. Present throughout the summer months with first record of one near the pier on April 5th (J McKinnon). Almost daily offshore sightings between the beginning of May & early September with last record of two on Sept 19th (S Helliwell). Max count of six between Eigg & Mallaig on Sept 5th (JC).

Little Gull

A bird seen near the Perches rocks on Aug 24th (R Dyer) was the years only record.

Black Headed Gull

The usual scattering of records with 12 sightings of small numbers between March 28th & Nov 16th. Max of six on July 25th.

Common Gull

Another dreadfully poor breeding season with probably only around 20 pairs scattered around the coastline. A total of only nine fledged juvs seen in July. Present throughout with the largest numbers in the autumn-winter months but no particularly significant counts.

Lesser Black-backed Gull

As per last year no nesting attempts from this previously regular breeding species. Recorded from March 10th (JC) but numbers generally very low with max counts, presumably involving passage birds, of 23 at Galmisdale Bay on April 16th & 24 at the same location on Aug 30th. Last record of one at Laig Bay on Sept 13th.

Herring Gull

Yet another dreadful breeding season for this once extremely numerous species with only a few pairs scattered around the shoreline & only seven fledged young seen in July. Outwith

the breeding season present in good numbers particularly in the early spring & late autumn with max counts of 250 at Kildonan Bay on March 2nd & 140 at the Perches on Nov 9th. A ringed freshly dead adult found at Laig Bay on July 2nd had been ringed on Rum as a nestling on 2nd July 2012.

Iceland Gull

Two records, both from Kildonan & both of 1st winter birds, on Oct 24th & Nov 16th (JC).

Great Black-backed Gull

Common resident but a very scarce breeder with two pairs territorial on Castle Island in May & probably the odd pair present elsewhere. However very few if any young raised.

Present throughout with maximum numbers present during late Sept-mid Oct but no particularly significant counts.

Kittiwake

Present offshore throughout though generally scarce in the spring when birds were presumably at their breeding colonies. Usual build up of numbers around the Perches in late summer with up to 500 present during September.

Arctic Tern

Approximately 25 pairs present on Castle Island at the beginning of June but all had left, probably due to the atrocious weather conditions of the time, by June 4th. The odd pair laid eggs at the SE Bays & Talm with one pair remarkably successfully fledging a chick at Green Island.

Birds present from May 7th with the usual late summer build up of numbers around the Perches in late July. Max count of 100+ including a good number of juveniles between July 25th & 29th but mass departure on July 30th & no further sightings.

Common Tern

Small numbers seen irregularly at the SE Bays between May 2nd & the end of June. Usual late summer build up of numbers at Galmisdale Bay from mid July on with max of 60 including many juvs on July 30th. Smaller numbers remained throughout much of August with the last record being of a juv on Aug 30th.

Guillemot

Present offshore throughout though numbers often low during the winter months. Birds with accompanying young seen from July 13th & good numbers of chicks reported between Arisaig & Egg in late July (R Dyer).

Razorbill

As with Guillemot present offshore throughout & like that species numbers often low during the winter periods. Count of 15 off Kildonan Point on April 3rd.

Black Guillemot

A seemingly declining breeder though with no early spring count being carried out no figures are currently available. Moderate numbers bred on Castle Island where they had at least some success but none were seen at the West Cliffs in June, an area that previously supported a healthy breeding population.

Present in small numbers January – March with arrival of main breeding population from mid April. Departure from late September & last record of one on Oct 12th.

Puffin

Small numbers recorded almost daily between Eigg & the mainland during June & July. Last record of a juvenile bird on July 27th (R Dyer).

Rock Dove

Reasonably common breeder around the coastal cliffs & probably a moderately successful breeding season. Flocks regular at Kildonan & the croftland with counts of 32 at Kildonan on January 1st & 30 there on Dec 14th. Several records of feral pigeon plumaged birds with the flocks.

Woodpigeon

As usual small numbers bred throughout the woodlands & probably a reasonably successful season overall. First singing heard at the forestry plantation on Jan 10th. Present throughout with max counts of 20 at the Graveyard Wood on July 31st & 21 at the Lodge Grounds on Nov 11th.

Collared Dove

Recorded in very small numbers between March 11th & June 19th. Nonetheless one pair seemingly bred at Kildonan as two adults accompanied by two juveniles were present in Millers Cottage garden on June 7th. Unusually no autumn records.

Cuckoo

An estimated 12 singing males were present, very much as last year. Birds present from April 21st (J Robertson) with continuing arrival throughout late April. Last singing bird heard on June 26th & fast departure in early July. Fledged juvenile seen at Howlin on August 8th (P Carr, C Davies).

