

The newsletter for BTO members and volunteers in Lewis & Harris

July 2020

Welcome

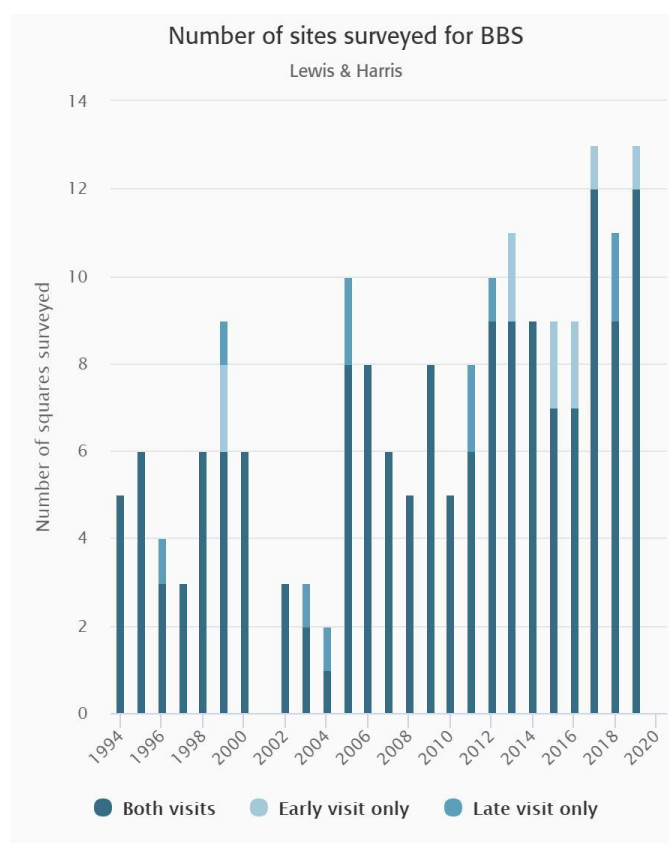
We hope this newsletter finds you in good health. It has been a challenging time for everyone with the covid-19 virus, but we hope you have been able to enjoy the wildlife close to home. Fieldwork for surveys has been severely affected this spring, though the recent relaxation in restrictions in Scotland may have allowed some of you to carry out surveys if they are close to home. You can keep up to date with covid-19 advice from BTO here: <https://www.bto.org/community/news/202006-bto-and-covid-19>

This newsletter brings news that your Regional Representative, Chris Reynolds, has decided to step down from the role after around thirty years. Chris has done an excellent job over those years, and I'm sure you'll join me in wishing Chris well for the future. If you are interested in taking on the role of Regional Representative, or helping the Regional Network team in Lewis & Harris in any way, please contact Ben Darvill at BTO Scotland (Email: ben.darvill@bto.org).

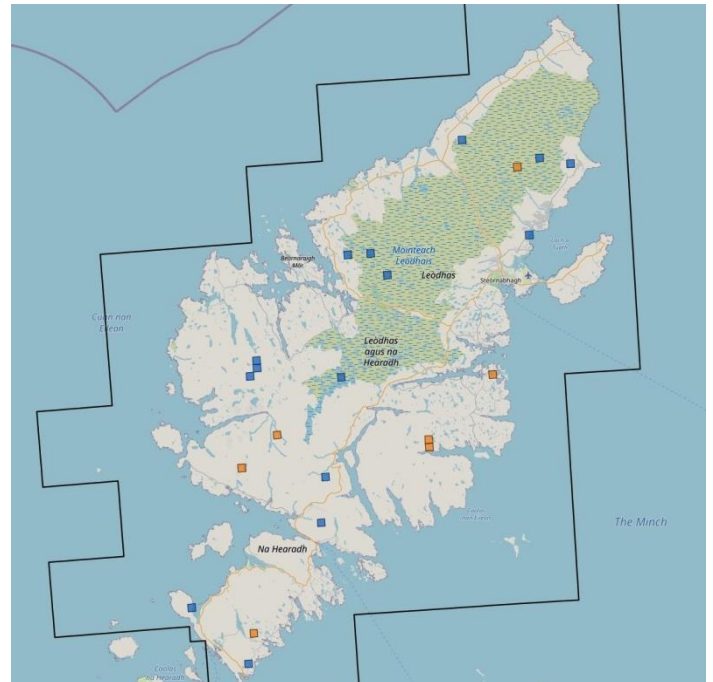
In this newsletter, we provide updates on the key surveys and schemes at BTO, and would like to take the opportunity to thank you for all the support you have given Chris, and the BTO.

