



## **Isle of Rum Community Trust Ranger Service Newsletter (Early autumn 2011)**

It's autumn at last and with the chance to witness the unfolding movements of many migrating birds and the forthcoming red deer rut, it's an exciting time to be on the island. As the manx shearwater young are almost ready to leave their subterranean worlds for warmer climates, we ask (very politely of course) to be aware of light pollution in Kinloch Village. You can help limit the amount of crash landings by turning off any unnecessary lighting and by drawing curtains (other options include sitting in the dark or going to bed at nine o'clock). If you find any grounded birds please hand into myself or Sean so that they can be ringed and released (if in the Mallaig/Arisaig area please inform Martin at the Moorings Guest House (01687 462225)). Top tip...a cardboard box punched with small holes for ventilation is a good place to store them until help arrives and will limit stress.

Deacon Blue's drummer Dougie Vipond has been over this month filming a short piece on the islands community development and the Rum ponies for Landward (BBC Two), and is due to be broadcast sometime in November (check your Radio times for more details). They also filmed a short piece about shearwater research on the island, as Holly Kirk from the University of Oxford has been up at the colony continuing her work to pin point important resource areas for the birds at sea. To achieve this, a total of 13 birds were singled out for individual attention and fitted with miniature satellite tracking devices (GPS loggers and Geolocators), with the GPS loggers fixing the birds position. To retrieve the data from the loggers, Holly then had to wait out high in the colony for the birds to return over the next ten nights. Early indications suggest that this year's birds are foraging closer to home particularly around Colonsay; last year's birds appeared to be taking longer forays with one of the survey birds making a trip most of the way to Greenland.

The usual ranger guided walks and talks are doing well and the campsite has been pretty well used and enjoyed. Our Community Wildlife Garden is slowly taking shape (please check out the poster at the hall). Further ground work for the various planting zones and pond etc will commence this autumn in earnest, so any help would be greatly appreciated. I'll be organising a few volunteer days soon, so I'll keep you posted.

Archie (one of our Rum ponies) is now happily living in the Midlands and is being trained for show jumping and will also be entered at the Highland Show in Edinburgh next year. On the raptor front, one of our golden eagle pairs managed to successfully raise one chick this season and hen harriers bred for the first time since 2006 producing two young males. Three pairs of merlins successfully bred also. Red-throated divers have done well on the island this season, with nine chicks reared to fledging. After their initial apprehension at using the site for the first time, the pair of swallows at the Visitor Centre took the plunge and successfully raised four young. Despite the noise and cigarette smoke, even the pair that decided to nest directly outside the Courtyard Bar were successful. Nicorette patches for the fledgers weren't provided due to lack of funding at present, so it looks like it was cold turkey for them all. Even though the majority of our swallow population haven't had second broods this year, a total of 15 pairs bred around the island producing 54 young.

It has been a very poor summer for sightings of both basking sharks and minke whales around the coast of Rum and Eigg, with Ronnie from the Sheerwater only reporting about 40 minke whales and



not a single basking shark between here and Arisaig all summer. We have still had a few exciting marine sightings however, such as the 2 killer whales spotted by Stuart Johnson off A'Bhrideanach on the 23<sup>rd</sup> July (thanks for the photos). August has been relatively productive with 12 bottle nosed dolphins spotted off Rubha na Roinne on the 4<sup>th</sup> and five Risso's dolphins off the Ard of Sleat on the 25<sup>th</sup>. Other notable species included a long staying green sandpiper which has been recorded several times in the north east of the island between the 18<sup>th</sup> June-15<sup>th</sup> August and a lone female crossbill put in a brief appearance in the Castle Policy woodland on the 10<sup>th</sup> June.

As its now the end of August we're starting to slowly see a trickle of passage migration. 14 storm petrels have been caught and ringed around the coast over the last few weeks, and meadow pipit, goldcrest and siskin numbers are building up also. Two more crossbills and a single grasshopper warbler were observed on the 23<sup>rd</sup> August in Kinloch and pomerine skua and sooty shearwater were off the coast on the 25<sup>th</sup> of August. A really bad view of a possible barn owl at Rubha na Roinne on the night of the 18<sup>th</sup> August will always remind me to leave a head torch where it belongs, as you never know quite when you'll need it.

*Mike Werndly, Isle of Rum Community Trust Ranger Service*