



Scottish Ornithologists' Club
Scotland's Bird Club
Established 1936

Clyde branch outing to Tay Reedbeds

14 November 2024 (08:00-16:00)

Leader: Donald Wilson

Weather: 6 to 12 degrees, Bright (High Pressure), No Wind.

Participants: 6



Grey Heron © Donald Wilson

Seven of us, me included, met at Hogganfield car park at 8am. I usually like to get to “Hoggy” (Hogganfield Loch) at least twenty minutes early but this morning I was chasing my tail, as they say. However, I was pleased to see a **Jay** fly over the M8 just after joining the motorway from Bargeddie.

I arrived at the Hoggy car park just before 08.00, and as usual started the bird count with the usual waterfowl and parkland birds you would expect to see here, although I was surprised not to see any Whooper Swans which have been a winter speciality of this site for as long as I can remember!

Soon all the group were present, we managed to leave one car behind, and off we went, leaving about 08.15.

It was a pleasant one hour, twenty minutes' drive to Errol, although the section of the M80 through Cumbernauld during rush hour, was a tad slow as usual.

On the way we had a fly over **Raven** just after Cumbernauld, another bird like Jay that is increasing in Clyde. As we approached the Stirling Castle area I always look out for Red Kite as the area of open field either side of the M9 usually produces a sighting and today was no exception with a **Red Kite** flying away from us on the left-hand side of the motorway.

Driving through Errol a flock of around twelve **Skylark** were seen as we drove by one of the vacant fields, another nice addition for the trip.

We arrived at Errol at around 09.45 and I sent my car load to the reed beds as Harry knew the drill, while I waited for Ania's crew who arrived around 10.15 due to an enroute pit-stop.



Outing group © Donald Wilson

Whilst I was waiting, I made myself a welcome cup of coffee and birded the gardens around where you park. I added **Starling, Collared Dove, House Sparrow** with at least 40 coming to garden feeders, **Dunnock, Blackbird** and a fly over **Herring Gull**.

I meandered back to my car and bumped into a local who asked if I was going to the reed beds to which I confirmed, she then told me that "they" have been struggling to get sightings this year. I decided to keep this to myself, but doubt was starting to creep in about connecting? But hey-ho, you never know we might get lucky!

The others arrived and we set off down the few hundred metres track to the open area of the reeds, birding as we went. We didn't see much but about three quarters of the way down I scanned the fields and picked up some distant birds in the field to our left. I was fairly confident they were a flock of **Golden Plover**, which proved to be the case once I got the scope on to them, with about 40 birds, and in the same place they were during our last visit.

Soon we were in the open area of the reeds and to my surprise, in total, there were around twenty folk dotted around and to be honest, whilst not being selfish, this was not the best



Reed Bunting © Ania Owsianka

situation!

So the wait began. Expectantly the first bird that gave itself up was the occasional **Reed Bunting** darting over the reeds, then the odd **Blue Tit** and the usual **Robin**.

When in this situation, I find myself people watching - as well as looking for birds. Now you might think that's a bit weird, but we all do it whether it's conscious or sub-conscious.

In this case I was assessing the field craft and general vibe of the situation and weighing up our chances of connecting. Why? Well as hinted at earlier to the group you find that Bearded Tit are very susceptible to disturbance and so twenty folk, even spread out, may significantly lessen our chances of seeing our target bird!



Robin © Ania Owsianka

Now I'm not having a go at all photographers or, "togggers" as I call them, as it's again down to the individual and their field craft ability or in this case lack of it! But there were two togggers standing about two metres from the edge of the reeds and talking in voices that were not exactly quiet. As a result, we stood searching for around forty-five minutes with no visual sighting or hearing the pinging calls we were hoping to hear. I managed to keep my cool (in past situations like this I've sometimes had to have a quiet word with people who don't understand what's required to increase your chances of seeing what you came to see!). However just as I was starting to lose the will, they departed! Guess what! Within about ten minutes there was some interesting movement in the reeds close to where we were and then at least one male and then another male and female **Bearded Tit** rose to the top of the reeds. Four birds flew across the gap near to where we were standing. We didn't get long but everyone connected, phew!



Bearded Tit © Robert Cousins

Sometimes you know that the show is over and in this case I felt we were lucky so gathered the troops and decided to press on.

We decided to walk along for a few hundred metres through the woodland copse which overlooks the reed bed. It was quiet but we added **Treecreeper**, **Great Spotted Woodpecker**, **Great Tit** etc to the list for the day.

We headed back to the cars for a welcome lunch and on the way back we added **Chaffinch** and some lovely **Yellowhammer** action with at least eight birds.

After a quick cuppa and bite to eat we headed to Scone Palace, hoping for to see Hawfinch.

It's about twenty minutes' drive to Scone and upon arrival we still had a good hour or so of light and therefore the hunt was on. We decided to stay as a group but despite our best efforts we had no sign of any Hawfinch. The bird of Scone during this visit was a very showy Raven calling from the top of one of the pines near the car park. Other additions to the day were **Redwing**, although only single birds, **Nuthatch**, **Goldcrest**, **Mistle Thrush** and **Buzzard**.

It was a glorious day weather wise, we connected with our main target bird with some nice birding in-between, so all in all another successful Clyde SOC outing!

Donald Wilson

List of species seen on the outing (52 species)

Mute Swan	Common Gull	Great Tit
Pink-footed Goose	Herring Gull	Coal Tit
Mallard	Lesser Black-backed	Blue Tit
Wigeon	Gull	Bearded Tit
Teal	Woodpigeon	Nuthatch
Tufted Duck	Collared Dove	Treecreeper
Goldeneye	Great Spotted	Magpie
Goosander	Woodpecker	Jackdaw
Pheasant	Skylark	Rook
Cormorant	Pied Wagtail	Carrion Crow
Grey Heron	Duncock	Raven
Red Kite	Robin	Starling
Buzzard	Song Thrush	House Sparrow
Sparrowhawk	Redwing	Chaffinch
Moorhen	Mistle Thrush	Goldfinch
Coot	Blackbird	Siskin
Golden Plover	Chiffchaff	Reed Bunting
Black-headed Gull	Goldcrest	Yellowhammer