

# Fife SOC

**Newsletter No. 192**

Compiled by Elizabeth Irwin

*December 2018*



*A Redwing stops over in the garden: Dave Heeley*

NB Dave comments: is this an example of the Icelandic sub-species T. i. 'coburni' rather than T. i. 'iliacus' from Scandinavia - which are the ones we usually get? Looks very like the photos in <http://two-in-a-bush.blogspot.com/2014/11/redwings-coburni-v-iliacus.html>

**Our next Newsletter will be Issue No. 193 for March 2019. Articles, letters, reports and photographs in *jpeg* or *tiff* format for publication should be sent, by Monday 4<sup>th</sup> March at the latest, to Elizabeth Irwin at Drumcarrow Cottage, Pettycruik, Strathkinness KY16 9XP or email: [fifechair@the-soc.org.uk](mailto:fifechair@the-soc.org.uk)**

## **FROM THE CHAIR**

Despite rather variable weather, we have been getting good numbers coming along to recent outings, and it has been very pleasant welcoming some new members. Have a look at the outings that are coming up and see if any appeal.

You will also see that I have included details of SWT Fife below. We are happy to welcome any of their members to our meetings and outings, and I have been sending our information to their secretary. I know many of us have interests across nature and conservation and are members of many organisations: RSPB, Fife Bird Club, SWT and so on. The more we can collaborate and work together for the benefit of the wildlife that is close to our hearts, the better!

Finally, thank you to ***RB Grant Electrical Contractors*** for once again doing our electrical PAT testing free of charge.

***Elizabeth Irwin***

### Forthcoming meetings at the Town Hall: -

Wed 12<sup>th</sup> Dec

**Members' night:** Join us for two members' presentations followed by a sociable quiz and Christmas refreshments. Raffle tickets will be on sale: the prize this year is a bumper box of bird food.

Sat 15<sup>th</sup> Dec

**Christmas LUNCH at The Fairways Restaurant**, Cupar 12 noon for 12.30. Anyone still wanting to put their name down please contact John Irwin ASAP on [jirwin435@gmail.com](mailto:jirwin435@gmail.com). If you have not already paid, please could you do this ASAP. If you contact John, he can give you the SOC bank account details to make a transfer. Our guests will be Alison Irvine and Paul Blackburn from SWT Fife.

Wed 9<sup>th</sup> Jan

**Jeremy Greenwood - The European Breeding Birds Atlas: Birdwatchers collaborating across the continent.**

Wed 13<sup>th</sup> Feb

**Peter Mawby - The distance between: the significance of territory in the lives and survival of birds.**

### 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.*

Sun 13<sup>th</sup> Jan

**Loch Leven** (Caroline Gordon: [fifeseecretary@the-soc.org.uk](mailto:fifeseecretary@the-soc.org.uk))

Sat 16<sup>th</sup> Feb

**Dalgety Bay to Kinghorn** (Caroline Gordon)

15<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> March

**Islay trip** (Dave Heeley: [dw.heeley@btinternet.com](mailto:dw.heeley@btinternet.com)).

NB transport, ferry bookings and accommodation to be arranged by individual members. Please contact Dave for details and to express interest if you have not already done so.

*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.*

NB. **SWT in Fife** extend a welcome to any SOC members who wish to go along to their meetings and outings. You can find details on their website (<http://www.swt-fife.org.uk/>) and on their Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/swtfifeandkinrossmc>). On Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> February they have an outing to the Castle Golf Course near St Andrews: "A tour of the wildlife-friendly managed Castle Links Golf Course, St Andrews by the deputy manager, Trevor Harris. Potential flocks of winter finches". Please get in touch with them for details if you are interested. (contact Paul Blackburn on 01382 542826).

From Caroline Gordon: "We've been contacted by **Tom Bowser at the Argaty Red Kite centre near Doune** who is



writing a book about Red Kites in Scotland. He's looking for any historic records of Red Kites before their extinction in the country in the late 1800s. If anyone has information that they think might be of interest to him, he'd be delighted to hear from you. He can be contacted at [tombowseruk@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:tombowseruk@yahoo.co.uk)"

*Red Kites at Argaty: Elizabeth Irwin*

## GOSHAWKS IN FIFE 2018 and 2019

Work progressed fairly well with Goshawks in the county in 2018. A minimum of nine pairs were found. However, they were not exactly the same sites as 2017 and the minimum number of pairs over the two years is 12 (and a maximum of 14). The big forest sites in the west of the county which have recently matured are the areas where we are finding most new pairs but not all of them. Andy Pay and Kim Blasco confirmed a pair at a site we have been looking at for years. The central part of Fife has been disappointing. They are probably there but in low density and they are always difficult when they are at low density when they display less.

