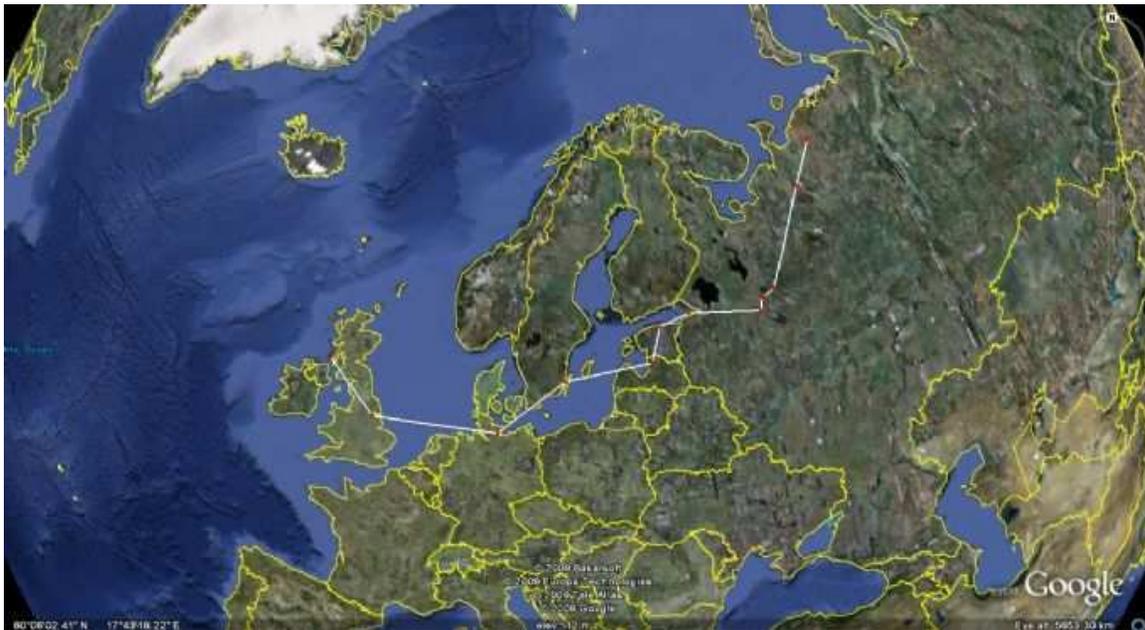


The movements of Askaig in 2009

Askaig migrated to northern Russia to breed. The migration journey (point to point of her locations) was an amazing distance of 4093 kilometres (2543 miles).



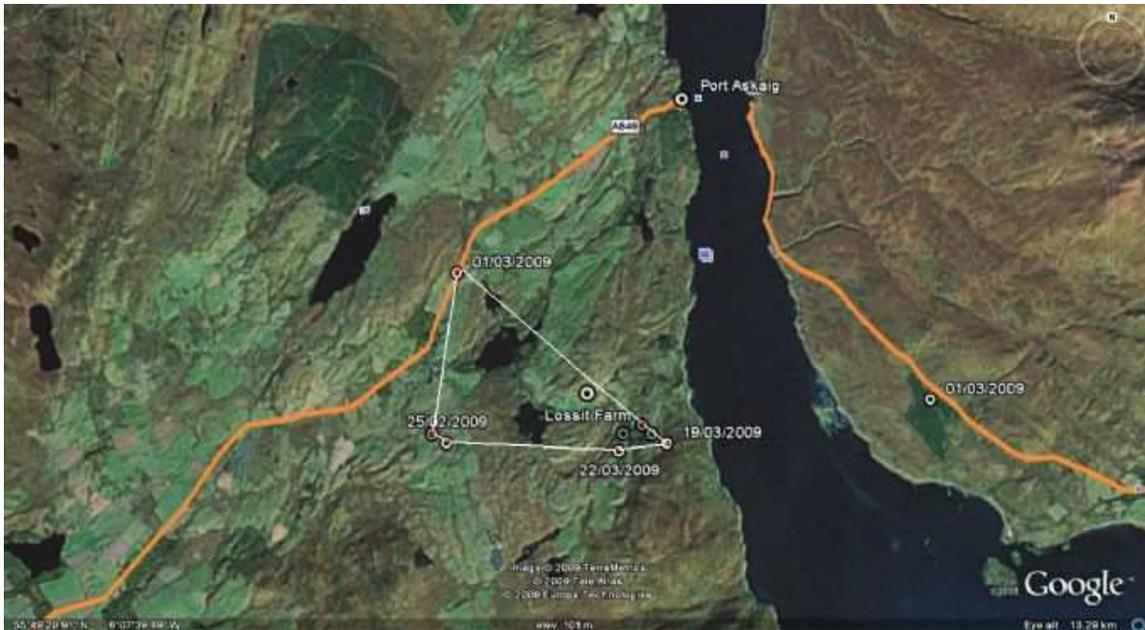
Askaig's incredible migration

26th February 2009

Released at dawn in wooded valley below and to the east of Lossit Farm.

