

Islay & MullIn Style

Naturetrek Tour Report

31 October - 6 November 2013



Fallow Deer by Charles Kinsey



Otter by Charles Kinsey



Adult White-Tailed Eagle by Peter Clement



Barnacle & Greenland White-fronted Geese by Peter Clement

Report compiled by Peter Clement

Images by Peter Clement and Charles Kinsey



Naturetrek Cheriton Mill Cheriton Alresford Hampshire SO24 0NG England

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

F: +44 (0)1962 736426

E: info@naturetrek.co.uk

W: www.naturetrek.co.uk

Tour Leader:	Peter Clement
Participants:	Roger Williams
	Tony Warner-Smith
	Sue Chinn
	Jill Holmes
	Don Holmes
	Charles Kinsey
	Jan Beckett
	Janet Spens
	Chris Hardingham
	Sarah Hardingham
	Barbara Evans
	Ann Baker

Day 1

Thursday 31st October

The first part of the group gathered at Glasgow Central Station and just before 1.30pm Peter arrived in the minibus and we loaded up for the drive to Kennacraig, stopping only to pick-up the rest of the group at Glasgow Airport shortly after 2pm. On the way we passed the calm but cool-looking Loch Fyne where the first Hooded Crows appeared and stopped in the warm autumn sun for a short comfort and tea-break by the old quay at Inverary. Pressing on again there was little of note and we arrived at Kennacraig shortly after 5 pm just as it was getting dark.

The ferry left a little after the scheduled time at 6.10pm and the crossing to Islay was fairly smooth and uneventful despite earlier fears that the strong winds day may have meant otherwise. Once ashore at Port Askaig, we drove across to Bowmore. A roaring log fire and warm welcome awaited us at the Harbour Inn, our home for the next three nights. We quickly settled in to our rooms and then found a welcome hot supper waiting for us in the dining room. After dinner Peter set up a map of Islay in the lounge and explained the plan of action for the next couple of days.

Day 2

Friday 1st November

The morning dawned slightly grey and overcast but otherwise clear with a little brisk breeze. After a fine breakfast in the dining room which looks out over the harbour we set off in search of geese. The nearby Bridgend Flats seemed almost empty of geese at first but it soon became clear that as the tide was out most of the geese were out on the open mudflats. We drove on 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 large flocks of Barnacle Geese and amongst them smaller numbers of Greenland White-fronts and some Grey Lag Geese.

In the more distant fields we could see 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. Although able to see the geese well from the minibus we drove on up to the RSPB visitor centre perched on a low hill overlooking all the fields for a better view. From the reserve car park we took a walk through the small wood that borders the edge of the reserve and being on a slight incline has a grandstand view out over the lagoons and loch itself. The wood itself was fairly quiet with only the occasional Robin to keep us company until we reached the end of the wood where a Treecreeper was busily inspecting some moss-covered tree-trunks in search of a morsel. From the hide out on the edge of the lagoons were flocks of Teal, Wigeon, Mallards together with a few Shovelers and in the fields either side were some Lapwings together with a huge flock Golden Plover and some Curlew.

We returned to the minibus and set off along the road to Ardnave which looks down onto the wide expanse of Loch Gruinart from the slightly higher ground to the west. We stopped several times to admire and photograph several large flocks of Barnacle Geese and smaller numbers of Greenland White-fronts gathered in the fields between the road and the loch. By now the weather had become changeable with occasional short sharp showers appearing on the horizon and racing across the island and us. Near the end of the track we stopped to look at birds on Ardnave Loch which was being whipped up by the stiffening breeze. At first the loch seemed strangely deserted apart from a close pair of Wigeon but a more thorough scrutiny revealed 3 Scaup and a fine female Long-tailed Duck which showed well to everyone through the telescope.

