



Horse Island, Tony Barr



Showing  
People  
Seabirds . . .

. . . on the Clyde

Selected sailings (usually Saturdays)  
during July and August on board the  
Ardrossan - Brodick Ferry\*

The RSPB has a strong presence in south and west Scotland. There are numerous reserves as shown on the map above, most of which are open to the public. Whilst the RSPB doesn't have any reserves on Arran itself, most of the island is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

There is a strong network of RSPB Local Groups covering North Ayrshire (who provide most of the volunteers for the ferry crossings), Central Ayrshire, Renfrewshire, Hamilton, Glasgow, Helensburgh, Galloway, Borders, Edinburgh and the Forth Valley. Many of the Groups also have members who are available to give illustrated talks to local community groups. Full contact details for Group events can be obtained from the RSPB address and web site listed on the back page.

Membership of the RSPB is excellent value for all the family and entitles you to free entry to over 170 RSPB reserves throughout the UK. In addition you also receive the awarding winning quarterly BIRDS magazine. Full membership information is available on board the ferry.

When on board, the RSPB volunteers will be able to supply you with a range of information about the RSPB, birds and nature conservation as well as pointing out the seabirds during your crossing.



**Caledonian MacBrayne**

Hebridean & Clyde Ferries

The RSPB acknowledges the generous support given by **Caledonian MacBrayne** in the running of this venture. Caledonian MacBrayne sails in modern ferries to 22 islands off the West Coast of Scotland and the Firth of Clyde. Many of the destinations are near to areas rich in wildlife and nature conservation.

Full information on their services and facilities is available from their website at [www.calmac.co.uk](http://www.calmac.co.uk) or by contacting Caledonian MacBrayne, Ferry Terminal, Gourock PA19 1QP, Tel: 01475 650100.

**RSPB Scotland** works for a healthy environment rich in birds and wildlife. It depends on the support and generosity of others to make a difference. It works with bird and habitat conservation organisations in a global partnership called BirdLife International.



**RSPB Scotland**

10 Park Quadrant Glasgow G3 6BS

Tel: 0141 331 0993 [www.rspb.org.uk/scotland](http://www.rspb.org.uk/scotland)

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*Black Gullinot*  
[www.rspb-images.com](http://www.rspb-images.com)



The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Registered Charity No. 207076  
\*Weather Permitting



During the 50-minute crossing between Ardrossan and Brodick you will be surprised at how many birds you can see from the ferry – often over 30 species. A daily list is displayed on the outer aft deck of the ferry when the RSPB volunteers are on board.

One of the most common birds to be seen is the **gannet**. This large white bird has black tips at the end of its wings and is often seen diving from great heights into the sea. Over 26,000 pairs of gannets nest on the RSPB's newest reserve, Ailsa Craig, in the lower Clyde. They can often be seen following the ferry along with the numerous gulls.

Around Ardrossan and Brodick harbours you should also see the **black guillemot**. This is a small duck-like bird that is a member of the auk family. It is black with a white patch on the side of its body and often nests in holes in harbour walls. When it opens its beak you can usually see its bright red gape. Other auks that can be seen frequently include the **common guillemot** and **razorbill**. These two birds are very similar to the black guillemot but they have more white about them and the razorbill's beak is very sturdy. If you are very lucky you may see the most well-known auk – the **puffin**. Some puffins now breed on Ailsa Craig and occasionally fly up the Clyde.

All around the Clyde, you should see plenty of **eider** ducks. The male is mainly white with some black patches on it, and

has a pale green tinge on its head, whilst the female is a drab brown colour. Over 500 pairs of eider nest on Horse Island.

Also on Horse Island over 1800 pairs of **lesser black backed gulls** and **herring gulls** nest. It is also home to **shelduck**, **curlew**, **oystercatcher** and even a pair of **greylag geese**! You can often also see **sandwich terns** fishing offshore, some of which nest elsewhere on the Clyde, and some **common** and **grey seals** basking on the rocks.

One of the most exciting birds to see on the crossing is the **manx shearwater**. This is a member of the petrel family and is the size of a medium gull, but is totally black on top and white below. In calm weather large groups (200-300) of shearwaters can sometimes be seen feeding on the water, or more commonly, groups of birds may fly together in a line, zig-zagging between the waves. Several thousand shearwaters can easily be seen in a very short space in time if conditions are right.

During late summer the occasional **great** or **arctic skua** may sometimes be seen as can the odd **storm petrel**. More common birds that are easy to see from the ferry are the **shag** and **cormorant**. Brodick Bay also often has several pairs of **red breasted merganser** and **great black backed gulls**.

**Dolphins** and **porpoises** are being seen more frequently from the crossings. If you are lucky you may even spot a **basking shark** or **minke whale**. The basking shark often frequents Brodick Bay and the shores near Corrie. Identification charts for cetaceans are usually available when the RSPB volunteers are on board the ferry.

There is a wealth of birdlife to be seen on Arran itself, with over 200 species having been recorded on the island. The absence of the fox as a predator on the island should enable most visitors to see plenty of raptors including **buzzard**, **sparrowhawk** and maybe even the elusive **hen harrier** or **golden eagle**.

Commonly seen around Brodick in good numbers are **ravens** and during the summer common migrants such as **wheatear**, **swallow**, **house martin** and **common sandpiper** can also be readily seen.

The wide variety of habitats on Arran can be easily viewed by following the main roads around and over the island. The local Tourist Information Centre and bookshops should have the latest bird and nature reports published by the Arran Natural History Society whilst the National Trust for Scotland Ranger Service at Brodick Castle is also a good source of current information. The Castle gardens themselves are rich in birdlife and are well worth a visit at any time.