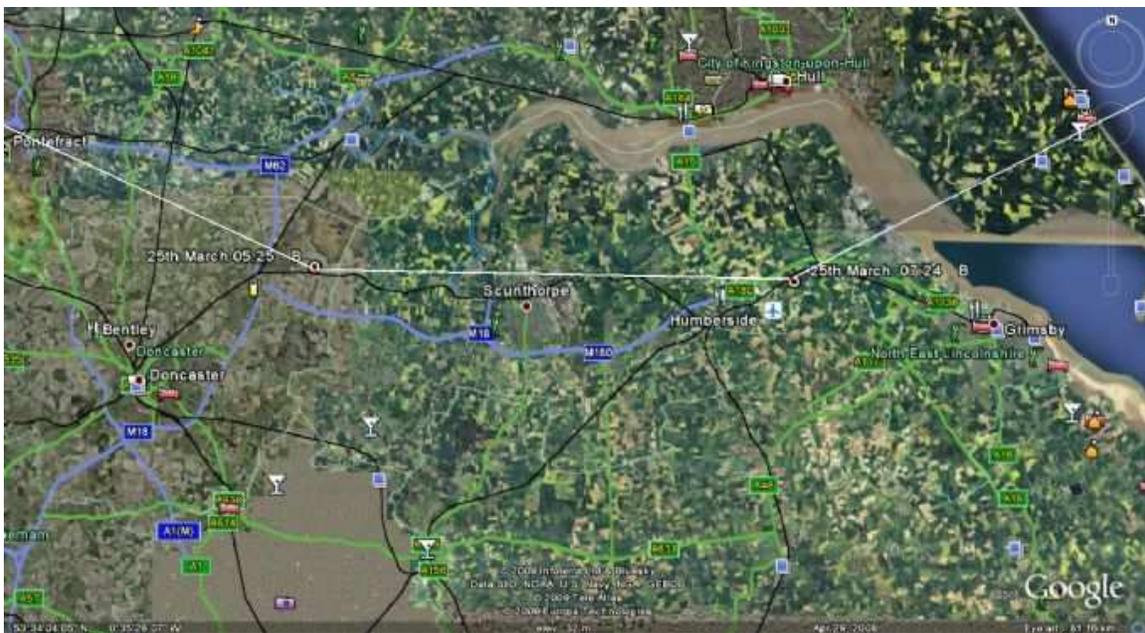
22 March 2009

From 26th February to 22nd March Askaig lived in a relatively small area on Dunlossit estate between the fields where she was caught and woodlands at Ballygrant and hill pastures. There is a possibility that she roosted in a wood on nearby island of Jura on 1st March.



25 March 2009

Askaig was off on migration and by dawn on 25th she had flown to Humberside. At 05.25am she was near Thorne and at 07.24am was not far from a deciduous wood at Croxton. These points are 24 miles apart either side of Scunthorpe and are not very accurate. This is 256 miles SE of Islay, and it looks as though Askaig is making for a short sea crossing to the Netherlands.



Askaig's fixes in Humberside

27 March 2009

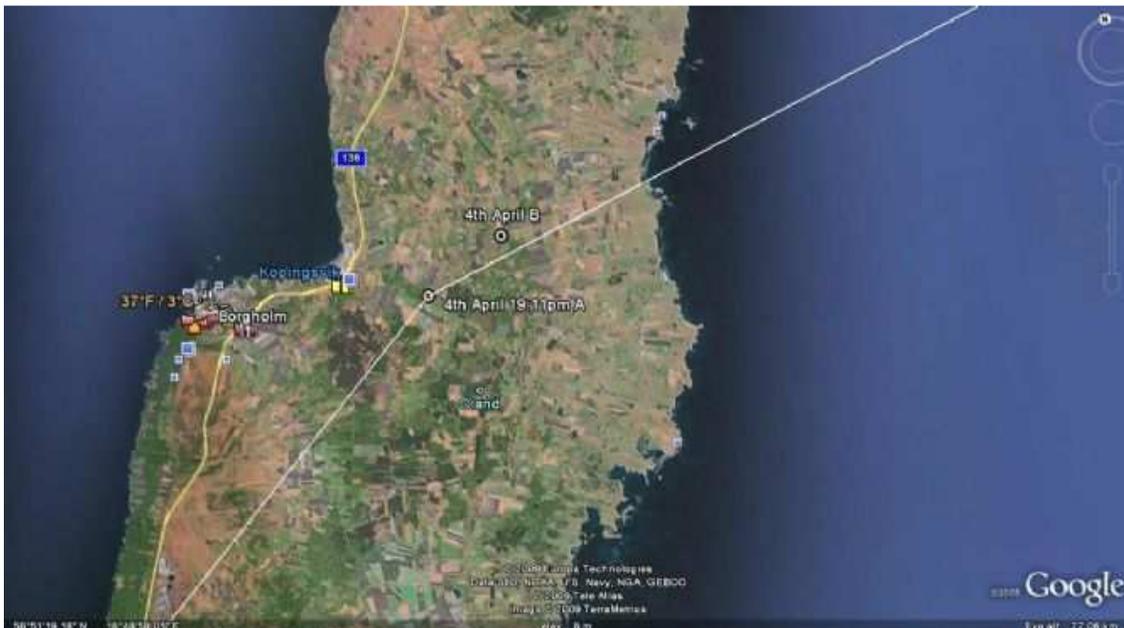
An accurate signal (within 350 metres) came in for 2125GMT and it was on the edge of a small wood near Wulfsdorf, near Lubeck in Germany. Migration journey across North Sea was 470 miles (756 kilometres).