Barn Owl

A total of only four sightings during the year though at least one bird probably present in the croftland throughout. Records were as follows – single birds near the surgery on Jan 3rd (A Morrison), at Kildonan on Jan 9th (JC) & at Cleadale on July 11th (B Cormack) & Nov 14th

(S Renny). Long dead bird found at Kildonan on March 18th (JC).

Long Eared Owl

One pair bred & successfully raised three young at Howlin (P Carr, C Davies) with chicks first heard on June 3rd. At least one other territorial bird was present in the forestry plantation though no young were heard in this area.

Outwith the breeding season there was the usual scattering of sightings with three seen together at the forestry gate on Jan 10th (JC).

Short Eared Owl

One pair bred & successfully raised young on the lower Sgurr moors (J Robertson). Occasional sightings of lone birds between April 3rd (A Boden) & late July but no winter records.

Great Spotted Woodpecker

A single record of a male calling & drumming in the Lodge area on May 24th-25th (J Robertson, J Clare).

Swift

One flying south over the pier on July 25th (JC) was the years only record.

Skylark

Common breeder in suitable areas with the population at least equalling that of last year & seemingly a pretty successful season overall. Arrival of breeding birds from March 5th with the first territorial singing heard on March 21st. Departure from early-mid July though small numbers remained until late October. A bird present at Laig Bay throughout January (B&S Gardner et al) was the only midwinter record.

Sand Martin

Two pairs bred & successfully raised young at Laig. First returned bird at Kildonan on April 24th (JC) & regular sightings between then & last record on August 20th.

House Martin

Eight spring records of small numbers between May 27th & June 6th, max of five on June 4th (JC). Two birds at Blar Dubh on July 10th (N Barnes) was the only other record.

Swallow

Breeding population noticeably lower than in previous years with pairs missing from many regularly used sites. Overall a late (presumably due to the dire June weather) though reasonably successful breeding season though few pairs raised second broods. First fledged juv seen on June 26th with a monitored pair at the Old Shop successfully fledging four young on July 5th-6th. Last known fledging at the pier shelter on Sept 2nd.

First bird seen on April 1st (N Barnes, B Wallace) but main arrival not until the beginning of May. Departure from mid August though smallish numbers remained until mid September with last record of two at Laig on Sept 20th (JC).

Meadow Pipit

A common & widespread breeder & a good season with many young reared. First fledged juv seen on June 10th. Very scarce January – March when only the odd bird present. Main arrival of breeding birds from March 20th on & first full song heard on March 23rd.

Very common throughout the summer months with counts of 65 at the Church Park on April 10th & 70 on the Kildonan Braes on Sept 17th. Departure from the end of September & last record of two at Kildonan on Oct 24th. One at Galmisdale on Dec 21st was the only late year record.

Rock Pipit

A common breeder around the islands shorelines & a successful season with good numbers of young seen. Once again birds frequently encountered in the moorland areas during the winter months. Count of 24 at Laig Bay on January 24th.

Grey Wagtail

A poor breeding season with only four pairs located & only two pairs known to have raised young. Present throughout though very few sightings after the end of October.

Pied Wagtail

Common breeder in suitable areas & overall a productive breeding season with good numbers of young birds seen. First fledged juvenile seen on June 6th.

First returned bird at Cleadale on Feb 26th (JB Cormack) but main arrival not until mid-late March. Main departure in late September with a few birds remaining into early October & last record of one at the pier on Oct 10th (JC)

White Wagtail

The usual series of spring records of small numbers between April 15th & May 13th. Max of seven on April 19th-20th. In autumn three records of 2-4 birds between Sept 3rd & 13th.

Dipper

One pair bred at the Laig Gorge & successfully raised young with the chicks fledging around May 20th. Birds present from March on with a lone individual remaining on the Mill Burn at Kildonan from late September until the end of the year. Occasional sightings from other burns throughout the year.

Wren

A very common breeder & a successful breeding season with good numbers of young birds seen during the summer. Very common & widespread throughout with birds occurring from the shorelines to the highest moorlands.

Dunnock

Common breeder & seemingly a reasonably productive season with a fair number of juvenile birds seen. Seemingly some arrival of birds in early October as very widespread & numerous throughout the latter part of the year.

Robin

A common breeder though casual observations suggest a rather lower population than usual. However seemingly a reasonably successful breeding season with fair numbers of fledged young seen. A monitored nest located in a hole low in a Lawson Cypress tree at the

Robin (cont)

Lodge Grounds produced five young which fledged around July 5th. Widespread with much singing during the early autumn months.

Whinchat

For the first time on record no breeding pairs were present on the island. A single bird at Kildonan on May 11th (JC) was the only record of this once reasonably numerous breeder.

Stonechat

Twelve breeding pairs located, up from the eight pairs of last year. Overall a successful breeding season with good numbers of young seen & several pairs rearing second broods. First fledged young seen on May 29th.

