

# Islay & Mull ... In Style!

Naturetrek Tour Report

30 October - 5 November 2014

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Report compiled by Peter Clement



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## Day 1

**Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> October**

The tour group gathered at Glasgow Central Station and, just before 1.30, Peter arrived in the minibus. We loaded up for the drive to Kennacraig, stopping only to pick-up the remaining four members of the group at Glasgow Airport at around 2pm. On the way we passed the calm but cool-looking Loch Long, where the first Hooded Crows appeared, and stopped for a short tea-break by the old quay at Inveraray. 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 due to some late arriving passengers: a tree had fallen across the road shortly after we had passed through. Once ashore at Port Askaig, we drove across the island to Bowmore where 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 late but welcome hot supper waiting for us. 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 31<sup>st</sup> October**

The morning dawned slightly grey and overcast but otherwise clear with a brisk breeze. In the calm water of the harbour right in front of the hotel were 3 Eiders and a lone female Red-breasted Merganser. After a fine breakfast we set off in search of geese. Apart from a few Wigeon and Curlew, the nearby Bridgend Flats seemed almost empty but, 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 grazing 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 Greylag Geese. In the more distant fields we could see even larger flocks of geese, and smaller numbers were flying to and fro between the fields and the nearby Loch Gruinart. 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. From the hide on the edge

of the lagoons, we could see large flocks of Teal and Wigeon together with Mallards and a couple of Pintail. In the fields beyond were some Lapwings, together with a huge flock Golden Plover and some Curlew. We returned to the minibus and set off along the road 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 flock of Wigeon in one corner. At the end of the road we stopped and, taking advantage of a prolonged break in the weather, walked out along the track through the dunes to Ardnave Point. Almost immediately after setting off we were greeted by a small flock of Chough and their very distinctive 'chiaow' call notes. As we walked further across the dunes they were joined by other small groups, until there were about 40 in total around us together with 3-4 Ravens, their much larger relative. At the headland itself we looked across the narrow channel to Nave Island, separated by a fast-moving current of water, where several large herds of Grey Seals were hauled out and slumbering on the open beaches. On the way back we came across a flock of about 50 Twite which had been feeding on small seeds at the side of the track and, closer to the minibus, a Peregrine dashed over and away across Ardnave Loch.

Setting off in search of a slightly delayed lunch, we drove back through Bridgend and on to Port Ellen, where we had lunch in the cafe at Ardbeg distillery. After lunch we returned north, to see if there would be any movement of geese into the roosts. We passed the geese-filled fields around Loch Gruinart again, this time with smaller numbers of Greenland White-fronts. Taking the bumpy road that runs along the east side of the loch we found a family group of Whooper Swans, and a Merlin which perched obligingly, but all too briefly, on a nearby telegraph post. On the return journey to Bridgend a few geese were moving to roosting areas against the sky in the fading light.

## Day 3

## Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> November

After another fine breakfast, we took advantage of the clear skies and distant puffy clouds and 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. On the way we stopped for a short comfort break on the outskirts of Port Ellen, where the road runs across the top of a bay. A quick search of the breaking waves revealed a small brown head, which at first was thought to be a small seal, but a closer look when it surfaced again showed it clearly to be an Otter. This was quite an amazing find, and one of the closest ever known to such a large area of human occupation: it showed how tolerant these animals can be. The Otter continued to dive, surfacing with small crabs or fish in its mouth which it took only moments to swallow, before diving again. Despite the fairly choppy water in the bay, everyone managed to see the Otter well through the scope before it disappeared. At one point whilst we were watching the Otter, a female or ringtail Hen Harrier flew high from left to right straight across the bay in front of us.

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 plateau-like area of dry bracken and heather moorland. We arrived in the deserted car park near the headland. The wind had increased but the weather was still holding fine so, nothing daunted,

we set off along the fairly muddy track to the monument on tip of the headland. Along the way we came across a fairly large flock of Redwings newly arrived from Iceland, and some Twite which were feeding in the weedy fields at the side of the track and, a little further on, a fine Snow Bunting showed well as it fed on the track itself. As we neared the monument, a sudden squealing note from high overhead made us look up, to see a Merlin being mobbed by a Raven or, occasionally, the Merlin appeared to be mobbing the Raven. From the monument we looked out across the sea, and parts of Northern Ireland could just be made out in the misty distance, between the curtains of showers which appeared to be sweeping along towards us, but somehow missing us. However, it wasn't to last and, as we turned back, the showers hit us with full force.