Breeding Bird Survey

Many thanks to the volunteers that take part in the Breeding Bird Survey – not an easy task on Lewis & Harris! It's great that the number of squares covered has increased in recent years, with 13 covered in 2017 and 2019. As well as recording birds, most volunteers also record mammals, and in 2019, Red Deer was recorded on five squares, and Rabbit on two squares.



The map shows the location of the BBS squares – blue are allocated squares, and orange available. There are seven available squares, shown in orange on the map below. If you're feeling intrepid and interested in taking on a BBS square, please contact Sarah Harris at BTO (Email: sarah.harris@bto.org).

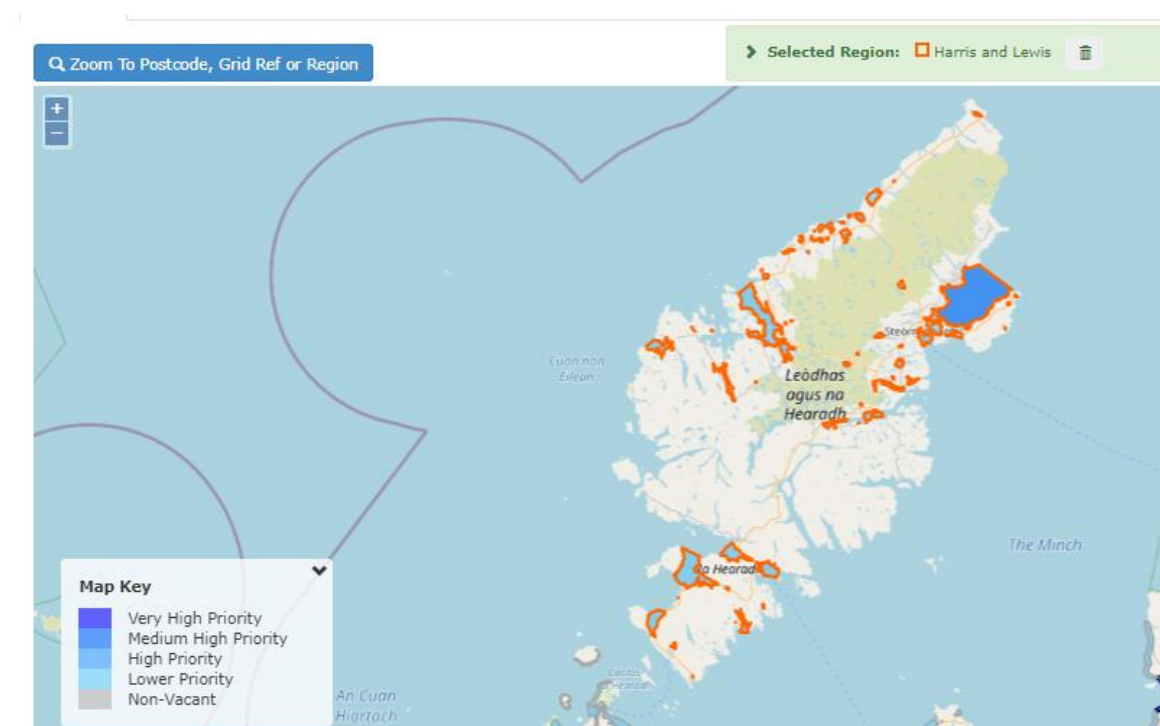


Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS)

