

Firth of Clyde Eider News



No 5. August 2004

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Introduction

September 2003 coverage was again very good. A special thanks to everybody who took part (listed below). As you will see below, the overall numbers were slightly up on 2002, and continue the recent run of counts around 15,000 birds. Also included are some results from the 2004 breeding season and a survey of moult flocks in July/August 2004.

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September count stretch	<u>1996</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>
Clyde Estuary (Gourock-Craigendoran)	2616	962	797	841	313	172	250	688
Inner Firth (Toward-Largs to Gourock-Craigendoran)	6776	7117	6969	6556	7643	6263	6997	7987
Bute & Kyles (Toward-Ardlamont Pt)	571	1641	1534	1992	1160	1626	1091	763
Great Cumbrae + Largs-Seamill	612	1373	1532	1114	1206	1320	1068	741
Loch Fyne		1499	1558	1510	1297	1874	1505	1363
East Kintyre		339	579	322	277	406	298	334
Arran		155	318	278	603	326	191	210
estimate for remainder of Argyll and Arran	3200							
Firth of Clyde except Ayrshire Coast	13775	13086	13287	12613	12499	11987	11400	12086
Ayrshire (Seamill-Loch Ryan)	5127	6307	1242	4983	2180	3705	2897	3190
Total Firth of Clyde	18902	19393	14529	17596	14679	15692	14297	15276

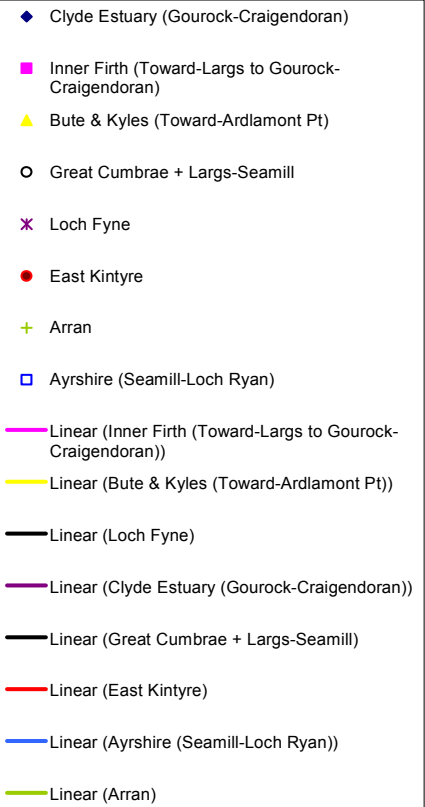
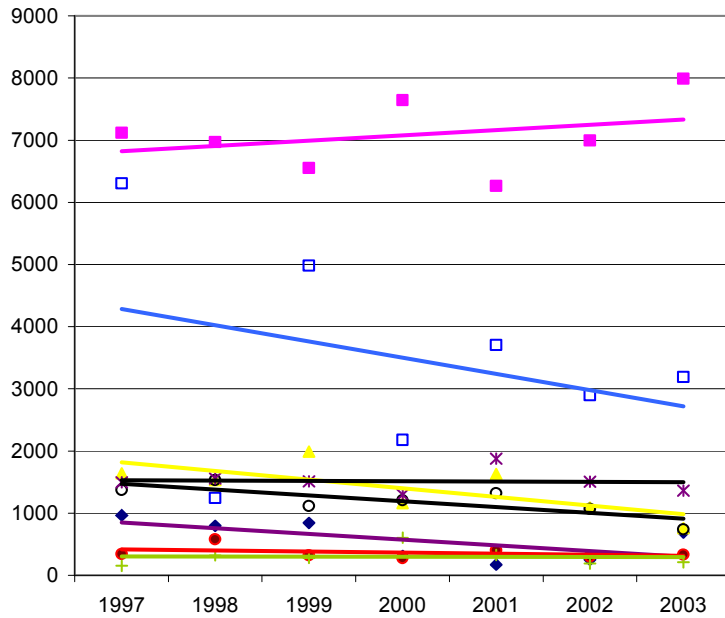
2003 counters

