

Islay & Jura in Summer: Birds & Botany of the Inner Hebrides

Naturetrek Tour Report

15 - 21 June 2012



Brown Hare (Peter Clement)



Red-billed Chough (Peter Clement)



Marsh Fritillary, Jura (Rosemary Bonney)



Juv Willow Warbler, Loch Gruinart (Rosemary Bonney)

Report compiled by Peter Clement
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Day 1

Friday 15th June

The tour group met up at the pick-up points at Glasgow Central Station at 1.30pm and shortly afterwards at Glasgow Airport and once the minibus had been loaded with the luggage we set off on the drive to Kennacraig and the Islay ferry. We stopped for a comfort break about half way at the picturesque village of Inveraray on the shores of Loch Fyne, a long sea loch which stretches some way inland and, as if to emphasise this, whilst we were standing on the old quay a couple of Gannets flew by, definitely a long way from the open sea. The journey to Kennacraig was otherwise relatively uneventful apart from the beautiful scenery and punctuated only by the occasional Buzzard along the way.

We arrived at Kennacraig in good time and had a look at the birds at the top end of the loch by the ferry terminal. In addition to several more Gannets feeding offshore there was a Common Tern and several Black Guillemots in the water around the ferry moored there. The birds were clearly at home with the huge ferry as two of them flew up and landed on the side of the ship where a small ledge protruded and were still there when the ferry left a little while later. The crossing was breezy with the occasional shower but not as rough as might have been imagined by the forecast of strong winds. A few hardy souls ventured out onto the foredeck from time to time but there was little of note apart from several Arctic Terns and a few Manx Shearwaters whizzed by, however, one of the group was fortunate to pick out a Great Northern Diver as the Sound of Jura came into view.

Once on Islay it was a short but pleasant drive in the evening light along the road to the hotel at Bridgend, there were flocks of Rooks in newly-mown fields, a Barn Owl sat up on a post at the edge of a field and Swallows made the most of the light to catch some late flying insects.

There was a warm welcome as usual at the hotel and once we had checked into our rooms there was a fine meal waiting in the large restaurant downstairs where we met up with the co-leader and Islay resident Malcolm Ogilvie, who gave us some idea of the plants and flowers that we may see whilst here.

Day 2

Saturday 16th June

The day started brightly with a good breeze and overcast skies. We headed off in the minibus along the road to the RSPB reserve at Loch Gruinart a large expanse of sedge and boggy grassland and meadows surrounding the southern edge of the loch. We made a few stops along the narrow road but apart from a singing Sedge Warbler there was little on show until we took a short walk down to the hide that overlooks some flooded pools. Here we found some Lapwings, Teal and both Shoveler and Redshanks with young, displaying Common Snipe which put on an aerial display of diving and 'drumming' and from time to time flew in front of the hide and landing on a close post (briefly) or a slightly more distant gorse bush, an unusual and presumably prickly observation post. On the way back to the road the rain was beginning and an adult Willow Warbler was frantically trying to feed some young fledglings in the grass at the side of the track

After visiting the nearby RSPB visitor centre we drove up to Ardnave Loch but by now the rain was becoming more insistent and clearly there would be little point in walking out over the dunes. At the side of the loch was a pair of Ringed Plovers and a recently fledged young Wheatear and in the grass right by the track was a young and rather wet Hare hoping that he hadn't been noticed. Fearing that the rain was now here to stay we set off again to see what we could from the mini-bus around Loch Gorm. At first there was little to see in the mainly agricultural fields but we soon came across fields with breeding Redshanks and Lapwings, some with well-grown chicks. A little further on there was a flock of about 30 Rock Doves feeding on the ground and a couple of inquisitive Stonechats perched on roadside fence-posts. From a vantage point overlooking the large loch we set up the telescope to look at a couple of rather distant dark spots out on the loch which on closer view turned into male Common Scoters, presumably the females were still on nests on the nearby grassy islands.

Sensing that the rain may soon be giving way we headed off along the road to Portnahaven and by the time we got there it had cleared up and brighter skies were overhead. We stopped in the very pleasant village where the houses run down almost to the sea atop a steep sided inlet where several Grey and Common Seals were playing in the shallow water. From a stop in the almost adjacent Port Wemyss we could see more seals on the rocks of two offshore islands and numerous Arctic Terns passing to and fro in front of us en route to their breeding colony on one of the islands. Through the telescope on a shingle beach on one of the islands there were several Turnstone, Dunlin and Sanderling all in their fine summer plumages. Carrying on round the headland we came across some female Eiders with chicks and a fine photo opportunity of the sea-scape with islands in a clearing sky and a little sunshine peering through.