At the end of the road we stopped and, taking advantage of another and hopefully prolonged break in the weather, walked out across the dunes to Ardnave Point. Almost immediately the air above us was thick with the sound of clouds of Barnacle Geese taking flight, but as they were rising from over the low hill it couldn't have been due to us. At the headland itself we looked across the narrow channel to Nave Island, separated by a fast-moving current of water in the channel where two Great Northern Divers were swimming and frequently diving in company with the more numerous Shags and the occasional Cormorant. On the rocks around the edge of the island large numbers of seals were hauled out enjoying the warm sun.

Setting off in search of a slightly delayed lunch we drove towards Loch Gorm and had just arrived at the loch when a ringtail Hen Harrier flew by. In the fields around the loch several flocks of geese were gathering, these were mostly Greenland White-fronts together with a few 120 Grey Lags, a little further along the road we came across a large flock of Rock Doves feeding on some spilled grain in one of the fields. After lunch in the rather busy cafe at Kilcolman distillery we drove on west to Portnahaven and on the way stopped at the jetty at Bruichladdich in the hope of seeing some Black Guillemots which breed there and are usually close-by during the winter. Sadly the Guillemots were nowhere to be seen but a little further along the road at a stop in Port Charlotte we did manage to find a late Arctic Tern flying by. These terns breed on Islay in good numbers in summer but by now should be well south of here as they winter at sea in the South Atlantic.

The attractive white-washed villages of Portnahaven and Port Wemyss lie at the far western tip of the island reached along a rather narrow single-track road. Here we stopped to admire the picturesque setting of small cottages lining a small inlet and the lighthouse standing on one of the two offshore islands that protects the villages from the wilder ravages of the Atlantic swells. And from what we could see through the narrow gap between the two islands, the Atlantic was fairly lively today with large breakers and white-crested rollers extending out to the horizon.

On the landward and more sheltered side of the two islands small groups of Common and Grey Seals (the latter outnumbering the former) dozed on rocks or on the boulder-strewn beaches. In the large inlet below our vantage point where small one-storey fishermen's houses lined both sides several Grey Seals played and splashed in the calm water seemingly oblivious of our presence.

Before heading back to Bowmore we took a short circular drive around the headland which looks back towards the two islands, the lighthouse and the sea beyond. Birds here were few and far between but we managed to find a flock of Redwings feeding right by the road in a farm garden and several Ravens in flight or by the road in one of the small fields along the way. The light was now beginning to fade and the grey clouds were gathering around the bright but watery setting sun providing much inspiration for some wonderful scenic shots of the lighthouse, the sea and the sunset before it all too soon disappeared. As dusk fell we headed back to the hotel well pleased with the birds, animals and seascapes we had seen.

Day 3

Saturday 2nd November

The weather forecast proved to be regrettably accurate, with heavy grey skies and an almost continual downpour. After breakfast we drove along to Bridgend Flats to see if there was any large-scale movement of geese out of the roosting area but probably due to the weather, by now strong winds and light drizzle, most of the geese seemed fairly settled in the fields. At the top of Loch Indaal we arrived at the layby overlooking the loch at the same time as a flock of about 70 Scaup flew in and settled just offshore. By mid-morning the worst of the weather had passed over and the sky was looking much brighter, so taking advantage of this fine break in the 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.

Arriving in the deserted car park near the headland the weather was still holding fine but the wind had increased so, nothing daunted, we set off along the fairly muddy track to the monument on tip of the headland. Along the way a male Hen Harrier showed briefly on a distant hillside and a pair of Ravens flew overhead croaking from time to time. As we neared the monument we looked out across the sea and parts of Northern Ireland could just be made out in the misty distance and between the curtains of showers which appeared to be sweeping along all round us but somehow missing us. However, it wasn't to last and as we turned back the showers hit us with full force.

Before leaving the Oa we drove a little way along the track to Loch Kinnabus where there was a large flock of Twite feeding in the field by the side of the track, at first they were extremely flighty spending long periods up in the air or only settling momentarily before flying up again. Eventually they settled on part of the fence close to us allowing good views of the subtle plumage tones of the otherwise little brown birds. A flock of about 300 Greenland White-fronts were feeding in the fields by the loch and a flock of about 25 Whooper Swans flew steadily west over the hill and out to sea. On our way back along the road to Port Ellen a female Merlin perched on a roadside fence-post yards in front of us and only moved a little further on as we slowly approached eventually getting fed up with our attention and made off across the moorland.