Betty Allison, Chris Armstrong, Tom Callan, Paul Daw, Aiden & Helen Doherty, Lindsay Dunlop, Bob Furness, Frances Gatens, Iain Gibson, Dave Grant, Audrey Handley, Roger Hissett, Alan Hollick, Frances Hood, Ian Hopkins, Bill & Elinor Kinnaird, Fiona Laing, Simon Lawrence, NJ & NC Lawrie, Eddie Maguire, Jim McGrady, Mary McMillan, Tom McNeish, Jane Mitchell, Rab Morton, Bob & Moira Nuttall, Crystal Paterson, Livingston & Christine Russell, Kate Sampson & NTS Ranger Service, Tony Smith, Peter & Margaret Staley, Alan & Susie Stoneham, Peter Tupman, Kevin Waite, Audrey Walters, Chris Waltho, Barrie Whattam, Hazel White.

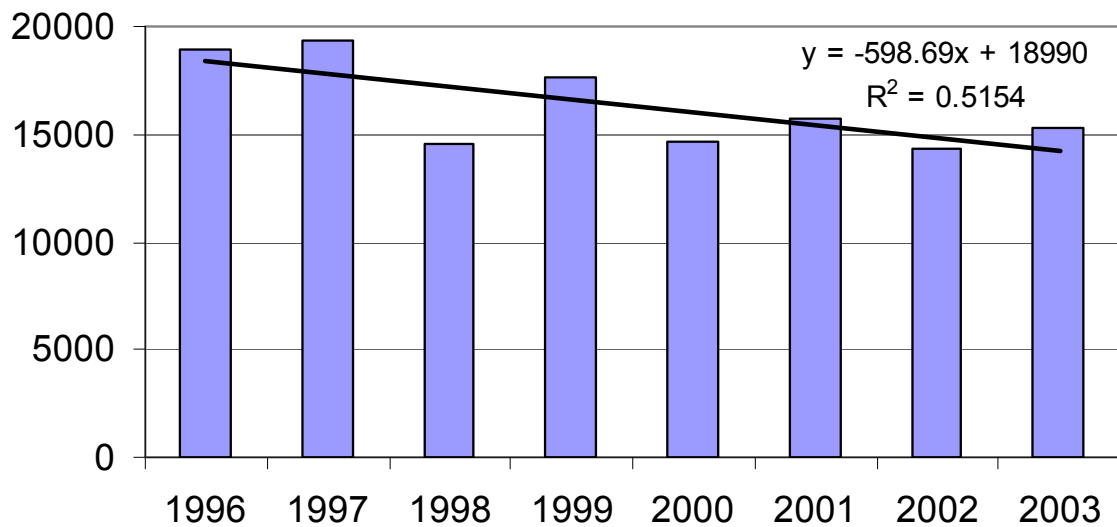
Apologies for anyone missed.

Please note that the September 2004 count will take place from the 18th-26th.

