



Scottish Ornithologists' Club
Scotland's Bird Club
Established 1936

Clyde branch outing to East Lothian coast

15th October 2023 (0930-1630)

Leader: **Scott Black**

Weather: Cool at first rising to c12 degrees by afternoon. Dry throughout with much sun and a strong westerly breeze.

Thirteen of us met at Torness Power station on a fine day. Two people were joining us for their first SOC outing since we resumed them after the Lockdown. Our leader, Scott Black arrived first and had two **Grey Partridge** close to the car park which he hoped to show the rest of us later, but they could not be re-found. He set his scope on a **Peregrine** (later two) perched up on the power station so it was a great start to the outing as it was the first bird many saw. We also saw a **Kestrel** later,

The hoped-for easterly winds had not materialised, so small migrants were very scarce. We first checked out a long line of bushes that were in the lee of the breeze but apart from a **Stonechat**, a singing **Skylark** and some **Goldfinches**, we saw very little there.

We then headed to the shore and shortly after we got there, Donald found a **Snow Bunting** perched on rocks just below us. Quite flighty, it was eventually seen well by all of us before it flew over our heads and disappeared.



Donald Wilson trying to re-find the Snow Bunting © Billy McKellar

Very few waders were about except the odd **Oystercatcher**, **Curlew** and **Bar-tailed Godwit**. Out at sea very little was obvious except **Gannet**, **Cormorant** and a few gulls. Many **Pink-footed Geese** were seen overhead and in the distance. Tony saw two **Little Egrets** briefly.

On our way back to the cars, we stopped to check out the activity of small birds near the track and were rewarded with a **Tree Sparrow** amongst the numerous **House Sparrows** and singles of **Greenfinch**, **Reed Bunting** and **Yellowhammer**.



Tree Sparrow © Billy McKellar

Next stop was Skateraw where the toilets were much appreciated! Many took advantage of the picnic tables too for a mid-morning snack and hot drink. It was also great to sit down and look through our telescopes. There were many waders about including good numbers of **Bar-tailed Godwit**, **Redshank** and **Dunlin**. With the sun shining on them, they looked striking. Other species seen here included two **Little Egret** (maybe the same two that were at Torness earlier?), **Red-breasted Merganser**, **Turnstone**, **Linnet** and **Rock Pipit**. The highlight undoubtedly was a **Little Auk** in flight picked up by Jim and then lost before he re-found it and some of us managed to see it.

We had planned to go to Barns Ness – a migrant hotspot in the area but as there were very few migrants about, we decided to spend time checking out the nearby Whitesands Quarry. There were huge numbers of waterfowl and a few waders present and amongst other species we had **Little Grebe**, a family of **Whooper Swans**, **Pink-footed**, **Greylag**, **Canada** and **Barnacle Geese**, our only **Pochard** of the outing. A small group of **Redwing** near our viewpoint were accompanied by a **Song Thrush**.

We had decided to get to Musselburgh lagoons in good time before high tide to make most of the waders that roost there, so there wasn't time to check out Aberlady Bay or Ferny Ness as we had originally planned. We called in at the SOC HQ where Caitlyn (the staff member present) kindly allowed us to have our lunches in the Library. It wasn't a bird less lunch though as at the feeder just outside, we had lovely views of three **Tree Sparrows** and our only **Coal** and **Great Tits** of the outing.

It wasn't far to the small car park by the boating pond at Musselburgh, so we reassembled there and visited two of the three hides. As expected, there were many birds present.



Redshank © Billy McKellar

A highlight was 4-5 **Snipe** feeding in short grass just a few metres in front of hide. Other waders present, some in numbers, included **Oystercatcher**, **Lapwing**, **Dunlin**, **Bar-tailed Godwit**, **Curlew** and **Redshank**. **Teal** and **Wigeon** were the most numerous ducks.

Someone found a perched **Kingfisher** at the edge of the first lagoon and managed to get a telescope on it, so we were all able to enjoy it. We had great views of **Linnet**.

Four **Shelduck** present were the only ones I saw all day. A very elusive **Goldcrest** just outside the first hide was eventually seen by several people.

Our next and final stop was the sea wall five minutes away from the lagoons. The sea was a bit choppy making it difficult to see birds sitting / feeding on the sea. Amongst other species, we did see **Red-throated Divers**, **Gannet**, **Shag**, **Eider**, two **Common Scoter**, **Razorbill** and **Guillemot**. Our highlight from the sea wall was picked out by Donald - a **Little Gull** in flight and everyone was able to see it (albeit distantly). After four of us left, the others saw **Velvet Scoter**.

A **Sparrowhawk** flew across the track as we were leaving the site.



Lapwing © Billy McKellar

81 species were recorded including four new ones to our outings list (Common Scoter, Grey Partridge, Little Auk and Snow Bunting) which now stands at 159 species. The day was a true team effort with everyone contributing something to the final total of 81 species recorded. Thanks to all those who attended.

Zul Bhatia, October 23

81 species of birds were recorded on the SOC outing to East Lothian coast on 15th October 2023

Mute Swan	Coot	Goldcrest
Whooper Swan	Oystercatcher	Blue Tit
Pink-footed Goose	Lapwing	Great Tit
Greylag Goose	Curlew	Coal Tit
Canada Goose	Bar-tailed Godwit	Skylark
Barnacle Goose	Turnstone	Long-tailed Tit
Shelduck	Dunlin	Wren
Wigeon	Redshank	Starling
Teal	Snipe	Blackbird
Mallard	Little Auk	Song Thrush
Pochard	Razorbill	Redwing
Tufted Duck	Guillemot	Mistle Thrush
Eider	Kittiwake	Robin
Common Scoter	Black-headed Gull	Stonechat
Velvet Scoter	Little Gull	Dunnock
Red-breasted Merganser	Common Gull	House Sparrow
Grey Partridge	Herring Gull	Tree Sparrow
Pheasant	Great Black-backed Gull	Pied Wagtail (yarrellii)
Red-throated Diver	Feral Pigeon	Meadow Pipit
Gannet	Woodpigeon	Rock Pipit
Cormorant	Kingfisher	Chaffinch
Shag	Kestrel	Greenfinch
Little Egret	Peregrine	Linnet
Grey Heron	Magpie	Goldfinch
Little Grebe	Jackdaw	Snow Bunting
Sparrowhawk	Rook	Yellowhammer
Buzzard	Carrion Crow	Reed Bunting

Other species recorded

Red Admiral
Roe Deer
Grey Squirrel