On the way back to the hotel we made a little detour to Ardnahoe Loch near the Bunnahabhain distillery at the northern end of the island where Peter had found a pair of Red-throated Divers on an early morning recce tour but regrettably there was no sign of them now.

Day 3

Sunday 17th June

The morning dawned bright and sunny with acres of blue skies all around. We boarded the minibus after breakfast and headed off to meet up with Malcolm on the east side of Loch Gruinart, stopping only to listen for Corncrakes at the start of the reserve but hearing only the same Sedge Warbler as yesterday and seeing a Spotted Flycatcher nearby.

We met up with Malcolm (and Merlin his faithful Labrador) at the locked gate just before Killinallan, effectively the end of the tarmac road before the track leads off into the dunes. From here we set off botanising on foot with Malcolm pointing out such local delights as Heath Spotted, Northern Marsh, Pyramidal and Frog Orchids together with Marsh Cinquefoil, Square-stalked St. John's-wort and Marsh Lousewort. We walked along the edge of the low grass-covered dunes and onto the shore of the loch and as the tide was out there large expanses of open mud. Out on the sandbanks were a gathering of Grey Seals calling and grunting to each other, some moulting and sleeping Eiders, a family party of Red-breasted Mergansers, several Curlew and a couple of Bar-tailed Godwits probed in the soft mud on the foreshore.

As we neared the top of the loch we could see the long-abandoned buildings that make-up the village of Killinallan including a large farmhouse and several smaller buildings all effectively now taken over by Jackdaws to judge from the number on the roof of the buildings. The taller sandy dunes at the seaward end of the loch held little of interest but at one stage three Choughs flew over calling and promptly disappeared behind the tallest dune never to re-appear much to our disappointment. We returned along the same route and marvelled at the fine weather and warm temperature setting in. Back by the mini-bus a Buzzard was quartering the nearby moorland and a little further away a Golden Eagle was soaring up over a hillside where several Red Deer were grazing.

We set off for the lunch stop back at the RSPB visitor centre stopping along the way to admire a small colony of Greater butterfly orchids right by the roadside. After lunch we again as yesterday took the road north to Ardnave and parked by the loch by now bathed in glorious sunshine. Setting off on foot for the headland we walked through the farmyard and out onto the open grassy headland. Sand Martin s flew around us as we neared the edge of the tall sandy dunes where they were nesting in small holes and a family party of Wheatears eyed us nervously. On the offshore rocky islands several pairs of Grey-lag Geese were nesting and some had well-grown downy chicks.

In the short turf near the headland we came across a family party of Twite and close to the headland itself we found the bird we had come here to see – Choughs. These fine glossy black crows with bright red legs and slightly curving beaks and distinctive calls (they almost announce themselves) put on a fine display involving several family groups foraging and feeding together in the short turf areas often as a rolling display with one or two birds moving on ahead of the rest of the group only to be overtaken by others doing the same. On the way back to the minibus we passed several more Wheatears and a Raven flew over showing its large size, powerful bill and wedge-shaped tail. Back at the hotel in Bridgend another Raven flew over and a Spotted Flycatcher was flycatching in the garden.

After dinner, in view of the calm and warm evening weather we set off in search of Corncrakes on the RSPB reserve. At first all was rather quiet with very little to be seen or heard but as we were about to give up a distant bird began calling rather hesitantly at first then more frequently. Shortly after another and closer bird also began calling and finally one called from what appeared to be right by the roadside but as we approached the spot where we thought it was calling from it fell silent. As a consolation however, two ring-tail female Hen Harriers circled close to us as the light faded causing havoc and consternation amongst the local Redshanks and Lapwings with chicks.

Day 4

Monday 18th June

After breakfast we set off to Port Askaig in good time to catch the ferry over to Jura. The short crossing allowed us time to catch sight of several Black Guillemots and a couple of Kittiwakes in the fast moving Sound of Islay. Once on Jura we drove slowly along the shore of the Sound in hope of finding an Otter but apart from a couple of inquisitive Seals who watched us from some distance there was little to be seen. After leaving the shore the road climbs up over rough moorland along the eastern side of the island on the way to the main village of Craighouse. Along the road we stopped to look at a Whitethroat, a pair of Stonechats and just after Jura House we stopped to look at a Short-eared Owl which was sitting on a post before dropping back down into the heather.

The village of Craighouse overlooks the very attractive Small Isles Bay, well-named for the group of small rocky islands that mark the outer edge of the bay and protect it from the deeper (and usually much rougher) waters between Jura and the mainland. Once in Craighouse we stopped for a short ramble around and down to the jetty. There was a fishing Heron in the shallows, some Siskins and Lesser Redpolls in the willows and the local, resident pair of Collared Doves.

