



Scottish Ornithologists' Club
Scotland's Bird Club
Established 1936

Clyde branch outing to RSPB Loch Lomond 21st January 2023 (0600-1000)

Leader: Ian Fulton

Hosted by: Paula Baker, RSPB Reserve Manager

This was an outing with a difference. The plan was for us to meet at the RSPB Loch Lomond Visitor hub very early in the morning so that we could be in place to watch the geese depart soon after dawn from their overnight roost on the loch. Through the winter season a variable number of geese roost each night in the Net Bay area of the loch or on the adjacent ponds and flood pools of the Endrick Water flood plain. The goose species which might be encountered are Pink-footed Geese, Greenland White-fronted Geese, Greylag Geese, Canada Geese and Barnacle Geese.

After a very early rise, a select group of two leaders and three attendees met at the RSPB Loch Lomond visitor hub. The weather had been cold and icy for the previous week, but the temperature was rising as a warm front approached. With head torches illuminated we set off down the path through Airey Wood to the new boardwalk across the Aber Bog and then on through Shore Wood to the viewpoint in the corner of Net Bay arriving just before 0700 in still complete darkness.

There was an encouraging amount of goose chatter from out on the loch which indicated that there were indeed some geese present. The icy conditions were probably in our favour. The other potential roosting spots like Wards Pond, Snipe Flats, 20 Acre and Low Mains were all frozen over forcing the geese to roost on the loch. On other occasions, such as when there is a strong westerly or northerly wind, the geese prefer to roost on the more sheltered inland flood pools on the reserve.

All we could now do was to wait to see what might develop. The wait was enlivened by the frequent calls of Tawny Owls. The weather was deteriorating with drizzle getting heavier and the dawn was very reluctant to show itself. Fortunately, it was almost windless and the loch was flat calm.



Net Bay, Loch Lomond, Kevin McCormick

After a while some geese began to move off in the gloom. It became apparent that there was a large flock of geese away at the end of Ring Point by the Endrick Mouth and another large flock to the west out from Ross Priory. Over the next hour there was a steady departure of Pink-footed Geese which is the predominant species in the area. Rather than a spectacular mass departure there was a steady stream of groups of 100, 200 and more passing away to the east up the Endrick Water and passing overhead

from the Ross Priory group. Our eventual estimate for Pink-foot numbers was approximately 4000. An unexpected sighting was a Kingfisher which flew across Net Bay to the Ring Point shore.

Unfortunately, due to the gloomy conditions and poor visibility it was difficult to positively identify the other goose species. However, birding can always throw up a surprise. A flying 'V' formation of geese was passing from left to right in front of us when Kevin exclaimed 'There's a Snow Goose in that group!'. And sure enough, right in the middle of one of the arms of the 'V' was a large white goose with black primaries which was undoubtedly a Snow Goose. This bird has been present in the area since before Christmas when it was regularly seen in the fields close to Drymen though latterly it has proved more difficult to locate.



Snow Goose, RSPB Loch Lomond, Robert Wall

After a while it became apparent that most of the geese had departed for the day. Often the Greenland White-fronts will leave later than the other species but, despite some hopeful telescope scanning, they could not be located. Just as we were leaving a shower of freezing rain carpeted the path in ice which made for an interesting walk back to the car park.

Many thanks to Paula Baker of the RSPB for facilitating our visit.

[**Addendum** After the outing the Snow Goose was relocated close to Drymen by the Old Gartmore Road and approximately 180 Greenland White-fronted Geese were located in the Meikle Finny area.]

Ian Fulton, 23/1/2023

No of bird species recorded: 27

Black-headed Gull	Grey Heron	Robin
Blackbird	Greylag Goose	Snipe
Blue Tit	Kingfisher	Snow Goose
Carrion Crow	Mallard	Tawny Owl
Chaffinch	Mistle Thrush	Teal
Cormorant	Nuthatch	Tufted Duck
Goldeneye	Pink-footed Goose	Whooper Swan
Goosander	Redwing	Wigeon
Great Tit	Reed Bunting	Wren