Close up of Askaig in north Germany

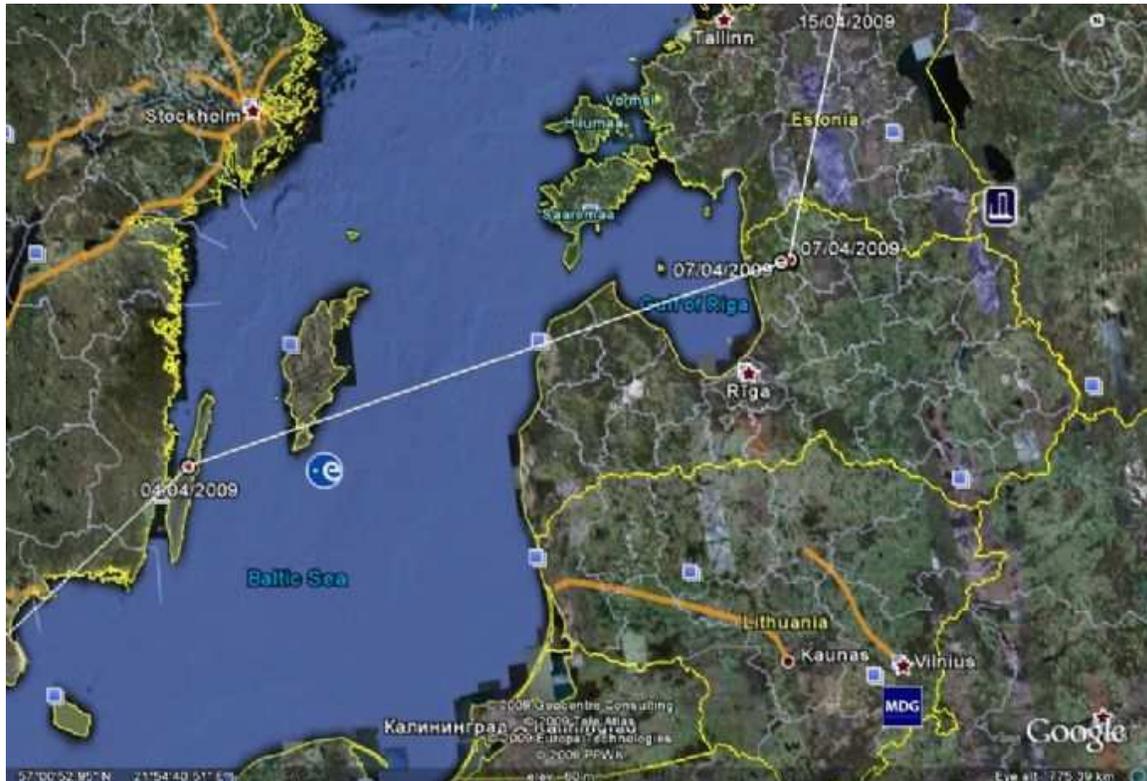
04 April 2009

Askaig was on the island of Oland off the east coast of Sweden, another 497 kilometres on her way.



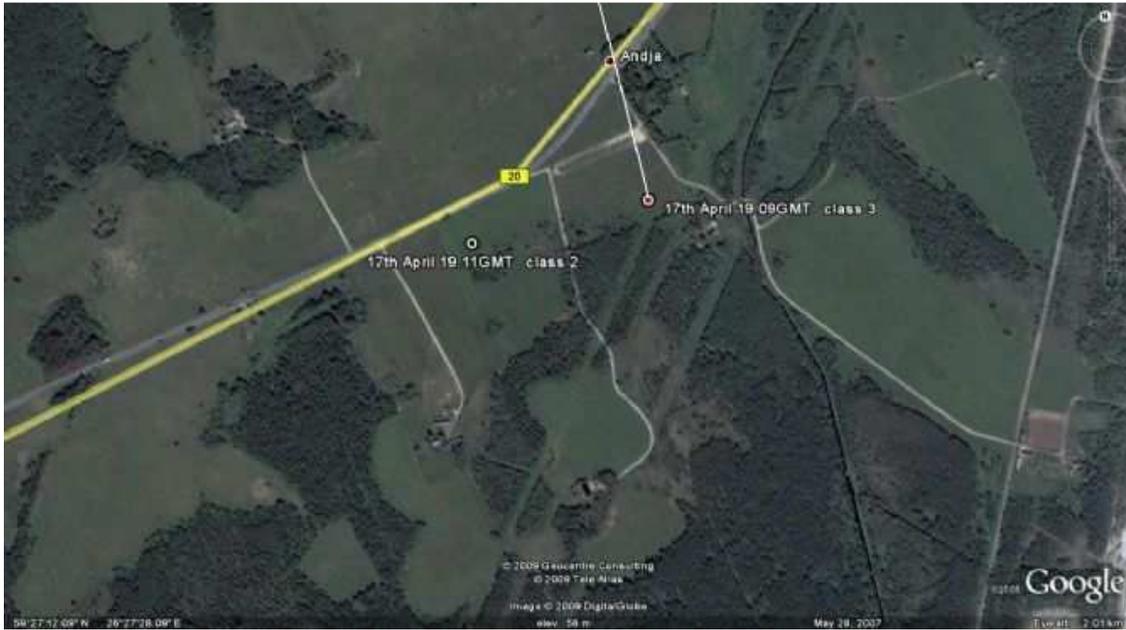
07 April 2009

She has crossed the Baltic Sea and is in Latvia, near Brivzemnieki. Two positions of low quality at 10.41 GMT and 1130GMT. This is ideal woodcock breeding habitat. The distance travelled from Oland was 497 kilometres.