A late lunch was suggested and, with this in mind, we headed off to the Port Charlotte hotel and, as we were parking at the hotel, a Red-throated Diver was noticed swimming just offshore from the back of the hotel. After lunch, we drove on west to the attractive white-washed villages of Portnahaven and Port Wemyss which lie at the far western tip of the island, and are reached by driving 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 protect the villages from the wilder ravages of the Atlantic swells. 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 Harbour (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 we took a short circular drive around the headland, which looks back towards the two islands, the lighthouse and the sea beyond the offshore reefs known as Frenchman's Rocks. We had just set off along the track when a fine pale grey male Hen Harrier flew across the road and off over the fields to our right. Although it was only in view a short time most of the group managed to see this elegant raptor. Otherwise birds here were few and far between, probably due to the gusting wind, but we managed to find a flock of Redwings feeding right by the road in a farm garden, and several Ravens 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. On the way back we stopped for a last look at a field of geese, where several hundred Barnacle and Greylags were feeding together with a single Pink-footed Goose (a local scarcity here) and a Whooper swan. As dusk fell we headed back to the hotel well pleased with the birds, animals and seascapes we had seen.

## Day 4

## Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> November

After a farewell breakfast at the Harbour Inn, we loaded the minibus for the drive to Port Ellen 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. The crossing, in blue skies and warm sun with a strong breeze, was fairly quiet at first, marked only by a few Kittiwakes until an Arctic Skua came into view and gave chase to one of them. A little later another and slightly larger skua was seen, possibly a Great Skua, but it vanished as suddenly as it had arrived, before the species could be confirmed. Apart from several Gannets and Guillemots, the crossing was otherwise uneventful until we reached the entrance to Loch Tarbert, where there

were a couple of Great Northern Divers, a Black-throated and a single Red-throated Diver, together with a couple of Black Guillemots and a large flock of Eiders sitting on the water.

We drove on to Oban, and made it in good time to catch the evening ferry to Craignure, and arrived on Mull as the sun was setting. By the time we had driven along the narrow roadway west across to the end of Loch Scridain, and then along to Tioran House Hotel it was dark. At Tioran House, set in large secluded gardens above the loch, a warm welcome awaited us as we were shown into our sumptuously luxuriant rooms, before an equally sumptuous evening meal was served in the dining room.

## Day 5

## Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> November

The day dawned 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, some of the group 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 scenic beauty. Loch Scridain was almost mirror-still, and reflected back perfectly the surrounding hillsides with their many shades of green and brown, together with the occasional larch and birch woods shedding the last of their summer leaves. In one of the loch-side fields were several Lapwings together with a late migrant Whimbrel, which should have been well south of here by now, as most winter in West Africa though a few can be found in SW England. We drove along the edge of the loch, and found several Great Northern Divers and a Black-throated Diver in one of the bays near the top of the loch. In the bright autumn sun the view across to the distant mountains was another 'Wow' moment, as the landscape had been transformed by the snow-dusted peaks of Ben More and the accompanying ridges and tops.

Amongst the seaweed covered rocks at the top end of the loch we found our first Otter of the day, swimming and diving amongst the strands of kelp and occasionally coming out onto the rocks to eat, when it matched perfectly the colour of the seaweed and rocks. A little further on we found another Otter swimming and diving in the small river at the head of the loch. It was busily engaged in catching crabs or small fish, as it only took moments of quick chewing on the surface before it dived down again. Both Otters were seen very well by all the group members, for several minutes at a time, with especially good views through the scopes.

We made a brief foray along the main road which overlooks the southern edge of the loch, to get a better view of the mudflats. The tide was rapidly going out, and several more Greenshank, together with some Redshank, were feeding on the newly exposed mud. At one point, we stopped by a small bridge over a narrow stream which flows into the loch. A Dipper was foraging in the stony shallows, as it walked in and out of the stream in search of something for breakfast.

As we retraced our route back along the edge of the loch, we saw another Otter, our third of the morning. It watched us whilst lying prone in the loch close to the edge of the shore, before continuing with its underwater search for something to eat. Leaving the loch behind, we took the road up through an extensive pine and larch plantation, which eventually comes out into the broad open valley of Glen More, between two high shoulders and rugged peaks. This is eagle-country, and we spent some time here waiting and watching for any large raptors that were about, but nothing showed. Tearing ourselves away, we pressed on down the steep slope towards the

seaward entrance to Loch na Keal, with panoramic views out over the Sea of the Hebrides. The scattering of islands, including Staffa, Lunga and the Treshnish Isles, with Coll on the far horizon, were all perfectly lit by the morning sun. 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.