Of course, we only have a figure for the number of pairs and we know nothing about their productivity. I have discussed this with the Secretary of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel. He is happy with our extensive work as there are many intensive studies elsewhere in the country and we, unlike many counties, are getting close to having a figure for the number of pairs in the county. There is, however, a good reason for more intensive work in some areas. Large, mature, lowland forests on flat ground are difficult to watch and finding nests (under licence) would be the way forward. There is also another technique we can use to understand a bit more about how successful our birds are. Traditionally, we look for Goshawks in and around March, when they display. Working on woodland raptors elsewhere in Scotland we have noticed a 'second peak' in August when juveniles are seen almost daily. We should try this. It can be lovely sitting out on a warm August day watching over woodland, perhaps with a friend and a picnic! That apart there is another very good reason for August watches. In our work elsewhere, this is the month we see Hobbies, almost daily, another species we are underestimating!

We all have busy lives (well, I am assuming we have, perhaps some of us don't!!) and our rule elsewhere is 'we can only do what we can do'. The guys who work on other raptors; Harry, Tommy, Graham, the Little brothers, John Nadin, myself etc can get particularly stretched (although I acknowledge that they are often the very guys who are very good at managing and 'creating' time). We are grateful to EVERYONE who has got us to this position.

We continue in 2019. Some of us just like to see the birds, particularly display, I get that!! However, if you have seen them at a couple of 'the usual sites', please try somewhere new. No matter what level you will be working at and you want to discuss any aspect of our work, or Goshawks generally please contact me in the first place. I am away a lot next year, but I have set aside February as a liaison / discussion / decision making month.

***Ken Shaw on behalf of Harry Bell, Tom Ross, Graham Sparshott & Malcolm Ware***

***A very handsome Sparrowhawk in the garden:  
Andy Falconer***



## Observing Birds in Hides

We are very fortunate to have several excellent bird hides in Fife, where we can take refuge from the chill winds (and rain this last week in November) and watch birds in comparative comfort. As we sit there with binoculars, telescopes, and often a flask and a sandwich to hand, I wonder if everyone also remembers the bird log that you will see in every hide. It is easy to take the trouble to fill in the entries when you feel that you have spotted something special, but please read below the plea from Ken Shaw to fill it in every time, and where appropriate include counts – and he explains why:

“The log is a very important part of the hide. The County Recorder uses it to publish our counts, including seabird counts, and day totals can be easily passed on to those who need them. We are therefore asking ALL observers where possible to fill in logs in hides. Every record matters, and ‘day counts’ can be a critical part of this.

For example, big ‘seawatching days’ at Fife Ness like 28 October 2018 don't come along that often....so let's make the most of them. When I am first in a hide, I set the log up for the rest of the day. Very simple, date, wind direction and speed, observers' names and then just a list of species as they come. I try to remember to leave space for the next group of observers. So, Storm Petrel will only need one line but Common Scoter (at least 420 that day) will need several lines. After I leave the next observers just add their sightings. If YOU are first in, please do the same. As often in life, generally, the worst thing you can do is.....do nothing. Your counts in your head or notebook helps only you.

I can hear your brains working!! some of you are thinking.....yeh, sounds easy but when you are alone how do you count every species AND fill in the log especially if you are sea watching or counting geese. Very, very good point. Without being too technical it is a matter of prioritising. Count the Poms, the Sooties, the Manx, the Bonxies but estimate the Common Scoter, the Wigeon, the Teal. Being alone on a big day IS challenging (believe me, I know); I try to ‘share’ my time between looking north and far out (for Poms coming south) and south and middle distance (for Shears, Petrels etc coming north). Traditionally I, and I suspect most of us have not been good enough at looking at divers. We might have to change that!! There is one simple answer to all of this; bring a friend!! Two makes sea watching easier, splitting up the species and / or the ‘search areas’. A friend who is fast with their camera and has a ‘big lens’ could be particularly helpful.

