



Scottish Ornithologists' Club
Scotland's Bird Club
Established 1936

Clyde branch outing to Lochwinnoch

10th December 2022 (0930-1250)

Leader: Zul Bhatia

13 of us met at Castle Semple Loch car park on a very cold, but bright Saturday. Much of the loch was frozen but there was a good concentration of waterfowl on the ice free area giving us excellent views of **Mute** and **Whooper Swans**, **Goldeneye**, **Tufted Duck** and **Goosander**. The ice next to the car park still held all the birds that are used to being fed there regularly including dozens of **Mallard**, **Jackdaw**, many gulls (**Black-headed**, **Common** and **Herring**) and unusually six **Moorhens** together presumably frozen out of their normal marshy haunts nearby. Two **Grey Wagtails** and a couple of distant **Lapwings** were seen briefly by some. Fortuitously, Allan Russell, one of the park rangers (and a very keen birder) arrived at the car park and gave us an impromptu introduction to the site and answered any questions we had.



Goldeneye female (Ian Fulton)

We then set off on the Semple Trail towards the RSPB Reserve. Our start was delayed by some small bird activity in the trees by the car park entrance with the highlight being a **Treecreeper** that we all eventually got good views of. We stopped at a site where Goldcrest are regular, but unfortunately, they weren't showing today but we did see a **Song Thrush** and a lovely pair of **Bullfinches**. Despite the very cold weather, a **Woodpigeon** was singing.

We stopped at the pedestrian bridge over the River Calder hoping to see a Dipper at this regular haunt, but none were seen today (although I saw one there the next day!). Two **Dunnocks** which can be shy and skulking gave fabulous views foraging right out in the open on the trail. Nearby, someone noticed some movement in leaf-litter under a tree in the mid-distance and after a bit of a struggle we were rewarded with good views of **Redwings**. Singles of **Cormorant**, **Snipe** and **Grey Heron** in flight from the rest of the Semple Trail were our only sightings of these normally very commonly-seen species.

Our next proper stop was inside the centre at RSPB Lochwinnoch Nature Reserve where the warden Ally Dowd gave us an update on the reserve including recent wildlife seen as well as forthcoming habitat and infrastructure plans. It was very interesting and everyone also enjoyed the warmth of the centre!

We then went up to the viewing Tower , but the adjacent Scrape which has been providing much of interest in past months was completely frozen and we saw only a couple of **Carrion Crow** there. Most of the Aird Meadow Loch was frozen too, but in the remaining open water was a dense concentration of wildfowl including at least 65 **Mute Swan**, 91 **Wigeon** as well as a few **Goldeneye** and one **Coot**. Next we headed along the Aird Meadow trail as far as the screen and feeding station where we had a good variety of small birds including a **Nuthatch**.

Our plan was to head to the Barr Loch but quite a few people were cold and decided to call it a day when we got back to the car park, so our group of 13 had dwindled to five hardy souls who made it there. Most of the Barr Loch was also frozen and the only open areas of water were distant but through the scopes we could see hundreds of birds including our only Great Crested Grebe, Canada Goose and Greylag of the outing. A flock of c20 Lapwing in flight and then settling on the ice were a nice sight as were the occasional Goosander low overhead.



A mostly-frozen Barr Loch, RSPB Lochwinnoch Reserve (Ian Fulton)

We then headed back along the Semple Trail to our start point at Castle Semple loch. Despite the very cold weather, it was a very enjoyable outing. There was a very good mix of people with a range of ages and included some beginners as well as some very experienced birdwatchers. There was good ‘banter’. A total of 42 species was seen (9 less than our visit here in December 2021). 70 records from the outing were submitted to BirdTrack.

Our thanks to all that attended. It was particularly good to see four people on their first SOC outing. We have now had 111 different people attend our outings since we restarted them in October 2021 after Lockdown. No new species were added to our outings list which still stands at 146 species of birds.

[A couple of hours after our outing ended, I got a message on our local WhatsApp group to say that a single Waxwing had been discovered by the RSPB North Ayrshire local group (who were also visiting the reserve the same day as us). It was seen in an area we had passed earlier! Luckily, it was still there when my wife and I arrived.]

Zul Bhatia, 12/12/22

No of bird species recorded: 42

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|---------------|---------------------|---------------|
| Canada Goose | Great Crested Grebe | Great Tit |
| Greylag Goose | Lapwing | Wren |
| Mute Swan | Snipe | Nuthatch |
| Whooper Swan | Black-headed Gull | Treecreeper |
| Wigeon | Common Gull | Song Thrush |
| Mallard | Herring Gull | Redwing |
| Teal | Cormorant | Blackbird |
| Tufted Duck | Grey Heron | Robin |
| Goldeneye | Magpie | House Sparrow |
| Goosander | Jackdaw | Dunnock |
| Woodpigeon | Carrion Crow | Grey Wagtail |
| Collared Dove | Waxwing | Chaffinch |
| Moorhen | Coal Tit | Bullfinch |
| Coot | Blue Tit | Goldfinch |