Birds present throughout with some passage noted during October & more numerous than usual during November – December.

Wheatear

Reasonably common breeder throughout much of the island though population considerably reduced from that of a few years ago. Apparently a moderately successful

breeding season with reasonably good numbers of young seen. First fledged juv seen on June 7th (D McLean)

First returned bird seen on March 23rd (C Lovatt) with main arrival scattered throughout April. Departure from mid July with last record of one on the Sgurr moors on Sept 18th (J Robertson).

Blackbird

A very common breeder & an excellent breeding season with large numbers of young birds seen. First fledged juvenile seen on May 22nd.

Birds present throughout though typically scarce in the late summer when many of the breeding birds seemingly leave the island. Passage recorded from mid October though numbers not particularly high. Max count of 20 at Sandavore on Nov 13th (K Harding).

Fieldfare

Two at Sandavore on March 13th (J Robertson) was the only early year record. Autumn passage from Oct 14th with good numbers moving through between then & late November. Several counts of 100+ birds with a maximum count of 300 over Sandavore on Nov 1st (K Harding). Late record of six near the school on Dec 30th (M Merrick)

Song Thrush

A common breeding species & an outstanding season with large numbers of young reared. First territorial song heard on Feb 19th & first fledged juv seen on May 15th. A bird was recorded sitting on a nest in a rocky gully above the shore of Castle Island on May 16th.
Song Thrush (cont)

Present throughout though typically very scarce in late summer when most of the breeding population seemingly moves off. A small influx of birds occurred in late Sept-Oct & regular sightings between then & the years end. Count of 15 at Kildonan during a cold snap on Jan 24th.

Redwing

Spring passage between March 29th & April 10th with the main movement occurring on March 29th-30th when 350+ birds were present (JC, B Cormack).

Autumn passage from Oct 7th until late Nov. Max counts of 400 on Oct 16th (JC, J Robertson) & 300 on Oct 19th (JC, E Weldon).

Mistle Thrush

Three breeding pairs present with one pair at the Glebe known to have raised three young. Fledged juvs first seen on May 17th. Birds present throughout though sightings rather irregular during the mid winter periods. Group of 10 migrants present with other thrushes at Kildonan between Oct 7th & 15th (JC).

Sedge Warbler

A common breeder throughout the croftland marshes with the odd bird occurring elsewhere. Probably a reasonably successful season with fairly regular sightings of birds carrying food in June – early July. Birds present from April 25th (JC) until the end of July.

Whitethroat

A common & widespread breeder throughout much of the island & a successful season with good numbers of young reared. Late spring arrival with the first bird not recorded until May 7th (JC) & main arrival not until mid May. First fledged young seen on June 26th. Departure during late July-mid August with last record of one at Sandavore on Sept 2nd (J Robertson).

Blackcap

33 singing males/pairs located, well up on the 22 pairs of last year, & a good season with several pairs known to have raised young. First fledged juvs seen on June 12th.

Birds present from April 18th (JC) with arrival throughout the second half of that month. Departure from late July with last local bird recorded on Sept 5th. Late records of two females at the Glebe on Oct 2nd (JC) & a female at Cleadale on Dec 10th (N Robertson).

Chiffchaff

Only three singing birds recorded in the SE woods, well down on the eight birds of last year. Nonetheless one pair at the Lodge Grounds apparently successfully raised young. First returned bird on April 5th (N Barnes) & singing birds regularly encountered between then &

Chiffchaff (cont)

the end of June. As per last year a bird at the surgery frequently mixed its typical song with snatches of Willow Warbler song.

Late individuals recorded on Sept 3rd, Sept 20th & Oct 14th (JC) with last bird reported from Foresters garden on Nov 10th – 12th (A Mowat)

Willow Warbler

Abundant breeder throughout the woodland & scrub areas & a very successful season with large numbers of young raised. First returned bird on April 10th (JC) with the main arrival

around April 17th. First fledged juv seen on June 12th. Departure from late July & last record on August 28th.

Yellow Browed Warbler

A bird in the trees near Millers Cottage on Oct 18th (JC) was a second record for Eigg & the first since 2009.

Goldcrest

Common breeder in the woodlands & a fairly successful season with reasonably good numbers of young birds seen. First singing heard on March 26th & first fledged young seen on June 5th. Common throughout with birds wandering widely in the autumn & early winter months.

Spotted Flycatcher

Five pairs located in the SE woods but only one pair, at the surgery, known to have successfully reared young. First returned bird seen on May 15th (JC) & last record on August 2nd (S Heath). A bird at the Graveyard Wood was seen to catch & eat a Red Admiral butterfly on July 2nd.

Coal Tit

A common & widespread breeder throughout the woodland areas & a reasonably successful breeding season. First fledged juvs seen on June 7th. Common throughout.