September trends of Common Eider in the Firth of Clyde



September Common Eider in the Firth of Clyde

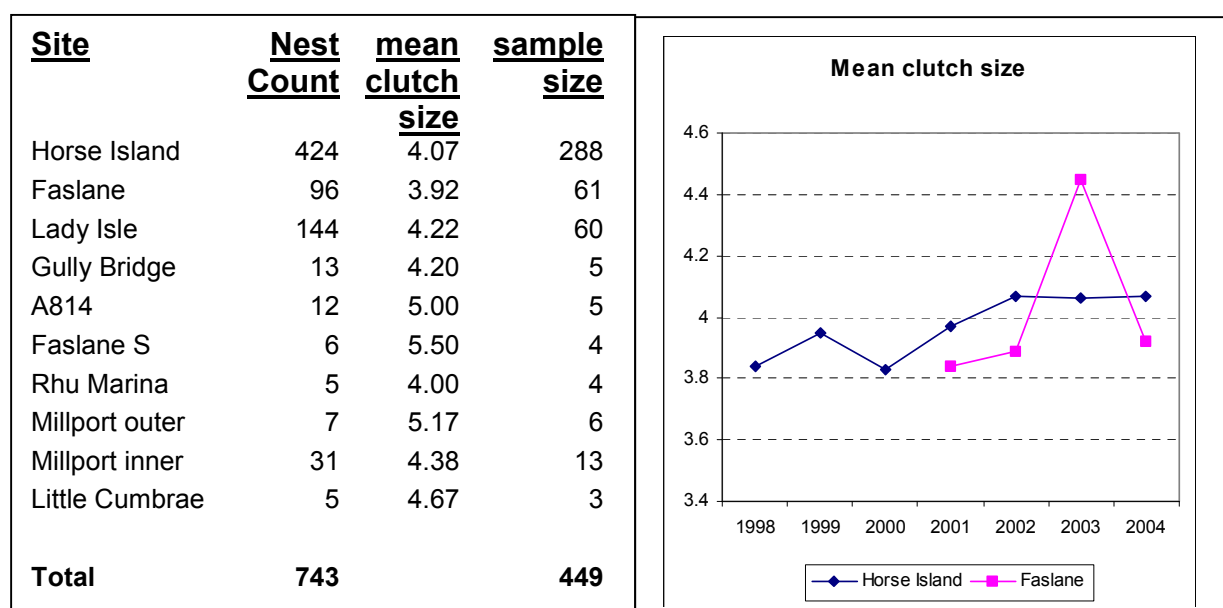


<u>Count stretch</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>mean 99-03</u>
Clyde Estuary (Gourock-Craigendoran)	2616	962	797	841	313	172	250	688	475
Craigendoran-Kilcreggan (Gare Loch)	3037	2419	2156	2261	3877	3252	2619	3263	2833
Kilcreggan-Strone Point (L Long/Goil)	1285	1331	2960	2164	1539	1299	1459	1390	1884
Holy Loch to Toward Pt	1021	2192	794	1504	1319	615	1146	1114	1076
Gourock-Largs	1433	1175	1059	627	908	1097	1773	2220	1093
Toward Pt-Strone Pt (Loch Striven)		415	336	299	150	255	69	50	222
Kyles of Bute (mainland) & L Ridden		463	249	326	239	228	78	256	224
Bute	571	763	949	1367	771	1143	944	457	1035
Great Cumbrae	347	776	685	537	666	717	597	444	640
Outer Loch Fyne (L Gilp-Tarbert & Otter Ferry-Ardlamont Pt)		258	196	232	153	227	147	407	191
Inner Loch Fyne (Otter Ferry - Port Ann)		1241	1362	1278	1144	1647	1358	956	1358
E Kintyre (Skipness-Southend)		339	579	322	277	406	298	334	376
Arran		155	318	278	603	326	191	210	343
Gogo Burn, Largs - Fairlie Pier	265	182	522	229	255	434	221	247	332
Fairlie Pier-Seamill		415	325	348	285	169	250	50	275
Seamill-Saltcoats	850	961	486	680	237	169	284	469	371
Saltcoats-Stinking Rock Barassie	1400	1510	67	789	243	800	628	471	505
Sinking Rock-Pow Burn	892	1006	75	616	419	1134	198	337	488
Pow Burn-Ayr Harbour	467	460		159	85	69	31	60	69
Ayr Harbour-Greenan Castle		280	127	312	224	14	92		154
Dunure-Culzean				38	31	20			30
Maidens-Dipple	1518	820	246	653	252	306	249	397	341
Dipple-Girvan		680	143	35	138	129	140	116	117
Girvan-Ballantrae		430	58	301	165	109	87	138	144
Loch Ryan		160	40	1400	386	955	1188	1202	794
Total	18902	19393	14529	17596	14679	15692	14297	15276	15357

**Please note that the September 2004 count
will take place from the 18th-26th.**

The 2004 breeding season.

Nest Counts and Clutch Size



Breeding Productivity (Rhu-Coulport)

Following the highly successful brood productivity in 2003, 2004 was more similar to 2001-2. This annual pattern also reflects the clutch size data for Faslane (above).