We stopped to look at a large flock of Barnacle Geese feeding in one of the fields at Balnahard, doubtless on their way to join up with others further south on Islay. 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 came upon two more Otters swimming a little way offshore, but these were also rather shy and soon disappeared into the edges of the vast loch. We had much better luck with the next Otter, our 7th of the day, a male which just sat grooming itself, out in the sun on a short grassy headland. It appeared to be almost totally oblivious of our presence (and that of a photographer who had also seen it and was approaching with a huge lens) as we parked close-by. We slowly walked towards it as it continued to roll on the grass, and were within a matter of feet, getting some of the closest ever views of an Otter, with our cameras clicking all the while. Eventually, it decided that enough was enough, and made a dash to the nearby edge of the loch.

Congratulating ourselves, both on our luck and that we were unlikely to get better or certainly closer to a wild Otter, we carried on along the edge of the loch. On a small rise overlooking the loch we stopped for a scan of the water and, amongst several Great Northern Divers, we found a couple more Red-throated Divers, and several Slavonian Grebes in their black and white winter plumage. In one corner at the top end of the loch, a group of three Goosanders swam amongst the larger numbers of Red-breasted Mergansers.

By now it was early afternoon and we hadn't had lunch, so we made a quick dash to the nearest shop (in Salen, a few miles away) where we bought sandwiches and drinks, before returning to the loch. Despite the clear weather, almost perfect conditions, and long scans of the high peaks and crags, we had yet to find any eagles, so the rest of the afternoon was devoted to a search for them. However, apart from several more Buzzards and groups of Ravens causing the occasional sudden stop, nothing large came into view.

## Day 6

**Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> November**

On Mull the weather is rarely the same two days running, but today our luck was still holding, with another clear and sunny dawn, this time with little wind. A pre-breakfast walk down to the loch revealed little new, except a spectacular sunrise over the eastern hills.

Once on the road, we took the track up to the high pass of Glen More and, as yesterday, stopped and scanned the high peaks on either side of the road. The bright sun, blue sky and huge puffy white clouds were perfect weather for soaring birds of prey, and today we were in luck, as it wasn't long before something large was spotted up in the sky. A majestic Golden Eagle was circling up high over the huge peak to the west of the road. Showing off its enormous wingspan and long tail, it continued to soar up against the mountain in the rising thermals, and we watched until it was almost a speck in the sky.

Having had our fill, we drove on around the edge of Loch na Keal, re-tracing yesterday's route but strangely today, despite stopping and looking in all the spots, there was not a sign of any Otters, just to prove how we had been, and how elusive and unpredictable they can be. We drove on around the loch, finding the occasional

Buzzard on roadside telegraph posts, and the flocks of Barnacle and Greylag Geese in the same fields as yesterday. By mid-morning, we had reached the top end of the loch and, in the small pine wood just above a little car park where we had stood and waited yesterday, an adult Sea Eagle was perched in one of the trees. Through the scopes we could see almost every detail of this truly impressive bird: its huge size, fierce frowning look, massive yellow hook-tipped bill and cold pale yellow eyes, which appeared to glare back at us. In fact, there was little sign of any concern, and it seemed oblivious to our presence. It sat serenely gazing out over us and the loch, moving only for an occasional bit of preening. On one occasion the eagle partly opened or spread its wings, showing a bright yellow plastic wing-tag. This was put on when it was a chick in the nest, so that it can be recognised as an individual over subsequent years. As we watched, a second eagle flew out from behind the perched bird. It came overhead, and we could see the huge, broad wingspan and the white tail as it flew out over the loch, before disappearing back the way it had come.

