



This newsletter has been designed to enable you to get an idea of what kind of experience you will have should you join us on one of our cruises.

Wed 1 Oct | Tiree proves tops It's October already. Unsurprisingly there is less news for us to report over these off-season months. This newpage will run from 1 October to 31 December and we'll use it to keep you updated of our progress over the winter.

Thu 2 Oct | Tiree proves tops Yesterday, as predicted, it blew a hoolie all day so Zuza (with crew but minus guests who opted to stay on Tiree) sat in Tobermory all day. There was a break in the weather this morning so the yacht headed down to Oban Marina on Kerrera. The weather was rough for most of the day and many Outer Hebridean ferry services were cancelled. Our guests did get back from Tiree on the late ferry but it would have been dangerous to transport them across the bay, in the dark, in prevailing conditions so they had a night in the hostel in Oban. Photo: the Glasgow - Oban seaplane over Oban bay by Heather McNeill



Divers from York BSAC joined Hjalmar Bjorge alongside in Oban from 1800 today. The vessel departs early tomorrow morning.

Fri 3 Oct | A Siberian stop-off Michael and co met Zuza alongside the Railway Pier this morning having spotted two more rare birds on Tiree. There were two separate sightings of a yellow-browed warbler. This little bird is not a UK resident but a rare visitor from Siberia. The even rarer gull-billed tern was seen again too. The guests were delighted with Tiree and thought the amount of bird life there was "staggering".

The group's most noteworthy and unusual sightings are listed below. The Gull-billed Tern which was seen on Tiree was, says Michael, "the rarest bird of the trip and undoubted highlight; only the 10th record for Scotland".

Gull-billed Tern (Tiree)

Yellow-browed Warblers (Tiree)

Lesser Whitethroat (Tiree)

Little Stint (juvenile - Tiree)

Pied Flycatcher (Eriskay)

Spotted Flycatcher (Eriskay)

Golden Eagle (Eriskay and the Monach Islands)

White-tailed Sea Eagle (2 adults and juvenile in the Sound of Mull, a fourth in Loch Linnhe)

Whitethroat (Monachs)

Wheatears (Monachs)

Lapwing, Golden Plover, Ringed Plover (mixed flock at the Monachs)

Snowy Owl (North Uist)

American Golden Plover (North Uist)

Cuckoo (juvenile - Benbecula)

Sat 4 Oct | Snowy start and finish Zuza crew and guests woke this morning to a beautiful but cold day with snow on the tops. As they cruised up Loch Linnhe to Corpach it seemed an appropriate finish to the yacht's first full season in Scotland. When she first sailed out of Corpach at the end of April there was also snow on the tops. Below: snow capped peaks across Loch Linnhe by Heather McNeill



One white-tailed sea eagle was seen off Appin and a pale-bellied Brent Goose was spotted back at base in Corpach. Michael, Trevor, Chris, Alan and Leo have been running an autumn trip similar to this one annually for the last 13 years. 12 of those years have been spent on the Shetland Islands and this year was their first foray into the Hebrides. After reviewing their sightings, and assessing the trip in terms of "points" gained per sighting, they reckoned this was their third most successful trip out of the 13 - we were very happy to be in the top three (in fact there's a rumour going round that Heather refused to make them breakfast unless we **were** in the top three!).

Sun 5 Oct | Wind restricts range Day four of a dive trip aboard Hjalmar Bjorge. The weather has been somewhat grim so they haven't ventured beyond the Sound of Mull. That said, there is plenty of good diving within the Sound, mainly wrecks and, with pub visits each evening, the 12 divers are managing to enjoy themselves. This evening the calm after the storm was seen in Tobermory. Below: Tobermory harbour early evening by Mark Henrys



Tue 7 Oct | Final day of final trip 2008 Mark, Ylva and Anna waved off regulars York BSAC today before Hjalmar Bjorge set off for Corpach. Unusually for us this is the last trip of the year. We frequently run dive charters through to Christmas but, having run two boats solidly for the summer, we decided to take things a little easier this autumn and winter.

Tue 14 Oct | Zuza lifted out at Kerrera Hannah drove Mark and Tim to Corpach this morning to board Zuza. They took the yacht down to Oban Marina (<http://www.obanmarina.co.uk>)

www.obanmarina.com/), on the NE of Kerrera, as she is going on the hard-standing over the winter, this being a very safe option for the boat. At 22m and 40-something tons the vessel is one of the biggest to have been taken out of the water here. Below: Zuza coming out of the water at Kerrera by Mark Henrys



Thu 23 Oct | Get your props off At some point in the late summer it became apparent that something was not quite right with the props on Zuza - nothing to get alarmed about, but an annoyance nonetheless. Mark got the props off today, ready to be couriered back to the manufacturer in Essex.

