

Clyde Ringing Group – Report for 2020



Pied Wagtail © Michael Sinclair

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Unfortunately, I once again lacked the free time to produce a “proper” Clyde Ringing Group (CRG) report, but have managed to produce a very brief summary of the year, its highs and lows, record and ground breaking totals and a summary of the best recoveries.

This year will sadly be remembered as the year the Covid-19 pandemic hit and as I write this we are still very much in the midst of it. We endured the first national “lockdown” in living memory which resulted in us only being able to catch and ring birds in our gardens. This proved fun for some but most were frustrated, myself included. When it was partially relaxed and BTO volunteers could once again venture out under strict conditions, we were able to restart most of our projects and did so with renewed enthusiasm! A determination to “make up for lost time” certainly kicked in and to be fair I feel it has stayed though 2021 as well.

Our combined efforts produced a total of **12,758** new birds ringed, of **118** species including one new species, **Lapland Bunting** caught and ringed on the Isle of Arran during a Skylark catch. We also had **247** recoveries and controls reported to us from the BTO (this excludes near countless colour ring reports).

Since our formation in 1976 we have now ringed 336,655 birds of 185 species, 1 sub species and 1 hybrid. We have generated 8,860 recoveries and controls.

Some of our projects suffered, we were unable to get out to Horse Isle in May for the Eider RAS (Retrapping Adults for Survival) study and the Pied Flycatcher and Redstart boxes in Dumfriesshire only just had one part visit. The rest of the year however was fairly settled which resulted in some spectacular warbler totals (Willow Warbler 942, Blackcap 368, Whitethroat 214 and Chiffchaff 205 a record).



Plate 1: Pied Flycatcher Chicks © Connor Smith
(Undisclosed site: Dumfriesshire)



Plate 2: Common Redstart Chicks © Connor Smith
(Undisclosed site: Dumfriesshire)

Sustained effort monitoring and catching owls on Arran resulted in more record totals including **125 Barn**, **10 Long-eared** and **29 Short-eared Owls**. The number ringed of the last species would have been much higher but for the lockdown. There was a vole “plague” in 2020 which saw many raptors breed early and with large successful broods and many had fledged before restrictions were lifted.

Seabirds; Ringing on the Isle of Tiree saw Hayley catch 71 adult Fulmars as part of a RAS project and then 62 chicks in successful nests. A good number of Manx Shearwaters were also ringed on Sanda.

Waders also had a good year with a wide variety of species handled and increasing numbers ringed and recovered thanks for the colour ringing project on Oystercatchers. A single Black-tailed Godwit caught at Kinneil was the second for the CRG, the first was ringed at Newshot Island in the autumn of 1991!!

During the winter we ringed our **1000th Jack Snipe!** I could have a look through the books to see who ringed it but that doesn't matter, it's a Group project! (Calm down).



Plate 3: Common Tern © Connor Smith (Blackness Castle)

For me the stand out species for the year was however the **Lesser Redpoll**. The Arran “crew” reported seeing flocks of juveniles in early July and suggested it may be a “bumper year”. They were not wrong and we soon had our own flocks passing over Kinneil by mid July. The passage continued late into the autumn and by the end of the year CRG had produced a record total of **1061** new birds and several controls.

Species absent from the list that we normally do catch was probably most noticed in the wildfowl. Despite a good catch of 4 Whooper Swan at Hogganfield Loch we only managed 1 Mallard, no Tufted Duck again and only 1 Greylag. The Arran crew however kept the hopes alive with 5 Teal.

Recoveries

With the electronic recoveries these days being passed round the whole Group as they come in, I don't need to type them all out, they are also available now via DemOn (if you can figure it out).

Our most impressive recovery of 2020 was an adult Teal ringed in Arran in February 2019 which was found dead in August 2020 having made a mammoth journey to Finland. Other birds of note included a 30yr old Ailsa Gannet and another Gannet recovered in Denmark. A Sanda Shag was recovered in Wales at 15 years of age. The oldest Guillemot reported was only 14 years and a juvenile was shot in The Faeroes (what century are we in?), the oldest Razorbill was 21 years old having hatched on Sanda and caught breeding on The Calf of Man, a second 21yr old was found dead on Mull.

A Barn Owl from Braidwood, N.Lanarkshire and found dead in The Borders is our furthest movement at 97km. Unfortunately the satellite tracked SE Owls from Arran don't generate recoveries which is frustrating given we had two to France, one dying there on a motorway and the other wintered in Western Sahara and died there.

Passerines make up the bulk of our ringing totals but generate the fewest recoveries by proportion, it's just they do tend to be good ones when we get them! A Kinneil Dunnock recovered in Auchterarder 34km north in the spring is our furthest movement ever for that species.

We also had Sedge Warblers from France and The Netherlands (a first) and one each to France and Cornwall (Arran birds). France stayed on the up with a Blackcap and a Whitethroat (first ever) from Kinneil caught there in August. A Chiffchaff from Hampshire was caught by Neil at Carluke in the spring. A Willow Warbler ringed at The Manse and controlled the following day by the Tay Ringing Group in Clackmannanshire 32km away was unusual. Our CRG outpost in Bristol manned by Adam Cross also produced a French recovery at the same time this one being a Reed Warbler.



Plate 4: Adult Whitethroat © Connor Smith (Kinneil)

Finches produce the bulk of the passerine recoveries, due to the numbers ringed but mainly down to the fact they are attracted into gardens by feeders where they are easy to catch. We had a Siskin from Milngavie to France as well and 29 Lesser Redpolls / Goldfinch mainly from England in the winter and spring passage. We saw the 100th Goldfinch recovery this year.

I'd like to take the opportunity to thank all members of the Group for their efforts again and hope to catch up at some point preferably with an in person AGM, Covid-19 permitting or a Zoom one if we can get it arranged.

Stay well and have a great festive period.

Thanks,

Iain Livingstone
15.12.2021.