A late lunch was suggested at the cafe at Ardbeg Distillery but when we arrived there found it closed as was the cafe at the airport. As the rain had now returned with a vengeance we settled for a drive back to Bowmore and some sandwiches and coffee back at the hotel. A little before dusk a few of the group ventured out along the jetty at Bowmore and found two Great Northern Divers offshore together with a winter-plumage Black Guillemot swimming and diving slightly closer inshore.

Day 4

Sunday 3rd November

After a farewell breakfast at the Harbour Inn we loaded the minibus for the drive to Port Askaig and the ferry back to Kennacraig. The morning had dawned bright and sunny although it was fairly breezy and the sea rather choppy but nothing like the swell that had been forecast forcing the ferry to change from Port Ellen to Port Askaig. As we left Port Askaig a small flock of Common Scoter flew by and a little further along the Sound a Long-tailed Duck flew across in front of the ferry. The crossing in blue skies and warm sun was otherwise uneventful until we reached the entrance to Loch Tarbert where there were about 12 Great Northern, at least 4 Red-throated and two Black-throated Divers together with a large flock of Eiders sitting on the water.

Once off the ferry a defective tyre meant a stop at the nearby town of Tarbert to summon a breakdown vehicle for assistance and hopefully a replacement (bald) tyre. As we waited we took an early lunch in the excellent cafe overlooking the picturesque Tarbert Harbour. The breakdown assistance arrived in good time but the spare tyre was only a little better than the defective one. Once in Oban we found a tyre-fitting garage and ordered a tyre to be fitted on our way back. We then caught the evening ferry to Craignure. We arrived on Mull as the sun was setting and it was fully dark by the time we had driven along the narrow roadway west across to the end of Loch Scridain and then on to Tirolan House Hotel set in large gardens above the loch. A Hen Harrier flew over the road in front of us at one point, as the sun went down several Grey Herons took off from the side of the loch disturbed from their nocturnal fishing. At Tirolan House a warm welcome awaited us as we were shown into our sumptuously comfortable rooms before an equally sumptuous evening meal was served in the dining room.

Day 5

Monday 4th November

The day dawned bright, clear and sunny with little wind and from the large windows of the dining room we had our first views of the extensive gardens of the hotel. In the bright morning sun we took a short walk down to the edge of the loch in the hope of catching sight of an Otter but all seemed calm and very still with only a few Curlew and a Greenshank, the last of the summer migrants, on the edge of the shallows.

After breakfast we boarded the minibus and drove off down the drive and out through the gates to the first of many heart-stopping moments of tranquil beauty. Loch Scridain was almost mirror-still and reflected back perfectly the many shades of green and brown on the surrounding hillsides together with the occasional larch and birch woods shedding the last of their summer leaves. We drove along the edge of the loch and found several Great Northern Divers and a couple of Red-throated Divers and at the top of the loch, as the tide was rapidly going out, several Greenshank together with some Redshank and Golden and Ringed Plover were feeding on the newly exposed mud. We made a brief detour along the southern edge of the loch in search of two Otters which we had been told were seen here earlier that morning but by now there was no sign.

We retraced our route along the edge of the loch then took the road up through an extensive pine and larch plantation which eventually comes out into a broad open valley between two high shoulders and rugged peaks beyond. The bright sun, blue sky and huge puffy white clouds were perfect weather for soaring birds of prey and it wasn't long before something large up in the sky was spotted. Coming to a sudden halt we rapidly climbed out of the minibus and there soaring high above us was a Golden Eagle. Moments later it was joined by a second appearing from below a ridge and together they spiralled up into the blue only for a third bird to appear below them. As we watched the first eagle made a rapid and almost vertical dive onto the late-comer and as they met the third bird turned and showed its much broader and rounded wings with almost no tail. This was an adult White-tailed Sea Eagle which was presumably trespassing on the Golden Eagle's territory and being reminded of it! The White-tailed soon vanished below the ridge but the two Golden Eagles remained soaring up into the blue sky.