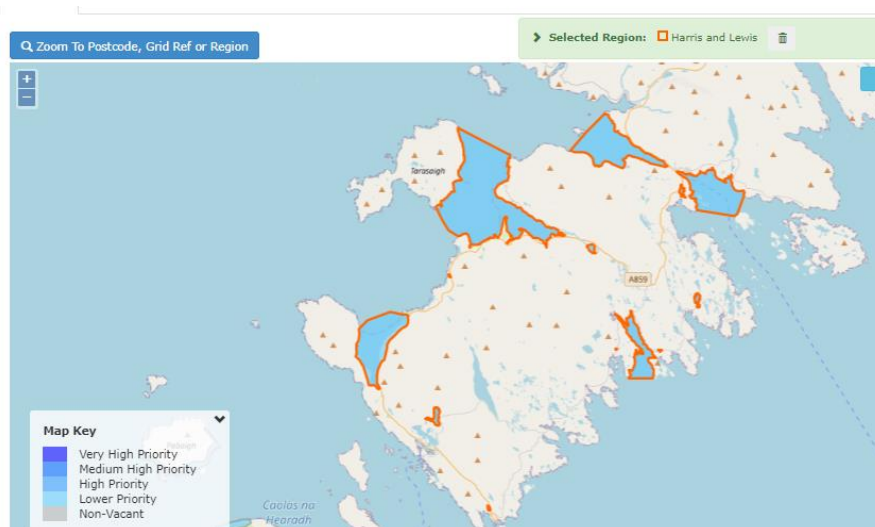
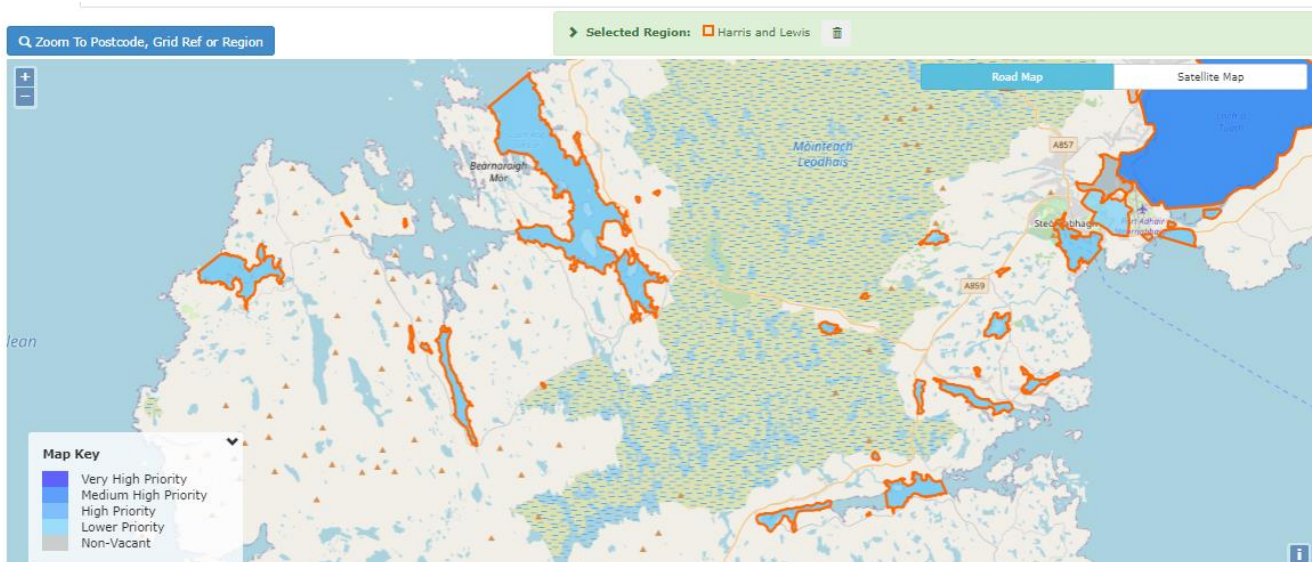
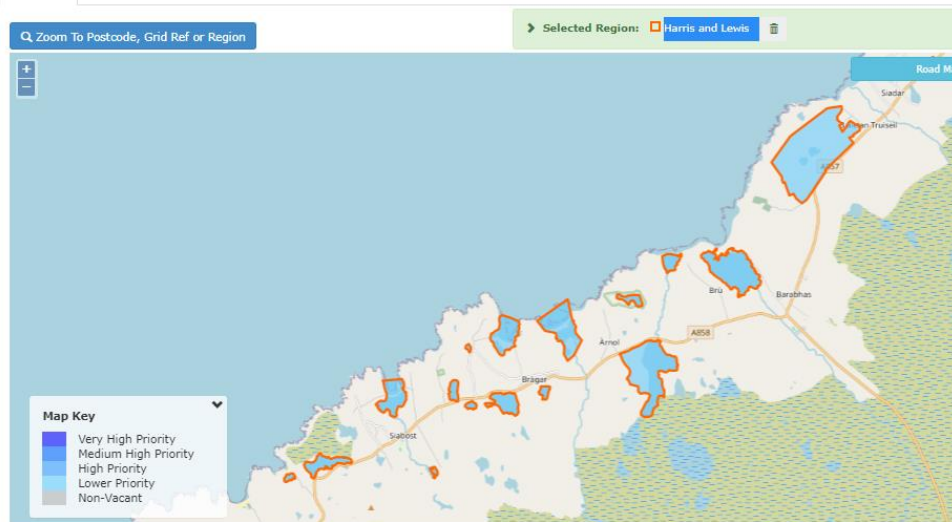
WeBS surveyors monitor the UK's internationally important non-breeding waterbirds. Following a tradition begun in 1947, wetland sites are counted once per month, providing data for population and trends in abundance and distribution. The network of sites legally protected for their importance to wintering waterbirds depends fundamentally on the WeBS counts. There are many vacant sites on Lewis & Harris and it would be great if we could achieve coverage at some of these sites. Have a look at the WeBS 'Vacant Sites Tool' to see where the available sites are:

<https://app.bto.org/websonline/sites/vacant/vacant-sites.jsp#region=218>

There is a Medium High Priority site at Melbost Sands and Broad Bay (Lewis), shown on the map below.



There are also many Lower Priority sites available, including some close to roads, and others much more of a challenge!



If you are interested in taking on any of these WeBS sites, please contact Yvonne Benting, the WeBS Regional Organiser (Email: uistbto@gmail.com)

Other surveys

Heronries

There are six Heronries currently allocated to volunteers on Lewis (none on Harris), and records were submitted for three sites in 2018, though no information received for 2019, or 2020 so far. Very many thanks to the volunteers who monitor heronries. If you are currently allocated a site but can no longer visit, please let us know and we can make the sites available again. There are five sites available to cover on Lewis: Croc Ard na Muilne, Cromor, Laxay, Loch Brollum, Loch Claidh and Opposite Enaclete, Little Loch Roag. If you are interested in taking on a site, please contact Ian Woodward at BTO (Email: ian.woodward@bto.org). Heronries on Lewis tend to contain a small number of nests, around 1-9 nests, so if you see a Grey Heron in the breeding season, in suitable breeding habitat, please look carefully to see if you can see any nests. We're interested to hear about colonies of just one! You can read more about the 2019 season here: <https://www.bto.org/sites/default/files/heronries-census-summary-2019.pdf>

Nest Record Scheme

Nest recording is of great value and the BTO's scheme is the place to record the data. My nest box addition this year was more successful and a pair of Blue Tits raised a brood. If you find any nests, especially those for which you can follow through from laying to fledging, the BTO scheme would like the results (<https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/nrs> or <https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/nbc>).

Garden BirdWatch

There are 26 Garden BirdWatch participants in the Western Isles. If you enjoy watching the birds in your garden, why not join GBW for free at www.bto.org/gbw



Ringing & Nest recording

The ringing and nest record totals for 2019 are just out. You can find the Nest Record totals for the Western Isles here: <https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/nrs/publications/online-nesting-reports>

Nest Record Totals for Western Isles in 2019 sorted by Species					
Red-throated Diver	7	Common Gull	14	Raven	1
Shag	145	Herring Gull	3	Skylark	1
Golden Eagle	4	Guillemot	2	Starling	1
Hen Harrier	5	Puffin	34	Wheatear	2
Buzzard	1	Rock Dove	1	Meadow Pipit	2
Oystercatcher	8	Peregrine	2	Rock Pipit	3
Lapwing	1		.		.
Total Number of Records submitted: 237					

The ringing totals for the Outer Hebrides for 2019 are found here: <https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/ringing/publications/online-ringing-reports>