10 April 2009

She has flown another 504 kilometres to northern Estonia. The weather is not good, with a lot of clouds and rain. A signal at 00.17GMT on 10th was of class 2 (within 350 metres) and she was near Kunda, on the Gulf of Finland, about 100kms ENE of Tallinn. Is she ready to go further east and north when the weather clears?



17 April 2009

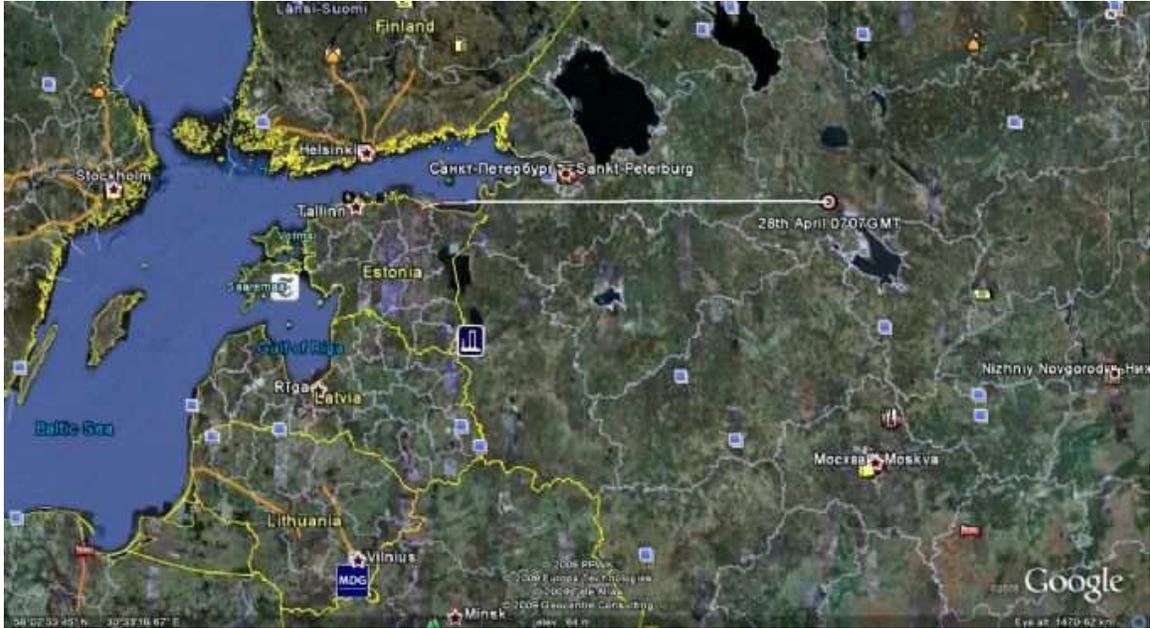
She has moved 5 kilometres to the south and is now in excellent woodcock habitat of small farms and woodlands. The position at 19.09GMT is accurate within 150 metres, and by that time of the day she would have been out in the fields feeding. Her migration from Islay has already been 1491 miles (2399 kilometres) point to point.



The migration to date

25 April 2009

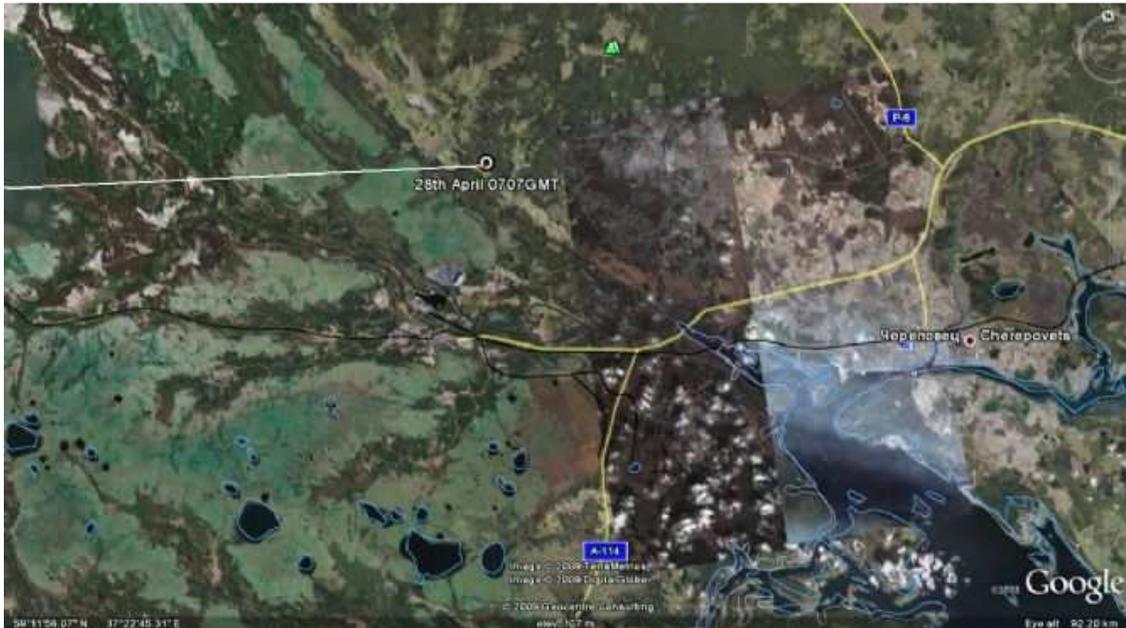
At 1950 GMT, after dark, Askaig was 33 kilometres ENE flying over the Gulf of Finland towards Russia.



