

# Islay & Jura

Naturetrek Tour Report

25 - 31 October 2012

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Great Northern Diver by Mike Youdale



Otter by Mike Youdale



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## Day 1

**Thursday 25th October**

The tour group assembled at Glasgow Central Station and at 1.30pm Peter and Mike arrived in the mini-buses and we loaded up for the drive to Kennacraig, stopping only to pick up Laraine at Glasgow Airport shortly after 2pm. Along the way we passed the calm but cool-looking Loch Fyne where the first Hooded Crows appeared and stopped for a short comfort break by the old quay at Inverary. Pressing on we arrived at Kennacraig shortly before 5 pm as it was beginning to get dark with just enough time for a look around the top of the loch by the ferry terminal but apart from a small group of Red-breasted Mergansers and a very elusive Red-throated Diver there was little of note. The ferry left on time and the crossing to Islay was uneventful despite earlier fears that the strong winds earlier in the day may mean otherwise. Once ashore at Port Ellen we drove the short distance to Bridgend where a warm welcome, as usual, awaited us at Bridgend Hotel our home for the next three nights. We quickly settled in to our rooms and then had a welcome hot supper waiting for us in the dining room. Over dinner Peter set up a map of Islay and explained the plan of action for the next couple of days.

## Day 2

**Friday 26th October**

The morning dawned fine and clear, with a little brisk breeze. After a good breakfast we set off in search of geese, though at first the nearby Bridgend Flats seemed almost empty but it soon became clear that as the tide was out, most of the geese were rather distant out on the open mudflats. A little further on we stopped to look out over the top end of Loch Indaal where in the rather choppy water we found a large flock of Scaup, one or two Eiders and some distant Shags on the rocks.

Further along the beach a large flock of Barnacle Geese were gathered allowing us our first good views and closer inshore there were several groups of Red-breasted Mergansers also giving some good views and two Long-tailed Ducks dived in search of mussels bobbing up and down as they moved along in front of us.

Pressing on we drove north along the narrow road to the RSPB reserve at Loch Gruinart passing a small flock of Greenland White-fronts in a field close to the road along the way. In the fields around the reserve headquarters we came across several flocks of Barnacle Geese and amongst them smaller numbers of Greenland White-fronts and some Greylag Geese. In the more distant fields we could even larger flocks of geese and there were a lot of smaller flocks flying to and fro between the fields and the nearby Loch Gruinart itself, just hidden from our view behind a low bank. We drove on up to the RSPB visitor centre which is perched on a low hill for a better view over the fields and the bottom end of Loch Gruinart.

Suddenly this tranquil scene was interrupted by mass panic breaking out with geese rising almost as a single flock as the alarm spread. It was clear that a predator had appeared but where was it amongst all these birds in the air. Most of the geese were heading away from the loch and it seemed the most likely place to start looking and sure enough out from behind the trees that partly obscured our view an immature White-tailed Eagle came into view flying low across the loch. Moments later it landed on the open mudflats of the loch and queuing up behind our scopes all of the group had excellent views of this huge bird dwarfing the crows that kept it company and the few remaining geese it was near to out on the mud.

After a while, having had our fill of views of the eagle, we boarded the buses again and pressed on towards Loch Gorm and the nearby Sunderland Farm. We had just arrived at the loch when a ringtail Hen Harrier flew by right in front of us and down towards the loch. In the fields below Sunderland Farm a large flock of geese were gathering, these were mostly Barnacles and about 120 Greylags and then we managed to locate one of the smaller races of Canada Geese that are now a regular feature of the winter goose flocks here, this was a Richardson's Canada Goose of the race *hutchinsii* which with a little difficulty (due to having to park along the side of the narrow road) all of the group managed to see through the telescopes.

By mid-morning the wind had dropped and the sun was shining in an almost cloudless sky so taking advantage of this fine weather we headed off to the south of the island to the Oa which is really only worth visiting for large birds of prey when the weather is favourable. The road from Port Ellen to the Oa twists and turns a little, passing through several small hill farms before coming out onto a wide rolling but almost plateau-like area of dry bracken and heather moorland. Here we found some Buzzards sitting on roadside telegraph posts and a little further on made an abrupt stop when a large bird of prey was seen to one side of the road. With everyone out of the mini-buses first one then another Golden Eagle put on a fine display just a few hundred yards away before disappearing behind the hills, this was clearly going to be a good day!

Arriving in the car park near the headland the weather was still holding fine we had an alfresco picnic lunch at the tables set out at the edge of the car park and then set off along the track to the monument on the tip of the headland. Along the way birds were few and far between but the panoramic views were fantastic and at one stage we were joined by a Raven which flew overhead to inspect us before dropping back down out of sight. As we neared the monument we looked out across the sea and large parts of Northern Ireland stood out well against the shimmering pale blue sea and appeared much closer than the thirty or so miles distance between us.