Eventually tearing ourselves away we moved on down the steep slope into the entrance to Loch Na Keal with panoramic views out over a scattering of islands including Staffa, Lunga and the Treshnish Isles and Coll on the far horizon. Once down almost at sea level the road follows the edge of the loch all the way round giving an excellent view of the shoreline and its many inlets and bays. At one point an Otter showed briefly in the water below us but must have sensed our presence as it vanished before all of the group were able to see it. Further along we stopped for a picnic lunch on a small rise overlooking the loch. Amongst several Great Northern Divers out on the loch we found a couple more Red-throated Divers and several Slavonian Grebes. Across the loch a large bird sitting in a pine tree was spotted and through the scope was found to be a White-tailed Sea Eagle and as we watched it was joined by a second. With little time to lose we decided on a quick drive round the loch and amazingly as we approached the spot one of the eagles was still sitting in the tree. It stayed there as we set up the scopes and cameras occasionally looking down at us from a lofty perch. Through the scopes we could see almost every detail of this truly impressive bird with its fierce frowning look and massive yellow hook-tipped bill (and the bright yellow wing-tags put on when it was a chick in the nest). The eagle appeared oblivious to our presence and sat serenely gazing out over us and the loch.

Turning our attention away from the perched eagle for the moment there were other birds out on the loch including a fine Great Northern Diver in summer plumage and several Slavonian Grebes in their winter finery. We had parked on a slight headland and to our right an Otter swam into view swimming and diving a little way offshore. Gradually the Otter came closer and then swam past us at less than a hundred yards distance until it disappeared behind a large rock-slab, fearing that to be our final sighting we were about to give up when the Otter reappeared amongst the seaweed covered rocks in the narrow channel right by the shore. Slowly the Otter made its way steadily coming closer to us feeding and diving all the time. At one point it climbed out onto the rock before vanishing behind the rock. Shortly after it reappeared again in the water swimming on again and coming out on some rocks a little further away and then bounding up the beach into some long grass by the side of the road and vanished doubtless into a hideaway to digest a meal of crabs and fish. Wherever we had looked there had been something to see with a Sea Eagle in one direction, an Otter in another and Divers and Grebes in another, what more could we ask!

By now it was mid-afternoon and the light was changing. We set off back the way we had come, stopping only to look through the large flock of Grey Lag Geese, a lone Whooper Swan and several Fallow Deer in the fields at the top of the loch.

As we were driving along the southern shore of the loch again a shape on top of a rock out on the edge of the loch turned into an Otter and then two other heads appeared in the water nearby. All three made a brief appearance out on the rock and it was clear from the sizes they were a mother and two cubs. They didn't stay on the rock for long and soon took to the water and swam on for some way along the shoreline. Several times it seemed like they were heading for the shore as we followed them at a safe distance but each time they swam on until we finally lost them at the point where a floating jetty meets a rocky headland and we guessed they must have a holt somewhere nearby. On our way back to Tìroran House we mused on what a fantastic day it had been not only for brilliant views of wildlife but also for some truly stunning scenery in the best of autumn lights.

Day 6

Tuesday 5th November

Rarely is the weather the same two days running on the west coast of Scotland and so it proved today, dawning cloudy with intermittent squally showers. Nothing daunted we set off suitably armed against the weather in the minibus in hopes of better things. We hadn't gone far from Tìroran when the first stop by a bridge over a small river that emptied in to Loch Scridain was made for a Dipper foraging in the shallows seemingly unaware of the driving drizzle as it walked in and out of the stream in search of something for breakfast. We drove on along the side of Loch Scridain stopping from time to time to check on birds sitting out on the water. At one stop we came across a fine Black-throated Diver close in to the shore and showed well in the telescope. At another point along the shore we came over a low ridge and in front of us an Otter was sitting on a rock but he saw us as at the same time and took to the water and swam off, we managed to re-find him (lone animals at this time of the year are presumed to be males) again on the way back but he again got wind or sound of us and vanished before we could all get a good view.

