

# NEWSLETTER 28 - JANUARY 2000

## PROGRAMME

- 8th February    The Geology of Lochalsh  
Peter MacKenna  
Kirkton Church Hall at 8.00pm
- 24th March     AGM and Social Evening  
Plockton Village Hall at 7.30pm
- 28th April     Greece in Flower  
Geoffrey Chaytor  
Kirkton Church Hall at 8.00pm

## THE WEATHER IN 1999

Duncan Glen-Riddell has again provided us with details of his weather readings at Reraig House for which we are extremely grateful. He has been keeping records for 15 years and so it is now possible to compare annual figures with the 15 year averages at Reraig rather than with the 30 year averages from Achmore which he has used previously. The 1985 - 1999 figures show some remarkable variations making it difficult to determine any trends. The average annual rainfall at Reraig over this 15 year period was 1953mm (76.89ins) compared with 1620mm (63.78ins) at Achmore from 1951 to 1981. Does this suggest a significant increase in annual rainfall between the two periods or not? One would suspect that Achmore would generally be wetter than Balmacara being on higher ground but perhaps this is not the case: it is a pity that the two sets of figures do not overlap to clarify this point. The total rainfall for 1999 was 2336mm (91.96ins) despite the fine hot weather in late July and August. However this was not the wettest year of the 15 as 1989 (94.02ins), 1990 (100.50ins) and 1992 (95.59ins) were all wetter. The driest year was 1996 with 1559mm (61.38ins). The wide variations in any one month can be highlighted as follows:-

January rainfall varied between 36mm in 1985 and 459mm in 1989.  
February rainfall varied between 0mm in 1986 and 456mm in 1997.  
August rainfall varied between 57mm in 1995 and 287mm in 1989.  
November rainfall varied between 97mm in 1993 and 389mm in 1986.

February 1986 was the only month in which no precipitation was recorded.

The next two driest months were May 1991 with 27mm and December 1995 with 28mm. Strange that two of the driest months should be a February and a December, both months which averaged over 200mm from 1985 to 1999.

The two warmest months were July and August 1995 with average maximum temperatures of 21.90 and 22.30 degrees Celcius. The coldest month was, perhaps predictably, also the driest month i.e. February 1986 with an average minimum temperature of -2.07 degrees Celcius.

The 1999 summary is shown below. Figures in brackets show the 15 year averages.

	Rainfall		Temperature (Celcius)	
	mm	ins	ave max	ave min
January	329	12.95 (8.70)	7.4 (7.1)	2.1 (1.6)
February	175	6.89 (7.95)	7.7 (7.7)	1.4 (1.5)
March	230	9.06 (8.58)	10.1 (9.0)	2.9 (2.5)
April	148	5.82 (4.41)	13.0 (11.1)	4.3 (3.5)
May	136	5.35 (3.43)	15.5 (14.6)	6.6 (5.9)
June	130	5.12 (3.50)	16.4 (16.1)	7.5 (7.8)
July	68	2.68 (4.41)	18.7 (17.4)	9.7 (9.7)
August	83	3.27 (5.39)	19.7 (17.1)	9.6 (9.6)
September	223	8.78 (6.14)	17.6 (15.3)	9.6 (7.7)
October	175	6.89 (7.72)	14.3 (12.3)	6.3 (5.9)
November	336	13.23 (8.07)	10.3 (9.3)	4.0 (3.4)
December	303	11.93 (8.54)	7.2 (7.5)	0.4 (1.9)
Total	2336	91.96 (76.89)		

The most rainfall recorded on any one day in 1999 was 60mm (2.36ins) on 4th November. The highest temperature recorded in 1999 was 29 degrees on 1st, 3rd and 4th August, the lowest was -5 degrees on 9th February and 15th December.

**AUTUMN/WINTER 1999 - WILDLIFE REPORTS** (Compiled by Brian Neath 01599 555341)

Probably the most unexpected record during this period was that of a House Martin at Killilan on 2nd November. My previous latest sighting was on 20th September 1993, a good six weeks difference. I heard of no late Swallows in 1999, my own latest were at Duirinish on 24th September. (Late Swallows are often seen in October and were recorded during November in 1990 and 1998). Dippers, perhaps juvenile birds, move down to the lower reaches of burns and rivers for the winter months. They can be seen close to or even on the shore at Portneora, Erbusaig, Balmacara, Kirkton, Nostie, Sallachy, Shiel Bridge, Letterfearn and Glenelg and were present at most if not all of these localities between October and December.

What appeared to be an immature Long-tailed Duck was taken to Jean and Brian Saville by local children in October. It did not seem to be injured in any way and was released in Glenelg Bay where it dived quite happily in the shallow water, foraging amongst the gravel. Why such a wild bird from northern latitudes should allow itself to be picked up is something of a puzzle but it was a pleasant incident well captured on the numerous photographs taken by Jean.

A Water Rail turned up in Jean and Luke Camilli's garden at Ratagan during the festive season. This is a secretive bird of lowland marshes and reed-beds and not the sort of species one would expect to find in the north-west Highlands. However there were 6 records between 1989 and 1995 in the Ardelve/Nostie/Kirkton area, mostly in November or December, but this is the first "garden" Water Rail I have heard of. It is thought that many of the Water Rails found in Scotland in winter outside of their known breeding sites are immigrants from Scandinavia and Europe.

Other interesting sightings included my only Merlin of the year at Kirkton on 5th October, a Hen Harrier at Dubh-aird on 11th October (Hubert Hunton), an exceptional flock of 160 Mallard at Kishorn on 19th November, a solitary Waxwing on Carr Brae on 4th December, 2 Barn Owls high up in Glen Shiel on 16th December (Jean and Brian Saville) and the usual scattering of Blackcaps at garden bird tables.









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