At the monument we scanned for large raptors and managed to relocate the now more distant Golden Eagles still soaring over their cliffs. We carried on along the circular path and passing through the fields on the way back to car park we suddenly noticed a ringtail Hen Harrier in the valley that runs down to the cove from the most south-westerly house on the island. Amazingly, although we were only a hundred yards or so away then harrier landed first on a fence-post and then dropped into the heather whilst we stood and watched it's every move through the scopes.

Shortly before we left the Oa we drove a little way down to Loch Kinnabus and found a large flock of Twite feeding in the field by the side of the track, two Chough flew by briefly calling their name and a flock of about 300 Greenland White-fronts were feeding in the fields by the loch. On our way back to Port Ellen we stopped to look for the eagles but at first there was no sign but once we had all got settled back in the mini-buses they re-appeared almost in the same place as earlier and after another emergency stop they again put on a fine flying and soaring display in the late afternoon sun. A cup of tea was suggested and this meant a trip to the cafe at Ardbeg distillery but we arrived there too late so had to contend with a drive back to Bridgend in the orange glow of the setting sun and reflections on what a great day it had been.

## Day 3

## Saturday 27th October

The weather forecast had proved to be reliable with a calm sunny day forecast with only little chance of scattered showers so after a fine traditional breakfast we boarded the buses and set off along the road to Loch Indaal stopping only to check out the birds at the top end of the loch which apart from a winter plumage Red-throated Diver and several Slavonian Grebes seemed to be much the same as yesterday. We moved on to the RSPB visitor centre at Loch Gruinart where, from the large picture window overlooking the fields, several flocks of mainly Barnacle Geese were grazing and a couple of Roe Deer were frolicking and showing no sign of the panic that ensued here yesterday morning.

We climbed back into the buses and continued along the road north to Ardnave at the seaward end of Loch Gruinart. The road runs close to the western edge of the loch and we stopped several times to look at flocks of geese in the fields (in the hope of seeing a Red-breasted Goose that had been seen in several locations in the last few days) and some winter thrushes along the side of the road. At the end of the road on Ardnave Loch there was a small flock of Wigeon, several Mute Swans and four Whooper Swans. The weather was remaining settled so we took a short stroll along the path through the dunes to look at the seaward end of Loch Gruinart, which is a good place to look for Chough and divers at the head of the loch. Surprisingly we didn't find any Chough but several Ravens eyed us from the dunes as we made our way across to Ardnave Point which looks out across a small channel to Nave Island. Standing on a little rise we spotted a large bird soaring on flat wings over the island, our second White-tailed Eagle, and a different bird from yesterday, this was a sub-adult bird with a considerable amount of white in the tail which obligingly flew slowly and sedately around the island several times and at one stage landed on a pointed rock and stayed there long enough to get the scopes on it. In the channel between us and the island was a fine Great Northern Diver in full breeding plumage which, in between frequent dives, showed fairly well.

Back at the mini-buses again we set off for a lunch stop at Port Charlotte, stopping on the way at Bruichladdich to look for some Black Guillemots that nest under the jetty but were regrettably not at home today. Instead we made do with another Red-throated Diver and some Eiders.

Over lunch from the cafe at Port Charlotte we could look out through the large picture windows and over the seaward expanse of Loch Indaal and just as the soup arrived a couple of summer plumaged Great Northern Divers also swam into view. Luckily they stayed in view for some time and after lunch allowed us some very good views from the car park together with a winter plumage bird in the bay right in front of us and a distant flock of Common Scoter.

After lunch and diver-watching we set off along the road to Port Wemyss and Portnahaven. Portnahaven is a small village set on two sides of a narrow sheltered inlet which is itself a small arm of the channel between the headland on which Portnahaven sits and two offshore islands. The water in the channel is eternally on the move and almost a raging torrent in places with swirling currents sweeping along with smaller side-streams and eddies. In the inlet below the village a few Common and one or two large Grey Seals were swimming and diving seemingly unconcerned by our presence close-by and on the rocky beaches of the offshore islands several more were contentedly snoozing.

At the adjacent Port Wemyss we looked out across the channel to the offshore islands and the wild whipped-up seas beyond, here a couple of Gannets were swooping along together with occasional groups of Kittiwakes. On the shingle beach on one of the islands were several Eiders and a large flock of Great Black-backed Gulls together with snoozing seals. On the way back we took the road to Gruinart to see if there was any sign of geese coming in to roost in the fields but apart from those that we already seen in the morning there was little sign of any roosting movement, possibly due to the very low tides allowing the birds to stay out on the mudflats, but we contented ourselves with a couple of Stonechats near Loch Gorm and a ringtail Hen Harrier doubtlessly en route to a roosting spot in the tall grassy area behind the goose grazing fields.

