



Scottish Ornithologists' Club
Scotland's Bird Club
Established 1936

Clyde branch outing to RSPB Loch Leven

20 November 2022 (1000 - 1500)

Leader: Donald Wilson

Participants: 7

Weather: Overcast with outbreaks of sunshine. Temp: 6 to 12 degrees

Including myself, seven of us met at the revamped (and still undergoing renovations) RSPB Loch Leven visitor centre car park.



Loch Leven (Donald Wilson)

Before the outing midweek I called the centre for a heads up of where to go and what to expect, as I personally hadn't visited the site in about fifteen years! So armed with some details of where to go and what to expect, I then checked the forecast as during the week there had been some torrential downpours and flooding. The weather forecast was a 50% chance of rain mid-morning with sunshine developing late morning into the afternoon with light winds, perfect, so I was looking forward to several hours of good birding.

As usual I was up early at 6am and set off at 08.15 for the 46 mile drive from home which took around 54 minutes driving at a leisurely pace, for once! As always I like to get to a birding site earlier than the other members, just to

uss out the venue and to get a feel for the place. My first impression was that a considerable amount of money had been spent, with a very modern visitor centre, great toilet facilities and a lovely café which was going to be a definite stopping point!

After we had gathered, we wandered to the main building, and around the small woodland and feeders at the visitor centre we clocked up a good number of common and woodland species including, **Tree Sparrow, Treecreeper, Chaffinch**, all 4 tit species you would expect, **Greenfinch, Dunnock, Blackbird** etc.



At RSPB Loch Leven Reserve (Donald Wilson)

Once in the centre one of the on duty volunteers gave us a rundown of where to go and what to expect and off we went under the tunnel to the reserve. Our first port of call was to walk along the main path to the sluice area where the river Leven meets the main loch. On the way we started clocking up the waterfowl species such as **Pochard, Goldeneye, Tufted Duck, Coot** and what I thought was an unusual record of 25 **Red-breasted Mergansers?** (I asked one of the volunteers later on if this was indeed an unusual record but they were unsure!)

A little further along Clare had spotted a **Wigeon**, which was a new trip tick. So I set up my scope for a scan, but to my and Claire's disappointment it couldn't be relocated and then I piped up, "I've found the drake **Smew**"! We were told by the centre staff that a Smew had been seen on the reserve but not seen since Thursday! It was a wee bit distant but with the scope all the party had a decent enough view. Nice! It's a sad day if you weren't fussed about seeing a Smew especially a drake.

We soldiered on to the sluice area where a cracking **Grey Wagtail** was spotted and then we followed the river for a couple of hundred metres.

Apparently around the sluice and river a Kingfisher was a good possibility but alas we didn't connect. However just on the opposite of the path we all had superb, prolonged views of a **Dipper** in full breeding plumage which was using some overhanging branches as a perch to dip in and out of the water to feed.



Dipper, Loch Leven Reserve (David Palmer)

We continued along and we added **Pied Wagtail**, which was using a dung heap to feed from, a solitary **Fieldfare** (the only one for the trip) and I spotted a drake **Goosander** flying above and away from us, and then two **Pink-footed Geese** (again disappointingly the only ones of the trip) keeping the day's bird tally ticking over.

We headed back the way we came to check out the hides but as it was around 13.00 we decided to head to the café for a bite to eat and drink.

As the light had dramatically improved we cracked on and headed to the hides but then a quick change of decision was made to visit the small trail behind the centre to look for Red Squirrel. We were told that up to seven individuals can be seen around the trail.

After a short walk and again looking at some of the feeders I noticed a photographer who has set up a mini feeding station and then soon picked out a **Red Squirrel**. I alerted the others and soon we were having jaw dropping views of these amazing and fascinating mammals.



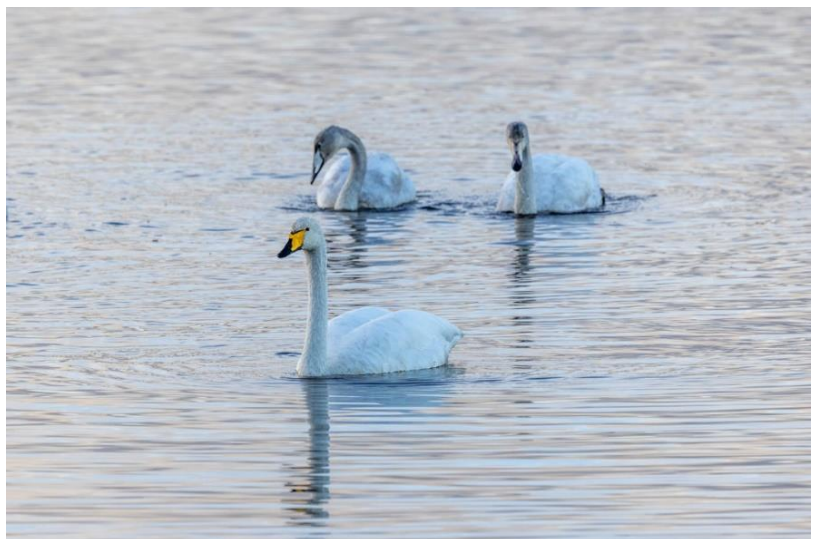
Red Squirrel, Loch Leven Reserve (David Palmar)

We then headed off to the hides with the first and largest hide not adding any new species to the day but again had good numbers of **Goldfinch** and a few **Greenfinch** feeding and squabbling at some feeders. The next hide which was only a very short walk away gave a nice view over the reserve. Then up went approximately 40 **Curlew** and then we realised what had put them up was what was surely a female **Peregrine**. We had superb views as this top predator quartered over the marshy area and then even landed twice on the ground in front of us about 100 metres away. We watched this bird for easily 5 minutes and it was a real joy. Also noted from this hide were two winter plumaged **Black-tailed Godwit** which was anew addition for the reserve latest sightings board and a good bird for our days bird count.

Off to the last hide which added **Teal**, **Moorhen** and **Whooper Swan** to the day, with the latter including a lovely family group with four juveniles which was nice to see.

Our last stop was again the café where a well-deserved cup of coffee and cake was demolished before heading home!

Thanks to those who came along and yet again another great outing, with good company, superb coffee and cake and of course some amazing wildlife and birds!



Whooper Swan family group, Loch Leven Reserve (David Palmar)

A respectable total of 53 species of birds were seen. Two (Pochard and Dipper) were new to our outings list which now stands at 146 species since we resumed outings after the Lockdown in October 2021. **Red Squirrel** was also new to our outings list.

Donald Wilson

No of bird species recorded: 53

Mute Swan
Whooper Swan
Pink-footed Goose
Greylag Goose
Wigeon
Teal
Mallard
Pochard
Tufted Duck
Smew
Red-breasted Merganser
Goosander
Cormorant
Grey Heron
Little Grebe
Great Crested Grebe
Buzzard
Moorhen

Coot
Curlew
Black-tailed Godwit
Black-headed Gull
Common Gull
Herring Gull
Feral Pigeon
Woodpigeon
Great Spotted Woodpecker
Kestrel
Peregrine
Magpie
Jackdaw
Rook
Carrion Crow
Goldcrest
Blue Tit
Great Tit

Coal Tit
Long-tailed Tit
Treetreeper
Wren
Starling
Dipper
Blackbird
Fieldfare
Mistle Thrush
Robin
Dunnock
Tree Sparrow
Pied Wagtail (yarrellii)
Chaffinch
Greenfinch
Goldfinch
Reed Bunting

Other species recorded

Red Squirrel



Teal flock in flight, Loch Leven Reserve (David Palmar)