Driving on north along the road we climbed higher up the island getting good views of the towering grey slate and scree-clad Paps of Jura in all their glory against the clear blue sky and clear of the cloud that often forms or hangs about the peaks. Jura is immensely photogenic and several stops were called along the way for breathtaking scenery shots. We had just passed the end of Loch Tarbert, the sea loch that almost cuts the island in two, when the first butterflies of the day were spotted along the side of the road. Pulling into a convenient lay-by we walked back to find a Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary on some thistles and then a superb Marsh Fritillary (a great rarity) showed well on the same patch. This was indeed exciting as Malcolm had told us of the life-cycle of this nationally scarce butterfly and that the population in both islands was at a cyclic seven-year low and the chances of seeing one had not been good. It later transpired that this was the first record from this transect square for more than ten years!

Driving on we reached the end of the paved road just over the River Luss and as it was nearing lunchtime in the pub at Craighouse we turned round and set off back south. We hadn't gone far when another stop was made for a singing Grasshopper Warbler reeling his insect-like song from the top of bracken frond only to be interrupted by a passing male Hen Harrier at one stage before resuming his song post.

Further on as we made our way back along the edge of Small Isles Bay a movement out on a rock caught our attention and rapidly coming to a stop we could see an Otter swimming around the rock and then climbing out on an almost submerged rock before swimming on again. As we watched we could see the Otter swimming and occasionally diving but getting closer to the shore all the time. We drove on slowly keeping the Otter in view all the time and watched as it came ashore surprising a fishing heron on the shore as it did so and judging by the size it was probably a female Otter.

Over a slightly delayed late lunch we set off back along the edge of Small Isles Bay in the hope of catching further sightings of the Otter - we hadn't gone very far when Peter saw it swimming towards a low reef of rocks. Finding another convenient lay-by close-by we piled out and were truly entertained as the Otter clambered out of the water and proceeded to eat a large crab on the rocks slightly less than a hundred yards in front of us, occasionally glancing in our direction to let us know she knew we were there before slipping back into the water and out of sight. After this we made another bid to find a Dipper on one of the mountain streams that flow into the bay but with no success and soon it was time to head back to catch the ferry back to Islay.

Once back on Islay we took a short detour to the historical site of Finlaggan, seat of the meeting place of the ancient chiefs of the Hebridean islands, which lies at one end of Finlaggan Loch. Here there is a visitor centre and a short walk around the ruins of the site with boards explaining the history of each part. We were just looking round the visitor centre (re-opened on our arrival as the staff were just closing for the day) when Peter rushed in to say that there was a Sea-Eagle flying by. Dashing out, we all caught great views of this huge bird majestically flying slowly over the trees by the loch and out over the far hillside, at one stage accompanied by a Buzzard which it completely dwarfed. Once the eagle had vanished over the hill it was huge smiles all round and back to the lady in the visitor centre who was patiently waiting for us.

Day 5

Tuesday 19th June

As the day dawned calm and sunny we made another visit to Ardnahoe Loch in the hope of catching up with the Red-throated Divers but there were none to be seen and all we could find was a single Common Sandpiper and a couple of Grasshopper Warblers gave short bursts of song.

We headed off to the southwest of the island to explore the Oa (pronounced 'Oh' and so-called because of the shape of the peninsula) in particular the higher ground areas around the southerly tip, most of which is an RSPB reserve. Arriving in the car park we were rather surprised to find it full when it is usually completely empty, and it seemed our visit had coincided with an organised walk by the RSPB although there very few people to be seen anywhere. We parked the minibus and set off down the track and across the boggy moorland towards the American monument to two wrecked troop ships that stands like a lighthouse on the furthest peak of the headland.

At first there was little to be seen apart from one or two Buzzards and a couple of Stonechats but as we neared the monument several Wheatears bounded around. We reached the monument, our planned lunch-stop at almost the same time as the large RSPB group who decided to share the same spot on the headland for their lunch.

The view from the monument was truly panoramic with views across the Irish Sea to Northern Ireland (which seemed almost close enough to touch), south to the tip of the Mull of Kintyre and east along the peaks and moorland of the Oa. On the cliff below the headland were several Rock Doves and some feral goats and in the calm water beyond were several Grey Seals and some Black Guillemots.

Over lunch Peter managed to find a fairly distant Golden Eagle soaring up above the cliffs and through the telescope the dark brown plumage with a paler or golden-brown nape and large wingspan showed up well. After lunch we waved farewell to the RSPB group who had finished their walk and set off along the southern tip of the Oa and back to the minibus via a deep cove with steep cliffs. We hadn't gone far when a Raven flew overhead croaking a welcome and in the cove itself we could see the cliffs dotted with pairs of breeding Fulmars that occasionally took off and soared gracefully around. As we neared the most southerly house on the island a male Hen Harrier flew by and it or possibly another was later seen from the minibus together with a pair of Whinchats as we drove back across the moorland and on down to Port Ellen.