At the high pass over into Loch Na Keal the weather improved slightly and was much brighter, though dark glowering clouds were threatening from the west. Surprisingly the two Golden Eagles were up and about again, one even coming down low and gliding along the hillside before disappearing over the ridge. The loch itself was almost unrecognisable from the serene sunlit picture of yesterday. We drove on around the loch, now filled with rather choppy water, in the strengthening breeze finding the occasional Buzzard on a roadside telegraph post and the flock of Grey Lag Geese in the same field as yesterday.

Arriving in Tobermory around lunchtime and after a drive along the front of the town with every house or shop seemingly painted a different colour we settled on the bright yellow fronted Mishnish Hotel at the end of the Strand. After lunch we took a quick stroll along the front and a look in the harbour but apart from the usual Shags and Grey Herons there was little of note though we were later told that an Otter had been seen there earlier. The weather appeared to be improving with the drizzle now much reduced but the cloud-base still seemed ominously low. We took the road out of Tobermory that runs up and over the hilly and moorland covered northern part of the island. Wildlife here seemed a little sparse except for a few Buzzards hovering in the strong breeze and some Greenshank on mudflats at Dervaig. Shortly before the turning to Ulva Ferry we came across two Golden Eagles over a low hill both of which showed well in the company of a Buzzard (providing some good size and shape comparisons) for a short spell. We made our way round to Loch Na Keal and as we turned into the loch the view across to the distant mountains was another 'Wow' moment for the landscape had been transformed by the latest downpours to one of snow-dusted mountain-tops on the peaks of Ben More and the accompanying ridges and tops.

At the top of the loch we stopped at the same spot as yesterday and although there was no sign of any eagles in the trees above the road, the same Otter was out feeding and diving in the loch in much the same place as yesterday. We spent some time just watching until he swam off beyond the rocks. It would have been difficult to follow that and so it proved with the return of the rain, all we could do was to peer out from the minibus at the hail and rain-lashed scenery and give thanks for the day before! We arrived back at Tìroran as the light was fading but in good time for a little relaxation by the blazing fire in the lounge and an aperitif or two before dinner.

Day 7

Wednesday 6th November

Dawn arrived with dull mist and drizzle and little expectation of a break in the weather. After breakfast we said our farewell to Tìroran House, loaded the minibus and set off back along the road to Craignure. Sitting in the queue to board the ferry on the sea-front at Craignure we were amazed to see an Otter swimming and diving just a matter of 50 yards or so offshore and seemingly oblivious of all that was going on ashore or a large ferry arriving at the nearby jetty. The Otter continued unperturbed as we boarded the ferry and was last seen swimming towards and then disappearing somewhere around the jetty. This brought our total of Otters to eight and shortly after another seen from the lounge window swimming alongside the departing ferry took the total to nine. The rest of the crossing to Oban was rather uneventful with few of the group venturing outside into the continuing drizzle and only a few Kittiwakes of note and a brief sighting of a Harbour Porpoise from the lounge window seen along the way.

We left the ferry and made it to the tyre-fitting place in Oban in good time where we also took the opportunity for an early lunch in a delightful and very friendly cafe along the main road by the sea-front. We were back on the road again by early afternoon often driving through some torrential downpours which suddenly vanished as we got closer to Glasgow when blue skies appeared. We were back at Glasgow Airport in good time for those catching flights home and for the final farewells at Glasgow Central just after 3.30. Although the weather had attempted to dampen the atmosphere of one or two days it was agreed by all that the trip had been hugely successful with all the aims of the holiday including the geese on Islay and eagles and otters on Mull achieved in full and together with the combination of superb light and breath-taking scenery on both islands meant that it would all remain long in the memory...

