



Scottish Ornithologists' Club
Scotland's Bird Club
Established 1936

Clyde branch outing to Inversnaid & surrounding area

1st May 2022 (0830-1600)

Leaders: Donald Wilson & Sandy McNeil

Participants: 14

Weather: 10 to 15 degrees, mainly overcast with little or no wind.

No of species recorded 57 (see list below)



The Atlantic oak woods of east Loch Lomond, Inversnaid (David Palmar)

We all met up at the Riverside car park, Aberfoyle for 08.30. Due to lack of parking availability along the way we reduced the car numbers by car sharing. In the meantime as I was at the car park approximately 15 minutes early, I immediately set up the Riverside car park up on Birdtrack via the app on my phone and started counting and tapping. It was a good start as even in a semi urban environment there was lots of bird activity and of course the nearby river Forth helped.

The first birds which attracted my attention were the circling **Sand Martin** and a couple of **Swallows**. For me it's been a strange spring in some ways and the hirundine species have been very slow. I hadn't seen too many of these birds on my daily patch rounds so far. In addition **Goosander** on the river, singing **Collared Dove**, **Willow Warbler**, **Chaffinch**, **Duncock**, **House Sparrow** and **Robin**, with 18 species noted made a good start to the day.

We got sorted and then headed off at around 08.45.

On the way to Inversnaid Hotel car park we noticed some **Black Grouse**. We managed to park the cars safely and view the birds from our cars therefore avoiding any disturbance. We soon left as we didn't want to hang around too long. The next bird for myself and Bill Little who was my travelling companion for the day, was a male **Whinchat**. As I was driving Bill was my spotter and that's the beauty of multiple eyes and ears! Bill pointed out a distant bird sitting on top of a small Rowan tree. We pulled over into a layby. I rolled the window down and viewed the bird with my bins as it was on my side and that's what it turned out to be.



Black Grouse (Donald Wilson)

We got out of the car but unfortunately the bird whilst in the vicinity was out of sight of the road by the time the others arrived. We waited for a few minutes but the bird didn't sit up again. For me there were mixed emotions. Delight at seeing my first **Whinchat** of the year but deflation and disappointment the others didn't see it. However I knew there would be scope to try and find another throughout the day. On a positive note we all heard our first **Cuckoo** and some of the group (not me) heard and then saw a **Common Sandpiper** fly down the nearby loch.

We headed on to the Inversnaid Hotel car park and after a short rest break we were off around the RSPB trail. Whilst at the car park it was great to watch several pairs of **House Martin** perform their acrobatics up to their traditional nest sites. For quite a few of the group this was their first of the year.

Just at the edge of the car park a male **Blackcap** flew in front of us to our right and then perched on a bare twig allowing a good but brief view. Then to our left two **Mistle Thrush** flew chasing each other and alighted in a large Sycamore.

The pace was leisurely and the key was to listen for birds singing and soon we heard **Willow Warbler, Wren, Robin, Chaffinch** and then a few hundred yards along the track we picked out by song our first male **Pied Flycatcher**.

Unfortunately this bird along with at least 3 other males seemed content to confine themselves to the canopy and as such we all felt as if we were rainforest birding by staring directly and vertically upwards. All the group got brief glimpses of this species and we decided to press on.

Next up were two battling **Wood Warblers**. The trilling call could be heard from a good distance but with a bit of time and patience one gave itself up with superb views for all the group to enjoy.

A little further up the trail staircase and Sandy picked out a male **Redstart**. Again with time and patience most of the group got good enough views, although again it remained faithful to the canopy. At the same time three of the group located another male **Redstart** briefly.



Wood Warbler (David Palmar)

We continued on up and out of the edge of the woodland where 2 singing and parachuting **Tree Pipits** were performing again with lovely views. We climbed on up to the view point with spectacular views of Loch Lomond and the surrounding hills. We took some scenic and group pictures and then I turned around and shouted out **Black Grouse**. 4 birds flew from distance around the hillside past us still distantly and out of view. Wow, our second sighting of this difficult and iconic bird! Another **Cuckoo** could be heard very distantly.

We continued on down and then made our way back to the car park and came across another male **Pied Flycatcher**. Again high up in the canopy and frustratingly playing hide and seek but continually singing.