After a comfort stop by the sandy beach in Port Ellen and a refreshing tea-stop at the cafe in Ardbeg distillery we took the road east to Claggain Bay which passes by some secluded bays and through some fine mossy birch and rhododendron woods before coming out onto a panorama of high moorland hills on one side and wide open sea with rocky islets on the other along the eastern side of the island. We stopped at the abandoned churchyard at Kildalton and admired the Celtic Cross which sits in the church-yard as it has done for several hundred years as the mosses and lichens which cover it testify.

We headed back to the hotel but the day's birding was not finished yet. After dinner we took advantage of another calm and warm evening and set off in search of Corncrakes again. As we left the hotel a short and sudden downpour set in only to turn quickly into bright sunshine creating two very vibrant rainbows and a slight third as a shadow dramatically set against the darker grey of the passing shower and purple hills and moorland in the background. Our route this time was the road that runs around Loch Gorm and by driving slowly and stopping frequently we hoped to cover as much of the area as possible before it got too dark. As we arrived at the loch a Barn Owl sat up on a fence post close to the road before setting off on a hunting foray alongside the road before disappearing into some vegetation.

The technique of driving and stopping worked fine, and were about to head back when a Corncrake began calling from a small grassy patch in the corner of a field right by the road. Stealthily we climbed out of the minibus and lined up along the road intent on trying to find the singer. Try as we might it remained elusive in what seemed little depth of cover. As the light faded and another one or two began calling some way over, Peter attempted to locate the bird by walking into the field and as he did so the Corncrake flew a short way out of the grass and landed at the edge of the field and remained there momentarily before diving into cover.

Day 6

Wednesday 20th June

Another bright and sunny day dawned, while the rest of country was doused in continual rain according to the national weather forecast.

We started with a quick stop by the bridge at Bridgend Woollen Mill in the hope of seeing an elusive Dipper but all we managed was a very brief fly-by as one came up river, flew under the bridge and away almost in a blur, a Grey Wagtail by contrast was much more obliging. Our second stop was another visit to Ardnahoe Loch in a bid to catch-up with the elusive divers but as ever they remained elsewhere but a pair of Hen Harriers put on a fine display for us including a food-pass at one stage, and the Grasshopper Warblers were still reeling from their bramble patches.

We met up with Malcolm again for a lengthy botanical stroll through Ballygrant Woods an extensive area of beech, oak and some birch trees surrounding the large Loch Ballygrant. The woodland is home to several interesting or locally scarce plants including Dewberry, Slender St. John's-wort and Common Twayblade. In the trees parties of birds with young were busily feeding, these included Willow Warblers, Blackcaps, Great, Blue, Coal and Long-tailed Tits and at least one Treecreeper, we had hoped to hear or see the Wood Warblers which breed here but as they were not now singing we may have missed them. On the loch itself several Little Grebes showed themselves briefly before diving away. At the end of the walk we thanked Malcolm for all his help in showing us the plants and flowers and for regaling us with tales of the island's history, local politics and what the future may hold for the islands and bade him a fond farewell.

We stopped for lunch at the hide at Loch Gruinart and watched the Shoveler, Teal and Herons out of the lagoons in front of us whilst closer to a family party of Sedge Warblers was feeding along the ditch and a Swallow was collecting spider's webs from underneath the eaves of the hide presumably as a comfortable nest-lining, but there was no sign of any Snipe or other waders.

In the afternoon we drove to Portnahaven and Port Wemyss for some scenic shots and views of the charming villages perched on the remotest edges of the islands and tried to visualise from the calm summer's day scene just how different it must be during the height of a winter storm. The Seals in the bay were enjoying cavorting in the shallows or sleeping on the rocks and the Arctic Terns were to-ing and fro-ing to their nests on the islands and the Eiders and their young dabbled in the seaweed at the edge of tide-covered rocks.

On the way back to Bridgend a small party of finches in one of the roadside fields near Port Charlotte included some Twite amongst the flock. At the top of Loch Indaal we made a sudden stop when Peter spotted a single Barnacle Goose sitting on the beach. As we backed up the minibus the bird got up and walked off trailing a broken or severely damaged wing, clearly the reason why he has been left behind when all his other friends and relatives are far away in Greenland.

Day 7

Thursday 21st June

Going home day... A pre-breakfast walk for the early risers into the adjacent part of Bridgend Woods was rewarded with excellent views of a Dipper sitting mid-stream just below the wooden bridge and which didn't seem that concerned when we approached flying off just a little further down the river.