## Day 4

## Sunday 28th October

Today, our last day on Islay, dawned cloudier than yesterday with more than a hint of rain in the air. After a hearty breakfast we set off on foot into Bridgend Woods adjacent to the hotel in a bid to find the resident Dippers on the river that flows through the woods. However, the recent rain meant that the water level was much higher than usual and all the sloping edges and gravel and mudbanks in the normally shallow and meandering river were covered by something more like a raging torrent.

Returning to the hotel we loaded up the buses, said our farewells and set off for the Gruinart area for a last look at the geese. In the fields at Gruinart and along the road to Ardnave we came upon large flocks of Barnacle Geese and smaller numbers of Greenland White-fronts but although we had seen five species of goose on the tour the sixth (the rare Red-breasted Goose) still continued to elude us. On the way back from lunch in the cafe at Port Charlotte we stopped at the Bruichladdich jetty where we saw two Great Northern and a Red-throated Diver and a small flock of Common Scoter but the Black Guillemots were still not around.

We were on our way back to the buses when Jane saw a seal perched on a rock a little further along the shore, and right next to it was an Otter standing on a rock. Hurriedly we set off for a closer look and with everyone lining the shore close to where it had been one or two lucky people managed to see it well swimming and diving but by the time everyone had gathered at the spot where it had been seen it had vanished, leaving us with only the seal on the rock to look at.

Time was now against us and we had to make tracks to get the Jura ferry so with promises from Peter of more Otters on Jura we set off for Port Askaig. The ferry crossing was short and uneventful although the weather was changing and large dark clouds were gathering. We were the only visitors to Jura on the ferry so had the road to Craighouse to ourselves. We drove slowly along the road that hugs the shoreline of the Sound for the first part of the way whilst scrutinising all the look-alike rocks and clumps of seaweed for signs of life. We had gone a few hundred yards and had stopped at one likely looking spot for an Otter when a large bird appeared in the sky flying slowly west across the Sound. Another hurried exit from the buses gave us views of an adult White-tailed Eagle making for the distant wooded hills on the rugged eastern coast of Islay.

Boarding the buses again we drove on towards Craighouse stopping along the way to look at four ringtail Hen Harriers drifting along over bracken-covered hillsides. By the time we arrived at Craighouse it was getting dark but there was time for a look along the road that runs along the edge of the aptly-named Small Isles Bay. We drove slowly along the edge to the top end of the bay, the only birds of note were several Grey Herons and 3 or 4 Red-breasted Mergansers but sadly we couldn't find any Otters.

## Day 5

## Monday 29th October

The hotel at Craighouse sits on a slight rise overlooking Small Isles Bay which, on the far side, is marked by a line of small rocky islands (hence the name) which often means that the bay is sheltered from the rougher area of sea beyond. Our first morning on Jura dawned bright and clear though a little cool; most of the group were up early searching the shore for any signs of Otters. At first all seemed rather quiet with no tell-tale signs of any Otters foraging in the shallows but the Red-breasted Mergansers were still there together with a few Mallards and some Mute Swans. We walked round to the jetty that runs out almost at the southern end of the bay and looked into the sheltered area of the bay beyond and had almost given up when Peter spotted a tell-tale splash and dive with a long thin tail disappearing into the water. Moments later an Otter's head re-appeared much to everyone's relief. The Otter was swimming and feeding back across the bay in fact right in front of where we had been standing only minutes before! Once we had all had good scope views we hurried back round to get a closer look and surprisingly the Otter stayed in place swimming, diving and catching and eating crabs right in front of us for several minutes until we had to drag ourselves away for breakfast.

After breakfast we boarded the minibus and drove north along the edge of the bay and on across the east side of the island over some rugged terrain of rolling hills and bracken-covered slopes leading up to the Paps of Jura. Stopping from time to time to look over the bay there was no sign of any Otter activity but we did find two or three Great Northern Divers out in the bay and a large flock of winter thrushes, Fieldfares and Redwings feeding on the rowan and hawthorn berries together with some brilliant views (and probably good photos) of many Red Deer along the way, some with fine sets of antlers. The weather which had started fine with clear blue skies was slowly turning very grey with an occasional squally showers now becoming more permanent and little sign of any improvement to judge by the glowering clouds over the peaks. We continued on to the end of the driveable road but with little to show for our efforts. We returned to Craighouse for lunch and waited for the worst of the weather to pass over before venturing out again.

In the afternoon we set out for the Sound of Islay again and the area where we had looked for an Otter yesterday but try as we might in several likely looking spots there was not a sign.

