

Warden: Simon Franks

In April and May there were regular sightings of Greylag Geese and Red Breasted Mergansers on the east side of the island. Here to, in the last week of April, the first Bluebells were also in flower. Throughout May the Sea Thrift flowered all along the shoreline and by the beginning of June the Dog Roses and Foxgloves were coming into bloom.

At the end of April and the beginning of May a couple of tours were able to get very close sightings of Otters around the lighthouse. On one occasion an Otter swam around under the gangway of the lighthouse (while people were on it!) for about 10 minutes. 4 days later a large Otter came out on to the rocks just north of the lighthouse after feeding for about 10 minutes in the sea. This last sighting was seen by 10 people on a tour. As the wind was blowing from the Otter towards the people, the Otter was unaware of the human presence, even though they were only 5-10 metres away.

There was a sighting of a Pine Marten one evening in May, investigating the rocks near the lighthouse. This was only the second sighting of a Pine Marten on the island, although there were many droppings (skats) seen around the island last year. The small number of skats found this year may be because there have been very few

Voles

on the island, although they have been heard squeaking in the undergrowth from time to time, especially in August and September.

In May a small flock of Starling

were feeding on the island. Only this year the large

In June there were a number of visits by juvenile birds and their parents. The area up from the slipway has quite a number of Scots Thistles growing in it and these attracted a number of Bullfinches including a male, female and a juvenile for a period of a couple of weeks. There were also a pair of Pied Wagtails with a juvenile feeding around the path coming up from the slipway. Small numbers of Greenfinches and Siskens were feeding around birch trees on the south east side of the island during the first couple of weeks of July.

From the end of June to the middle of July there were regular sightings of a mother Otter with two cubs, mainly on the south east side of the island. They were often seen feeding on the seaweed in the bay beneath the bothy. On one occasion a couple of Hoodie Crows were flying down and stealing scraps of food while the otters were feeding. During the last few sightings towards the middle of July, the cubs were becoming more independent, spending time away from the mother. In August I often saw a young Otter around the island, which may have been one of the cubs that had moved away from its mother.

A pair of Whitethroats had been seen, always on the south east side of island, and I am still seeing them around in September. Over the summer a range of different butterflies and moths appeared. Small White, Small Blue and Small Tortoiseshell Butterflies have been seen from the end of April onwards. In July a few pairs of 6 spotted Burnet Moths were identified, while the end of August and into September brought the occasional sighting of

Magpie Moths

.

There have been only a couple of Porpoise sightings this year, a marked difference from 2000 when there were sightings every few weeks. By the end of August there were up to 40 Harbour Seals

around the skerries north of Eilean Bàn and on the shore of Eilean Mhal. The seals have returned to this area in July after an absence of about 3 months.

Gannets

were occasionally spotted around the skerries north of Eilean Bàn but, unlike last year, these sightings were not associated with bad weather. Finally, as we move into autumn, the island is being visited by small

flocks of Tree and Rock Pipits

as well as

Sparrows

and a few

Robins

.