



Scottish Ornithologists' Club
Scotland's Bird Club
Established 1936

Central and Clyde branch joint outing to Kinneil & Skinflats

9th September 2023 (0830-1445)

Leader: **Billy Thomson**

Weather: Mainly overcast with light SW breeze. Very warm with temperatures up to the early twenties.

This was the first joint outing that the Central and Clyde SOC had organised. It was led by Billy Thomson from Central branch who knew the areas we were going to visit very well. A total of 14 people joined the outing at some point during the day. Twelve of us met at Kinneil Kerse sewage works at 0830 (a couple of hours before high tide). For those of us travelling from Clyde, it was a very early start!



Group photo © Andrew Muirhead

Within minutes of setting off, we were watching a **Little Egret** and huge numbers waders assembling / feeding on the mud flats at the mouth of the River Avon. This area is part of the Firth of Forth, the most important site for wintering birds in Scotland. Amongst the very numerous **Black-tailed Godwit** (for which the site is internationally important), there were a handful of **Bar-tailed Godwit** enabling easy comparisons of these two species in winter plumage. Other waders present in hundreds were **Redshank**, **Knot** and **Lapwing**. Other waders seen in smaller numbers were **Oystercatcher**, **Curlew**, **Dunlin** and **Greenshank**. There were so many **Shelduck** around (500+) and we learnt that the Forth is the only site in Scotland where birds gather to moult with peak counts in the thousands.



Goosander © Billy McKellar

A couple of diving ducks in the middle distance proved a challenge, but we eventually decided they were **Tufted Duck**. Both **Goosander** and **Red-breasted Merganser** were seen in small numbers. The expected five species of gull were around too.

After enjoying the birds on the mudflats and waters beyond, we walked along the sea wall to overlook the lagoon. As the tide was coming in, huge numbers of waders were flying into / roosting on the lagoons. For many of us, the small flock of **Golden Plover** was a highlight. Some people were lucky enough to see a **Kingfisher** in flight too. A **Ringed Plover** flew over us calling – the only one of the day for me. Others had **Grey Wagtail** and **Skylark** too. **Kestrel** and **Peregrine** were seen from the sea wall.



Knot & Godwits © Andrew Muirhead

There was a lot to see looking the other way too - into the Forth. Several **Guillemot**, a **Razorbill** and a few **Great Crested Grebe** as well as a large number of **Cormorants** were present.

At one point, Billy spotted a distant skua sitting on the water. We peered at it for ages, but couldn't come to a firm conclusion of which species it was. Billy thought it was almost certainly a Pomarine Skua. A skua that was easier to identify was an **Arctic Skua** that was watched several times chasing **Sandwich Terns**.

Billy knew that parking was limited at the second site we were due to visit – Bothkennar Pools at Skinflats, so we decided to meet up at the Asda supermarket in Grangemouth and decant into a smaller number of cars. We took the opportunity to have our packed lunches in the Asda car park and Stuart made a BirdTrack list for the site!

At Bothkennar Pools, we were joined by Claire who used to work at RSPB Lochwinnoch and now works as a Ranger for Falkirk Council. She had got to the site well before us and had already had a walk. She alerted us to the butterflies that were around and subsequently, we saw quite a few **Specked Wood** and a **Comma**. **Mute Swan** was very numerous at the pools with 50+ seen. Other wildfowl included **Wigeon**, **Gadwall** and **Shoveler**. There were quite a number of **Little Grebe** and **Coot** present, both new for the day. We saw very few waders at the site, probably as the tide had gone out quite a bit by then. Raptors were well represented and we had good views of **Sparrowhawk**, **Buzzard** (stunning views) , **Kestrel** and **Peregrine**.



Black-tailed Godwits © Billy McKellar

57 species were recorded during the day. No new species were added to the Clyde Branch 'outings list' but it was only the second time, we had seen Golden Plover and Arctic Skua. More impressive than the number of species recorded of course, was the **very** large numbers of individuals seen. Everyone agreed it had been a great outing. Thank you to everyone who attended, particularly Billy Thomson who led us so ably. The other members of the Central branch present also freely chipped in with their local knowledge throughout the day. Big thanks to Andrew Muirhead and Billy McKellar for allowing use of their photos. Many of us from Clyde have made a point of returning to this superb area soon.



Buzzard © Billy McKellar

No of bird species recorded: 57

Mute Swan
Shelduck
Wigeon
Gadwall
Teal
Mallard
Shoveler
Tufted Duck
Red-breasted Merganser
Goosander
Pheasant
Cormorant
Little Egret
Grey Heron
Little Grebe
Great Crested Grebe
Sparrowhawk
Buzzard
Moorhen

Coot
Oystercatcher
Golden Plover
Lapwing
Ringed Plover
Curlew
Black-tailed Godwit
Bar-tailed Godwit
Knot
Dunlin
Greenshank
Redshank
Arctic Skua
Razorbill
Guillemot
Sandwich Tern
Black-headed Gull
Common Gull
Lesser Black-backed Gull

Herring Gull
Great Black-backed Gull
Woodpigeon
Kingfisher
Kestrel
Peregrine
Carrion Crow
Blue Tit
Great Tit
Skylark
Swallow
Chiffchaff
Wren
Robin
Grey Wagtail
Pied Wagtail (*yarrellii*)
Greenfinch
Linnet
Goldfinch

Butterflies recorded

Speckled Wood
Comma