After a by-now traditional fine and hearty breakfast in the hotel we bade farewell to Lorna and the hotel staff who had looked after us so well and boarded the mini-bus and set off along the road back to Port Askaig and the ferry terminal. The ferry arrived promptly on time and we set sail down the Sound just as the rain turned from drizzle into a more persistent squall. On the crossing very few souls braved the elements outside but as we neared Kennacraig there were a few Guillemots, Gannets, Eiders and one or two Arctic Terns at the entrance to Loch Tarbert.

The journey back to Glasgow was fairly uneventful but 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 which looked rather choppy in the strong breeze. We said farewell to Mike, Rosemary, Jennifer and Isobel at Glasgow airport. By mid-afternoon we were in the traffic on the M8 heading in to Glasgow and the final farewell destination at Glasgow Central Station where the tour had begun and now we were saying our final goodbyes but in conclusion everyone agreed that we had been extremely fortunate with the weather and it had been a very successful and memorable tour.

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Otter, Small Isles Bay, Jura (Peter Clement)

Species List

Birds

	Common Name	Scientific Name	Notes:
1	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	Small numbers on flooded area by Loch Gruinart and Ballygrant Loch, Islay and about 4 in Small Isles Bay, Jura.
2	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	Up to 50 in fields around Loch Gruinart and Loch Gorm and pairs with young at Killinallan and Ardnave Island.
3	Barnacle Goose	<i>Branta leucopsis</i>	Single with severely damaged or broken wing along shore of Loch Indaal on 21st.
4	Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	small number (up to 6) daily on a sandbar by Bridgend Flats.
5	Wigeon	<i>Anas penelope</i>	4 on flooded area by Loch Gruinart on 16th.
6	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Up to 20 on flooded area around Loch Gruinart and about 5 on Small Isles Bay, Jura.
7	Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	Two females with broods of 4 and 3 on flooded area from the hide by Loch Gruinart on 16th and 20th.
8	Common Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	About 5-6 on flooded area from the hide at Loch Gruinart on 16th and 20th.
9	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	Loch on 16th and 17th and about 5 on Loch Finlaggan on 18th. About 6 on Ardnave
10	Eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>	A small flock at the entrance to Loch Tarbert on the way out and on the return journey; on Islay a single female on the small island offshore and two females with three well-grown young at Portnahaven on 16th and 20th; about 20 moulting males on a sandbar in Loch Gruinart on 17th.
11	Common Scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>	2 males on Loch Gorm on 16th.
12	Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>	4 in the main channel of Loch Gruinart on 17th and 2 in Small Isles Bay, Jura on 18th.

	Common Name	Scientific Name	Notes:
13	Red-throated Diver	<i>Gavia stellata</i>	3 in breeding plumage on Ardnahoe Loch on the morning of 16th but not seen there on subsequent visits.
14	Great Northern Diver	<i>Gavia immer</i>	Single from ferry on outward journey from Kennacraig to Port Askaig on 15th.
15	Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>	At least 50 pairs nesting on the cliffs and stacks at the Oa on 19th.
16	Manx Shearwater	<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>	4 from ferry on outward journey from Kennacraig to Port Askaig on 15th.
17	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	Up to 3 on Loch Ballygrant and the adjacent Loch non Cadhan on 20th.
18	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	About 3 from the hide at Loch Gruinart on 16th and 17th; at least 3 around Small Isles Bay, Jura on 18th and 2 Ardnahoe Loch on 20th.
19	Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>	Several from ferry on outward journey from Kennacraig to Port Askaig on 15th; at least 30 offshore from Portnahaven on 16th and one or two fishing close inshore at Port Wemyss; several large fishing flocks seen offshore from the Oa on 19th.
20	Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	At least one at Portnahaven on 16th, and a single on Ballygrant Loch on 20th.
21	Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	Very common, seen every day.
22	Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	A male at Ardnahoe Loch on 16th; a male and a female seen over fields by Loch Gruinart on the evening of 17th; up to 3 ring-tails seen on Jura on 18th; 2 males over moorland on the Oa on 19th and a male and female together at Ardnahoe Loch on the morning of the 20th.
23	Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	Common, seen every day.
24	Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Fairly common 1 - 2 seen most days.
25	White-tailed Sea Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	Single adult seen in flight over hillside by Loch Finlaggan on 18th.

