



**Scottish Ornithologists' Club**  
Scotland's Bird Club  
Established 1936

## **SOC Clyde branch outing to Crammond Island**

10<sup>th</sup> September 2024 (0900-1800)

**Leader:** Donald Wilson

**Participants:** 7

**Weather:** Bright and sunny with light cloud with strong westerly winds gusting to 30 mph!

For me, deciding where to go on any SOC outing is generally based on thinking primarily, “what would we like to see”? Next, I align that thought with, “where are we likely to see it or them?”

With that in mind and looking at running a trip in September the obvious choice is the east coast, either Fife Ness or Lothian. Why? The more scarce passage sea birds such as shearwaters, skuas and even the odd scarce gull or phalarope are very possible if the moons align or more to the point, if the winds are right! However we have to plump for a day well in advance for obvious reasons and so getting the right weather is always a bit of a long shot!



*Outing group photo (Donald Wilson)*

Not only were the winds strong westerlies, they had been westerly for weeks and in fact for most of the autumn, the east coast sea watchers were struggling compared to previous years. However the plans were made.

I arrived at Hogganfield Loch a little early as usual and started the bird count going with some of the wintering wildfowl already making an appearance such as my first autumn/winter **Goldeneye**, a female in this case. Also on offer were two male **Pochard**, and some of the usual suspects such as **Coot**, **Tufted duck**, **Little Grebe**, etc. A **Grey Wagtail** flew overhead and whilst my eyes were to the sky I counted five **Swallow** hawking around then car park trees. Time ran away with me and when I looked at my watch it was 9.00 and I was still "Donny nae mates"! "Oh dear" I thought so I called Neil who said he was on his way with Sam but had to make some detours due to road closures. Eventually there was just the three of us but hey ho, less can be more in my book so off we went.

At Cramond we met up with John, Pauline, Christine and David. I could see the causeway was clear and conscious of time we cracked on. Despite the glorious sunshine it was blowing an absolute hoolie! Crossing the causeway to Cramond Island can always be a good opportunity to view waders with often close views to be had. At this time of year many are on passage and on an ebbing tide they are usually furiously feeding to keep up their reserves for their long migrations or roosting to catch up on much needed rest. Unfortunately, despite searches, none of the more unusual autumn passage waders could be found but we had nice views of **Dunlin**, some still with remnants of their breeding plumage, **Turnstone**, with some in breeding plumage also, a solitary **Greenshank** at close quarters, **Curlew**, **Redshank**, **Oystercatcher**, and some fly over **Bar-tailed Godwit**. The usual coastal gulls were on show and I pointed out where possible the varying plumages.



*Greenshank (photo: Donald Wilson)*



*Ringed Plover (Juv) (photo: Donald Wilson)*

On the island itself the only passerines of note were again the usual birds such as **Dunnock**, **Wren**, **Robin** etc and then the call I often hear in autumn of **Chiffchaff** with at least two heard and one seen. I often wonder what "good" birds are missed on Cramond Island, especially after a good easterly? It takes about ten to fifteen minutes or so to get to the disused WW2 buildings on the far side of the island which make perfect shelters to watch out to the Firth of Forth straight ahead.



*Great Black-backed Gull (Juv) (photo Donald Wilson)*



*Sandwich Tern (photo Donald Wilson)*

Alas, as I thought, the sea watching was very poor but we enjoyed some nice reviews of a raft of **Eider** and some close fly by **Sandwich Tern** as they hawked around the island edges looking for small fish. We

enjoyed the lovely sunshine out of the wind with a nice lunch, and thank you for the donated grub to yours truly who left his in the car!

After only about an hour of scanning the Forth, in-between cups of coffee and blagged lunch, I decided to call it a day as there was little prospect of seeing anything of note. Those gathered I believe enjoyed the walk, the sheltered sunshine, the birds we did see and the banter as always? On the way back, we had a fly over **Meadow Pipit** and a few fly over **Linnet** too.

Back at the car park I offered people the opportunity to twitch the rare Steppe Grey Shrike which had been found the Friday before near Dunbar. This rarer race of the Great Grey Shrike (from which it may be split) is native to Central Asia and parts of northern China, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Neil and Sam both were up for it, which was handy as they were in my car so we bade farewell to the others and headed off to Dunbar, approximately forty minutes south. The BirdGuides pin drop took us literally straight to the bird which was initially sitting on one of the putting greens of Winterfield Golf Club and we had very good views of the **Steppe Grey Shrike** for a good forty-five minutes or so. A good selection of the diehard Lothian birding fraternity was also present.



*Steppe Grey Shrike (photo Donald Wilson)*



*Steppe Grey Shrike (photo Donald Wilson)*

At approximately 4pm we headed off but unfortunately the dreaded M8 was grim but we eventually got back to Hogganfield at around 6pm.

A good day out with cracking bird to end the day!

**Donald Wilson**

**44 species of birds were recorded on the outing to Cramond Island + Dunbar + Hogganfield Loch on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2024.**

Mute Swan	Lapwing	Steppe Grey Shrike
Mallard	Curlew	Jackdaw
Pochard	Bar-tailed Godwit	Carrion Crow
Tufted Duck	Turnstone	Goldcrest
Eider	Dunlin	Blue Tit
Goldeneye	Greenshank	Great Tit
Goosander	Redshank	Swallow
Cormorant	Sandwich Tern	Chiffchaff
Little Egret	Black-headed Gull	Wren
Little Grebe	Common Gull	Starling
Great Crested Grebe	Lesser Black-backed Gull	Robin
Moorhen	Great Black-backed Gull	Pied Wagtail (yarrellii)
Coot	Feral Pigeon	Meadow Pipit
Oystercatcher	Woodpigeon	Linnet
Golden Plover	Kingfisher	