Scottish Ornithologists' Club
Scotland's Bird Club
Established 1936

Clyde branch outing to RSPB Baron's Haugh

15th August 2026 (1000-1400)

Weather: Cloudy, with a few light showers, Temperature 17c

Leader: John Dryden **Participants**: 24

In April this year I led an outing at Baron's Haugh for members of the Lochwinnoch Force for Nature group and had suggested they return to see the reserve during passage wader season. Rather than set up a separate walk I invited them along to join our SOC Clyde Branch outing. This nudged up our overall participant number for today to 24. Most of the group had already arrived when I turned up at the car park at 0950hrs and after a quick introduction and head count by Zul (whilst I was distracted by a calling **Chiffchaff** and a **Lesser Black-backed Gull** flying over) the group made their way towards the paddock via the path across the "Bing Meadow". I hoped we might see Sparrowhawk here as there were two young from this summer's breeding season showing occasionally in days previous but no such luck today. We stopped by the top of the first paddock where I gave the group some pointers on where to look for summer warblers if they were to return earlier in the year.

Group Photo © Zul Bhatia

We then made our way to the Marsh hide. As we reached the path that leads to the hide, those at the front of the group got a glimpse of a singing **Nuthatch** followed by a Chiffchaff. As we made our way further along the path, we had views of distant birds including two **Kestrel** and two **Buzzard.** There was also a flyby of three **Cormorant** making their way to the main pool. On reaching the Hide it became obvious that things were going to be a bit on the tight side for 24 bodies and some of the group led by others familiar with the site headed off to the Causeway Hide. Those remaining at the Marsh hide were treated to an initial view of a Baron's Haugh specialist, a single **Green Sandpiper** before another four made an appearance. The reserve is probably the most reliable site in Scotland to see these waders bobbing around with birds on site 11 months out of the year. We were also treated to good views of several **Little Grebe**, **Coot** and **Moorhen**. Zul pointed out that it was the most difficult time of year for duck identification with drakes in eclipse plumage, he took a moment to explain some handy pointers for separating **Mallard** and **Gadwall** of which we saw both. Before leaving to swap hides with the other half of the group one sharp eyed participant spotted an adult **Water Rail** and we quickly got onto it with a scope allowing a few of the group to get a look at.

Lesser Black-backed Gull and Herring Gull © Rebecca Dickson

From the Causeway hide we had further views of another Green Sandpiper, a flock of approximately 280 **Lapwing**. From here we also observed **Teal**, **Snipe**, **Black-tailed Godwits**, a single **Oystercatcher** and large numbers of gulls, mainly **Lesser Black-backed** with **Black-headed** and **Herring Gulls** also present. A Speckled Wood butterfly landed on a tree trunk directly out of the hide window giving good views, this was still a rare sighting for some of the group however the reserve has seen significant numbers of these in the past two years. After regrouping with those returning from the Marsh hide the full party made its way to the "breach" area which was once the site of the Phoenix hide. This area gives good views of the wetland and also the river. While we stopped here for lunch some of the group managed a glimpse of a passing **Kingfisher**. After lunch we made our way along the circular route (now discouraged by the RSPB but safe when the river level is low).

Lapwing (+Black-headed Gull far left) © Rebecca Dickson

Reaching the Dalzell Burn at 1330hrs, I knew time was getting away from us a bit and I was still keen to visit the Carbarns pool area. I'd been worried that it might be a struggle to fill a four-hour walk. In fact, quite the opposite. I ended up having half an hour to get everyone back to the car park for the arranged finish time. After a show of hands, it was clear that some of the group were happy to extend the day and others made their way home. A group of around ten headed upriver to Carbarns where I was (overly) optimistic we might hear the long staying Cetti's Warbler call or sing, unfortunately it was not to be but we were treated to a **Greenshank** and a **Little Egret** which were two lifers in the space of a few minutes for one of our group. A **Canada Goose** in flight added to our list for the day. We returned to the car park via the chestnut walk and manse road where I picked up the final bird for the outing list, a **Coal Tit**.

A personal thank you to Ania Owsianka for the organisation of this outing, and Allan Russell for helping guide the split group to the Causeway hide.

Despite being a large group full of distractions with lots of chat and sharing of birding stories going on we still recorded a respectable 48 species of birds on the outing.

Report by **John Dryden**

Species seen - 48

Blackbird
Black-headed Gull
Black-tailed Godwit
Blue Tit
Buzzard
Carrion Crow
Canada Goose
Chaffinch
Chiffchaff
Coal Tit
Common Sandpiper
Coot
Cormorant
Curlew
Gadwall
Goldcrest
Goldfinch
Great Tit
Green Sandpiper
Greenshank
Grey Heron
Greylag Goose
Herring Gull
House Martin
Kingfisher
Kestrel
Lapwing
Lesser Black-backed Gull
Little Egret
Little Grebe
Long-tailed Tit
Magpie
Mallard
Moorhen
Nuthatch
Oystercatcher
Pied Wagtail
Robin
Sand Martin
Shoveler
Snipe
Swallow
Teal
Treecreeper
Water Rail
Willow Warbler
Woodpigeon
Wren

Other species. Speckled Wood, Green-veined white, Roe Deer