Species	Pullus	Juvenile	Adult	Unaged	2019 Total	Total	Retrap	Recovery	More
Greylag Goose <i>Anser anser</i>	1	0	0	0	1	309	0	0	
Red-throated Diver <i>Gavia stellata</i>	5	0	0	0	5	75	0	0	
Storm Petrel <i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>	0	0	154	0	154	8,301	1	4	→
Leach's Petrel <i>Oceanodroma leucorhoa</i>	6	2	6	0	14	26	1	0	
Fulmar <i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>	1	0	1	0	2	1,077	0	0	
Manx Shearwater <i>Puffinus puffinus</i>	0	1	1	0	2	4,916	0	0	
Gannet <i>Morus bassanus</i>	229	0	1	0	230	432	0	0	
Shag <i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	319	0	78	0	397	3,241	62	2	→
Golden Eagle <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	14	0	0	0	14	58	0	2	→
Hen Harrier <i>Circus cyaneus</i>	11	0	0	0	11	235	0	0	
White-tailed Eagle <i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	20	0	0	0	20	66	0	1	→
Buzzard <i>Buteo buteo</i>	2	0	0	0	2	394	0	0	
Oystercatcher <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	28	0	0	0	28	1,445	0	0	
Lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	156	0	0	0	156	1,907	0	1	→
Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	18	0	0	0	18	789	0	0	
Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i>	0	0	0	0	0	308	0	1	→
Sanderling <i>Calidris alba</i>	0	0	0	0	0	422	0	1	→
Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina</i>	2	0	0	0	2	4,615	0	0	
Snipe <i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	2	0	0	0	2	499	0	0	
Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i>	4	0	0	0	4	1,655	0	0	
Common Gull <i>Larus canus</i>	11	0	0	0	11	816	1	1	→
Great Black-backed Gull <i>Larus marinus</i>	34	0	0	0	34	725	0	2	→
Herring Gull <i>Larus argentatus</i>	12	0	0	0	12	2,958	0	0	
Lesser Black-backed Gull <i>Larus fuscus</i>	1	0	0	0	1	2,254	0	0	
Arctic Tern <i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	11	0	0	0	11	2,287	0	0	
Great Skua <i>Stercorarius skua</i>	31	0	2	0	33	459	2	2	→
Guillemot <i>Uria aalge</i>	194	0	72	2	268	5,067	36	0	
Razorbill <i>Alca torda</i>	347	0	576	2	925	2,210	280	2	→
Puffin <i>Fratercula arctica</i>	46	0	925	0	971	2,252	602	1	→
Rock Dove <i>Columba livia</i>	2	3	13	0	18	165	1	0	
Collared Dove <i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	0	0	4	0	4	475	1	83	→
Cuckoo <i>Cuculus canorus</i>	0	0	1	0	1	83	0	0	
Short-eared Owl <i>Asio flammeus</i>	1	0	0	0	1	91	0	0	
Peregrine <i>Falco peregrinus</i>	8	0	0	0	8	440	0	1	→
Hooded Crow <i>Corvus cornix</i>	0	0	0	0	0	62	0	1	→
Raven <i>Corvus corax</i>	4	0	0	0	4	326	0	0	
Great Tit <i>Parus major</i>	0	0	1	0	1	73,829	1	0	
Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>	0	4	0	0	4	23,265	0	0	
Long-tailed Tit <i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	0	8	0	0	8	21,052	13	0	
Willow Warbler <i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	0	19	25	0	44	25,411	5	0	
Chiffchaff <i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	0	8	5	0	13	43,687	1	0	
Bonelli's Warbler <i>Phylloscopus bonelli/orientalis</i>	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	
Yellow-browed Warbler <i>Phylloscopus inornatus</i>	0	0	0	2	2	220	0	0	
Sedge Warbler <i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	0	1	5	0	6	19,077	0	0	
Blackcap <i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	0	22	4	0	26	74,811	3	0	
Garden Warbler <i>Sylvia borin</i>	0	3	0	0	3	4,177	1	0	
Subalpine Warbler <i>Sylvia cantillans</i>	0	1	0	0	1	13	0	0	
Goldcrest <i>Regulus regulus</i>	0	37	2	0	39	24,015	17	1	→
Wren <i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	0	24	15	1	40	16,688	15	0	
Starling <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	6	14	23	0	43	20,846	9	0	
Blackbird <i>Turdus merula</i>	0	40	9	0	49	24,076	38	0	
Fieldfare <i>Turdus pilaris</i>	0	1	1	0	2	1,411	0	0	
Redwing <i>Turdus iliacus</i>	0	34	10	0	44	20,435	0	0	
Song Thrush <i>Turdus philomelos</i>	0	18	6	0	24	6,502	5	1	→
Robin <i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	0	42	6	0	48	27,538	35	0	
Stonechat <i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	0	2	2	0	4	1,413	0	0	
Wheatear <i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	11	11	2	0	24	978	1	0	
House Sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i>	0	95	37	22	154	16,480	13	6,074	→
Duncock <i>Prunella modularis</i>	0	5	1	1	7	20,361	3	0	
Pied Wagtail <i>Motacilla alba</i>	0	1	2	0	3	1,964	0	0	
Meadow Pipit <i>Anthus pratensis</i>	5	53	12	0	70	17,302	2	0	
Rock Pipit <i>Anthus petrosus</i>	11	11	2	0	24	233	1	0	
Chaffinch <i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	0	26	18	0	44	26,041	16	1	→
Brambling <i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>	0	3	1	0	4	4,469	0	0	
Greenfinch <i>Chloris chloris</i>	0	26	47	0	73	19,091	32	4	→
Twite <i>Linaria flavirostris</i>	0	2	1	0	3	865	0	0	
Redpoll <i>Acanthis flammea/cabaret</i>	0	1	1	0	2	550	0	0	
Lesser Redpoll <i>Acanthis cabaret</i>	0	14	20	0	34	13,286	3	0	
Goldfinch <i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	0	33	38	0	71	50,299	66	2	→
Siskin <i>Spinus spinus</i>	0	0	0	0	0	28,012	0	2	→
Reed Bunting <i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	0	3	0	0	3	15,625	0	0	
Grand Total	1,553	569	2,130	30	4,282	1,047,521	1,268	6,190	