Askaig in Estonia

28 April 2009

At 0707GMT, with a class A signal, Askaig was in woods near meadows 5 kilometres SE of Nikol'skoye in Vologda Oblast, Russia; this is 390 kilometres east of St Petersburg and 48 kilometres NW of Cherepovets. The landscape looks suitable for breeding woodcock - I wonder if she has reached her breeding grounds or will she travel further east?. So far she has migrated at least 1870 miles (3000 kilometres) from the wintering site on Islay - it's amazing to think that she is so far away from where we caught her on a February night in the Scottish islands.



06 May 2009

Last signal on 2nd May was a few kilometres further east, and today's signals were poor so she was probably hidden in woodland and maybe starting to breed.

08 May 2009

It appears that Askaig was migrating in the evening, being south-west of Lake Belye at 8.43 pm local time and to the east an hour later.

11 May 2009

The further migration was confirmed today when Askaig was located 745 kilometres NE of the accurate locations north west of Cherepovets. She was along the river Vashka, between Chelusa and Leshukonskoye, about 250 kilometres east of Arkangel. This is good woodcock habitat and is getting close to the northern limit of breeding in Russia.



Flight to River Vashka

14 May 2009

Askaig has moved 24 kilometres and is now on the land between the Vashka and Mezen rivers, 5 kilometres NE of the riverside town of Leshukonskoye. This area is northern birch forest dotted with small hay fields. The weather there today is overcast with a light north wind, the temperature is 2C but it is like freezing. Is this her breeding area or will she travel further when the weather brightens up? Her migration distance from Islay is now at least 2360 miles (3800 kilometres).



Askaig's migration so far

16 May 2009

She moved another 6 kilometres north and is now on the north side of the Mezen River, near the village of Smolenets, opposite Leshukonskoye. This village has hay fields and grazing cattle, which provides additional feeding habitat. Her accurate location at 10.33pm local time was in woodland 500 metres from the edge of the village fields. To the north of the wood are bogs and heathland. This could be her breeding site but we will need to wait for next transmission to check if she has settled down or flown further.