Hooded Crow (Donald Wilson)

Almost back at the car park we came across a **Hooded Crow** or **Hoodie/Carrion Crow** hybrid. At the time of writing the identification has not been clinched. **Buzzard** and **Jay** were also noted along this section, but not by all of the group.

Next stop was the Inversnaid Garrison site approximately half a mile back towards Aberfoyle. A good place to sit and have your lunch as you are surrounded by hills, with a good panoramic view and a nearby feeding station for good measure. This spot has always been good for Whinchat and especially good for Cuckoo and Hooded Crow has been seen here also.

On the way to the Garrison a **Jay** flew up from the road and 2 **Grasshopper Warblers** were heard reeling.

So we all settled down for our lunch and soon Kevin spotted a distant bird perched in some tall birch. Soon the scopes were out and to the delight of everyone our first sighting of a **Cuckoo** was had by all. A few minutes later I saw a **Black Grouse** fly out distantly from us and then it settled on a large boulder. Superb! Our third encounter of this species on the trip!

Some of the group walked a little down from the picnic tables to the feeding station where close views were had of **Chaffinch, Siskin, Dunnock** and **Lesser Redpoll**. Still at the main car park 2 reeling **Grasshopper Warblers** were very close but we just couldn't get a visual on them. Then a **Cuckoo** flew at a reasonable range affording the whole group good flight views and seeing the falcon like shape of this bird whilst flying.

Some of the group had to leave unfortunately and the rest of us decided to walk a little up the glen in the hope of finding a Whinchat.

We walked about half a mile and enjoyed singing and parachuting **Meadow Pipit**, singing **Willow Warbler**, a **Stonechat** pair with the female carrying food, and 2 **Whitethroat** with one singing. Then just at the small steel bridge we again heard a reeling **Grasshopper Warbler** which was close. We stood still and waited. Then amazingly out it popped into the middle on a dead bush with fantastic and prolonged views of this normally skulky and elusive bird. There were plenty of grinning faces!

We decided to head back as time was tramping on.

The original plan was to head to Loch Katrine but the birding had been so rewarding that we decided to call it a day. However on the way back to Aberfoyle we stopped at Loch Arklet for a quick scan which produced an unusual sighting of a **Great Crested Grebe**. Other birds seen were a party of 3 **Red Breasted Merganser** flying down the loch, a pair of **Oystercatcher** and two pairs of **Canada Geese**. Lastly we stopped at the head of the loch, split into two groups and walked a short distance down a couple of the tracks to look for Whinchat but alas they eluded us.

Back at Aberfoyle the leaders decided to spoil themselves by participating in the demolishing of a very nice large ice cream!

All in all we had an absolutely superb day and my thanks to all who attended and especially to Sandy McNeil as my co leader, who gave up his own time to recce the area on the previous Friday and for noting all the bird species which were all added to Birdtrack.

Again another superb SOC Clyde outing which was a pleasure to lead with fantastic participants!

I for one am looking forward to attending and leading more; please come along!

Even if there's nae birds you'll be guaranteed fresh air, a bit 'o' exercise an some guid banter!

Donald Wilson

57 species of birds were recorded on SOC Outing to Inversnaid & surrounding area on 1 May 2022.

(Seven of these were only seen at Aberfoyle where we assembled before setting out for Inversnaid):

Greylag Goose	Carrion Crow	Blackbird
Canada Goose	Hooded Crow	Song Thrush
Mallard	Raven	Mistle Thrush
Red-breasted Merganser	Blue Tit	Robin
Goosander	Great Tit	Pied Flycatcher
Black Grouse	Coal Tit	Redstart
Pheasant	Sand Martin	Whinchat
Great Crested Grebe	Swallow	Stonechat
Buzzard	House Martin	Duncock
Oystercatcher	Long-tailed Tit	House Sparrow
Common Sandpiper	Wood Warbler	Grey Wagtail
Common Gull	Chiffchaff	Pied Wagtail (yarrellii)
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Willow Warbler	Tree Pipit
Woodpigeon	Blackcap	Meadow Pipit
Collared Dove	Whitethroat	Chaffinch
Cuckoo	Grasshopper Warbler	Lesser Redpoll
Great Spotted Woodpecker	Nuthatch	Goldfinch
Jay	Wren	Siskin
Jackdaw	Starling	Reed Bunting