Rhu-Coulport breeding production	2001	2002	2003	2004
Survey date	15/07/2001	14/07/2002	13/07/2003	18/07/2004
Number of brood/creches	27	34	80	36
Number of ducklings	72	90	239	84
Number of attendant females	50	51	135	49
Number of other females	406	402	509	443
Total number of females	456	453	644	492
% attendant females	11.0	11.3	21.0	10.0
Number of ducklings/all females	0.16	0.20	0.37	0.17
mean brood/creche size	2.67	2.65	2.99	2.33
Number of attendant female per duckling	0.69	0.57	0.56	0.58
mean attendant females per brood	1.85	1.50	1.69	1.36
Number of single female broods	8	23	44	24
% broods/creches with single female	29.6	67.6	55.0	66.7

Ringed Eider

Readers are asked to regularly check shorelines for corpses and to inspect birds for rings.

To date there have been only three recoveries of the nearly 900 females recently ringed in the Firth of Clyde.

Any rings found should be reported to the **Ringling Office, British Trust for Ornithology, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU.**

	<u>no caught in 2004</u>	<u>retrapped</u>	<u>ringed 2004</u>	<u>total ringed to date</u>
Horse Island	86	16	70	251
Faslane	56	29	27	131
Sgat Mor				23
Burnt Islands	87	37	50	311
Sanda				11
Minard				13
Ailsa Craig				20
Lady Isle	61		61	65
Gully Bridge	8	3	5	15
A814	7	2	5	11
Faslane S	5		5	5
Rhu Marina	4		4	4
Millport outer	6		6	6
Millport inner	18		18	18
Little Cumbrae	3		3	3
	341	87	254	887

Recoveries

To date there have been only 3 recoveries away from the nesting colony.

- Adult female ringed at Faslane 31 May 2003 found dead on beach at Fairlie 10 April 2004 (pre breeding) 36km 315 days.
- Adult female ringed at Burnt Islands 2001 reported from Rothesay 11 March 2002 - apparently as a 'sight record by non-ringer'.
- Adult female ringed at Burnt Islands 1999 found Loch Striven 15 Jan 2001 drowned in mussel farm netting.

Colour ringed birds.

The Clyde Ringing Group has started a colour-ringing programme of females. Each bird has a metal BTO ring on the right leg. Above this, on the same leg, is a white darvic ring – this is used as the scheme marker (all Clyde colour-ringed birds will show white on the right leg). On the left leg is a bigger colour ring, that varies between nesting colonies.

This year:

28 birds were marked with **light green on Lady Isle,**

3 with **yellow on Little Cumbrae,**

13 with **white from the Eileans in Millport Bay,** and

50 with **orange from Faslane.**

Could all sightings of colour rings be reported to Chris Waltho.

Moulting Flocks

Eider are most vulnerable to oil pollution, during the moult period when they are flightless.