Useful online resources

Garden BirdWatch: Explore the Garden BirdWatch results and look at the long-term pattern of garden use by species. Some fascinating trends! <https://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/gbw/results>.

BirdTrack: Visit BirdTrack and take a look at 'Explore data' and use the 'Reporting rate' to produce interesting graphs at www.birdtrack.net. Your data feed through to Eurobirdportal too (<https://www.eurobirdportal.org/ebp/en/>). This allows you to see weekly changes in many species (mostly migrants) across the whole of Europe during the past 12 months.

BirdTrends: A one-stop shop for information on population and demographic trends for our common breeding birds. Includes results from BBS, WBBS, Constant Effort Sites and nest recording, at www.bto.org/birdtrends.

Online ringing and nest recording report: Summary information by species and county at <https://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/ringing/publications/online-ringing-reports>.

Wetland Bird Survey Report Online: Summary information by site and species for all species monitored through WeBS at <https://app.bto.org/webs-reporting/>.

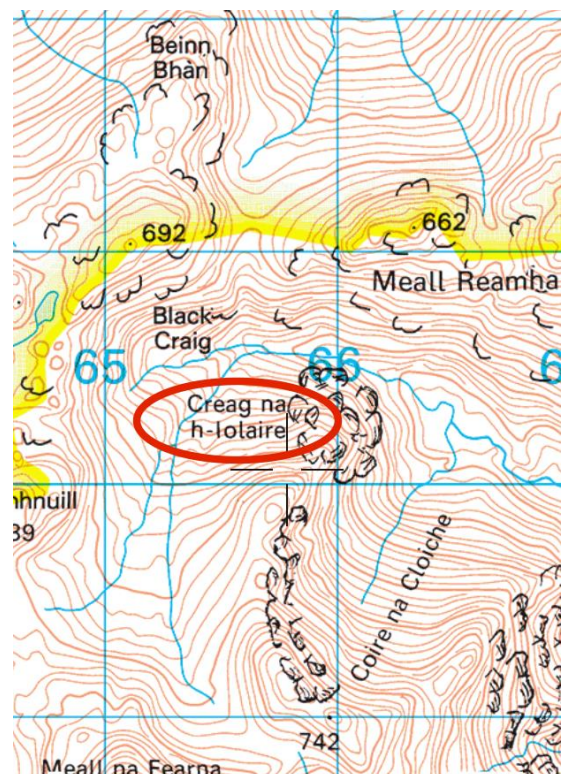
Breeding Bird Survey: Country trends for common breeding species at <https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/bbs/latest-results>.