We left the minibus by the ferry terminal and walked along the tops of the cliffs overlooking the narrow Sound with Islay across the water only a few hundred yards away. One side of the path looks down onto the choppy waters of the Sound whilst the other side has great views up over the vast moorlands sweeping down from the first of the grey and conical Paps. We were a little way along the track when, not far in front of us an adult White-tailed Eagle rose up and headed out across the Sound. We followed it in the scope and binoculars and watched it soaring over to Islay before disappearing behind the hills. We carried on along the track and although a Sparrowhawk showed briefly just before Inver cottage birds here were at first few and far between with a few flocks of Fieldfares in the birches and the Red Deer here seemed very skittish and ran off at our approach.

We returned to the minibuses as it was getting dark and drove back along the road to Craighouse. It was now too dark for Otter watching but we were keeping an eye out for a Barn Owl which has been seen here at this time of day in the past. As we were crossing one of the more open hillsides a Short-eared Owl flew across in front of us then circled round and then, much to our surprise, landed on the road seemingly attracted to or dazzled by our headlights. We managed to approach the owl on foot whilst it was sitting on the road but after a while it became nervous and flew off and as it did so a car approached from the opposite direction and appeared to flush either the original bird or another from along the road.

## Day 6

Tuesday 30th October

We were all up and out again in front of the hotel at dawn hoping for more views of the Otter. As the light improved we re-found the Otter feeding slightly further out in the bay but still giving a good swimming and diving display. After a while the Otter seemed to be intent on moving along in front of us towards the jetty we were on yesterday morning when we first saw her (judging by size we thought it was most likely a female). As we watched she swam first towards and then clambered out onto the rocks by the jetty. We hurried round there but at first there was no sign, then after a few minutes a head appeared further over towards a line of rocks marking the edge of the bay. As we watched her swimming and diving another slightly smaller Otter appeared on the rocks nearby, this we thought was possibly a young male (judging by the size and that adult Otters are only rarely social animals) and we spent some time drinking in views of both as they fed and swam in the edge of the bay. At one stage the young Otter climbed out of the water and up through the rocks onto a small grassy patch and rolled around with legs and feet in the air much as any terrier might do before starting to preen his coat. With some difficulty we had to tear ourselves away from here and walk back to the hotel for breakfast.

After breakfast we set off in the buses to check out the area by the only other road on Jura that leads to the settlements at Knockrome and Ardfernal before turning into a bumpy track to Lowlandman's Bay. We passed along the edge of Small Isles Bay and noted the now familiar Buzzards, Red-breasted Mergansers and a flock of Greylag Geese. As we neared the walled gardens area at the top of the bay we stopped to look at a small flock of Siskins and a couple of Stonechats. We drove on to Lowlandman's Bay and parked by one of the cottages that must have one of the best views on the island looking out over the wild and often white-capped Sound of Jura to the rocky and indented coast of mainland Argyll with very little sign of any human habitation anywhere.

The bay itself appeared rather birdless at first though the shoreline was dotted with various groups of dozing Grey Seals. We walked a little way down towards the shoreline and scanned the bay when first one Otter was picked out across the bay and then another swimming and diving much closer and almost below us, our third and fourth Otters of the day!

Also out in the bay were two Great Northern Divers which showed well through the scopes and an elusive Red-throated Diver which didn't. As we stood and looked out over the bay a fine male Hen Harrier was spotted hunting over the fields and rough ground and slowly making its way round the top of the bay, gradually it came closer and by keeping track of it we also saw its fine pale grey and white plumage and contrastingly black wingtips in the scopes as it came to within a few hundred yards of us before disappearing over a ridge. As we were leaving this delightful spot two Whooper Swans flew over calling their very evocative fluting note, a call best heard and most-fitted to such wild places.

On the way back to Craighouse some of the group were lucky enough to see and photograph an Otter (possibly a different one from those seen earlier) on the rocks opposite some houses along the front of the village. After lunch in the hotel we set off mid-afternoon back towards the Sound of Islay in hope of seeing the Short-eared Owls in daylight. We drove across to the Sound of Islay again and then turned round and on our way back along the edge found another Otter swimming and diving along the edge of the Sound before suddenly disappearing from view. Although this was our sixth Otter of the day (and seventh for the trip) it was no less exciting and was still hugely enjoyable to be able to see so many of these once-threatened and endangered animals.