Smolenets village

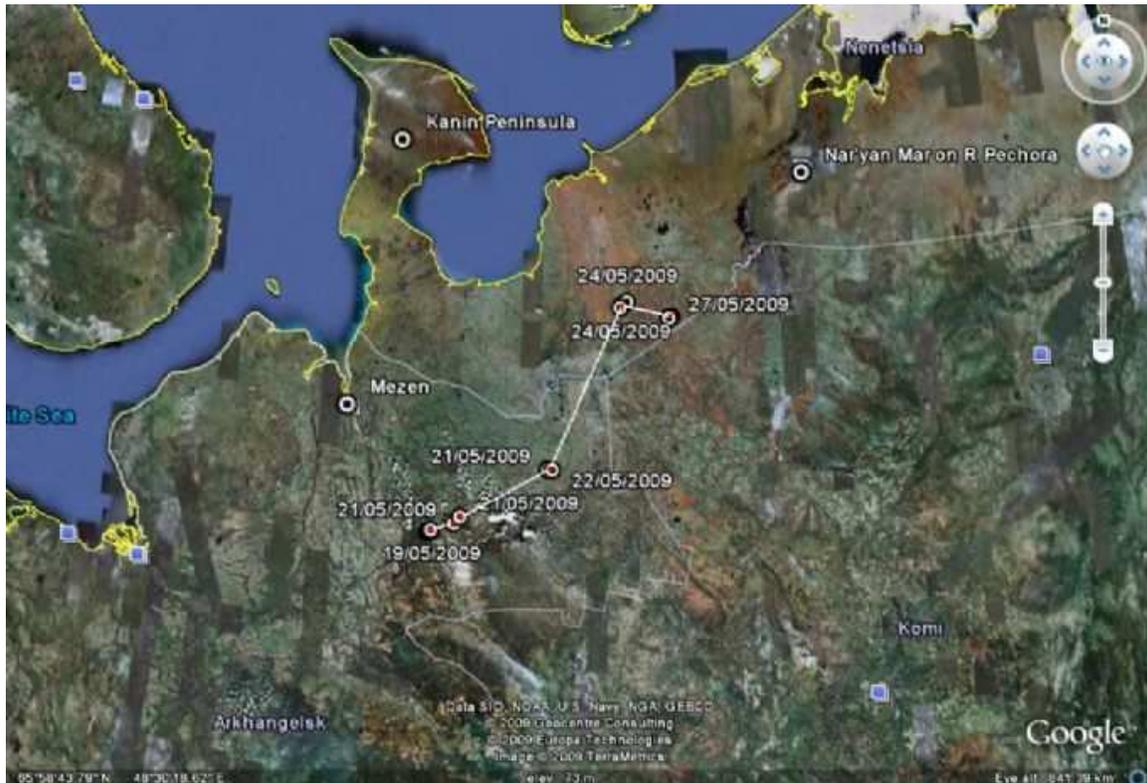


Askaig near Smolenets hayfields

27 May 2009

Askaig continued her migration on the night of 21 May and flew 116 kms ENE where she rested. On the 24th she had flown another 150 kms NNE, and then

changed direction for the next stage, which was 42 kms ESE of where she had arrived by 27 May. This proved to be her breeding ground.



Migration 21-27 May

30 June 2009

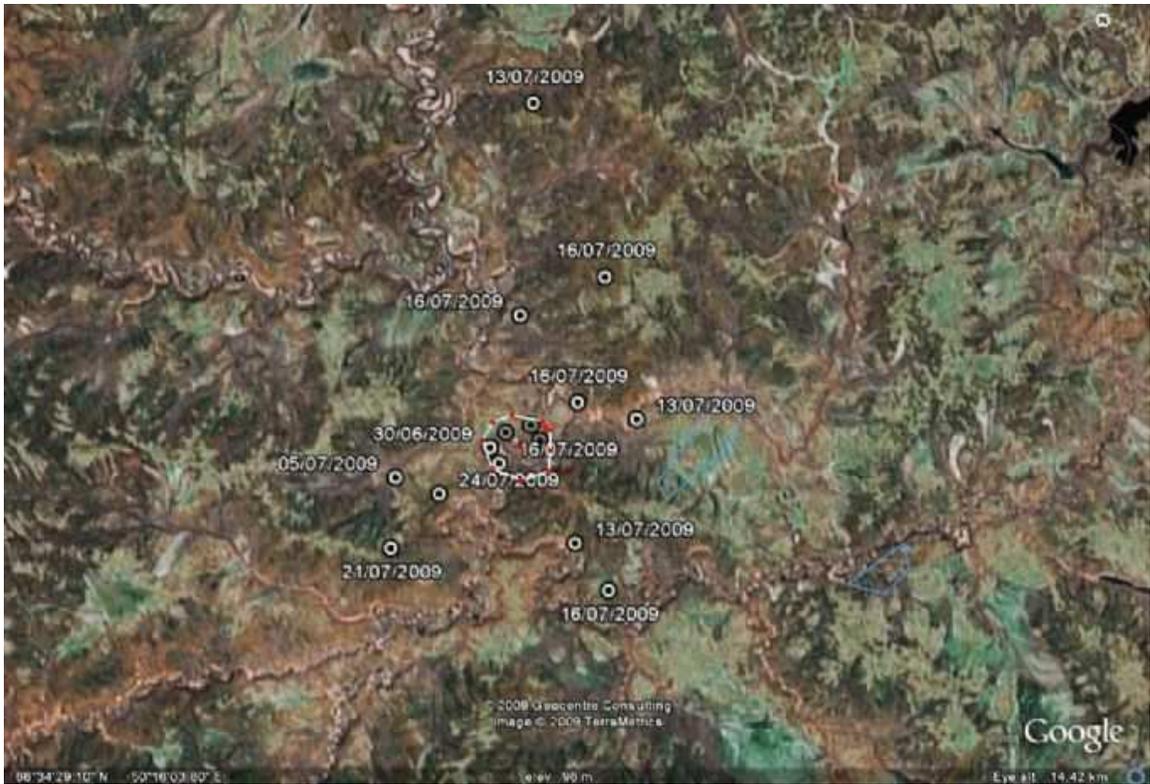
Askaig has now been settled on her breeding grounds for over a month in a remote area of northern Russia, where at this time a year it is continuous daylight. The GoogleEarth maps for this area are low quality so it is difficult to get an idea of her breeding grounds, but it looks like low hills, probably covered in birch scrub, beside a meandering river. All contacts have been within a local area and this map shows a class 3 location for 30th June (accuracy of 150 metres).

Her migration journey from Islay to this breeding area in northern Russia has covered at least 2570 miles (4110 kms), which is an amazing journey for a woodcock. I can still see my local woodcock roding over the house each evening, and it's a lovely thought that some of those that I see here in winter might be breeding near Askaig in the remote northern woodlands of Russia.



27 July 2009

Askaig remains on the breeding grounds. Most accurate fixes have come from an area about 1 kilometre by 1 kilometre in a land with few noticeable features. In July she appears to have moved about a bit more with class 2 and 3 fixes being within 3 kilometres of the centre of her breeding range. On 16th she was 2.68 kilometres NNW and on 21st 2.32 kms SW. Class one signals are plotted on the map, but some outside these distances may not be accurate. The days of permanent sun are now over and nights, although short, are getting longer. I wonder if and how she will migrate - will she move to stop-over sites to the west or south?