Mapstore: All the maps from Bird Atlas 2007–11, and previous breeding and winter atlases at www.bto.org/mapstore.

Gaelic in the Landscape

Even if you're not a native speaker of Gaelic you'll no doubt be aware that Scot's Gaelic is a wonderfully expressive language with many lyrical ways to describe familiar things. A fantastic example of this is "*Iolaire sùil na grèine*" which is one of the Gaelic names for the White-Tailed Eagle and translates as "the eagle with the sunlit eye" - a superb description of the piercing gaze of one of our species of Eagle (some nice photos in a brief article [here](#)).

On the subject of eagles you may have cast your eye over maps and seen '*Creag na Iolaire*' over some remote crag - this translates as 'crag of the eagle' and once you get your eye in you'll see it absolutely everywhere! There are 276 Gaelic place names in Scotland that refer to eagles. Whilst



in many areas these crags are still in use by eagles in some areas the eagles are conspicuous by their absence- a poignant reminder of how rich our landscape once was and how some species were much more widespread and abundant.



The Gaelic for bird is '*Eun*' (sometimes '*Eoin*') and across Scotland there are various hills called *Beinn nan Eun* (hill of the bird). Sadly such names are quite vague as to just what bird they are referring to! Another name that crops up in the hills is '*Fitheach*'- a reference to the Raven.

It's not just birds though, the names of hills, glens, and parts of the landscape are often referred to in terms of colour (*dubh* = black; *dearg*= red; *gorm*= blue), animals (*Damh*= Stag; *Laogh*= Calf (of Deer); and *Cat* is, well, Cat). There are also names of animals long gone: *Tuirc* means Boar and *Madadh* or *Faol* is a reference to the Wolf. In our current largely treeless landscape you can often get a glimpse into the past with place names referring to *Beith* (Birch), *Darrach* (Oak), and *Fearna* (Alder).

There are some fantastic resources online which can help you to tease apart Gaelic place names and they can really help bring the landscape to life. For some commonly used animal and bird names you can see more [here](#) and there is a short blog on Gaelic place names [here](#). Finally the Scottish Natural Heritage website has a [Dictionary of Gaelic Nature Words](#).

Of course just as today we have Anglicised and corrupted many Gaelic words the same was done by Gaelic speakers to Old Norse many centuries ago. In the Western Isles it is common to find places on the coast featuring the word '*Sgarbh*' which means Cormorant or Shag (folks back then weren't overly concerned with detailed taxonomy). This actually comes from Old Norse, and is similar to the current Norwegian '*Skarv*'. It shows that the Viking influence on the Hebrides extended to birdwatching!

Note from BTO

We would like to thank Chris for all the support he has given BTO, and especially BTO Scotland over the years. Chris has been the Regional Representative for around 30 years and has been a key figure in the BTO Regional Network, and a regular at BTO annual conferences, and always willing to share his wealth of experience with others. He has done a fantastic job as Regional Representative, working closely with the small network of members and volunteers, and always achieving excellent coverage for surveys. His help throughout Bird Atlas 2007–11 was a particular highlight. Thank you Chris, and we wish you all the very best for the future.



Contact information

Regional Representative :	Vacant
Regional Ambassador:	Vacant
Wetland Bird Survey Regional Organiser:	Yvonne Benting Email: uistbto@gmail.com
Breeding Bird Survey Regional Organiser:	Vacant, covered by Sarah Harris BTO Email: bbs@bto.org
Heronries Census Regional Organiser:	Vacant, covered by Ian Woodward BTO Email: herons@bto.org

Useful contacts:

BTO Scotland www.bto.org/national-offices/scotland

SOC HQ www.the-soc.org.uk

SOC Recorders: Fife – Yvonne Benting Email: recorder@outerhebridesbirds.org.uk

<https://www.the-soc.org.uk/bird-recording/local-recorders-network/areas/outer-hebrides>

BTO Website: www.bto.org

Do you have an email address? Please email membership@bto.org or update your details at 'My BTO' on the BTO website.

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