Turning our attention away from the eagles 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. Eventually tearing ourselves away, we moved north along the western side of the island. At Ulva Ferry, we stopped to look for Black Guillemots in the sheltered inlet, but none were on show. However, we were compensated with a fine ringtail Hen Harrier, which crossed the narrow stretch of water from Ulva, and came by in front of us, before heading up and away over the fields. At Achleck, the road turns inland a little way and crosses through a narrow valley, bordered on either side by high domed hills and craggy outcrops. We had stopped to look at a flock of Curlew and several Rock Doves in one of the roadside fields, when suddenly, along one of the slopes at the back of the field, a Golden Eagle was spotted flying towards us. Quickly scrambling out of the minibus, we set up scopes. As we watched this bird, a sub-adult with white patches in the wing and tail, it was joined by two adults, circling and soaring over the hills. Over the course of the next fifteen minutes or so (the time just flew), we had excellent views of these superb eagles, which stayed and put on a very engaging display for us.

By now it was early afternoon, so we pressed on north towards Tobermory. We passed through a more pastoral landscape of fields with one or two Highland cattle, and small stunted, windswept beech woods, shaped by the predominant westerly wind. As we crossed over the higher moorland towards Dervaig, a large female Sparrowhawk flew over in front of us. We stopped at the reservoir in the hills above Tobermory, to look at three Goldeneye, out on the water. In Tobermory, where every house or shop overlooking the harbour seems to be painted a different colour, some of the group opted for lunch in a waterfront cafe, while the rest preferred fish and chips on the quay.

After lunch, we set off along the main road and then back to Loch na Keal. By the time we arrived at the eagle spot there was no sign of anything in the trees. However, we didn't have to wait long before first one then the other Sea Eagle flew in almost overhead, and landed in a large pine tree, only a few metres apart. We spent some time just admiring these truly great birds, as who knew when there would be another chance to see them again. On our way back to Tìroran House, we stopped at the pass below Glen More to check for Golden Eagles, although none were showing. 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. We were grateful for 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 7

Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> November

Dawn arrived with cloudy skies, which soon cleared and changed into another fine and sunny morning. After breakfast, we said our farewells to Tìrوران House, loaded the minibus and set off back along the road to Craignure. Driving along the edge of Loch Scridain, we looked out on all the now-familiar views, and an Otter which was swimming along the edge, just a few feet from the road. A little further on, another otter-shaped rock turned into the real thing. It was sitting on the seaweed at the edge of the loch, busily tucking into something crunchy, and seemed not the least bothered as we tumbled out of the minibus, at what we thought would be our last look at this elusive but spectacular animal.

As we were in good time, we took a short detour down to Grasspoint, on the southern shore of the island, looking across to the mainland. The grazing fields give way slowly to grassy sedge-filled areas and willows, and we were just in time to see a Hen Harrier, which cruised through and away towards some birches, before we had to head back to the ferry terminal. While we were 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 yards offshore. It seemed oblivious to a large ferry arriving at the jetty. The crossing to Oban was fairly uneventful, enlivened only by the occasional Guillemot and Kittiwakes. However, as we neared Oban, a couple of triangular fins of Harbour Porpoises broke the surface of the water.

We were back at Glasgow in good time, where we said our final farewells, and dropped some of the group at the Airport, before reaching Glasgow Central just after 3.30pm. 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 more than successfully achieved. The geese on Islay and eagles and Otters on Mull were highlights which, together with the combination of superb light and breath-taking scenery on both islands, meant that it would be one of the most memorable of holidays.

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## Species List

### Birds

#### Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

Islay: At least 200 in fields around Octofad on 1<sup>st</sup> Nov and a flock of about 60 in fields at Loch Gruinart on 31<sup>st</sup> Oct.

Mull: About 300 in fields at top of Loch na Keal on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Nov.

#### Greenland White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons flavirostris*

Islay: At least 300 mostly on Gruinart Flats and around Loch Gruinart on 31<sup>st</sup> Oct; a flock of about 150 in fields between Bowmore and Port Ellen on 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov.

#### Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis*

Islay: Flocks totalling over 30,000 on various parts of the island on 31<sup>st</sup> Oct and 1<sup>st</sup> Nov.

Mull: at least 75 in fields by the coast road at Balnahard on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Nov.

#### Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*

Islay: Small numbers on Loch Gruinart and Loch Indaal.

#### Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

Islay: single adult on Ardnave Loch and family part of about 5 on Loch Gruinart on 31<sup>st</sup> Oct and an immature in fields with geese at Octofad on 1<sup>st</sup> Nov.

#### Wigeon *Anas penelope*

Islay: At least 30 on Bridgend Flats and fields around Loch Gruinart 31<sup>st</sup> Oct and 1<sup>st</sup> Nov and about 50 on Ardnave Loch on 31<sup>st</sup> Oct.