Fri 31 Oct | Charity cheques Returning guests will know that several years ago Hannah and Mark decided to make a £5 donation to one of two local charities for every cruise guest who booked on any of our boats. Our guests are also given the option of doubling this by paying an additional £5. Today we are delighted to have written cheques for £570 to Argyll Animal Aid (<http://www.smallpaws.co.uk/>) and £990 to Glencoe Mountain Rescue Team. Of the total donation of £1560 the sum of £405 came from our very generous passengers this year who opted to pay an extra £5 per head to the charities. Big thanks go to...

John and Diana Barber
Anna Blundell
James Butlin
Marc Calhoun
Barbara Campbell
Forrester and Alison Cockburn
Katherine Coleville
Michael Coupe
Ronnie Cramond and 10 guests
Jean Crawford
Pauline Crerar
Peter Dale
Kathryn Dodd
Giles Emery
Graham and Maureen Farrant
Rae and Alex Findlay
Carole Gardner
Marion Glasscoe
Tim and Christa Greenacre
Dan and Elizabeth Hall
Barbara Holl (twice)
Peter Ingleby
Lyndon Knott and 9 guests
Frederick and Ann Ledden

Deborah Lodge
Jon and Val Mager
John and Cathy Martindale
Isabella and Amy McClelland
Susan Page
Eddie and Mo Paterson
Isabel Plant
Robin and Ros Priestley
Joan Pringle
John Reid
Paul Remblance
Norman and Valerie Robb
Kate Russell
Jan Scott
Christopher and Mary Shaw
Peter Sheaf
Richard Sheaf
Clyne Shepherd
Kathleen Tuck
Paul and Jackie Walker
Brian and Una Webberley
Keith Whiffin
Graham Wren

Fri 7 Nov | Hjalmar Bjorge in print Hannah's birthday today (21 again!) was an excuse for Mark and she to climb Ben Nevis. First job of the day was to buy a map. Imagine our surprise to see Hjalmar Bjorge at Corpach Basin on the front of OS Landranger Map 41. The photographer most likely snapped this shot sometime last winter as Ben Nevis, in the background, has heavy snow on the slopes. Right: Photographer Dennis Hardley snapped Hjalmar Bjorge for the front cover of this Ordnance Survey map



Wed 12 Nov | Rare bird photos An email today from Michael McKee who chartered Zuza in September/ October to go looking for little seen birds. He sent us some photos of the very rare gull-billed tern that he and his fellow sailors saw on Tiree. Only the 10th occasion that this species has been seen in Scotland, one of Michael's photos of the tern appears in our bird gallery.

You can also see this splendid photo, right, of a snowy owl in flight, taken on North Uist. To visit Michael's website of stunning bird photographs please got to <http://www.michaelmckee.co.uk/>. Right: snowy owl by Michael McKee



Tue 18 Nov | New old St Kilda photos We were lucky enough to recently receive some slides from Alison Sassoon, wife of the late George Sassoon, our friend and neighbour from Lochbuie who helped us get started way back in the early days of Northern Light Charters. George had travelled to St Kilda in 1965 aboard the "Glen Carradale" which was owned by Alastair Gibson. Alastair's son Kenny was another neighbour of ours when we lived in Lochbuie - small world!



A couple of George's photos from his 1965 visit to St Kilda are shown above and the rest can be seen on a new gallery page we've created. Above (left) George - we think - on the forepeak of "Glen Carradale" (right) passengers at Stac Lee, St Kilda by George Sassoon

Fri 21 Nov | Beavers arrive in the UK The Scottish Beaver Trial became a reality yesterday when four beaver families arrived from Norway at Heathrow. The beavers will spend six months in quarantine before being released in Knapdale, mid-Argyll, on a time-limited trial basis in spring 2009. Beavers are native to Britain but were hunted to extinction over 400 years ago.

