



Scottish Ornithologists' Club
Scotland's Bird Club
Established 1936

Clyde branch outing to Ardmore

16th March 2024 (1230-1530)

Weather: 7-8 degrees, light easterly to north easterly wind, blue sky with sun breaking through, then clouding over with rain.

Leader: Donald Wilson

Participants: 22

During the week before the outing the weather was, in the main, dire. I was contemplating whether we would need to postpone, but in fact, looking at the weather app on my phone it was looking ok for the Saturday, so fingers were crossed!

At Ardmore by 12.30 all the participants were gathered, and it was great to see so many people out for a few hours birding at one of the Clyde's top spots. There were some familiar faces but also some new ones which was brilliant, and the weather was good!

After a very brief introduction we cracked on as I was conscious the weather was to slowly turn, with rain being forecast for about 3pm. Ardmore, whilst a superb birding location, is fairly unforgiving in inclement weather!

Ardmore has several key areas, the South Bay, North Bay, Mid-Point, and for the hardy, you can walk through the inner parts of the peninsula but Alex Nicol, who birds the area regularly and has for many years, advised that with a largish group, this would be unadvisable. Furthermore at this time of the year we probably wouldn't see too much else and time was of the essence. To see birds at Ardmore properly I would advise at least 2-3 hours or even more.

Upon arrival at the South Bay parking area, the tide was still well out. There were the usual dog walkers out on the sands and so no birds, so we headed off in the direction of the North Bay.



Wigeon © Billy McKellar

Again, I mentioned the value of logging every bird either by notebook or by using Birdtrack as you can and will be amazed just how many bird species you can clock up without realising it! So I pointed out the value of stopping where possible to view the varying landscapes and habitats.

Firstly, a quick view of the House at the junction of the circular path around the headland produced **Dunnock, House Sparrow & Robin**. We then looked across the fields and I mentioned the value of checking this area for wagtails, thrushes and geese. Scanning the fenceposts can produce Chats, particularly in the migration months and birds of prey such as Merlin or Peregrine.

With everyone looking, we collectively had a fly-over **Buzzard, Greylag Geese**, a fly-over **Pied Wagtail, Jackdaws** and **Carrion Crow** in the near field. Nothing major but they all count!

We headed on to the North Bay which is only an easy 10 min walk. On the way we had **Chaffinch, Blue Tit, Wren** and **Song Thrush**. Of course, at this time of the year the resident birds are very vocal, declaring their territories although in the afternoon much less so than in the morning.

We arrived at the North Bay and the tide was still a good bit out, but rising. The usual birds were soon being seen such as **Shelduck, Curlew, Oystercatcher** and various gulls. Then one of the group spotted a **Peregrine Falcon** sitting at a distance on the grass and it remained there for a considerable time, long enough for everyone to get a decent scoped view.

We continued to scan the shoreline when the shout went out from Ian, **Gannet!** Brilliant, an early one and certainly my first of the year. The gannets that patrol up and down the Clyde estuary are most likely from Ailsa Craig. Then Zul spotted a single **Bar-tailed Godwit** which was again well received. Next up a Knot was spotted, which didn't surprise me as Knot is a regular here at the right time of year and across the estuary at Port Glasgow there has been an unprecedented flock of over 600. Then after a few minutes Zul commented that the Knot was in fact a **Grey Plover!** That got my attention as I was busy helping some of the groups with Bar-tailed Godwit identification and helping them with training their optics on birds. I got back onto my scope and yep, that was a **Grey Plover**, another very good year bird for Clyde and relatively scarce. Zul was on roll!

We spent a good bit of time at the North Bay, but it was time to head off anti-clockwise around the point.



Cormorant with crab © Billy McKellar

We stopped at the first decent opening to scan the open water and we added **Cormorant, Shag, Red-breasted Merganser, Great Crested Grebe** and **Slavonian Grebe**, with two of the latter in almost full summer plumage - stunners! Then some of the group got onto a diver and we confirmed it as a **Great Northern Diver**, I was hoping the group would get to see this bird as I knew there had been up to three seen in the area this winter. Another scarce

Clyde bird and a new addition to the outings' species list. Then Daphne spotted a small bird on top of the gorse behind us and it was identified as a female **Linnet**, another nice addition to the trip species list.

We headed on to the mid-point to try and get better views of the Great Northern which in reality was more or less the same but we added a couple of **Red-throated Divers**, with one really close. With more scrutiny we then picked up a breeding-plumaged **Black Guillemot**, another Ardmores specialty.

We pressed on and I had just mentioned that we hadn't seen an Eider when we clapped eyes on a small group of four, two female **Eider** with two male Eider, looking stunning in their breeding finery. By now the forecast was true to the predictions and the rain was slowly setting in so we sped up our pace to get back to the cars just in the nick of time!

Yet again I thoroughly enjoyed leading an outing and the group, I trust, had a very enjoyable few hours. It was a pleasure helping everyone get the most out of the time spent birding.

If you've not been on an SOC outing why not look up the outings' schedule <https://www.birdsinclyde.scot/outings.html> and come along, all are welcome!

Here's to the next one,

Donald Wilson, March 2024

No of bird species recorded: 43

Greylag Goose	Buzzard	Blue Tit
Shelduck	Oystercatcher	Skylark
Wigeon	Grey Plover	Treecreeper
Mallard	Curlew	Wren
Eider	Bar-tailed Godwit	Starling
Goldeneye	Redshank	Blackbird
Red-breasted Merganser	Black Guillemot	Song Thrush
Red-throated Diver	Black-headed Gull	Mistle Thrush
Great Northern Diver (new to outings list)	Common Gull	Robin
Gannet	Herring Gull	Pied Wagtail
Cormorant	Great Black-backed Gull	Chaffinch
Shag	Woodpigeon	Linnet
Grey Heron	Peregrine	Goldfinch
Great Crested Grebe	Jackdaw	
Slavonian Grebe	Carrion Crow	