If observers don't fill the logs in, we are missing out as a county! Let's not let that happen. For most keen birdwatchers changing the status of a species for your county, region or nationally is a quest..... or perhaps a dream. Finding a ‘first’ for the county, region, or country is the quickest way to do this but it is not the only way. With the RSPB conservation work and a dedicated team of surveyors we are changing the breeding status of Corn Buntings in Fife year on year. Our work on Goshawk has changed the known status of this secretive species in Fife. In the 1990s and 2000s as a county we changed the status of Storm Petrel and Balearic Shearwater and before that we changed the status of Cory's Shearwater in Fife. Now, there is at least one new species where a change in status is imminent .....and observers' records will again be an important part of that change.”

**Ken Shaw and Elizabeth Irwin**

## Trip reports

### **Outing to Fife Ness, 16<sup>th</sup> September 2018**



Fourteen members came along for this outing on a bright and breezy morning. As we drove out to the club house, a couple of Wheatears on the edge of the golf course was a nice start.

Our first port of call was Balcomie beach. We saw Gannets passing in numbers and picked up a few Red-breasted Mergansers as well as Eider, Shag, Cormorant, Great Black-backed Gull and Herring Gull. On the beach, the waders included Curlew, Redshank, Ringed Plover, Turnstone, Sanderling, Dunlin and Oystercatcher. We also added Swallow, Goldfinch, Linnet, Blue Tit, Dunnock, Wren and Starling to the list.

*Waders on Balcomie Beach: Elizabeth Irwin*

At Fife Ness, it was a bit quiet, at least close to shore. A single Red-throated Diver flew south as did a group of Common Scoter. There were Fulmars and a few Sandwich Terns. One Shearwater was seen at a distance as were a number of Auks but they were just too far away to pin the identification down further. On the rocks in front of the hide there were a few Turnstones and we also had good views of a couple of Knot. It was warm enough in the sun for a large dragonfly to be hunting along the edge of the path and for a Painted Lady and a few White butterflies to be out.

We then tried our luck at Kilminning which produced a few new birds for the day - a Buzzard, Great Tit, Chaffinch, Blackbird and Yellowhammer - but despite scanning the shrubbery for some time, we could not add to that and called it a day.

**Caroline Gordon**

### ***Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> October***

Unfortunately, a forecast of torrential and persistent rain forced the cancellation of the planned trip to **Gartmorn Dam, Black Devon Wetlands and Torry Bay**. However, we had done a recce of the area two days beforehand and, if you don't know these places, they make a great place for a winter's walk (if it is dry): see photo below. We have therefore given the details that were prepared for the day below in case you fancy a trip out.



*Gartmorn Dam under blue skies: Elizabeth Irwin*

**Gartmorn Dam** (OS NS920943; GPS 56.126550, -3.753470)– Gartmorn Rd, Sauchie, Alloa, FK10 3NZ.

Signposted off the A908 Alloa-Sauchie Rd, near Sauchie Post Office.

NB the first part of the road is called Schaw Court, but it soon becomes Gartmorn Road.

There is a 3 mile (4.8km) circular walk around the reservoir. The footpaths are good and there is insignificant ascent/descent. If it has rained hard recently the path might be muddy in places.

NB the aim was to spend an hour or so walking the path looking for winter wildfowl, and, of course, anything else that appeared.

The café has toilets and does provide hot and cold food at lunchtime if you have not brought your own.

**RSPB Black Devon Wetlands** (OS NS891915; GPS 56.107539, -3.78808)– 8, Riverside View, Alloa, FK10 1BU. A residential street: please park considerately.

This is a new reserve near the Black Devon river. There is a small hide and a nice 0.5 mile (800m) walk there and back. This is again on good paths. NB fairly new but worth a look and should develop well.

**Torry Bay** Park in the children's playground carpark (OS NT021861, GPS 56.0582644, -3.5725638) Main Street, Torryburn.

Good for looking over the Forth mudflats and to be there as the tide comes in.

**John and Elizabeth Irwin**

### ***Outing to Kinneil and Slamannan: 18 November 2018.***

An early start was required to try and catch the incoming tide at Kinneil so 14 Fife members, later to be joined by two more and a Lothian member, met at 9.15 at the Premier Inn south of the Kincardine Bridge. While waiting for everyone to arrive we saw a flock of Curlews in a nearby field, watched Redwings flying overhead and heard Goldfinches calling in the hedges.