Receive our e-newsletter

Join the Naturetrek e-mailing list and be the first to hear about new tours, additional departures and new dates, tour reports and special offers. Visit www.naturetrek.co.uk to sign up.

Naturetrek Facebook

We are delighted to launch the Naturetrek Facebook page so that participants of Naturetrek tours can remain in touch after the holiday and share photos, comments and future travel plans.

Setting up a personal profile at www.facebook.com is quick, free and easy. The [Naturetrek Facebook page](#) is now live; do please pay us a visit!

Species List

Birds (✓ = recorded but not counted)

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

Islay: At least 200 in fields around Loch Gruinart on 1st Nov and a flock of about 80 in fields between Bridgend and Port Askaig on 3rd.

Mull: About 300 in field at top of Loch Na Keal on 4th and 5th Nov.

Greenland White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons flavirostris*

Islay: Up to 300 mostly on Gruinart Flats and around Loch Gruinart on 1st Nov; flock of about 150 in fields between Port Ellen and Bowmore on 2nd and about 50 in fields between Bridgend and Port Askaig on 3rd.

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*

Mull: At least 2 with the Grey Lag Goose flock at top of Loch Na Keal on 4th and 5th Nov.

Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis*

Islay: Flocks totalling over 30,000 on various parts of the island between 1st and 3rd Nov.

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*

Islay: Small numbers on Loch Gruinart and Loch Indaal.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

Islay: up to 20 on Gruinart Flats and Loch Gruinart on 1st Nov; a flock of about 25 flew west over the Oa on 2nd.

Mull: Single immature with grey Lag Goose flock at top of Loch Na Keal on 4th and 5th Nov.

Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

Islay: About 20 on lagoons and mudflats at Loch Gruinart on 1st Nov.

Wigeon *Anas penelope*

Islay: Up to 25 on Bridgend Flats and fields around Loch Gruinart 1st and 2nd Nov and a pair on Ardnave Loch on 1st.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Islay: Up to 30 on flooded area around Loch Gruinart on 1st - 3rd Nov.

Mull: Small numbers on Loch Scridain and Loch na Keal on 4th and 5th.

Common Teal *Anas crecca*

Islay: About 30 on Ardnave Loch and at least 150 on flooded area around Loch Gruinart on 1st Nov.

Mull: A flock of about 15 on mudflats at top of Loch Scridain on 4th and 5th.

Scaup *Aythya marila*

Islay: 3 on Ardnave Loch on 1st Nov and about 70 on Loch Indaal on 2nd Nov.

Eider *Somateria mollissima*

Islay: Small numbers on Loch Indaal on 1st Nov and a pair along the edge of Loch Indaal at Bowmore on 2nd. Flock of about 30 Loch Tarbert on return crossing.

Mull: Small numbers in Oban harbour on 3rd and 6th.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

Islay: Flock of 6 in Sound of Islay from Port Askaig on 3rd Nov.

Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis*

Islay: Single female on Ardnave Loch on 1st Nov and single in flight over Sound of Islay from Port Askaig on morning of 3rd Nov.

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*

Common in small numbers and seen daily on Islay and Mull.

Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*

Islay: At least 2 in Loch Tarbert between Islay and Kennacraig on 3rd.

Mull: At least 2 on Loch Na Keal on 4th.

Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica*

Mull: Single in winter plumage on Loch Scridain on 3rd Nov.

Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*

Islay: 2 off Ardnave Point on 1st Nov and 2 on Loch Indaal from Bowmore on 2nd also about 12 at entrance to Loch Tarbert between Islay and Kennacraig on 3rd.

Mull: About 20 in total on both Loch Scridain and Loch Na Keal on 3rd and 4th.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Mull: Single on Loch Na Keal on 4th and 5th Nov.

Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*

Mull: At least 4 in winter plumage Loch Na Keal on 4th and 5th Nov.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Small numbers seen every day, more numerous on Mull than on Islay.