	Common Name	Scientific Name	Notes:
26	Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	Single seen distantly over hills inland from Killinallan on 17th, single seen distantly on Jura on 18th and one soaring high over cliffs on the Oa on 19th.
27	Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	1-2 from the hide at Loch Gruinart on 16th and about the same number on Loch Ballygrant on 20th.
28	Corncrake	<i>Crex crex</i>	About 4 heard calling (one fairly close to the road) at Loch Gruinart in the late evening of 17th and 4 heard calling and one seen briefly in flight and then on the ground before diving into cover around Loch Gorm on the evening of 19th.
29	Common Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	Common and widespread, mainly introduced birds on both islands.
30	Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>	Single seen along the entrance track to Bridgend Woods on 20th.
31	Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	Common on both islands.
32	Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	Many pairs on the fields around Loch Gruinart and smaller numbers in the fields around Loch Gorm and around Killinallan.
33	Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	A pair at Ardnave Loch on 16th and 17th, 3-4 in Small Isles Bay, Jura on 18th and 1-2 on beach at Port Ellen on 19th.
34	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	3-4 in display flight and calling around the hide at Loch Gruinart on 16th and 17th.
35	Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	4 in summer plumage on beach of small island offshore from Port Wemyss on 16th.
36	Curlew	<i>Numenius arquatus</i>	About 10 on fields in front of the hide at Loch Gruinart on 16th and about 30 along the loch from Killinallan on 17th, 2 in a field on Jura on 18th and at least 2 in song-display on moorland on the Oa on 19th.

	Common Name	Scientific Name	Notes:
37	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	About 4 (including one young chick) in front of the hide at Loch Gruinart on 16th and 17th, single Small Isles Bay, Jura on 18th and several in fields around Loch Gorm on 19th.
38	Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	Two in non-breeding plumage, Loch Gruinart (from Killinallan) on 17th.
39	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	Single Ardnahoe Loch on 16th and 19th, single Small Isles Bay, Jura 18th.
40	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	2 on beach of small island offshore from Port Wemyss on 16th and about 5 on shore of Loch Gruinart (from Killinallan) on 17th.
41	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>	About 3 in summer plumage on beach of small island offshore from Port Wemyss on 16th
42	Kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	Several offshore from Killinallan and Ardnave Dunes on 17th and a single from inter-island ferry in Sound of Islay on 18th.
43	Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	Small numbers seen daily.
44	Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	Small numbers daily on both islands.
45	Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>	Up to 20 daily on Islay.
46	Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	Common on Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart, smaller numbers around Small Isles Bay, Jura.
47	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	Small numbers present on Islay, mostly on Loch Gruinart.
48	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	Single feeding around the jetty at Kennacraig on 15th.
49	Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	At least 15 birds on the offshore islands at Portnahaven and Port Wemyss, several also seen feeding in Loch Indaal and a pair frequented the beach close to the roadside layby near Blackrock.
50	Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>	About 4 seen from ferry between Kennacraig and Port Askaig on 15th and 3 on the return journey on 21st.

	Common Name	Scientific Name	Notes:
51	Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>	Single seen from ferry between Kennacraig and Port Askaig on 15th
52	Black Guillemot	<i>Cepphus grille</i>	Up to 5 around the jetty at Kennacraig on 15th, two of which frequently landed on the side of the ferry (and appeared to remain there for at least the start of the way across to Port Askaig), also several in the sound between Islay and Jura on 15th, 18th and 21st. About 6 on the sea below the Oa on 19th.
53	Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>	Several large flocks in the fields around Loch Gorm on 16th and 17th and on the Oa on 19th.
54	Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	Small numbers present on both islands.
55	Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	Pair at Bridgend, Islay and at least one pair at Craighouse, Jura.
56	Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	Single Loch Gruinart on 17th and another heard Ballygrant Woods on 20th.
57	Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>	2 singles on Jura on 18th.
58	Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>	Single between Port Askaig and Bridgend on the evening of the 15th and another at Loch Gorm on 19th.
59	Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>	Common and numerous, seen every day.
60	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	Common and widespread, several hundred present on Islay.
61	Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>	Common and widespread, seen daily.
62	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	Only seen between Glasgow and around Loch Lomond on the outward and return journeys.
63	Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	Common, small numbers seen on both islands.
64	Chough	<i>Pyrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>	3 distantly in the dunes at Killinallan on 17th and about 12 (possibly two or three family groups) together at Ardnave headland also on 17th.

