

Fife SOC

Newsletter No. 190

Compiled by Elizabeth Irwin

April 2018



Great White Egret at Rossie Bog: Stewart Neilson

Our next Newsletter will be Issue No. 191 for September 2018. Articles, letters, reports and photographs in *jpeg* or *tiff* format for publication should be sent, by Wednesday 5th September at the latest, to Elizabeth Irwin at Drumcarrow Cottage, Pettycruik, Strathkinness KY16 9XP or email: elizabethjirwin@hotmail.com

FROM THE CHAIR

There are just two outings and two months of bird sightings in this edition of our newsletter. The emphasis, however, is very much on information: you will find details about our planned summer outings from April to September further down the page. Please let the leaders know in good time if you plan to go on these.

The sharing of information electronically has led to massive changes in the way ornithological information is gathered and used. I am sure you are familiar with BTO's *Birdtrack*, but have you seen the free *EuroBirdPortal* that brings together information about bird movements from 81 institutions in 29 different countries? This is fairly new to me, so I am still learning, but I am finding it easy to use (there is a helpful video in the 'help' section). Just go to www.eurobirdportal.org.

Also, on the theme of information, there is also an interesting article about the Waterston House Library. Until I read Norman's article I had no idea what treasure could be found here. I hope you enjoy reading about it.

Elizabeth Irwin

Forthcoming meetings at the Town Hall: -

Wed 11th April **AGM and members' night: Ian Cumming, Norman Elkins and Allister Todd**

Date for your diary: -

We have booked a Christmas lunch (yes, really!) at The Fairways Restaurant, Elmwood, near Cupar, for Saturday December 15th. We hope that the lunch time might make it easier for those who are travelling further and if the weather is good we might even manage a bird walk beforehand.

Forthcoming outings: -

Members wishing to go on outings must let the leader know that they intend to attend by the Thursday before the outing at the very latest.

Sunday 6 th May (NB change of date)	Inversnaid and RSPB Loch Lomond: Dave Heeley dw.heeley@btinternet.com
Thursday May 31 st - Tuesday June 5 th	trip to Norfolk/Suffolk: Dave Heeley
Saturday 24 th June	Howe of Fife: Norman Elkins jandnelkins@btinternet.com
Saturday 4 th August	Musselburgh, Gosford Bay and Aberlady: Paul Taylor pauldtaylor43@aol.com
Sunday 16 th September	Fife Ness/Kilminning: Caroline Gordon sweetbank101@gmail.com

Members are reminded that neither the Club nor its branches or individual leaders of outings can accept any responsibility for any injury suffered by individuals taking part in these outings, or any loss or damage to their property.

Fife Branch donation: -

We know that feeding the birds through the recent harsh weather can be an expensive undertaking, so at our recent committee meeting we decided to donate £200 from Branch funds to the Fife Coast and Countryside Trust to help with providing food for the feeders at their hides in Fife and with other bird work. We were able to do this because of the funds raised through our Christmas raffle and the raffle at the SOC conference in March 2017.

Many thanks to everyone who bought tickets and donated prizes.

The SOC Library

The George Waterston library is one of the most valuable resources at SOC's headquarters at Aberlady, with almost 5000 books from all over the world. It is very much an up-to-date working collection, not only for the professional ornithologist but also for those new to birdwatching, students, artists, ornithological historians and writers, or those working in the areas of conservation and the environment.

The breadth of ornithological information provided means that the contents of the library shelves range from the best current academic books, reports and journals, to beautiful antiquarian books. Books include virtually all major British and international handbooks and country avifaunas, field identification guides, site guides, species monographs and works on biology, conservation and bibliography. The breadth of the periodical holding is exceptionally wide; the library exchanges with, or subscribes to, all the major international journals. There is a complete set of Scottish local and observatory bird reports. A small children's corner, well-stocked with books, colouring-in sheets and pencils, is designed to occupy the younger visitors.

There is also an archive of historically important material, including notebooks, photographs, films, sound recordings, and letters. This comprises many fascinating materials, such as birdwatching diaries from eminent Scottish ornithologists, including George Waterston's birdwatching notes from his time in a German prisoner of war camp.

SOC members can borrow up to two books at a time for a maximum of two months (p & p required). Bird reports, journals, ringing reports and Bird Observatory reports are not on loan, but individual papers may be copied for personal use. The office can scan and email (or photocopy and post) items to members. The Club receives donations of high quality natural history books from members past and present and the public, with duplicates to library holdings on sale in the second-hand book shop. If there's something in particular you're after, contact Waterston House. If members are looking to downsize their collection, donations of ornithological books, reports or journals are always very gratefully received. Sales raise money for the Club and allow us to continue the Club's work in advancing ornithology in Scotland. It is also possible to leave a bequest of books to the SOC in your will.

