



South West Ross Field Club

NEWSLETTER 75 JANUARY 2012

JOSEPHINE DEAN

It is with great sadness that we have to report that Josephine Dean died suddenly at her home in Lochcarron on New Year's Eve. She and her husband Roy, who died in 2004, had been stalwarts of the Field Club since moving to Lochcarron. She was responsible for encouraging many individuals from the Lochcarron area to become members of the Field Club and others to attend some of our meetings. Readers of our newsletters will be very familiar with her name as she contributed numerous interesting wildlife sightings, many of which were in or seen from her garden in Church Street. She also invariably helped out in the kitchen at our indoor meetings at Kirkton Church Hall. Josephine and Roy wrote the bird notes for the Lochcarron magazine, An Carranach, and Josephine had only recently handed over the reins for this during 2011. She still volunteered on the gate at Attadale Gardens and was planning to continue in 2012. She will be sadly missed by the Lochcarron community and the Howard Doris Centre in particular as well as all her friends in Lochalsh and Skye.

THE WEATHER AT RERAIG IN 2011

It will come as no surprise to members to learn that 2011 was one of the wettest years at Reraig since records began in 1985. However, as usual, the statistics throw up some surprising facts. For example January, February, March, June, July and August all recorded less rainfall than the average to date whilst nine years during the period 1985 to 2010 recorded more rainy days than the 235 days in 2011. It should be born in mind though that as little as one millimetre of rain during 24 hours counts as a rainy day. The total rainfall during 2011 was 2442mm, only the year 1990 exceeding this with 2553mm. Other years in which rainfall exceeded 2300mm were 1989 (2388mm), 1999 (2336mm) and 2004 (2364mm). The wettest months during 2011 were September with 323mm and December with 382mm. There are nine months on record as having more than 382 mm of rain four of which had over 400mm – January 1989 (459mm), March 1990 (458mm), February 1991 (456mm) and February 1990 (406mm).

	Rainfall mm	Temperature (Celsius) ave max	ave min
January	195 (240)	7.32 (7.85)	0.94 (1.83)
February	166 (183)	9.46 (8.49)	2.07 (1.46)
March	109 (191)	10.26 (10.03)	2.77 (2.35)
April	146 (112)	15.37 (12.56)	5.77 (3.72)
May	280 (103)	15.81 (15.77)	9.07 (6.11)
June	85 (98)	17.63 (17.55)	7.00 (8.06)
July	70 (107)	20.65 (18.84)	8.74 (9.92)
August	130 (139)	18.16 (18.58)	8.81 (9.70)
September	323 (167)	17.30 (16.71)	10.87 (8.21)
October	275 (210)	14.10 (13.59)	6.97 (6.16)
November	281 (213)	13.67 (10.28)	5.27 (3.57)
December	382 (212)	7.90 (7.95)	1.43 (1.65)
Total	2442 (1968)		

The figures in brackets are the average figures to date from 1985 to 2011.

Despite the amount of rainfall and the lower than average minimum temperatures in June, July and August the overall average daily maximum and minimum temperatures for the year continued the general upward trend that was interrupted in 2010. The average daily maximum for the year increased to 13.97 (from 11.03 in 1985) and the average daily minimum increased to 5.81 (from 4.66 in 1985).

The wettest day of the year was 17th November with 51mm. Between 16th November and 31st December a total of 635mm of rain was recorded, more than a quarter of the total for the year. The lowest temperature recorded was -5 degrees Celsius on both the 10th and 11th January. The highest temperature of the year was 26 degrees Celsius on 4th July while 25 degrees was recorded on 7th May and 27th July.

Glenys MacMillan at Achnagart, Glen Shiel also keeps regular weather records. If we think that 2442mm was an awful lot of rain how do we describe the 3870mm recorded at Achnagart during 2011? Interestingly January was the wettest month in Glen Shiel rather than December with 428mm recorded.

A STRANDED KITTIWAKE

Drumbuie seems to be a hot spot for seabirds getting stranded during gales. Following on from the Manx Shearwaters found there in October 2010 an immature Kittiwake was found by Marie and Vincent Finlayson during autumn 2011. The identification of a bird in the hand is often more tricky than a bird in its natural flight or perched and this was the case with this individual. Most bird guides are rather poor at describing juvenile birds. This bird had a black bill and brownish coloured legs and none of the books we looked at showed the bill and leg colours of immature Kittiwakes, being more concerned with the wing pattern in flight. The adults have yellow bills and black legs but these colours only seem to develop as the birds mature. No other gull species fitted the description of this bird so in consultation with Bob McMillan it was decided that the bird must have been a Kittiwake. It was clearly exhausted and was kept indoors overnight. Luckily by the morning it had recovered and was able to fly out to sea.

OTHER WILDLIFE REPORTS

The Common Sandpiper is a summer visitor to the Highlands although a few do winter in southern Britain. It was surprising therefore for one to appear at the Kyleakin Obbe during January, the first known record of wintering in Skye and Lochalsh.

Apparently it is a good winter for Iceland and Glaucous Gulls with many seen on Skye and at Mallaig. Unusually they include a good proportion of adult birds which are less often seen than immatures. The only Lochalsh sighting that I am aware of so far is of an immature bird which has been present around the Kyle pier area for several weeks. Both species stand out from the more common gulls by the complete lack of any black on the wings.

One or two Slavonian Grebes sometimes winter around the coast between Drumbuie and Plockton but one in Loch Duich near Eilean Donan on 15th January followed by another at the Plock of Kyle the next day were the first I have seen at those sites.

A Treecreeper feeding on peanuts? Sounds hard to believe but that is what has started happening in our garden on Carr Brae. It started by eating crumbs on the ground under the feeders but on 24th January it was seen twice on a peanut feeder. It carried a piece of nut onto a tree to eat, albeit with some difficulty, not having learned from the tits how to hold the nut with its feet.



Imm. Kittiwake at Drumbuie (M & V Finlayson)



Imm. Glaucous Gull (Brian Neath)