	Common Name	Scientific Name	Notes:
65	Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	Single on Jura on 18th and a family party in Ballygrant Woods on 20th.
66	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	Up to 4 in gardens at Bridgend and in woodland at Loch Gruinart and also seen around Craighouse, Jura and in Ballygrant Woods.
67	Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>	At least 1 on Jura on 18th and several heard calling Ballygrant Woods on 20th.
68	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	A flock of at least 16 together in Ballygrant Woods on 20th.
69	Northern Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>	At least 1 heard in Ballygrant Woods on 20th.
70	Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	Fairly common in fields around Loch Gruinart and Loch Gorm.
71	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	At least 20 over the dunes at Ardnave headland on 17th.
72	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Fairly common, pairs around the hotel at Bridgend, Loch Gruinart visitor centre and hide, Ardnave Loch and on the Oa.
73	House Martin	<i>Delichon urbica</i>	Small numbers present around the hotel at Bridgend and on Jura.
74	Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>	Single seen briefly in flight at Brdgend Woollen Mill on morning of 20th and another seen well in the stream closer to the hotel on the morning of 21st.
75	Grasshopper Warbler	<i>Locustella naevia</i>	Single singing from bracken covered slope on Jura on 18th and 1-2 heard singing close to Ardnahoe Loch on 19th and 20th.
76	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	Fairly common, breeding birds on Jura, Bridgend and Ballygrant Woods; 2 recently fledged young being fed on path to hide at Loch Gruinart on 16th.
77	Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	Heard singing around Kennacraig on 15th and in seen in Ballygrant Woods on 20th.

	Common Name	Scientific Name	Notes:
78	Common Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>	Up to 3 on Jura on 18th and 1-2 present at Bridgend and Ballygrant Woods on 19th and 20th.
79	Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	Fairly common and heard singing from several locations.
80	Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	Single singing on the edge of Loch Gruinart reserve on most days and 2-3 from the hide at Loch Gruinart appeared to be feeding young.
81	Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	Small numbers seen or heard daily on both islands.
82	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	At least 1 heard calling on Jura on 18th.
83	Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	Seen daily, mostly in large family groups around Loch Gruinart and Loch Gorm.
84	Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	Common on both islands.
85	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	Common on both islands.
86	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	Pairs or family groups at Bridgend, Loch Gruinart, Loch Gorm, the Oa and on Jura.
87	Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	Several seen or heard in Ballygrant Woods, Bridgend Woods and in garden of Bridgend Hotel.
88	Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	A pair on moorland on the Oa on the 19th and a male by the road to Ardnahoe Loch on 20th.
89	Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquatus</i>	Up to 4 seen most days on both islands.
90	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	Pairs with young at Ardnave Loch and headland on 16th and 17th, single near Port Wemyss also on 16th, pair with young at Killinallan on 17th, up to 5 on Jura 18th and similar number on the Oa on 19th.
91	Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	Single by road to Loch Gruinart on 17th and another opposite the hotel at Bridgend later that day, also single on Jura on 18th.
92	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	Small numbers daily on both islands.

	Common Name	Scientific Name	Notes:
93	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	Single Loch Gruinart visitor centre on 17th.
94	Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	Common, seen daily.
95	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	At least 1 pair along the river at Bridgend and seen at the Woollen Mill on 20th and close to the hotel on 21st.
96	Rock Pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus</i>	Small numbers on beaches at Portnahaven and Port Wemyss and on Jura.
97	Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	Single singing from forest plantation on Jura on 18th.
98	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	Small numbers present daily, mostly in fields around Loch Gruinart and on Jura.
99	Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	Common, seen daily.
100	Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	2 along the road to Ardnahoe Loch on the morning of 20th.
101	Siskin	<i>Carduelis spinus</i>	About 20 on Jura on 18th and 2 in garden of the hotel at Bridgend on 20th .
102	Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	Small numbers seen daily on both islands.
103	Lesser Redpoll	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	At least 5 (mostly seen or heard in flight) on Jura on 18th and 1-2 along the road to Ardnahoe Loch on morning of the 20th.
104	Twite	<i>Carduelis flavrostris</i>	A family group of 5 on the dunes at Ardnave headland on 17th and 3 in field near Port Charlotte on 20th.
105	Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	Small flocks or family groups present around Loch Gruinart, Loch Gorm and at Ardnave.
106	Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	Pairs present at Loch Gruinart and around Loch Gorm.

Mammals

1	Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>	Small numbers seen daily and on both islands.
2	Brown Hare	<i>Lepus capensis</i>	Fairly common on both islands..

	Common Name	Scientific Name	Notes:
3	Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>	Single, probably a female, fishing and coming out onto rocks in Small Isles Bay, Jura on 18th.
4	Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>	Fairly common and widespread on Islay, smaller numbers on Jura.
5	Roe Deer	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>	Small numbers (less than 5) daily on both islands.
6	Common Seal	<i>Phoca vitulina</i>	Small numbers at Portnahaven and Port Wemyss.
7	Grey Seal	<i>Halicaeetus grypus</i>	Small numbers at Portnahaven and Port Wemyss and on sandbanks in Loch Gruinart, also 1-2 Small Isles Bay, Jura.