The library is open to all for reference seven days a week (except over the festive periods) during normal opening hours, although it may help to phone beforehand about access.

Further details can be found on the SOC's website at www.the-soc.org.uk/about-us/library, where a full listing of all books and periodicals in the library can be accessed.

Norman Elkins (Waterston Library committee member)

“We want to keep you informed...but we need your consent!”

Do you want to continue to receive the following from Fife SOC:

- Newsletters?
- Information about meetings?
- Information about outings?

-as well as email notices about news and events from SOC HQ?

If the answer is 'yes' then please respond to the insert that arrived with this month's edition of the SOC magazine. You should also have had an email from HQ around the 23rd of March that gave you a quick link to give your consent, and there is further information on the SOC website.

If you do not give your consent **by 25th May 2018**, Fife Branch will not be able to send any electronic communications to you: so, this would be your last newsletter! As we have stated before, I as chair or Caroline Gordon, secretary, will only use your details to contact you with information that is directly relevant to you as a member of Fife SOC. We will not contact you about other events or news.

You can get further information about how your details are used from the SOC.

We don't want to lose touch with you, so please – sign up!

Elizabeth Irwin

Trip reports:-

Sat 17th February 2018: Outing to Carsbreck and Rhynd Lochs and Argaty Kite Centre

Twelve of us found our way to the designated meeting point near Rhynd and Carsbreck Lochs in Perthshire. As we were preparing to set off the heavens opened forcing us to take refuge in our cars for 15 minutes: but it was worth the wait. The Lochs are set in a beautiful part of Perthshire and despite an intermittent cold breeze we had a nice walk to the lochs. Stewart reported spotting a Peahen on the way to the car park.



View from Carsbreck Loch: Elizabeth Irwin

At Rhynd we also saw; Buzzard, Carrion Crow, Reed Bunting, a Red Kite, Grey Heron, Lapwing, Pink-footed Goose, Skylark (including song flights), Teal, Wigeon, Goosander, Mallard, Herring Gull, Little Grebe, Tufted Duck, Mute Swan, Goldeneye and Blue Tit.

The ermine stoat seen the week before unfortunately did not show itself on the walk to Carsbreck, but the Loch added good views of 7 Whooper Swans, as well as Cormorant, Greater Black-backed Gull, Common Gull, Black-headed Gull, Shelduck and Wood Pigeon. Paul also caught a glimpse of a Peregrine stooping.

We then headed off to the Argaty Kite centre for lunch and then to see the Kites. Argaty is managed jointly by the farmer and the RSPB. Lynn was our guide for the day and gave us a very informative talk about the reintroduction of Kites in Perthshire and how successful the project has been. The Kites do not rely on the food supplied by a local game dealer, but feeding does provide a spectacular

viewing experience. We saw over 20 birds swooping to pick morsels off the ground and transfer them immediately to their beaks. The photographers were hoping for some sunshine but despite the clouds this was, as advertised, truly spectacular.

We also added; Robin, Great Tit, Coal Tit, a lovely group of 7 Long-tailed Tits on a feeder, Chaffinch, Bullfinch, Jackdaw, Pheasant, Blackbird, Magpie and Tree Sparrow. Finally, Anne took a picture of some distant birds to identify them. The enlargement revealed both Redwing and Fieldfare.

John Irwin.



Red Kites at Argaty: Allister Todd

Sunday 18th March: Some you win some you lose – an abortive field trip to Tayport!

It seemed like a good idea at the time, meet at 11.00 and have a gentle stroll along the shores of the silvery Tay at Tayport taking in the waders feeding happily on the mudflats and scanning the estuary for sea ducks. Spring in the air and a relaxed picnic lunch while watching the tide come in bringing the birds to us. Occasional glances over the tree-tops to see if any Goshawks were displaying.

Unfortunately, the mini beast from the east arrived on Saturday and by Sunday morning even St. Andrews had a coating of snow. As several people were travelling from further west it seemed sensible to cancel and we contacted everyone. June and I undeterred set off on the 42 bus and arrived at Lundin Bridge. Why folks spend a fortune travelling to the Arctic Circle beats me – just come to Baltic Tayport for the experience.

The wind was whipping down the estuary, so we set off for Snook Head with at least some protection. June, an advert for Michelin man wrapped up in numerous layers, was nearly blown off her feet. There were virtually no birds braving the wind on the mudflats. A friendly Redwing did appear on the track in front of us but looked a bit bemused. Further on by Snook Head there were several Curlew close in and some Redshanks and Oystercatchers. Fortunately, nobody had appeared, so we abandoned the trip and set off back on the next 42 bus.