Grey clouds were hastening an early dusk as we drove back across the hills and moors but although we failed to find any Short-eared Owls there were still other birds about. Firstly a pair of Golden Eagles appeared high over one peak and these were joined briefly by a White-tailed Eagle before one Golden and the White-tailed vanished from view leaving a solitary Golden Eagle soaring in the gathering gloom. But the eagle wasn't alone as we waited and watched about 10 Hen Harriers swept into and out of view, including four males all heading for a roost in the small pine plantation by the side of the road. It was difficult to be sure how many birds we had seen in all as some flew round a couple of times whilst others flew straight by us. Totally elated by the success of the day in Otters, eagles and harriers we had seen we drove back to the hotel and as we entered Craighouse were greeted by a Tawny Owl sitting on a fencepost.

## Day 7

## Wednesday 31st October

An early dawn start today to get the ferry across the Sound to Port Askaig and then the drive down to Port Ellen to catch the ferry back to Kennacraig. The weather was again overcast and breezy but a few souls braved the elements outside. As we left Islay a few Gannets appeared and then, as if to wave us farewell, several Black Guillemots appeared close to the ship as we passed by but there was little else along the way apart from a few Common Guillemots until we were approaching the entrance to Loch Tarbert when several Great Northern Divers and a Black-throated Diver were sitting on the sea. Once on-shore the journey back to Glasgow was fairly uneventful and in good weather with the sun picking out the mountains and lochs along the way to perfection.

The first Carrion Crows reappeared on cue at Loch Lomond and we said farewell to Janet close to Erskine Bridge where she was being picked up by a friend and then to Keith and Susan at Glasgow airport who were flying back home. By mid-afternoon we were in the traffic on the M8 heading in to Glasgow and the farewell destination at Glasgow Central Station where we said our final goodbyes and everyone agreed that despite the weather it had been a very successful and extremely memorable tour.



## Species Accounts

### Birds

<b>Red-throated Diver</b>	<b><i>Gavia stellata</i></b> Singles in winter plumage at Kennacraig on 25 <sup>th</sup> , on Loch Indaal 27 <sup>th</sup> and 28 <sup>th</sup> Oct and Small Isles Bay, Jura 30 <sup>th</sup> Oct..
<b>Great Northern Diver</b>	<b><i>Gavia immer</i></b> Up to 7 on Loch Indaal on 27 <sup>th</sup> and 28 <sup>th</sup> Oct and 2-3 Small Isles Bay, Jura on 29 <sup>th</sup> and 30 <sup>th</sup> also about 12 at the entrance to West Loch Tarbert on 31 <sup>st</sup> .
<b>Slavonian Grebe</b>	<b><i>Podiceps auritus</i></b> Up to 3 on Loch Indaal on 26 <sup>th</sup> and 27 <sup>th</sup> and single there on 28 <sup>th</sup> .
<b>Gannet</b>	<b><i>Morus bassanus</i></b> Two distantly at sea from Port Wemyss, Islay on 27 <sup>th</sup> Oct.
<b>Cormorant</b>	<b><i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i></b> Fairly common, small numbers seen most days.
<b>Shag</b>	<b><i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i></b> Very common, seen every day.
<b>Grey Heron</b>	<b><i>Ardea cinerea</i></b> Small numbers seen every day, slightly more numerous on Jura than on Islay.
<b>Mute Swan</b>	<b><i>Cygnus olor</i></b> Small numbers on Loch Gruinart and Loch Indaal, Islay and up to 6 Small Isles Bay, Jura.
<b>Whooper Swan</b>	<b><i>Cygnus cygnus</i></b> 7 in fields below Sunderland Farm, Islay on 26 <sup>th</sup> , 4 on Ardnave Loch on 27 <sup>th</sup> and single on marsh from Loch Gruinart visitor on 28 <sup>th</sup> and 2 in flight over Lowlandman's Bay Jura on 30 <sup>th</sup> .
<b>Greenland White-fronted Goose</b>	<b><i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i></b> Up to 350 daily on Islay, mostly around Loch Gruinart between 26 <sup>th</sup> and 28 <sup>th</sup> Oct.
<b>Greylag Goose</b>	<b><i>Anser anser</i></b> Up to 150 in fields between Sunderland Farm and Loch Gorm between 26 <sup>th</sup> and 28 <sup>th</sup> Oct with smaller numbers in fields around Loch Gruinart and a flock of about 50 in fields near Small Isles Bay, Jura on 29 <sup>th</sup> and 30 <sup>th</sup> .
<b>Richardson's Canada Goose</b>	<b><i>Branta hutchinsii hutchinsii</i></b> Single with flock of Barnacle Goose below Sunderland Farm on 26 <sup>th</sup> .
<b>Barnacle Goose</b>	<b><i>Branta leucopsis</i></b> Flocks totalling over 30,000 on various parts of Islay between 26 <sup>th</sup> and 28 <sup>th</sup> Oct.
<b>Pale-bellied Brent Goose</b>	<b><i>Branta bernicla hrota</i></b> About three along the top of Loch Indaal, Islay on 26 <sup>th</sup> .
<b>Shelduck</b>	<b><i>Tadorna tadorna</i></b> Up to 6 on a sandbar by Bridgend Flats 26 <sup>th</sup> and 28 <sup>th</sup> and 2 in Small Isles Bay, Jura on 29 <sup>th</sup> .
<b>Wigeon</b>	<b><i>Anas penelope</i></b> Up to 100 on Bridgend Flats and flooded fields around Loch Gruinart 26 <sup>th</sup> to 28 <sup>th</sup> and about on small loch near Feolin, Jura on 29 <sup>th</sup> .
<b>Common Teal</b>	<b><i>Anas crecca</i></b> At least 100 on flooded area around Loch Gruinart between 26 <sup>th</sup> and 28 <sup>th</sup> Oct, also about 6 on small loch near Feolin, Jura on 30 <sup>th</sup> .
<b>Mallard</b>	<b><i>Anas platyrhynchos</i></b> Up to 30 on flooded area around Loch Gruinart between 26 <sup>th</sup> and 28 <sup>th</sup> Oct and up to about 20 on Small Isles Bay, Jura on 29 <sup>th</sup> and 30 <sup>th</sup> .
<b>Tufted Duck</b>	<b><i>Aythya fuligula</i></b> About 20 on Ardnave Loch 26 <sup>th</sup> and 27 <sup>th</sup> Oct.

