



Scottish Ornithologists' Club
Scotland's Bird Club
Established 1936

Clyde branch outing to North Ayrshire coast

22nd January 2022 (1000-1430)

Leader: Marco McGinty

It was a very well attended meeting with 28 participants, the highest we've had on any outing this season. For about half, it was their first SOC 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. The weather stayed dry throughout the outing and was actually warm at times, although quite cold towards the end.

A total of 67 species were recorded – the highest number on any of our outings this season, reflecting not only many eyes looking but some very keen and experienced observers. 109 records from the outing were submitted to BirdTrack.

We started at Fairlie Bay where we saw 35 species including distant **Eider**, several **Red-breasted Mergansers**, an unexpected **Great Crested Grebe** asleep far out, many waders including a fine **Greenshank** close by, two **Guillemots** and a **Black Guillemot** (in breeding plumage), a **Little Egret** and **Raven** overhead. Donald was the only one who saw a male **Bullfinch** just before everyone started arriving.

We then got back into our cars and drove the short distance to Southannan Sands. After squeezing our cars in to the limited parking, a short walk brought us to a large variety of hundreds of birds out on the bay. **Wigeon** were abundant, **Teal** and **Shelduck** were very common too, and we managed to pick out a **Gadwall** and four **Pintails** (three males and a female) too. The **Pintails** were a definite highlight for many of us and we got great views too as the rising tide brought them closer. Waders were plentiful too of course. There were an amazing number of **Curlews** (not counted properly but 100+). Other wader highlights were four **Bar-tailed Godwits** and six **Greenshanks** together. Douglas found a roosting **Mediterranean Gull** amongst the hundreds of other gulls. It took a while to establish its identity as we couldn't see the bill or legs for ages, although the eye mask was visible. There was some discussion of what age it was with some going for a 1st-winter bird, whilst others thought it was older. Other highlights on the bay were a **Little Egret** and a **Kestrel** going over. Behind where we stood to overlook the bay, there was woodland and scrub and we recorded some good birds there including **Great Spotted Woodpecker**, **Long-tailed Tit**, **Goldcrest**, **Treecreeper**, **Redwing** and **Buzzard**. Just before we got back to our cars, we saw and heard **Nuthatch**.

Next, we drove to the end of the power station road and had our packed lunches in the car park below Hawking Craig. Sharp-eyed Donald saw a **Peregrine** flying on to the cliffs and we got scopes on a fine adult that stayed put for a long time.

Our final stop was overlooking Hunterston Bay. Behind us in a distant field were quite a few **Greylag Geese**, some **Canada Geese** and two birds which Marco said were Canada x Barnacle hybrids. Also in the fields were a couple of **Mistle Thrushes** and our only **Starlings** of the day. Out on the bay highlights were c25 Turnstones and four **Snipe** sitting out the high tide by perching on rocks. Another **Black Guillemot** was seen, but this one was in winter plumage. The **Little Egret** that flew past us may have been the bird we saw at Southannan Sands earlier. David managed to find three distant **Red-throated Divers** which after a struggle, most of us were able to see. A few **Fieldfares** flying out of a heavily-berried Sea Buckthorn, the odd **Rock Pipit** and a stunning male **Stonechat** were appreciated by all.

It had a been a great outing with a record number of participants as well as a record number of species seen with some very special ones too. The weather was good, the company was great and there was plenty of ‘banter’ and mixing amongst the participants. Our thanks to all that attended.

Zul Bhatia

67 species seen on SOC Outing to N Ayrshire coast, 22 Jan 2022

Greylag Goose	Redshank	Long-tailed Tit
Canada Goose	Snipe	Nuthatch
Shelduck	Black Guillemot	Treecreeper
Wigeon	Guillemot	Wren
Gadwall	Black-headed Gull	Starling
Teal	Mediterranean Gull	Blackbird
Mallard	Common Gull	Fieldfare
Pintail	Herring Gull	Song Thrush
Eider	Great Black-backed Gull	Redwing
Goldeneye	Feral Pigeon	Mistle Thrush
Red-breasted Merganser	Woodpigeon	Robin
Red-throated Diver	Collared Dove	Stonechat
Cormorant	Great Spotted Woodpecker	Dunnock
Shag	Kestrel	House Sparrow
Little Egret	Peregrine	Pied Wagtail
Grey Heron	Magpie	Rock Pipit
Great Crested Grebe	Jackdaw	Chaffinch
Buzzard	Carrion Crow	Bullfinch
Oystercatcher	Raven	Greenfinch
Curlew	Goldcrest	Goldfinch
Bar-tailed Godwit	Blue Tit	Siskin
Turnstone	Great Tit	
Greenshank	Coal Tit	