

’S e eun drùidhteach àlainn agus uasal ann an dreach a tha sa bheachadair Eòrpach a tha na fhalbhanach car bitheanta as t-samhradh air feadh ceann a deas na h-Eòrpa agus e a’ sìolachadh cho fada sear ri crìochan Shìona. Bidh e a’ cur seachad a’ gheamhraidh ann an ceann a deas Afraga agus bidh eòin gu cunbhalach a’ siubhal seachad air a’ cheann-uidhe aca as t-earrach agus a’ nochdadh ann an Alba far am faicear iad a-nis (ged as ann an àireamhan beaga biodach) a’ chuid as motha de bhliadhnaichean. Tha iad a’ biathadh air bèisteagan air an ite agus ’s fheàrr leotha seilleanan a ghlacadh às an toir iad an gath le bhith gam bualadh is gan suathadh ri uachdar cruaidh.

Tha rannsachadh air atharrachadh na gnàth-shìde air breithneachadh gum bi leudachadh air an raon aca ann an ceann a tuath na h-Eòrpa. Tha coimeas ri fiosrachadh eachdraidheil a’ leigeil fhaicinn gu bheil càirdeas gu math làidir aca eadar àireamhan agus a’ ghnàth-shìde, agus a rèir ’s mar a tha an aimsir air fàs nas blàithe, gu bheil iad gu dearbh air tuineachadh gu tuath ann an àiteachan mar a’ Ghearmailt far a bheil na h-àireamhan air dol am meud gu mòr. O chionn beagan bhliadhnaichean tha caochladh nead air a bhith ann an Sasainn.

# European Bee-eater

## Beachadair Eòrpach

### *Merops apiaster*

Bha a’ chiad chlàradh Albannach ann an 1832 agus bha oidhirp air sìolachadh ann an 1920. Bidh iad a’ tighinn an seo nas trice a-nis – uaireannan ann am buidhnean beaga – agus tha e gu math coltach gun sìolaich iad gu soirbheachail an ceann ùine gun a bhith fada. ’S ann far a’ chladaich agus air eileanan far an deach an sguabadh far an slighe as motha a tha iad rim faicinn ann an Alba. An seo bidh iad a’ còmhnaidh air bruthaichean fàsach grianach far an glac iad na bèisteagan a tha rim faotainn – leòmain agus daolagan mòra nam measg.

Tha caochladh sheòrsaichean de bheachadair ann – agus a’ chuid as motha dhiubh a’ fuireach ann an Afraga. Tha a h-uile gin dhiubh nan gnèithean sòisealta, a’ neadachadh ann an tuineachaidhean ann am faichean ann am bruaichean gainmhich ùireach agus tha àl air a leudachadh aca le càirdean à mòran ghinealaichean a’ cuideachadh aig amannan gus àl nan isean a bhiathadh.

Chaidh an t-ainm Gàidhlig a thaghadh gus fear Gàidhlig na h-Èireann a leantainn, agus tha iad stèidhichte le chèile air an fhacal “beach” a tha a’ ciallachadh seillean no speach. Math dh’fhaodte gum fàs triutraich shònraichte a’ bheachadair cho bitheanta mar fhuaim mu chroitean na h-Alba agus a tha e am measg barraidean-fiona na Mara Meadhanaich.

*san Fhaoilinn thall sa Chèitean,  
eun coigreach a’ mairsinn air èiginn  
air na seilleanan ’s na daolagan ’s na leòmain*

The European bee-eater is a strikingly beautiful and exotic-looking bird that is a fairly common summer migrant throughout southern Europe and breeds as far east as the borders of China. It winters in southern Africa and birds regularly overshoot their journeys in spring to appear in Scotland where they are now seen (albeit in tiny numbers) most years. They feed on flying insects and, as the name suggests, favour catching bees from which they remove the sting by hitting and rubbing them on hard surfaces.

Modelling of climate change has predicted a steady expansion of their range into northern Europe. Comparisons with historical data show that they have a very strong climate-population relationship and, as conditions have warmed, they have indeed colonised northward in places like Germany where numbers have increased considerably. In recent years there have been a number of nests in England.

The first Scottish record was in 1832 and there was a breeding attempt in 1920. They now occur more frequently – sometimes in small parties – and it seems very likely that they will breed successfully in the near future. They are most commonly seen in Scotland on coasts and islands where they have been blown off-course. Here they inhabit sheltered, sunny slopes where they catch whatever insects are available – including moths and large beetles.

The Gaelic name was chosen to follow the Irish one, and they are both based around the word “beach” which means a bee or wasp. Perhaps the distinctive trilling call of the “bee-worker” may become as familiar a sound around Scottish crofts as it is among the vine-terraces of the Mediterranean.

#### NOTES

There are several species of bee-eater – most of which are resident in Africa. All of them are social species, nesting in colonies in burrows in sandy, earth banks and they have an extended family with relatives of many generations sometimes helping to feed the brood of chicks.

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on the shore in May, an alien bird barely living on bees and beetles and moths