Askaig's range in July

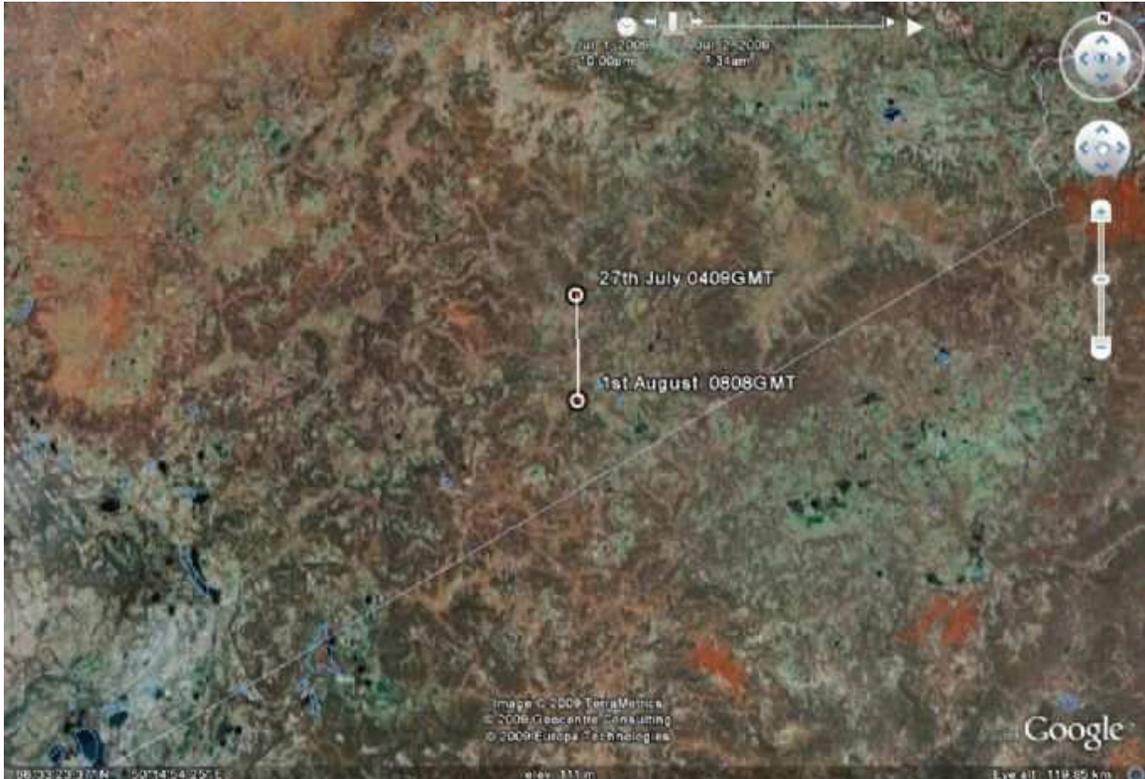
28 July 2009

A very accurate position came in for 0409GMT on 27th July - Askaig is still on the breeding grounds in the vastness of northern Russia - a veritable paradise of birds and mammals for a British birder - a place I'd love to visit.



02 August 2009: First movement

On 1st August, Askaig had moved 12.95 kilometres south from her location on 27th July - both were very accurate locations. The July site appeared to be on a wooded hillside and the August location is a river flat. It looks as though she has finished her breeding season and has started to move, but these might be local movements before migration.