<b>Scaup</b>	<i>Aythya marila</i> A large flock of about 80 on Loch Indaal on 26 <sup>th</sup> -28 <sup>th</sup> Oct.
<b>Eider</b>	<i>Somateria mollissima</i> Up to 10 on Loch Indaal on 26 <sup>th</sup> and 27 <sup>th</sup> and a flock of about 12 in Small Isles Bay, Jura on 29 <sup>th</sup> and 30 <sup>th</sup> .
<b>Long-tailed Duck</b>	<i>Clangula hyemalis</i> Two females feeding close inshore along the top end of Loch Indaal on morning of 26 <sup>th</sup> Oct.
<b>Common Scoter</b>	<i>Melanitta nigra</i> Small flock of about 7 on Loch Indaal on 27 <sup>th</sup> and 28 <sup>th</sup> Oct.
<b>Red-breasted Merganser</b>	<i>Mergus serrator</i> Common in small numbers and seen daily on Loch Indaal, Islay and Small Isles Bay, Jura.
<b>White-tailed Sea Eagle</b>	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i> An immature on the mudflats at Loch Gruinart on 26 <sup>th</sup> , a sub-adult over Nave Island from Ardnave Point on 27 <sup>th</sup> , an adult in flight between Jura and Islay on 28 <sup>th</sup> and a sub-adult flew across the Sound of Islay from near Feolin, Jura on 29 <sup>th</sup> .
<b>Hen Harrier</b>	<i>Circus cyaneus</i> A ring-tail female/immature in flight near Loch Gorm and 2 ring-tail female/immature on the Oa on 26 <sup>th</sup> ; 4 ring-tail female/immature along the road from Feolin to Craighouse, Jura on 28 <sup>th</sup> and a male and 2 ring-tail female/immature at Lowlandman's Bay in the morning of the 30 <sup>th</sup> and a roosting movement of up to 10 individuals, including 4 males near the plantation between Feolin and Craighouse in the evening.
<b>Sparrowhawk</b>	<i>Accipiter nisus</i> Single female in flight at the Ardnave Point on 27 <sup>th</sup> , another around the RSPB visitor centre at Loch Gruinart on 28 <sup>th</sup> and a single on Jura on 29 <sup>th</sup> .
<b>Buzzard</b>	<i>Buteo buteo</i> Common, seen every day, maximum of 10 on Islay on 26 <sup>th</sup> -28 <sup>th</sup> -30 <sup>th</sup> .
<b>Golden Eagle</b>	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i> A pair in display and soaring flight over the Oa on the afternoon of 26 <sup>th</sup> and another pair (with a White-tailed Eagle) over the road between Feolin and Craighouse, Jura on 30 <sup>th</sup> .
<b>Kestrel</b>	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i> Only seen on Jura with up to 4 daily between 28 <sup>th</sup> and 31 <sup>st</sup> .
<b>Peregrine</b>	<i>Falco peregrinus</i> 1 (seen by Peter only) over the road near Bridgend Flats on the evening of 28 <sup>th</sup> .
<b>Merlin</b>	<i>Falco columbarius</i> Single along the road between Feolin and Craighouse, Jura on 30 <sup>th</sup> .
<b>Common Pheasant</b>	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i> Common and widespread, mainly introduced birds on both islands.
<b>Red-legged Partridge</b>	<i>Alectoris rufa</i> A large covey of about 30 in fields near the RSPB reserve at Loch Gruinart on 28 <sup>th</sup> Oct.
<b>Oystercatcher</b>	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i> Common on both islands.
<b>Lapwing</b>	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i> Up to 120 in fields around Loch Gruinart between 26 <sup>th</sup> and 28 <sup>th</sup> Oct.
<b>Golden Plover</b>	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i> Several in fields around Loch Gruinart on 28 <sup>th</sup> Oct.
<b>Ringed Plover</b>	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> 7 on beach at Port Ellen on 26 <sup>th</sup> Oct and 4 in Small Isles Bay, Jura on 29 <sup>th</sup> and 30 <sup>th</sup> .
<b>Common Snipe</b>	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i> Single flushed from rough grass near Ardnave Point 27 <sup>th</sup> Oct.
<b>Bar-tailed Godwit</b>	<i>Limosa lapponica</i> 3 along the shore at the top end of Loch Indaal on 26 <sup>th</sup> and 28 <sup>th</sup> Oct and also several distantly on Loch Gruinart on 28 <sup>th</sup> Oct.