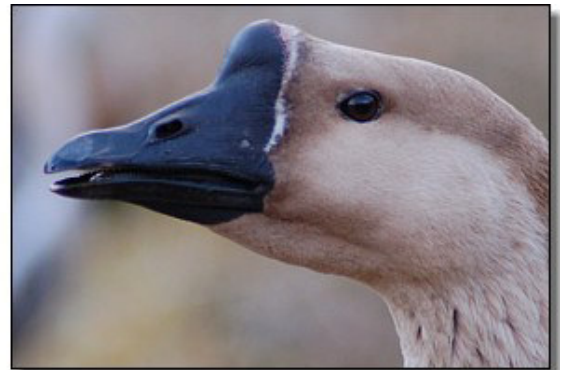
This evening Hannah and Mark danced the night away (or at least some of it) having been invited to a dinner and ceilidh by Glencoe Mountain Rescue Team. Previously we only knew a few of the Team so it was a good opportunity to put some faces to names.

Sat 29 Nov | White winter wonderland Snow everywhere! With visitors here this weekend we took a walk through Lairig Gortain between Glen Etive and Glencoe. There was a good 6" to 8" of snow through the middle to trek through. It was stunningly beautiful, but cold, and everyone - two legs and four - enjoyed the day. Photo: Mark, Seven, Hannah, Daisy, Trixi and Bracken in Lairig Gortain by Hannah Thompson



Of course these harsh conditions (minus 9 overnight) can bring problems for boats so Mark has done a few wee winterising jobs on both Hjalmar Bjarge (at Corpach) and Zuza (on hard-standing at Kerrera). The central heating has been left on low, the fresh water systems drained and an antibacterial agent added to the watermakers to preserve them. The engines and generator on Zuza have had a fresh water flush to prevent build-up of contamination although this is not necessary with Hjalmar Bjarge as she continues to sit in fresh water.

Fri 5 Dec | An absurd bird? An email today from Mr JG Walmsley, a professional ornithologist, researcher and naturalist at the Tour du Valat Biological Station in the Camargue. He had spotted the photo, right, simply entitled "goose" in our bird gallery because I had been unable to identify it any more definitively. Mr Walmsley immediately recognised it as a "swan goose" (*Anser cygnoides*) which resides in Mongolia, China and Russia and not, so far as anyone knows, Scotland. So quite what this one was doing in Lochbuie (Isle of Mull) in April this year is a mystery! But at least it is now correctly labelled in the bird gallery. Photo: Swan goose by David Bonar



Mon 15 Dec | Adventure - Inspiration - Conservation That's the motto of "Scotland Outdoors" magazine which we received today. We're trying a small ad in the publication as we're hoping our cruises will appeal to people reading the journal.

If you're passionate about Scotland's wild places then you'll definitely enjoy this magazine which brings together the best writers and photographers to capture Scotland's world-class natural diversity. What's more it is also printed on FSC-certified paper. For more details why not visit their associated website at <http://www.scotoutdoors.com/>? Photo: The winter 2008 issue of Scotland Outdoors magazine



Mon 22 Dec | A stitch in time saves...pufflings Another "you couldn't make it up" story courtesy of the National Trust for Scotland. Anyone who is good at sewing is being asked to make cotton drawstring bags to help save lost puffin chicks - pufflings - on St Kilda. The disorientated chicks are attracted by the lights of the base and fly onto

the islands instead of out to sea where they should be. The NTS is aiming to replenish stocks before next summer's breeding season. The BBC website carries a story today and if you're tempted to get your sewing machine out the NTS website offers more details at <http://www.nts.org.uk/NewsStory/426/>.

Thu 25 Dec | Merry Christmas to all We'd like to wish all our customers a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year. Thank you to everyone who has been onboard and sent us Christmas cards; they are all appreciated. As is tradition we did a dog walk, approx 20km from Kinlochleven to the Blackwater Reservoir and back. What an amazing feat of engineering - the dam is over 914 metres long making it the longest in Scotland. The reservoir, which is over 13km long, is literally in the middle of nowhere, and was constructed by pick and shovel from 1904 - 1909 and was not without human sacrifice, as witnessed by the small graveyard close by. A pretty special and thought-provoking location. We met a few people in the village but nobody once we set foot along the River Leven.



As usual, here is a card we received that we'd like to share with you as an environmentally-friendly paper-free option. Ullapool Harbour in the snow. It was much warmer than that here today, a good day for a walk. Even just a few days beyond the shortest day (21 December) the extra minutes of daylight at the "end" of the day (around 4.00pm) are noticeable...reasons to be cheerful!!!