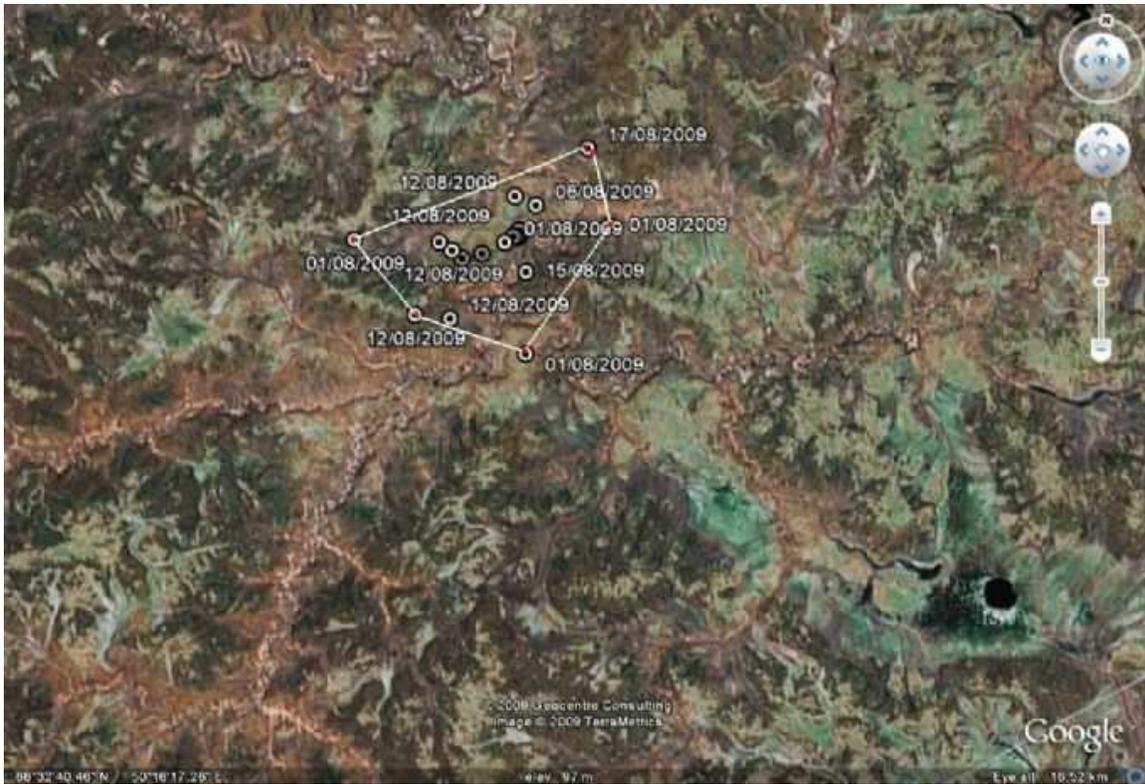


04 August 2009

She moved back 2.7 kilometres to the north.

18 August 2009

Regular data came in and it showed that Askaig was back in her breeding locality and during August so far she has lived in an area of about 4 km x 2.5 km. The map shows the spread of class 1 to 3 locations.



23 August 2009

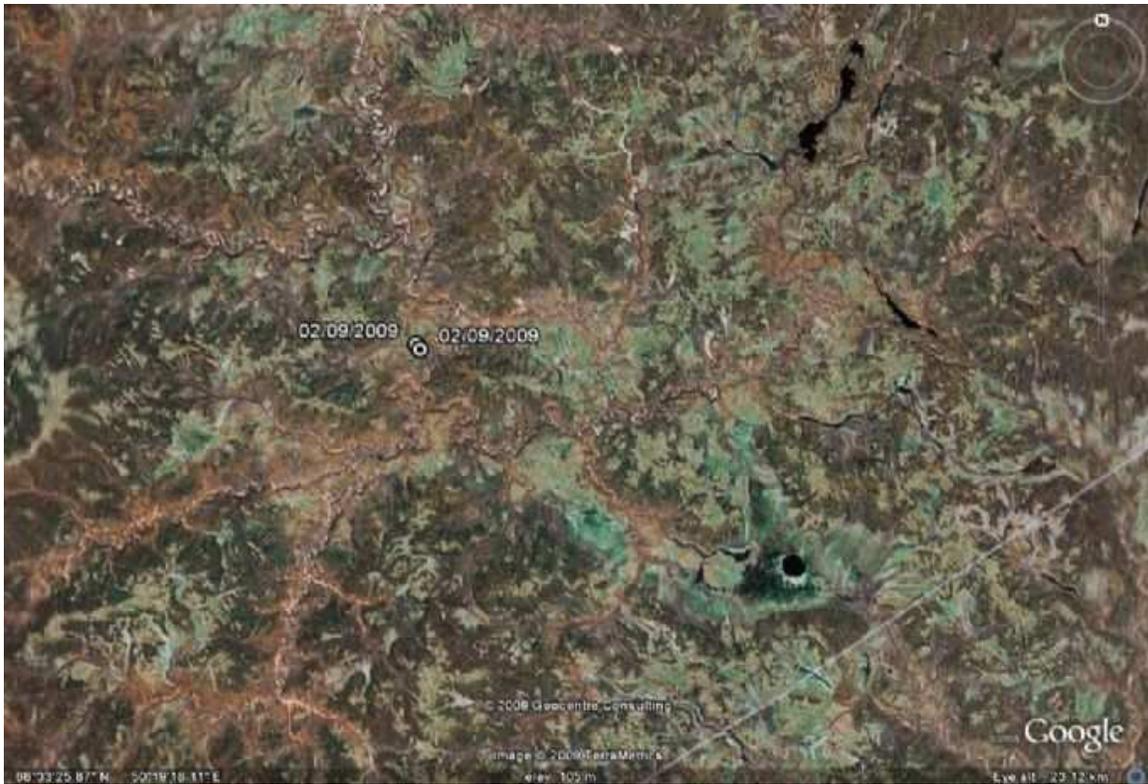
Very good signals at 0748GMT on 20th and 0142GMT today showed her in the same main locality, with 750 metres distance between the two days.

31 August 2009

Askaig still in the same area at 0639GMT - late morning local time.

02 September 2009

Askaig's data showed her still in the same area but the transmitter appeared to be stationary between 15.39GMT and 2154GMT, with no movement on the activity meter.



20 September 2009

There were nearly ten good signals on 5th September all from exactly the same position as on 2nd September, but there was no movement on the activity meter. Either Askaig has been killed by a predator, died or the transmitter has detached. This is very disappointing and sadly we will not be able to follow a migrating woodcock back to Western Europe, and see if she returned to Islay.

This first long distance tracked woodcock has shown extremely interesting facts about the life of a woodcock wintering in Scotland and breeding in northern Russia. The migration journey was a staggering distance of 2543 miles point to point (4093 kilometres).

There have been no signals since the 5th September, so the transmitter must have fallen into long vegetation and the solar panel is obscured.

