

# An Litir Bheag

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

An Litir Bheag is a shortened and simplified version of Ruairidh's Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh (also available on the BBC website), designed for those who are at an earlier stage of learning Gaelic. The topic each week is the same as Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh so that, once the Litir Bheag is mastered, a student of the language might wish to try the full Litir. This is Litir Bheag 775 (which corresponds to Litir 1,079). Ruairidh can be contacted at [rodny.macleane@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodny.macleane@bbc.co.uk).

*In the last Litir, I was telling you about Loch an Iasgair near the Fionn Loch. The name means 'the loch of the osprey'. In his book A Hundred Years in the Highlands, Osgood Mackenzie tells us also about another eagle in the area at that time – the sea eagle.*

*There was an island in the Fionn Loch called 'the island of the eagle'. Sea eagles were nesting there. When a small boat was put on the loch for fishing, the nest was no longer safe. People were stealing the eggs from the nest.*

*The sea eagles left. They built a nest high in the mountains. But they weren't safe even there. Osgood was an egg thief. It's difficult to read his account without getting angry!*

*'When I was no more than seven or eight years old,' he wrote, 'I was already quite a keen collector of eggs, and greatly coveted a clutch of those of the sea eagle, which were always rare in this district ... I gave my mother no peace until she had arranged an expedition to the nest ... we went on horseback, with an expert climber and ropes.'*

Anns an Litir mu dheireadh, bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu Loch an Iasgair faisg air an Fhionn Loch. Tha an t-ainm a' ciallachadh 'loch na h-ìolair-uisge'. Anns an leabhar aige *A Hundred Years in the Highlands*, tha Osgood MacCoinnich ag innse dhuinn cuideachd mu ìolair eile anns an sgìre aig an àm sin – an ìolair-mhara.

Bha eilean anns an Fhionn Loch air an robh Eilean na h-Ìolaire mar ainm. Bha ìolairean-mara a' neadachadh ann. Nuair a chaidh bàta beag a chur air an loch airson iasgach, cha robh an nead sàbhailte tuilleadh. Bha daoine a' goid nan uighean às an nead.

Dh'fhalbh na h-ìolairean-mara. Thog iad nead ùr gu h-àrd anns na beanntan. Ach cha robh iad sàbhailte eadhon an sin. Bha Osgood na mhèirleach uighean. Tha e doirbh an cunntas aige a leughadh gun a bhith a' fàs feargach!

*'Nuair nach robh mi ach seachd no ochd bliadhna a dh'aois,' sgrìobh e, 'bha mi mu-thràth an sàs ann an goid uighean, agus bha mi miannach air feadhainn aig an ìolair-mhara, a bha riamh gann anns an sgìre seo ... Cha tug mi fois gu mo mhàthair gus an robh i air turas a chur air dòigh don nead ... chaidh sinn ann air muin-eich, le sreapadair comasach agus ròpan nar cois.'*

*Osgood reached the ledge where the nest was. But the eggs had already been stolen. The day before, a shepherd on the estate, where the nest was, had gone there. He took the eggs with him to sell, because he had heard they were valuable. Osgood was angry.*

*However, Osgood belonged to the gentry, and he was wealthy. He gave money to the shepherd who gave him the eggs. Osgood went home with the large, pale eggs. He was filled with happiness. If you look for words of regret about the damage he did, you'll be disappointed. It wasn't long until the sea eagle became extinct in Scotland. Like the osprey, however, it has returned here, and it is in Wester Ross again.*

Ràinig Osgood an leac air an robh an nead. Ach bha na h-uighean air an goid mu-thràth. An latha roimhe, bha cìobair na h-oighreachd, air an robh an nead, air a dhol ann. Thug e na h-uighean leis airson reic, oir bha e air cluinntinn gun robh luach ann. Bha Osgood fiadhaich.

Ge-tà, bhuineadh Osgood do na h-uaislean, agus bha e beartach. Thug e airgead don cìobair, agus thug esan na h-uighean seachad. Chaidh Osgood dhachaigh leis na h-uighean mòra, bana. Bha toileachas na chridhe. Ma tha sibh a' coimhead airson faclan aithreachais aige mun sgrios a rinn e, bidh briseadh-dùil agaibh. Cha b' fhada gus an deach an iolair-mhara à bith ann an Alba. Coltach ris an iolair-uisge, ge-tà, tha i air tilleadh ann, agus tha i ann an Ros an Iar a-rithist.