We arrived at Kinneil, passing two Buzzards on the track to our parking place, to find that the tide was almost in but that did not affect the bird watching there. As we walked up to the sea wall a large flock of Lapwing rose into the sky. Duck species were well represented on the river, there being Mallard, many Teal and Shelduck, Pintail, Wigeon, Red-breasted Merganser and two Scaup. Waders were in abundance too. On the remaining mudflats and lagoon, we saw a huge flock of Dunlin, Curlew, Redshank, Oystercatchers, Black-tailed and Bar-tailed Godwit, Golden Plover and a single Grey Plover. Kinneil lagoon is always good for Greenshank and a group of seven were found. All common gull species, apart from Lesser Black-backed, were seen. On the river we located at least seven Great Crested Grebes along with a single Red-throated Diver. Kinneil in autumn and winter is always reliable for good numbers of ducks and waders.

From Kinneil we headed south west to Slamannan to search for Bean Geese. We searched the area thoroughly, travelling in convoy in the narrow roads and lanes. Finally, Rob in the lead car saw a flock of about 20 on the ground and Dave, also in the lead car, saw them take flight as they were probably disturbed by a passing quad bike. None of the rest of us managed to see them but “the team” had found the target bird (shades of John Hunt and the conquest of Everest in 1953, if you get my meaning). We continued to search the Slamannan plateau after that to try and relocate them but without success.

It had been a good day out, impressive numbers of species and quantity of birds at Kinneil in fine winter weather. Perhaps next time we will manage to strike lucky and get good views of those elusive Bean Geese.

### ***Paul Taylor***

PS Paul: Yes, it was a great trip out and many thanks to you and Rob. I notice you did not mention the term ‘wild goose chase’, once in your report, and nor did you mention the search for the lost Paul! (*Elizabeth*).



*Through the telescope at Kinneil: Elizabeth Irwin*

*The elusive Bean Goose (taken at Minsmere May 2018): Elizabeth Irwin*



## Fife Bird Sightings:

### September 2018

The Wilderness held Whooper Swans (20 on 29<sup>th</sup>), Pink-footed Geese (20 on 14<sup>th</sup>), Goldeneyes, Wood Sandpipers, Dunlins, Ruff, Common Snipes, a juvenile Pectoral Sandpiper, Spotted Redshanks, Greenshanks, Black-tailed Godwits, Golden Plovers and Crossbills. Fife Ness logged Barnacle Geese (488 on 28<sup>th</sup>), Pink-footed Geese (33 on 28<sup>th</sup>), Pale-bellied Brent Geese, Great Skuas, Arctic Skuas, a Pomarine Skua, a Long-tailed Skua, Red-throated Divers (39 on 28<sup>th</sup>), Great Northern Divers, Common Scoters, Velvet Scoters, Whimbrels, Mediterranean Gulls, Golden Plovers, Manx Shearwaters, Sooty Shearwaters (29<sup>th</sup>), Purple Sandpipers, Common Terns, Sandwich Terns, a Sparrowhawk and Kestrels. The Eden Estuary held Pale-bellied Brent Geese, Pintails, Redshanks, Greenshanks (14 on 20<sup>th</sup>), Spotted Redshanks, Curlew Sandpipers, Ruff, Knot (235 on 20<sup>th</sup>), a Little Stint (12<sup>th</sup>), Black-tailed Godwits, Kingfishers, Ospreys, Peregrines and Little Egrets (six on 20<sup>th</sup>). The Kinghorn / Pettycur area logged Black Terns (1<sup>st</sup>), Mediterranean Gulls, Arctic Skuas, Great Skuas, a Pomarine Skua, Common Scoters, Red-throated Divers, Black-throated Divers, Turnstones and Slavonian Grebes. Overhead migration at Ferryhills included Pink-footed Geese, Red-throated Divers, a Black-throated Diver, Great Northern Divers, Arctic Skuas, Great Skuas, Pomarine Skuas (seven on 29<sup>th</sup>), Yellow Wagtails, Tree Pipits, Spotted Flycatchers, Meadow Pipits (780 on 8<sup>th</sup>), a Short-eared Owl and Merlins.

