

SUMMER RECORDING
AMBRISBEG DISTRICT — QUIEN, FAD and DHU LOCHS — SCALPSIE and KILMORY SHORES, Etc.

By Mr. D. Shaw, Gamekeeper

RECORDS OF ADULTS with or without young

DATE	6 / May / 1969				10 / June / 1969				23 / July / 1969			
	Drake	Duck	No. of Broods		Drake	Duck	No. of Broods		Drake	Duck	No. of Broods	
MALLARD	67	73	14		34	26	24		19	15	12	
TEAL	17	12	4		7	6	5		5	2	1	
TUFTED DUCK	23	23	-		21	21	-		24	24	7	
EIDER	11	10	-		13	13	6		23	23	8	
MERGANSER ...	9	6	-		3	3	-		7	6	1	
SHELD-DUCK ..	2	2	-		3	2	-		4	4	-	
MUTE SWAN ...	3	3	2		3	3	Died		-	-	-	

BREEDING BIRDS OF THE LITTLE CUMBRAE

By J. A. GIBSON

To the best of my knowledge no list of the breeding birds of the Little Cumbrae has previously been published, so these brief notes are offered in an attempt to fill a gap in our knowledge of Buteshire birds.

I have been visiting the Little Cumbrae regularly for the past twenty-five years, and during this time have been grateful to Mr. Ian Parker and Mr. Peter M. Kay, successively owners of the island, for hospitality. For notes on the birds I am particularly indebted to the late Dr. Charles Cairnie, of Largs, whose knowledge of the Little Cumbrae spanned nearly half a century, also to Mr. P. E. D. Cooper who passed on to me a series of notes made by members of the Scottish Ornithologists' Club on several visits to the island, to many lightkeepers who have regularly sent me notes for nearly twenty years, and, of course, to many individual members of the Buteshire Natural History Society.

By and large, however, these notes are mainly personal. The Little Cumbrae has recently become a popular outing for many natural history organisations, so if anyone can add to this list of breeding birds I shall be very glad to hear from them.

Finally, it is a genuine pleasure to thank all those fishermen and boatmen who have ferried me to the Little Cumbrae over the years, and in particular Mr. John H. Harrison, of Largs, who within recent years has regularly transported me to and from the island, always willingly, usually at very short notice, and invariably at very, very high speed!

FULMAR *Fulmarus glacialis*

Although I have often seen fulmars round the cliffs, at times apparently 'prospecting', I have no evidence that they have ever bred.

CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo*

SHAG *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

One or two pairs of cormorants have nested from time to time on

the miniature sea-cliff on the west side although shags have always far outnumbered them. Recently, however, a change has taken place. In 1968 there were seven pairs of cormorants; in 1969 there were at least thirteen cormorants' nests, and as far as I could see only five pairs of shags.

HERON *Ardea cinerea*

Dr. Cairnie told me that before the war there was a solitary heron's nest in some thick scrub near the top of a scree slope on the west side. I know of no other record.

SHELDUCK *Tadorna tadorna*

Old established nesting species. Several pairs nest.

MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos*

Common.

TEAL *Anas crecca*

A few pairs near the top marshes.

EIDER *Somateria mollissima*

First nested in the late 1920s and has increased steadily since then, as it has all over the Clyde. Now possibly the commonest nesting duck.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER *Mergus serrator*

Known to nest since 1919 and still fairly common.

SPARROW HAWK *Accipiter nisus*

I have never seen a sparrow hawk on the Little Cumbrae, but Dr. Cairnie found several nests in thorn bushes before the war.

BUZZARD *Buteo buteo*

One pair nests pretty regularly. Occasionally another pair is reported.

PEREGRINE *Falco peregrinus*

Known to nest for well over fifty years and still a pair present, despite much persecution in the past. Young birds were seen in 1969.

KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus*

Kestrels are often seen, although I have never found a nest. Mr. Parker said a pair nested occasionally.

RED GROUSE *Lagopus lagopus*

Fluctuates a lot, but still a good few birds. Before the war shooting was regular.

BLACK GROUSE *Lyrurus tetrix*

Used to nest, but greatly decreased. Not quite extinct, however; I saw one in 1968. Further information would be desirable.

PARTRIDGE *Perdix perdix*

A few, but not common.

PHEASANT *Phasianus colchicus*

Very common. Regularly shot.

CORNCRAKE *Crex crex*

Used to nest here in the 1930s. I heard one in 1947 but no later record known to me.

MOORHEN *Gallinula chloropus*

One or two pairs nest.

OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ostralegus*

Nests commonly all round the shore, and inland. I have seen a nest literally on the summit of the island.

RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius hiaticula*

Common.

LAPWING *Vanellus vanellus*

Fairly common.

DUNLIN *Calidris alpina*

Dr. Cairnie saw one that had been shot in summer before the war. May nest. I have seen a few birds, but no proof of breeding.

REDSHANK *Tringa totanus*

Fairly common, but has decreased within recent years.

COMMON SANDPIPER *Tringa hypoleucos*

Fairly common.

CURLEW *Numenius arquata*

A few pairs nest on the hill.

WOODCOCK *Scolopax ruficollis*

A few pairs nest. Woodcock shooting before the war used to be 'the best sport in the district' (Dr. Cairnie).