Mull: 4 on Loch Scridain on 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov.

#### Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Islay: Up to 30 on flooded area around Loch Gruinart on 31<sup>st</sup> Oct and 1<sup>st</sup> Nov.

Mull: Small numbers on Loch Scridain and Loch na Keal on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Nov.

#### Common Teal *Anas crecca*

Islay: At least 250 on flooded area around Loch Gruinart on 31<sup>st</sup> Oct and 1<sup>st</sup> Nov.

Mull: About 10 on mudflats at top of Loch Scridain on 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov.

#### Scaup *Aythya marila*

Islay: about 50 on Loch Indaal on 31<sup>st</sup> Oct.

#### Common Eider *Somateria mollissima*

Islay: Small numbers on Loch Indaal on 31<sup>st</sup> Oct and a pair at Bowmore on 31<sup>st</sup> Oct and 1<sup>st</sup> Nov; about 3-4 on Loch Tarbert on return crossing on 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov.

Mull: Small numbers in Oban harbour on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Nov. Large flock of at least 40 over the mussel beds in Loch Scridain on 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov.

#### Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*

Common in small numbers and seen daily on Islay and Mull; max of at least 25 on Loch na Keal on 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov.

#### Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*

Islay: Single on Loch Indaal from Port Charlotte on 1<sup>st</sup> Nov. Single on Loch Tarbert, between Islay and Kennacraig on 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Mull: Single on Loch na Keal on 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov.

#### Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica*

Islay: Single near the entrance to Loch Tarbert on ferry crossing to Kennacraig on 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov.

Mull: Single in winter plumage on Loch Scridain on 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov.

#### Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*

Islay: 2 at entrance to Loch Tarbert on ferry crossing between Islay and Kennacraig on 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Mull: About 10 in total on both Loch Scridain and Loch na Keal on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>.

- Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*  
Islay: Single on lagoons at Gruinart Flats on 31<sup>st</sup> Oct.
- Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*  
Mull: At least 4 in winter plumage Loch na Keal on 4<sup>th</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> Nov, and several on crossing from Islay to Kennacraig on 2<sup>nd</sup>.
- Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*  
Very common, seen every day.
- Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*  
Fairly common, small numbers seen most days.
- White-tailed Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*  
Mull: A pair sitting in pine trees above the shore of Loch na Keal on 4<sup>th</sup> Nov.
- Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*  
Islay: A ring-tail female/immature in flight over the bay at Port Ellen on 1<sup>st</sup> Nov and a male at Portnahaven later the same day.  
Mull: A ring-tail female/immature at Ulva Ferry on 4<sup>th</sup> Nov and another at Grasspoint on the morning of the 5<sup>th</sup>.
- Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*  
Mull: Single large female in flight near Ulva Ferry on 4<sup>th</sup> Nov and a small male along the road from Salen to Loch na Keal later that day.
- Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*  
Common, seen every day.
- Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*  
Mull: A single in circling and soaring flight over the Glen More through the hills between Loch Scridain and Loch na Keal on the morning of 4<sup>th</sup> Nov, and 3 including two adults and a sub-adult in the hills at Achleck north of Ulva Ferry later the same day.
- Merlin *Falco columbarius*  
Islay: One being mobbed by a Raven over the Oa on 1<sup>st</sup> Nov and another sitting on a telegraph pole along the east side of Loch Gruinart later the same day.
- 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 50 in fields around Loch Gruinart on 1<sup>st</sup> Nov.  
Mull: About 5 in fields along the edge of Loch Scridain on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Nov.
- Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*  
Islay: About 150 on mudflats of Loch Gruinart on 1<sup>st</sup> Nov.  
Mull: About 5 on mudflats of Loch Scridain on 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov.
- Curlew *Numenius arquatus*  
Islay: Up to 50 on flooded fields at Loch Gruinart 31<sup>st</sup> Oct.  
Mull: About 20 on fields and mudflats of Loch Scridain on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Nov.
- Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*  
Mull: Single in fields below Tiroran House on the morning of 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov.

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*

Islay: Up to 25 on the lagoons on Gruinart Flats on 31<sup>st</sup> Oct and 1<sup>st</sup> Nov.

Mull: About 6 on mudflats at top of Loch Scridain on 3<sup>rd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> Nov, and a similar number on Loch na Keal.

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Mull: 4-5 on mudflats at Loch Scridain on morning of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Nov.

