

NEWSLETTER 16 - JANUARY 1997

PROGRAMME

- 17th January The Badger
 Illustrated talk by Roger Cottis
 Kirkton Church Hall 8.00pm
- 7th February The Work of Scottish Natural Heritage in Skye and Lochalsh
 Illustrated talk by Lesley Cranna
 Kirkton Church Hall 8.00pm
- 14th March AGM and Social Evening
 Seagreen Restaurant, Kyle 7.30pm
- 11th April The Destruction of the World's Forest
 Illustrated talk by Geoffrey Venables
 Kirkton Church Hall 8.00pm
- 2nd May To be arranged.

THE WEATHER IN 1996

Duncan Glen-Riddell has once again kindly made his weather records available to us. As usual the readings were taken at Reraig House, Balmacara. Equivalent figures for 1995 are shown in brackets.

	Rainfall		Temperature (Celcius)	
	mm	ins	max	min
January	70	2.76 (11.22)	12 (12)	-5 (-5)
February	117	4.61 (9.96)	17 (11)	-6 (-6)
March	69	2.72 (5.55)	15 (12)	-2 (-6)
April	113	4.45 (3.78)	20 (18)	-1 (-2)
May	79	3.11 (2.83)	20 (24)	-2 (-2)
June	153	6.02 (1.77)	22 (28)	5 (2)
July	97	3.82 (2.72)	23 (32)	5 (6)
August	72	2.83 (2.24)	25 (30)	7 (6)
September	108	4.25 (6.14)	22 (23)	3 (0)
October	342	13.46 (12.76)	18 (29)	2 (2)
November	235	9.25 (7.20)	15 (17)	-3 (-5)
December	104	4.09 (1.10)	12 (15)	-5 (-11)
Total	1559	61.37 (67.28)		

The readings indicate that 1996 was another odd year for weather patterns when compared with the average figures for Achmore taken over the 30 year period 1951 to 1981. As in 1995 October was the wettest month with 181% of the 30 year average rainfall. However that was about the only similarity. November and June were the second and third wettest months, both having well above the 30 year averages (153% and 156% respectively). Months with well below normal rainfall were January (45%), March (64%), August (56%), September (65%) and December (56%). The ups and downs balance out to give an overall rainfall which is 96% of the 30 year average compared with 104% in 1995. The annual totals are remarkably consistent considering the widely varying monthly readings.

The maximum and minimum temperature readings show that the maximum temperatures during the

first four months of the year were equivalent to or above those for 1995 but for the rest of the year were consistently lower. The minimum temperatures on the other hand were remarkably similar apart from the exceptionally low readings in December 1995.

AUTUMN 1996 - WILDLIFE REPORTS

As usual Red Admirals were the only butterflies still on the wing on Carr Brae during October and despite some very cold weather we still had two in the garden on 15th and the last one on 16th. Moth activity however continued through to 17th December except on frosty evenings. Amongst the "new" species that I identified were Red-green Carpet, Scarce Umber, The Satellite, Angle Shades and the extraordinary Red Sword-grass. The latter is quite a large moth but somehow manages to fold its wings so tightly that it looks like a narrow piece of twig. It also acts dead when disturbed making the camouflage even more realistic.

The main bird interest switched from Kirkton Bay to Eilean Tioram during the autumn. The island off Ardelve was full of birds (and Rabbits!) during October and produced record totals of 160 Wigeon on 13th and 70 Rock Doves on 19th. On 7th there was an unusual gathering of waders on the island which included 3 Black-tailed Godwits, a Bar-tailed Godwit and a probable Ruff as well as Dunlin, Redshank and the usual Oystercatchers and Curlews. Other species seen on the island during this period included Lapwing, Ringed Plover and Turnstone adding up to an impressive 10 species of wader. 10 Whooper Swans on Loch Shiel on 31st October included 4 juveniles but only one pair without young stayed on through November. There were three sightings of White-tailed Sea Eagle during October, once again in the Loch Long/Dornie area.

A sudden surge of Stonechat records in the last week of October gave a little hope that we might still have some breeding in the area next season. Redwings and Fieldfares were again late arriving this autumn and the poor crop of Rowan berries did little to tempt them to linger. There were two sizeable movements on Carr Brae: c.500 Redwings on 14th October and c.900 Redwings and Fieldfares on 27th October. Otherwise there have been very few about, especially Fieldfares. It seems no time at all since we were talking about the Waxwing invasion last winter and yet here we are again with Waxwings reported from Kyle, Drumbuie, Dornie, Allt-nan-Sugh, Braeintrach and Glenelg. This was a more typical movement with small groups passing through during the last week of November. None stayed around for long, the birds moving on without stripping the cotoneaster berries on which they were feeding.

By December bird numbers were generally very low. Great Northern Divers and Goldeneye were scarcer than usual and Song Thrushes were positively rare. However I still managed to record 72 species during the month including Black-throated Diver at Balmacara, Greenshank at Sallachy, Jack Snipe near Kintail Lodge, 15 Turnstones at Balmacara, Blackcap on Carr Brae and 6 Bramblings near Conchra.

Newsletter compiled by Brian Neath (01599 555 341)