Butterflies

1	Small Heath	<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>	Killinallan, Jura, Mull of Oa
2	Green-veined White	<i>Pieris napi</i>	Killinallan, Ardnave, Jura
3	Small Tortoiseshell	<i>Aglais urticae</i>	Ardnave (newly emerged and inflating wings), Jura
4	Common Blue	<i>Polyommatus icarus</i>	Jura (roadside above Tarbert Bay)
5	Meadow Brown	<i>Maniola jurtina</i>	Jura
6	Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary	<i>Boloria selene</i>	Jura
7	Marsh Fritillary	<i>Euphydryas aurinia</i>	Jura

The main site in Jura was a roadside verge beside a plantation at NR611845

Plants (Courtesy of Michael Rusbridge)

1	<i>Osmunda regalis</i>	Royal Fern	Seen from the bus near Loch Gorm
2	<i>Asplenium scolopendrium</i>	Hartstongue	Kildalton Chapel
3	<i>A. marinum</i>	Sea Spleenwort	Jura 1, Kildalton Chapel
4	<i>A. trichomanes</i>	Maidenhair Spleenwort	Jura 1, Kildalton Chapel, rocky places and walls
5	<i>A. ruta-muraria</i>	Wall-rue	Jura 1
6	<i>A. ceterach</i>	Rustyback	Jura 1
7	<i>Oreopteris limbosperma</i>	Sweet Mountain Fern	Roadsides in Jura
8	<i>Athyrium filix-femina</i>	Lady Fern	Ballygrant woods
9	<i>Cystopteris fragilis</i>	Brittle Bladder Fern	Uncertain, possibly Killinallan
10	<i>Dryopteris affinis</i> (agg)	Golden-scaled Male Fern	Ballygrant woods
11	<i>D. aemula</i>	Hay-scented Buckler Fern	Mull of Oa 2
12	<i>Thalictrum minus</i>	Lesser Meadow-rue	Killinallan, Ardnave
13	<i>Cotoneaster simonsii</i>	Himalayan Cotoneaster	Ballygrant woods
14	<i>Rubus caesius</i>	Dewberry	Ballygrant woods
15	<i>Comarum palustre</i>	Marsh Cinquefoil	Killinallan, Finnlaggan
16	<i>Geum rivale</i>	Water Avens	3; The Oa, Ballygrant woods, etc
17	<i>Hypericum tetrapterum</i>	Square-stalked St. John's-wort	Killinallan
18	<i>H. pulchrum</i>	Slender St. John's-wort	Ballygrant woods
19	<i>Erodium cicutarium</i>	Common Stork's-bill	Ardnave, on the west coast
20	<i>Armeria maritima</i>	Thrift	Mull of Oa
21	<i>Drosera rotundifolia</i>	Round-leaved Sundew	Common in bogs, also with 26 in Jura
22	<i>Silene uniflora</i>	Sea Campion	Mull of Oa
23	<i>Thymus polytrichus</i>	Wild Thyme	Mull of Oa, other rocky places
24	<i>Pedicularis palustris</i>	Marsh Lousewort	Killinallan
25	<i>P. sylvatica</i>	Lousewort	Killinallan
26	<i>Pinguicula vulgaris</i>	Butterwort	A fine group on a roadside in Jura
27	<i>Menyanthes trifoliata</i>	Bogbean	Finnlaggan
28	<i>Eupatorium cannabinum</i>	Hemp Agrimony	Ballygrant woods
29	<i>Valeriana officinalis</i>	Common Valerian	Ballygrant woods

30	<i>Neottia ovata</i>	Common Twayblade	Killinallan, Ballygrant woods
31	<i>Platanthera chlorantha</i>	Greater Butterfly-orchid	Gruinart Flats
32	<i>Coeloglossum viride</i>	Frog Orchid	Killinallan
33	<i>Dactylorhiza fuchsii</i>	Common Spotted Orchid	Gruinart hide, Ballygrant woods
34	<i>D. maculata</i>	Heath Spotted Orchid	Killinallan, common on moorland
35	<i>D. purpurella</i>	Northern Marsh Orchid	Gruinart hide, Killinallan, Portnahabhainn, The Oa car park
36	<i>Anacamptis pyramidalis</i>	Pyramidal Orchid	Killinallan

Notes:

1 On the stone parapets of the Corran River bridge.

2 An unexpected location; it was growing in a cleft in the sward, probably incipient erosion of the cliff-top

3 A good indicator of basic conditions, e.g. on the roadside leading up to the Oa and in many other places

This list comprises plants which I particularly noticed, together all those I can remember for which identification was requested by members of our group. Thanks to Malcolm Ogilvie whose checklist *The Wild Flowers of Islay* has been very useful in resolving doubtful cases. Nomenclature and species order follows Stace, *New Flora*, 3rd Edition



Pyramidal Orchid



Northern Marsh Orchid



Heath Spotted Orchid

Orchids images courtesy of Rosemary Bonney