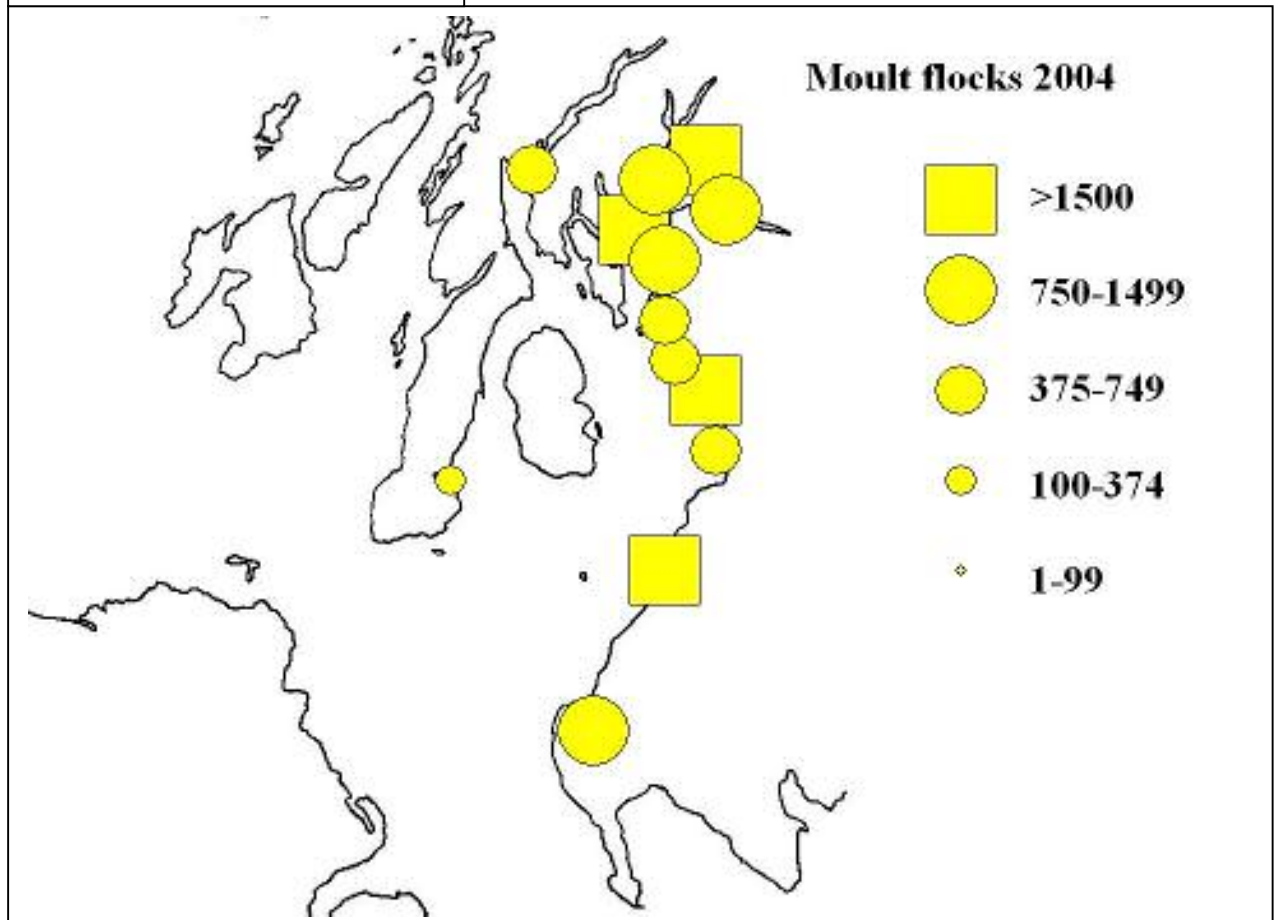
Males are flightless from mid July to mid August, and females late July to early September.

During this period they do not move very far, being restricted to swimming, although over a period of weeks they can drift many km along the coast.

Allowing for females and broods, and small numbers elsewhere, the population would be approx 15,000 birds

Moulting Flocks >750

	<u>date</u>	<u>observer</u>	<u>2004 count</u>
Gareloch	22-Aug	CMW	2230
Lower Loch Long	21-Aug	CMW	914
Hunters Quay-Toward Pt	21-Aug	CMW	2225
Hunterston-Fairlie	11-Aug	CMW	497
Ardrossan-Seamill	11-Aug	CMW	450
Irvine Bay	07-Aug	CMW	1547
Ayr Bay	07-Aug	CMW	718
Turnberry-Girvan	31-Jul	CMW	1500
Loch Ryan	31-Jul	CMW	1150
Gourock-Wemyss Bay	11-Aug	CMW	845
Clyde Estuary	11-Aug	CMW	803
Otter Ferry	14-Aug	Tom Callan	590
Total			13469



First flying males (after moult)