Gannet *Morus bassanus*

Islay: About 4 at sea from Portnahaven on 1st Nov and 3 on crossing from Islay to Kennacraig on 3rd.

Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

Very common, seen every day.

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Fairly common, small numbers seen most days.

White-tailed Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

Mull: An adult seen in company with two Golden Eagles over hills and pass from Loch Scridain to Loch Na Keal and later on an immature sitting in the top of a pine tree above the shore of Loch Na Keal and an adult in flight over Loch Na Keal all on 4th Nov.

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

Islay: A ring-tail female/immature in flight near Loch Gorm on 1st Nov and another near Portnahaven later that day and a male on the Oa on 2nd.

Mull: A ring-tail female/immature near Loch Spelve on the evening of 3rd.

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Islay: Single female over Gruinart Flats on 1st Nov.

Mull: Single in flight near Loch na Keal on 4th Nov.

Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Common, seen every day.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

Mull: A pair in display and soaring flight over the pass through the hills between Loch Scridain and Loch Na Keal on the afternoon of 4th Nov, at one stage in company with (and in diving flight towards) an adult White-tailed Sea Eagle; two individuals in the same area the following day, one of which was a sub-adult.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*

A female sitting on fence along the road to the Oa on 2nd Nov.

Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*

Common and widespread, mainly introduced birds on both islands.

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

Common on both islands.

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

Islay: Up to 150 in fields around Loch Gruinart on 1st Nov.

Mull: 2 in fields at top of Loch Scridain on 4th and 5th Nov.

Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*

Islay: About 300 on mudflats of Loch Gruinart on 1st Nov.

Mull: About 35 on mudflats of Loch Scridain on 4th and 5th Nov.

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

Islay: At least 15 on beach at Port Ellen on 2nd Nov.

Mull: At least 10 on mudflats of Loch Scridain on morning of 4th Nov.

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*

Islay: Single on the lagoon at Loch Gruinart on morning of 1st Nov.

Curlew *Numenius arquatus*

Islay: Up to 50 on flooded fields at Loch Gruinart 1st and 2nd Nov.

Mull: Up to 50 on mudflats of Loch Scridain on 4th and 5th Nov.

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*

Mull: About 6 on mudflats at top of Loch Scridain on 4th and 5th Nov.

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Mull: 2-3 on mudflats at Loch Scridain on morning of 4th and 5th Nov and 3 on mudflats at Dervaig later on 5th.

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

Islay: Small numbers present on both islands.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

Mull: 2 along the shore of Loch na Keal on 5th Nov.

Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*

Islay: About 5 between Islay and Kennacraig on 3rd Nov.

Mull: About 10 on ferry crossing between Craignure and Oban on 6th Nov.

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*

Small numbers seen daily.

Common Gull *Larus canus*

Small numbers daily on both islands.

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*

Up to 20 seen daily on both islands.

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*

Common on both Islay and Mull.

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*

Islay: Single 1st winter bird flew past Port Charlotte on 1st Nov.

Common Guillemot *Uria aalge*

At least 20 between Islay and Kennacraig on 3rd Nov.

Black Guillemot *Cepphus grylle*

Islay: Single in w/p Bowmore harbour on morning of 2nd and 3rd Nov.

Rock Dove *Columba livia*

Small numbers on both islands but most numerous on Islay.

Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus*

Islay: Small numbers on both islands.

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Islay: Small numbers at Loch Gruinart, Bridgend and Bowmore.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*

Mull: Single in gardens at Tioran House on morning of 4th Nov.

Jackdaw *Corvus monedula*

Common, seen every day.

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*

Common and widespread up to about 100 daily on Islay.

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*

Seen mainly up to Loch Lomond and around Arrochar on 31st Oct.

Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix*

Common and widespread, seen daily.

Raven *Corvus corax*

Common on both islands.

Coal Tit *Periparus ater*

Islay: 1-2 around RSPB Gruinart visitor centre on 1st and in gardens of Woollen Mill, Bridgend on 2nd.

