



Scottish Ornithologists' Club
Scotland's Bird Club
Established 1936

Clyde branch outing to Ardmore and Garelochhead

20th August 2023 (1100-1615)

Leader: **John Simpson**

Weather: Dry with broken cloud. Temperature: 17.4 °C with a 6mph SW wind.

The day started with a warm welcome and brief to the 32 participants, 8 of whom were on their first Clyde SOC outing, by John Simpson SOC Clyde Branch Local Recorder. John outlined the plan for the day, which was to walk round the South Bay first, progress to the point and then pick up the tide line and follow it up to high tide to catch the wader roost before lunch. After lunch, everyone would travel to Garelochhead Army Training Area to be introduced to an exceptional and unique birding environment.



Red-breasted Merganser © Ian Fulton

As the group started, **Sandwich Terns** were calling and were spotted on the strand line along with **Curlew**, **Oystercatcher** and **Redshank**. A pair of sharp eyes picked up a hovering **Osprey** in the distance hunting over Cardross Bay. At this point, John outlined the importance of both Ardmore and Cardross Bay for the regions breeding Ospreys. Continuing, the group had nice views of **Red-breasted Merganser**, **Black Guillemot** and cruising **Gannets** close to shore. 2 **Ravens** flew overhead and promoted discussion on the movements of this corvid 'hunting' for food which sees them fly from the hills of Dunbartonshire to beyond Dunoon in Argyll. The group was treated to the customary but always impressive **Great Crested Grebe** flock. 2 **Red-throated Divers** were seen by two lucky observers, but the sea conditions were choppy, and they could not be relocated.

During this phase of the outing John canvassed for opinions on birding advances at Ardmore. From a dedicated ringing effort to seating options, some great ideas emanated which John will progress on the group's behalf.



Knot © Ian Fulton

It was with some anticipation the group focussed on the North Bay. The tide was moving quickly, and the group spread out along the path to maximise the coverage, and everyone played their part producing species of interest to all. Population and distribution, migration routes and seasonal plumage variations were discussed; there was something for everyone as the species were being identified. **Bar** and **Black-tailed Godwits** found, and key features pointed out. Comparison of **Redshank** and **Greenshank** with **Dunlin**, **Knot** giving great views and a smashing flock of **Ringed Plover** wheeling around the bay emitting their characteristic calls was memorable. Many spoke of the first **Little Egret** they ever saw in the Clyde Area and the fact that this species has become ubiquitous and somewhat synonymous with Ardmore.

With the birding complete at Ardmore everyone enjoyed a well-earned lunch before heading to Garelochhead.

With everyone arriving safe and sound at Garelochhead Army Training Area, John introduced everyone to what could be regarded as one of the top sites in the Clyde Area, a site most people have never heard of and never visited. Whilst it is an area that is best visited in April, May, June and early July, the group's input was sought in the creation of a Black Grouse and Hen Harrier Watchpoint. Both species have healthy populations and as part of a SOC Clyde Branch led initiative, birders will be invited back in 2024 but also encouraged to visit themselves. The site is an active army training area and John explained the safety protocols in place and the responsible conduct required to ensure everyone's enjoyment.

A thoroughly enjoyable day came to a close with views of **Stonechat** and **Kestrel** with potential visits back to Garelochhead on the cards for all. Overall, 60 species were recorded, and thanks go to John Dryden, Mike Harrison, Stuart Milligan and Zul Bhatia for producing day lists and to all those who participated in what many regarded as a completely unique field trip.

John Simpson, August 2023



Photo: Zul Bhatia

No of bird species recorded: 60

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|------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|
| Canada Goose | Curlew | Blue Tit |
| Shelduck | Black-tailed Godwit | Great Tit |
| Mallard | Bar-tailed Godwit | Coal Tit |
| Wigeon | Knot | Swallow |
| Teal | Dunlin | House Martin |
| Eider | Greenshank | Chiffchaff |
| Red-breasted Merganser | Redshank | Willow Warbler |
| Goosander | Black Guillemot | Whitethroat |
| Red-throated Diver | Sandwich Tern | Blackcap |
| Gannet | Common Tern | Nuthatch |
| Cormorant | Black-headed Gull | Wren |
| Shag | Common Gull | Starling |
| Little Egret | Lesser Black-backed Gull | Robin |
| Grey Heron | Herring Gull | Stonechat |
| Great Crested Grebe | Great Black-backed Gull | Wheatear |
| Buzzard | Woodpigeon | House Sparrow |
| Osprey | Swift | Meadow Pipit |
| Oystercatcher | Kestrel | Chaffinch |
| Lapwing | Carrion Crow | Greenfinch |
| Ringed Plover | Raven | Goldfinch |

Butterfly species recorded

- | | |
|--------------|--------------------|
| Large White | Peacock |
| Meadow Brown | Green-veined White |