SNIPES *Gallinago gallinago*

Fairly common.

BLACK-HEADED GULL *Larus ridibundus*

A small colony at the lochann.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus fuscus*

Common. Mainly to the north and west.

HERRING GULL *Larus argentatus*

Very common. Nests widely, but the biggest concentration is to the south and west.

GREATTER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus marinus*

I have known the greater black-backed to nest since 1946. Dr. Cairnie said it did not nest before the war. Now a good many pairs and increasing.

COMMON GULL *Larus canus*

Two small colonies on the moor.

KITTIWAKE *Rissa tridactyla*

The Third Statutebook Account (1902) says 'Kittiwakes have nested for years in one or two places on the hills'. This is a mistake for the common gull. The kittiwake is a cliff nester which does not nest on the Little Cumbrae, even on the miniature sea cliff on the west. If this statement had been true the Little Cumbrae would have been

one of the few places in the country where all the British-breeding gulls nested.

SANDWICH TERN *Sterna sandvicensis*

From 1936 to 1939 Dr. Cairnie saw sandwich terns on the point along from the Castle. Birds were present all summer, but he was never able to find proof of breeding.

COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo*

Common nesting species.

ARCTIC TERN *Sterna paradisea*

Numbers fluctuate a bit, but a few nests most years.

RAZORBILL *Alca torda*

GUILLEMOT *Uria aalge*

It is worth recording that razorbills and guillemots do not nest on the Little Cumbrae, because they have occasionally been incorrectly reported as doing so. Auks are often seen on the surrounding seas and I have seen them roosting on the miniature sea-cliff, but to the best of my knowledge no eggs or young have ever been found.

BLACK GUILLEMOT *Cepphus grylle*

This is an old established breeding site of the black guillemot. Several pairs nest but there has been no obvious increase over the years. In this respect the Little Cumbrae differs from the other Clyde colonies, nearly all of which have recently shown substantial increases.

WOOD PIGEON *Columba palumbus*

Fairly common. Great increase during past twenty years.

ROCK DOVE *Columba livia*

Common, and apparently pure-bred birds.

CUCKOO *Cuculus canorus*

Common.

BARN OWL *Tyto alba*

Dr. Cairnie knew a cliff where a pair of barn owls had nested 'as long as he could remember'. I have seen a barn owl but can not prove nesting at present.

NIGHTJAR *Caprimulgus europaeus*

Used to be fairly common before the war. Still a pair or two, but an obvious decrease.

SWIFT *Apus apus*

A few pairs nest in the Castle.

SKYLARK *Alauda arvensis*

Fairly common on the hill.

SAND MARTIN *Riparia riparia*

A small colony in the south cliffs.

SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*

A few pairs.

HOUSE MARTIN *Delichon urbica*

A few pairs.

MEADOW PIPIT *Anthus pratensis*

Common.

ROCK PIPIT *Anthus spinoletta*

Common.

GREY WAGTAIL *Motacilla cinerea*

One or two pairs.

PIED WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba*

Fairly common.

WREN *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Fairly common.

HEDGE SPARROW *Prunella modularis*

A few pairs.

SEDGE WARBLER *Acrocephalus schænobænus*

One or two pairs near the marshes, but not common.

WHITETHROAT *Sylvia communis*

Fairly common.

WILLOW WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Common.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa striata*

I have seen spotted flycatchers several times in summer, but have no proof of breeding.

WHINCHAT *Sasicola rubetra*

Common.

STONECHAT *Sasicola torquata*

A few pairs.

WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oenanthe*

Common on the hills.

ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula*

Fairly common near habitation.

RING OUZEL *Turdus torquatus*

Dr. Cairnie saw ring ouzels several times in the late 1930s, and 'presumed breeding'. I have never seen one.

BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula*

Common.

SONG THRUSH *Turdus philomelos*

Not nearly so common as the blackbird.

LONG-TAILED TIT *Aegithales caudatus*

One or two pairs nest. I have seen several family parties.

BLUE TIT *Parus caeruleus*

One or two pairs.

CORN BUNTING *Emberiza calandra*

Dr. Cairnie knew it as common, and I used to see a pair or two

each year, but I haven't seen one since 1951.

YELLOW BUNTING *Emberiza citrinella*

Fairly common.

REED BUNTING *Emberiza schoeniclus*

A few pairs.

CHAFFINCH *Fringilla caelebs*

Common.

GREENFINCH *Carduelis chloris*

A few pairs.

TWITE *Acanthis flavirostris*

Several pairs nest.

LINNET *Acanthis cannabina*

Surprisingly common, and also very common on adjoining Great Cumbrae. The linnet is possibly commoner here than anywhere else in the Clyde area.

REDPOLL *Acanthis flammea*

A few pairs.

HOUSE SPARROW *Passer domesticus*

Common near habitation.

STARLING *Sturnus vulgaris*

Common, breeding in many of the cliffs.

JACKDAW *Corvus monedula*

Very common.

CARRION/HOODED CROW *Corvus corone*

Fairly common. Mostly 'hybrids', but some apparently pure-bred hoodies.

RAVEN *Corvus corax*

One pair nests regularly; possibly a second.