<b>Curlew</b>	<b><i>Numenius arquatus</i></b> Up to 50 on flooded fields at Loch Gruinart 26 <sup>th</sup> - 28 <sup>th</sup> Oct and single Small isles Bay, Jura on 30 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Common Redshank</b>	<b><i>Tringa totanus</i></b> About 4 on rocks at Ardnave Point on 26 <sup>th</sup> and 2-3 Small Isles Bay, Jura 29 <sup>th</sup> Oct.
<b>Turnstone</b>	<b><i>Arenaria interpres</i></b> Small numbers present on both islands.
<b>Black-headed Gull</b>	<b><i>Larus ridibundus</i></b> Small numbers seen daily.
<b>Kittiwake</b>	<b><i>Rissa tridactyla</i></b> At least 20 offshore from Portnahaven and Port Wemyss on 27 <sup>th</sup> Oct.
<b>Common Gull</b>	<b><i>Larus canus</i></b> Small numbers daily on both islands.
<b>Herring Gull</b>	<b><i>Larus argentatus</i></b> Common on Loch Indaal and smaller numbers around Small Isles Bay, Jura.
<b>Great Black-b. Gull</b>	<b><i>Larus marinus</i></b> Up to 20 daily on Islay.
<b>Rock Dove</b>	<b><i>Columba livia</i></b> Small numbers in fields on both islands but more numerous on Islay.
<b>Wood Pigeon</b>	<b><i>Columba palumbus</i></b> Small numbers daily on both islands.
<b>Collared Dove</b>	<b><i>Streptopelia decaocto</i></b> 2 Bridgend, Islay on 28 <sup>th</sup> Oct and a pair at Craighouse, Jura on 29 <sup>th</sup> and 30 <sup>th</sup> .
<b>Tawny Owl</b>	<b><i>Strix aluco</i></b> Single on fence post near Craighouse, Jura shortly after dusk on 30 <sup>th</sup> .
<b>Short-eared Owl</b>	<b><i>Asio flammeus</i></b> 2, possibly 3, in and along the road to Craighouse, Jura after dark on the evening of 29 <sup>th</sup> .
<b>Meadow Pipit</b>	<b><i>Anthus pratensis</i></b> Small numbers present in fields around Loch Gruinart and along edge of Small Isles Bay, Jura.
<b>Rock Pipit</b>	<b><i>Anthus petrosus</i></b> Small numbers around Loch Indaal and along Sound of Islay, maximum of 6 on 29 <sup>th</sup> Oct.
<b>Pied Wagtail</b>	<b><i>Motacilla alba</i></b> At least one pair at Loch Gruinart visitor centre on 27 <sup>th</sup> and 28 <sup>th</sup> Oct and single at Craighouse, Jura 29 <sup>th</sup> -30 <sup>th</sup> .
<b>Grey Wagtail</b>	<b><i>Motacilla cinerea</i></b> Singles seen or heard Loch Indaal 27 <sup>th</sup> and near Small Isles Bay, Jura on 29 <sup>th</sup> .
<b>Wren</b>	<b><i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i></b> Small numbers seen or heard daily on both islands.
<b>Dunnock</b>	<b><i>Prunella modularis</i></b> Up to 4 seen daily on both islands.
<b>Mistle Thrush</b>	<b><i>Turdus viscivorus</i></b> Single in rowan tree with other thrushes near Small Isles Bay, Jura on 28 <sup>th</sup> Oct.
<b>Song Thrush</b>	<b><i>Turdus philomelos</i></b> Fairly common in small numbers, seen daily on both islands.
<b>Redwing</b>	<b><i>Turdus iliacus</i></b> Small numbers seen daily on Islay but with larger flocks of birds clearly on the move and raiding rowan trees for their berries on Jura.
<b>Fieldfare</b>	<b><i>Turdus pilaris</i></b> Small numbers seen daily but flock of 100+ with Redwings on Jura.
<b>Blackbird</b>	<b><i>Turdus merula</i></b> Common and widespread, seen daily on both islands.
<b>Robin</b>	<b><i>Erithacus rubecula</i></b> Common and widespread on both islands.

Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquatus</i> Small numbers seen daily on both islands.
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i> Heard calling and singing in Bridgend Woods on the morning of 28 <sup>th</sup> .
Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i> Fairly common around RSPB Gruinart visitor centre, Islay and on Jura.
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i> Up to 4 in gardens at Craighouse, Jura between 29 <sup>th</sup> and 30 <sup>th</sup> Oct.
Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i> Singles on Jura on 29 <sup>th</sup> and 30 <sup>th</sup> Oct..
Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i> A flock of at least 10 near Loch Gruinart on 26 <sup>th</sup> and another flock on Jura on 30 <sup>th</sup> .
Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i> Single in Bridgend Woods, Islay on 28 <sup>th</sup> Oct.
Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i> 2 near Bowmore, Islay on 28 <sup>th</sup> Oct.
Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i> Two together in flight over Loch Kinnabus, the Oa on the afternoon of 26 <sup>th</sup> Oct.
Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i> Common, seen every day.
Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i> Common and widespread up to about 100 daily on Islay.
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i> Seen mainly up to Loch Lomond and Arrochar on Oct 26 <sup>th</sup> but also single between Port Charlotte and Portnahaven on 27 <sup>th</sup> Oct.
Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i> Common and widespread, seen daily.
Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i> Common on both islands.
Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i> Seen daily (mostly around Loch Gruinart) on Islay and several flocks daily on Jura.
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i> Small numbers daily on both islands.
Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i> Common, seen daily and about 50 together near Port Charlotte, Islay on 27 <sup>th</sup> Oct.
Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i> Small numbers up to 5 together at the RSPB visitor centre at Loch Gruinart.
Lesser Redpoll	<i>Carduelis cabaret</i> Small numbers associating with the Twite flock near Loch Kinnabus on the Oa on 26 <sup>th</sup> Oct.
Siskin	<i>Carduelis spinus</i> 12 in large garden along the shore of Small Isles Bay north of Craighouse, Jura on 30 <sup>th</sup> Oct.
Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i> About 3 alongside the road at Bridgend Flats on the afternoon of 28 <sup>th</sup> Oct.
Twite	<i>Carduelis flavrostris</i> A flock of about 75 in field close to Loch Kinnabus on the Oa on 26 <sup>th</sup> Oct and about 5 over rough grass patch Port Wemyss on 27 <sup>th</sup> .
Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i> About 20 with Twite flock near Loch Kinnabus on the Oa on 26 <sup>th</sup> and several near Ardnave Loch the following day.
Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i> Single in hedgerow near Sunderland Farm, Islay on 27 <sup>th</sup> Oct.
Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i> Several in bushes around Loch Gorm, Islay 26 <sup>th</sup> – 28 <sup>th</sup> Oct.

## Mammals.

<b>Rabbit</b>	<b><i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i></b> Small numbers seen on both islands.
<b>Brown Hare</b>	<b><i>Lepus capensis</i></b> At least three on Islay on 27 <sup>th</sup> and 28 <sup>th</sup> Oct.
<b>Otter</b>	<b><i>Lutra lutra</i></b> Single along the edge of Loch Indaal near Bruichladdich on 28 <sup>th</sup> Oct; a single (most probably a female) in Small Isles Bay, Jura in the morning of 29 <sup>th</sup> and the next day the same female together with a cub in Small Isles Bay as well as two other individuals in Lowlandman's Bay and a different individual later that morning on rocks along the edge of Small Isles Bay and finally one in the Sound of Islay in the afternoon.
<b>Red Deer</b>	<b><i>Cervus elaphus</i></b> Common and widespread on Jura, small numbers, mainly in farm fields on Islay.
<b>Roe Deer</b>	<b><i>Capreolus capreolus</i></b> Up to 4 daily near Loch Gruinart between 26 <sup>th</sup> - 28 <sup>th</sup> Oct.
<b>Common Seal</b>	<b><i>Phoca vitulina</i></b> Small numbers at Portnahaven on 29 <sup>th</sup> Oct.
<b>Grey Seal</b>	<b><i>Halicaerus grypus</i></b> Small numbers at Portnahaven on 29 <sup>th</sup> Oct.

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