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

Islay: At least two on the offshore islands from Portnahaven on 1<sup>st</sup> Nov.

Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*

Islay: At least 30 on the ferry crossing between Islay and Kennacraig on 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov.

Mull: 1-2 on ferry crossing between Craignure and Oban on 5<sup>th</sup> 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.

Common Guillemot *Uria aalge*

Islay: At least 5 between Islay and Kennacraig on 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov.

Mull: About 6 on the ferry crossing between Craignure and Oban on 5<sup>th</sup> Nov.

Black Guillemot *Cepphus grylle*

Islay: 3 on the ferry crossing between Islay and Kennacraig on 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov.

Rock Dove *Columba livia*

Small numbers on both islands but most numerous on Islay.

Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus*

Small numbers on both islands.

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

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

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 31<sup>st</sup> Oct and again on 5<sup>th</sup> Nov.

Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix*

Common and widespread, seen daily.

Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*

Islay: At least 40 on Ardnave Headland on 31<sup>st</sup> Oct.

Raven *Corvus corax*

Common on both islands.

Great Tit *Parus major*

Islay: Fairly common in small numbers.

Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Islay: Singles on Islay on 31<sup>st</sup> Oct and 1<sup>st</sup> Nov.

Mull: Single near the Tioran Hotel on 4<sup>th</sup>.

- Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*  
Islay: Small flock of about 10 on the way to the Oa on 1<sup>st</sup> Nov.
- Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*  
Mull: Single in small stream into Loch Scridain near Pennyghael on 3<sup>rd</sup> 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: At least 50 on The Oa on 1<sup>st</sup> Nov.
- Redwing *Turdus iliacus*  
Islay: Small numbers seen daily; flock of at least 50 on The Oa on 1<sup>st</sup> Nov.  
Mull: Small numbers daily and up to 30 seen along shore of Loch na Keal on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Nov.
- 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 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Nov.
- Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus*  
Mull: Up to 5 around Loch na Keal on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Nov.
- 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 31<sup>st</sup> Oct and 1<sup>st</sup> Nov.  
Mull: 1-2 along the shore of Loch na Keal on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Nov.
- Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*  
Mull: Single along the river into Loch Scridain near Tìroran Hotel 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.
- Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*  
Islay: Common, small flocks seen daily.
- Twite *Carduelis flavirostris*  
Islay: About 50 by the track to Ardnave Point on 31<sup>st</sup> Oct; a flock of at least 100 by a small weedy field on the Oa on 1<sup>st</sup> Nov.
- Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*  
Islay: Single along the track to the monument on the Oa on 1<sup>st</sup> Nov.

Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*  
Mull: Several in bushes around Loch Scridain on 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov.

## Mammals.

Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*  
Small numbers seen on both islands.

Brown Hare *Lepus capensis*  
Mull: 2 in fields at Acleck on 4<sup>th</sup> Nov.

Harbour (Common) Seal *Phoca vitulina*  
Small numbers on both islands, most numerous at Portnahaven, Islay on 1<sup>st</sup> Nov.

Grey Seal *Halichoerus grypus*  
Small numbers on both islands, most numerous on Nave Island on 31<sup>st</sup> Oct and at Portnahaven, Islay on 1<sup>st</sup> Nov.

Otter *Lutra lutra*  
Islay: Single, probably male, in sea in bay at Port Ellen on 1<sup>st</sup> Nov.  
Mull: Three singles, possibly males at the top of Loch Scridain in the early morning of 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov followed by 4 others (including 2 together) later that day along the south side of Loch na Keal. Two (also presumed) males seen on Loch Scridain on the morning of 5<sup>th</sup> Nov and another swimming and diving at the ferry terminal at Craignure.

Red Deer *Cervus elaphus*  
Islay: Small numbers of females with young distantly in fields near Loch Gruinart on 1<sup>st</sup> Nov.  
Mull: Several females with young male in hills and Glen More between Loch Scridain and Loch na Keal on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Nov. Fine male stag with several females by road to Tobermory on 4<sup>th</sup> Nov.

Roe Deer *Capreolus capreolus*  
Up to 4 near Loch Gruinart on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov.

Fallow Deer *Dama dama*  
At least one in woodland at top of Loch na Keal on 4<sup>th</sup> Nov.

Harbour Porpoise *Phocoena phocoena*  
One, possibly two, close to the ferry from Craignure to Oban on morning of 5<sup>th</sup> Nov.