



time you are on the George Street esplanade to stop and watch these irascible little fellows at work. The 'top' birds are those that get to utilise their bills in



the most productive fashion, often bulldozing and shunting pieces of seaweed, to reveal hitherto hidden morsels. 'Lesser' birds must perform the drudgery of picking and turning small pebbles or work on the periphery of the feeding area.

These tight communal units can be maintained because, like human fingerprints, Turnstones possess a unique pattern on their faces which allows individual birds to be recognised.

It is also possible for human beings to identify individual birds because of their tameness, something which you may wish to put into practice when you are watching these popular visitors on the local foreshore.

The first Turnstones arrive in the Oban area during August, often as little as 6 - 8 weeks after the last bird had left local shores on its northward migration to Greenland.

By October, the majority of the winter flock has returned and start going about their industry in a most unobtrusive manner.

Such is the Turnstone's popularity among residents and visitors to Oban, some people believe that the town should adopt this little wader as an 'ambassador' for the town.

Local birdwatcher, Stuart Gibson, explained: 'To many, Turnstones have become a symbol of the town and one which has enormous potential for environmental education.

'Breeding in far-flung arctic Canada and Greenland, the nearest human settlements to these birds in summer may belong to indigenous Inuit people.

'A tremendous opportunity to link our Scottish culture with that of the Inuit people could exist, with local schoolchildren playing a big part.'

Many local residents were concerned that Argyll and Bute Council's investment in introducing 'imported' sand to the George Street foreshore, would result in the Turnstones habitat being drastically altered and that they would be forced elsewhere.

Thankfully, this hasn't happened and Oban's pugnacious flock of Turnstones continue to delight spectators as they bulldoze their way through the piles of seaweed cast up on the shore with every tide.