21st August -Toward Point

22nd August-Lower Loch Long

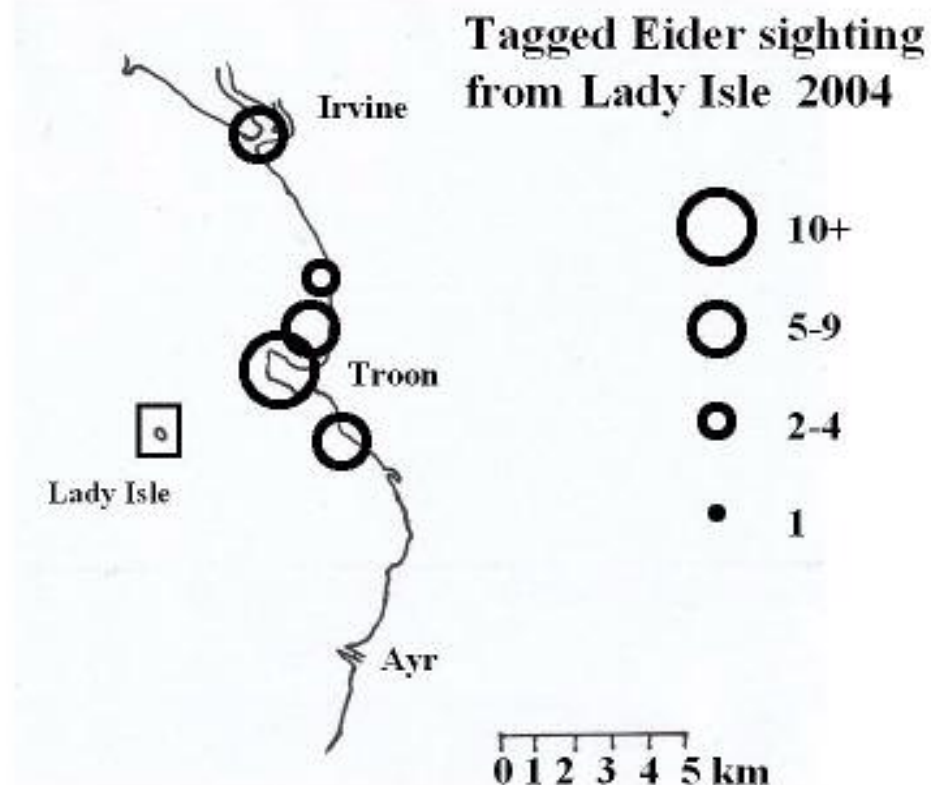
Eider tagging in 2004

Following the coloured nape-tagging on Horse Island in 2002, and Burnt Islands, Horse Island, Faslane, Blairvadach and Lady Isle in 2003, 40 females on Lady Isle were tagged with white tape by Dave Grieve, Dave Grant & Chris Waltho.

Maximum movements recorded from Lady Isle were 10 km north to Irvine Harbour/Bogside and 5 km south to Meikle Craigs. Most broods were recorded around Meikle Craigs/Troon/Barassie, although at least two were recorded at Bogside..

In addition, 3 females were tagged yellow on Little Cumbrae, by Iain Livingstone, John McKellar and Chris Waltho. One was subsequently found at Irvine mouth, but without any ducklings.

The Irvine/Garnock estuary appears to be an area of overlap between broods from Horse Island and from Lady Isle. However, that does not necessarily mean that broods from these colonies mix ducklings. One brood from Lady Isle (single tagged female) was observed to keep her brood separate from mixing with larger multi-female broods/creches (untagged – therefore unknown origin) and aggressively rebuffed any females or other ducklings getting close to her brood.



Eider ringing in the Firth of Clyde is supported by the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (to the Clyde Ringing Group) and by Glasgow University (Prof Bob Furness).

King Eider in the Clyde

Spring 2003 and 2004 has seen several drake King Eider in the Firth of Clyde.

In 2003, two drakes were found.

At Stevenston Point-Saltcoats from 14th June to 6th July

At Toward-Innellan from 23rd May to 21st June

In 2004, a drake was at Troon/Meikle Craigs from 27th May to at least 13th June. Later in June a drake (probably the same bird) was reported at Ballantrae.

As these birds associated with flocks of Common Eider in areas where they gather to moult, it is possible that the King Eider could have moulted within the Firth of Clyde. Once they start to moult the King Eider become increasing difficult to separate from the Common Eider, especially in large flocks offshore. However, there were no subsequent autumn records, which may mean that they moulted elsewhere.

One added benefit of these King Eider in those localities at that time of year, was that they attracted more birdwatchers to the coast looking at eider. This led to good reporting of tagged birds and broods in both years.

Dramatic declines reported in North Ayrshire.

Bob & Moira Nuttall have reported a dramatic decline in birds recorded along the coast of North Ayrshire that they monitor for WeBS. Their data is presented below. Whilst this may represent a redistribution of birds elsewhere within the Clyde, it does indicate that there may be more fundamental changes taking place in that area, in terms of food supply, disturbance, predation or some other factors. It also demonstrates the value of regular monitoring of local patches. The causes are as yet unknown.