Andrew Riches



A Baltic Tayport: Andrew Riches

Fife Bird Sightings:

February 2018

Whooper Swans were at Wormit (six on 17th) and 15 Pale-bellied Brent Geese were at Outhead on 7th. A drake Red-crested Pochard visited Kilconquhar Loch from 10th to 19th, with two drake Scaup there also. St Andrews Bay held c120 Scaup, with others noted at Ruddons Point and at the Eden Estuary mouth (62 on 25th). A count of c6000 Common Scoters was made off Kinshaldy on 18th, and there were c400 Velvet Scoters off Ruddons Point on the same date with the continuing Surf Scoter. Lochore Meadows held a redheaded Smew from 4th to 9th with another seen at Levenmouth on 14th. Grey Partridges were at Tayport. Red-throated Divers were logged off Kinshaldy (44 on 4th), Ruddons Point (20 on 18th) and Lower Largo (22 on 19th), Black-throated Divers off Tentsmuir Point (two on 18th), Ruddons Point (five on 18th) and Lower Largo (19th), and Slavonian Grebes off Kinshaldy (38 on 4th) and Lower Largo (15 on 19th). Little Egrets visited Tentsmuir and the Eden Estuary. A Great White Egret was still at Rossie Bog (1st – 11th) with presumably the same bird relocating to Angle Park on 22nd and then Guardbridge (23rd - 25th). A Merlin was noted at Dunino and Water Rails at Kilconquhar Loch (19th). Bowhouse Farm held 50 Golden Plovers, Purple Sandpipers continued at St Andrews and a Green Sandpiper was at Angle Park. Jack Snipes were again noted at Cocklemill Marsh and Valleyfield Lagoons. Mediterranean Gulls visited Buckhaven and Dalgety Bay with Iceland Gulls logged at Cambo and Townhill Loch (27th). Dunfermline Glen held a Nuthatch on 27th. Ravens were seen at Tayport and Blairadam, Crossbills in Tentsmuir and at Blairadam and two Snow Buntings were at Outhead on 7th.



Red-headed Pochard at Kilconquhar: Stewart Neilson

March 2018

Nine Whooper Swans were at Lochore Meadows on 5th. Greenland race White-fronted Geese were with a large flock of Pink-footed Geese at Letham Pools 12th – 26th, with Eurasian race White-fronted Geese (25th – 26th) and also a Tundra Bean Goose. Pale-bellied Brent Geese continued in the Eden Estuary, with one noted past Fife Ness (24th). A drake Mandarin Duck visited Loch Gelly (14th). Scaup were at Edenside (16 on 16th), in St Andrews Bay (70 on 22nd) and at Fife Ness (24th). The

drake Surf Scoter continued in Largo Bay and the red-headed Smew continued at Lochore Meadows. Red-throated Divers were past Fife Ness and at Lower Largo; Great Northern Divers were noted at Tentsmuir Point NNR (8th), Edenside (16th), St Andrews Bay (two on 22nd), Inverkeithing (18th) and Kinghorn (18th). Slavonian Grebes were logged at Kilconquhar Loch, Lower Largo and off Braefoot Point, with Red-necked Grebes at Lower Largo and Dalgety Bay. Little Egrets continued to expand their range with sightings from Tentsmuir Point NNR, the Eden Estuary, Morton Lochs, the heronry on Mugdrum Island and at Kincardine. Ospreys returned with sightings from Kirkcaldy (11th), Newburgh (20th), Wemyss Wood (20th) and the Eden Estuary (28th). Merlins were at Auchtermuchty. Purple Sandpipers were noted at Fife Ness and Lower Largo, Greenshanks at Tentsmuir Point NNR and Edenside and the overwintering Whimbrel was still at Ruddons Point. A Woodcock was seen at Auchtermuchty (19th) and Jack Snipes were noted at Largoward (18th) and the reliable site at Barnyards Marsh (20th). Little Gulls were off Kinraig Point and Seafield, Mediterranean Gulls were at Seafield, Pathhead, St Andrews, Inverkeithing and Kinghorn; Iceland Gulls were at Aberdour and Kinghorn and a Glaucous Gull was spotted at Elie (29th). Barn Owls showed at Lochore Meadows (5th) and Upper Largo (19th) and there was a Short-eared Owl at Fife Ness on 24th. Tree Pipits arrived at Blairadam on 24th, a Black Redstart was at Fife Ness on 19th and Chiffchaffs enlivened Lochore Meadows (25th), Anstruther (31st), Loch Gelly (20th) and Cullaloe (four on 29th). A Nuthatch continued in Dunfermline Glen, Ravens were over Letham Pools and at Ruddons Point, a Hawfinch was a good find at New Gilston (13th) with Bramblings there also and at Bow of Fife (26th).

David Heeley

*(Records of bird sightings for April to August, for inclusion in the September Newsletter should be sent by **Monday 3rd September 2018 at the latest** to David Heeley at dw.heeley@btinternet.com or 50 High Street, Newburgh, Fife KY14 6AQ)*

The SOC is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation Reg. No SC009859