Blue Tit

Common breeder & seemingly a moderately successful breeding season. First fledged juvs seen on June 7th. Common throughout.

Great Tit

As with Blue Tit a common & widespread breeder & a reasonably successful breeding season. First fledged young seen on June 12th. Common throughout.

Long Tailed Tit

At least two pairs bred successfully with fledged young first seen on July 3rd. Birds present throughout with flocks wandering widely in the autumn-winter. Max counts of 50 at the Manse wood on Oct 24th (E Weldon) & 40 in the forestry plantation on Dec 8th (J Robertson).

Treecreeper

Five pairs located in the SE woods, exactly as last year. However seemingly a poor breeding season with few sightings of young. Birds present throughout though very few sightings late in the year.

Jackdaw

The usual small colony bred at the Cleadale cliffs with several fledged young seen in the early summer. Maximum counts of 30 at Cleadale on March 10th (N Robertson) & 30 over Blar Dubh at dusk on Dec 17th (JC).

Hooded Crow

Very common resident breeder & a typically productive breeding season with many young raised. Very common throughout. Odd looking piebald partially leucistic juvenile, first seen at Sandavore on August 22nd (JB Cormack), present around the SE of the island until the years end.

Raven

Four breeding pairs located with a total of 16 young known to have been fledged. A further three pairs also present though none of these seemingly bred. First nest building observed on Feb 2nd & first fledged young seen on May 16th. Common throughout with a group of 14 at Kildonan on August 21st.

Starling

Common breeder throughout the croftland & at Kildonan & a good season with many young reared. Flock of 110, mostly juvenile birds, at Kildonan on July 9th. Outwith the breeding season flocks of 50-60 birds were regular at both Kildonan & the croftland with a count of 90 at the former site on Dec 13th.

House Sparrow

Breeding population somewhat reduced on that of the past two years following the apparent departure of many birds in the early autumn of 2018. Nonetheless a very successful breeding season with many pairs multi brooded & large numbers of young raised. First fledged juvs seen on May 20th. Maximum counts from feeding stations of 50+ at Cleadale from August on (JB Cormack) & 20 at Kildonan in Nov-Dec (JC).

Chaffinch

Extremely common breeder & an excellent season with large numbers of young raised. First territorial song heard on Feb 12th & first fledged young seen on May 30th. Very common throughout with 35 regular at Millers Cottage feeders in Nov-Dec.

Brambling

Two early spring records of probably the same male bird, at Kildonan on March 24th (JC) & at Sandavore on March 29th (J Robertson)

Greenfinch

A reasonably common breeder & a fairly successful season with a fair number of fledged juveniles seen. As usual the main breeding population was centred around the Lodge Grounds. Birds present throughout though less numerous during the winter months when mostly recorded at garden feeding stations.

Goldfinch

Common & increasing breeder & a good season with many young reared. First fledged juvs seen on June 4th. Birds present throughout with small flocks widespread in the winter months.

Siskin

Common & widespread breeder throughout the woodlands & a good season with many young raised. Birds present from April 2nd with main arrival at the end of that month. Departure in late August – early September with three records of passage birds in October & a late bird at Blar Dubh on Dec 17th.

Linnet

Fairly common breeder & overall seemingly a fairly productive season. Birds present from April 6th until late September with flock counts of 20 at Kildonan on Aug 27th & 25 at Laig on Sept 20th.

Twite

Thinly scattered & seemingly declining breeder around the moorland fringes & areas of rough grazings. Nonetheless some successful breeding with several records of family groups in midsummer. Birds present from April 18th with max flock of 60 at Kildonan on Aug 19th (JC).

Lesser Redpoll

A reasonably common & widespread breeder throughout the woodland areas & seemingly a moderately successful breeding season. Birds present from April 16th with main arrival late in that month. Departure from late July though occasional records of small numbers up until mid October. Late record of one near the forestry plantation on Dec 17th.

Bullfinch

A scarce breeder with a few pairs located in the Blar Dubh – Cuagach area but no evidence of any successful breeding. Irregular records of small numbers, mostly 1-2 birds, throughout.

Common Crossbill

A male & female present in the Glebe area between June 24th & July 5th (E Weldon) was the years only record.

Yellowhammer

Four sightings of possibly the same female bird at Millers Cottage feeders between March 30th & May 13th.

Reed Bunting

One pair present at the Cleadale reedbed throughout the spring but unfortunately no evidence of any successful breeding. First record of one at Cleadale on March 6th (M McKinnon). Migrant birds present at Laig on Sept 20th, at Kildonan on Sept 28th-29th & at the Glebe on Oct 2nd (JC). Last record of one at Cleadale on Oct 31st (M McKinnon).