Great Tit *Parus major*

Islay: Fairly common in small numbers.

Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Islay: Singles on Islay on 1st and 2nd Nov.

Mull: Single near the Tioran Hotel on 4th.

Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*

Islay: Single in the wood at Loch Gruinart RSPB reserve on 1st Nov.

Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*

Mull: Single in river into Loch Scridain near Tioran Hotel 5th Nov.

Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Widespread but small numbers seen or heard daily on both islands.

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Seen daily (mostly around Loch Gruinart) on Islay and several flocks on Mull.

Blackbird *Turdus merula*

Common and widespread, seen daily on both islands.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

Islay: 1-2 seen daily on Islay.

Mull: At least 10 in roadside fields on 5th Nov.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

Islay: Small numbers seen daily; flock of 50 in garden at Octofad on 1st Nov..

Mull: Up to 50 seen along shore of Loch Na Keal on 4th and 5th.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

Fairly common in small numbers, seen daily on both islands.

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*

Mull: Pair along shore of Loch Na Keal on 5th Nov.

Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus*

Small numbers seen on both islands.

Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

Common and widespread on both islands.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Small numbers daily on both islands.

Dunnock *Prunella modularis*

Small numbers seen daily on both islands.

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

Islay: At least one pair at Loch Gruinart RSPB visitor centre on 2nd Nov.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

Mull: Single along the river into Loch Scridain near Tìroran Hotel 5th Nov.

Rock Pipit *Anthus petrosus*

Islay: Small numbers around Loch Indaal and at Portnahaven.

Mull: Small numbers around the edge of Loch Scridain and Loch Na Keal.

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*

Islay: Small numbers present around Loch Gruinart and on Ardnave Point.

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

Common, seen daily on both islands.

Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*

Islay: Single near Kilcolman distillery on 1st Nov.

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

Common, seen daily on both islands.

Twite *Carduelis flavrostris*

Islay: A flock of about 150 over a small weedy field at the Oa on 2nd Nov.

Linnet *Carduelis cannabina*

Islay: a flock of about 30 in small hedge by Kilcolman distillery on 1st Nov.

Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Islay: Several in bushes around Loch Gorm on 1st Nov.

Mammals.**Rabbit** *Oryctolagus cuniculus*

Small numbers seen on both islands.

Brown Hare *Lepus capensis*

Islay: Single in the wood at Loch Gruinart RSPB reserve on 1st Nov.

Common Seal *Phoca vitulina*

Small numbers on both islands, most numerous at Portnahaven, Islay on 1st Nov.

Grey Seal *Halicoerus grypus*

Small numbers on both islands, most numerous at Portnahaven, Islay on 1st Nov.

Otter *Lutra lutra*

Mull: Single seen briefly on south side of Loch Na Keal and another single (both presumed males) on north side of the loch 4th Nov and later that day a mother and two cubs briefly on rocks then swimming along the southern edge of the loch and disappearing near the floating jetty. A lone (presumed) male seen on Loch Scridain on the morning of 5th Nov and one of the animals seen again later that day on the northern shore of Loch Na Keal. Single also swimming and diving at the ferry terminal at Craignure on the morning of 6th and another seen shortly after from the ferry some way out from the shore.

Red Deer *Cervus elaphus*

Islay: Small numbers of females with young distantly in fields near Loch Gruinart on 1st Nov.

Mull: Several females with young male in hills and pass between Loch Scridain and Loch Na Keal on 4th and 5th Nov. Fine male stag with several females by road to Craignure on morning of 6th Nov.

Roe Deer *Capreolus capreolus*

Up to 4 near Loch Gruinart on 1st and 2nd Nov.

Fallow Deer *Dama dama*

4 including a young male in fields and woodland at top of Loch Na Keal on 4th and 5th Nov.

Harbour Porpoise *Phocoena phocoena*

One, possibly two, close to the ferry from Craignure to Oban on morning of 6th Nov.



Loch Na Kea - By Charles Kinsey