

## NEWSLETTER 31 - NOVEMBER 2000

### POSTPONED MEETING

The talk by Allan Aitken will now be held on 24th November at Kirkton Church Hall commencing at 8.00pm. The talk is entitled "This is Beneath You - A Light-hearted Look at Volcanoes".

### RECENT PUBLICATIONS

**Highland Bird Report for 1998.** This is now available from Colin Crooke, c/o RSPB North Scotland Office, Etive House, Beechwood Park, Inverness, IV2 3BW. The price is £6.00 which includes £1.00 for postage. The report follows the format of the 1997 report but has an extra 30 pages. Cheques should be made payable to Colin Crooke.

**Birdwatching Sites in the Highlands.** Published by the RSPB Highland Members' Group. No sites in Skye or Lochalsh are listed but it is a very useful guide for those of us who live here when we visit other parts of the Highlands. Detailed descriptions are given on how to get to the best birdwatching sites with an indication of what you are likely to see at different times of the year. It also suggests which sites can be combined on the same outing. It can be obtained from the RSPB offices in Broadford and Inverness for a donation of £2.50.

**25 Walks in Skye and Kintail by Hamish Brown.** Published by Mercat Press at £8.99. This is a nice glossy up-to-date walks book for the area and from my own experience of some of the walks in Lochalsh is accurate and easy to follow. There is some overlap with the Kintail Mountain Rescue Team's "Where to Walk" booklet but it is in a more durable form and contains useful additional information as well as a number of local myths and legends. 16 of the walks are on Skye.

**Torridon, the Nature of the Place by Chris Lowe.** Published by Wester Ross Net, Shieldaig at £14.95.

A highly ambitious publication covering everything from the geology, flora and wildlife to the history and archaeology of this neighbouring part of Wester Ross, including Applecross, and all written in a very readable style. (Contributed by Roger Cottis)

### FIELD CLUB'S DONATION TO THE NATIONAL TRUST FOR SCOTLAND

At the last AGM there was a discussion about what we should do with our healthy bank balance. One of the suggestions was that we should discuss with the NTS whether we could contribute to an appropriate local project. Following consultation with Ian Turnbull, the Trust's representative at Balmacara, the committee decided to pay for a telescope which the Trust requires for its ambitious plans to carry out detailed surveys of the wildlife of the Balmacara and Kintail Estates. In his letter of thanks Ian Turnbull says "We are very grateful to the South West Ross Field Club for the donation for an item of equipment that we would not have been able to afford out of our normal revenue budget."

### SUMMER/EARLY AUTUMN 2000 - WILDLIFE REPORTS (Compiled by Brian Neath 01599 555341)

Many thanks to those who already phone through their observations but more contributors would be appreciated for a more comprehensive report.

Probably the most exciting occurrence during this period was the re-appearance of two Northern Bottlenose Whales in the first week of September. There were several scattered sightings in Loch Alsh and Loch Duich but there was no repeat of the crowd-pleasing performances given by the whales in Broadford Bay in August/September 1998. Nevertheless it was an amazing sight to see these huge marine mammals from the Clachan Duich Causeway, however briefly. They seemed even more out of place there than off the Co-op car park in Broadford !

Those living close to the shore have a distinct advantage in obtaining regular sightings of sea mammals and birds. Jean and Luke Camilli were amongst the lucky few who saw the whales and have also had many recent sightings of Otters. Earlier in the year Moira and Adrian Quinn saw 2 Red-throated Divers from their house overlooking Loch Long and the very next day John Holt reported a Black-throated Diver below his house at Avernish. Josephine and Roy Dean have a high-tide wader roost directly in view from their windows overlooking Loch Carron and are able to make regular counts of Oystercatchers, Ringed Plovers, Curlews and Turnstones without leaving the house. The autumn wader flock at the mouth of Balmacara Burn wasn't quite so exciting as last year but there were 48 Ringed Plover, 11 Turnstones and 2 Dunlin there on 15th September as well as a late Spotted Flycatcher flycatching from boulders in the burn.

Low-flying Golden Eagles were a regular sight between Nostie and Auchtertyre from late August and through September and October with up to 3 birds present including a young bird. I can't help wondering if there are any other stretches of road as busy as this length of the A87 from which Golden Eagles can be seen at such a low level.

It has been one of my poorest years for Goldfinch sightings so it was a pleasant surprise to find a flock of 22 in Dornie on 28th October, increasing to about 35 on 30th. This was an unusually large flock for the area so I was interested to hear that Carol and Tom Weale had also seen a large flock at Portneora at about the same time. Has anyone else come across flocks of this beautiful bird during the autumn? Tom also mentioned that he had seen Great Skuas over the Crowlins in August and wondered if they might have bred there. Their numbers have increased in Sutherland in recent years so some extension of range is possible. Such an increase could lead to more sightings along our coastline where surprisingly few are reported at present.

My total number of butterfly records for 2000 was 145 and included 15 species. This is very similar to the figure for 1999 but well below the totals for 1996 and 1997. There were some exceptionally early sightings, notably Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary on 12th May, Dark Green Fritillary on 26th June and Small Heath on 22nd May. It was another exceptional year for Red Admirals with a few seen in June and July and then large numbers during September and October. The first butterfly I have ever seen in November flew through our garden on 7th and was almost certainly a Red Admiral. The only other numerous species were Green-veined White, Speckled Wood and Scotch Argus. Scotch Argus were particularly numerous with over 50 in a small area at Nostie on 1st August and 40 in an even smaller area on Carr Brae where I have never seen more than 13 before on 13th August. A further influx of Painted Ladies occurred during September. 3 widely scattered individuals were seen between the 14th and 19th at Carr Brae, Balmacara and Dubh-aird.