Elsewhere, Whooper Swans were past Crail (95 on 22<sup>nd</sup>) as were Brent Geese (21 past on 9<sup>th</sup>); two Scaup were at the pond at Beveridge Park (8<sup>th</sup>), Red-throated Divers were off Tentsmuir Point NNR, a White Tailed Eagle was in the Eden estuary at Outhead, Marsh Harriers were noted at Letham Pools (19<sup>th</sup>) and St Andrews (one over on 8<sup>th</sup>), and there were Merlins at Kilminning and Dunino. Golden Plovers visited Kilminning with 80 on 17<sup>th</sup>, Little Stints were seen at Tentsmuir Lagoon (10<sup>th</sup>) and Tentsmuir NNR (30<sup>th</sup>); Spotted Redshanks visited Letham Pools with one past Pittenweem on 18<sup>th</sup>. Boarhills held two Whimbrels; a Ruff stopped off at Carnbee, and there was a fine record of a Buff-breasted Sandpiper at Kingsbarns on 8<sup>th</sup>. Great Skuas were logged off Outhead and Crail, a Pomarine Skua was also at Crail and Arctic Skuas were noted at Tentsmuir Point NNR and Outhead. Little Gulls went past Crail on 27<sup>th</sup>. The East Weymss gull roost continued to hold good numbers of Mediterranean Gulls, with 68 logged there on 11<sup>th</sup>. Others were at Pathhead, Anstruther and Kingsbarns. Black Terns were noted at Anstruther (two on 11<sup>th</sup>) and a Black Guillemot was found off Ruddons Point on 8<sup>th</sup>. Kingsbarns held White Wagtails and Yellow Wagtails on 9<sup>th</sup>; a Common Redstart was seen at Pittenweem and a Black Redstart graced Caiply Caves (17<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup>). Wheatears were at Dunshalt (two on 15<sup>th</sup>), Kingsbarns, Outhead and Cellardyke; Whinchats were noted at Wester Kilwhiss and Kingsbarns and a Lesser Whitethroat was in a Cellardyke garden on 25<sup>th</sup>. Kilminning held Willow Warblers, Chiffchaffs, a Spotted Flycatcher and a notable short-staying juvenile Common Rosefinch, which was only seen on 4<sup>th</sup>. A Lapland Bunting flew over St Andrews with a Ring-necked Parakeet providing a surprise there also (both on 22<sup>nd</sup>).

### October 2018

Fife Ness logged Long-tailed Ducks (102 on 27<sup>th</sup>), Greater Scaup, Red-throated Divers (36 on 8<sup>th</sup>), Black-throated Divers, Great Northern Divers, White-billed Divers past on 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>, Arctic Skuas (13 on 3<sup>rd</sup>), Great Skuas, Pomarine Skuas, a Sabine's Gull (juv. on 29<sup>th</sup>), Little Gulls (46 past on 20<sup>th</sup>), Velvet Scoters, Common Scoters (420 on 28<sup>th</sup>), Little Auks, Storm Petrels, Manx Shearwaters (six on 3<sup>rd</sup>) Sooty Shearwaters (three on 8<sup>th</sup>), Merlin, Little Stint (8<sup>th</sup>), Wheatears, Golden Plovers (30 on 10<sup>th</sup>), Purple Sandpipers and a Woodcock in off the sea.

The Fife Ness "ringing patch" held Yellow-browed warblers, Pied Flycatchers, a Red-breasted Flycatcher, a Treecreeper (possible ssp. *familiaris*) and Woodcocks.

Kilminning – Balcomie held Yellow-browed Warblers (c11 in total), Bramblings (76 on 16<sup>th</sup>), Ring Ouzels (c10 in total), Chiffchaffs (incl. one of the ssp. *tristis*), Common Redstarts, Lesser Redpolls, Common (Mealy) Redpolls, Goldcrests, A Short-eared Owl, a Little Bunting, Redwings (1150 on 16<sup>th</sup>) and Fieldfares (170 on 16<sup>th</sup>).

The Eden Estuary held Whooper Swans, Greater Scaup (73 on 25<sup>th</sup>), Ruff, Greenshanks, Black-tailed Godwits (110 on 18<sup>th</sup>), White-tailed Eagles, Ravens, Spotted Redshanks, Golden Plovers (800 on 18<sup>th</sup>), Little Egrets (six on 25<sup>th</sup>) and Lapland Buntings (three on 10<sup>th</sup>).

Ferry Hills logged Bean Geese, Long-tailed Skuas, Pomarine Skuas (10 on 5<sup>th</sup>), Great Skuas, Arctic Skuas, a Black-throated Diver, a Great Northern Diver, a Hen Harrier (female), Waxwings, Bramblings, Hawfinches (five on 13<sup>th</sup>), Crossbills,

Elsewhere, Whooper Swans were at the Wilderness, Brent Geese were noted at Levenmouth, and Anstruther, Greater Scaup were at the Wilderness and at St Andrews West Sands (50 on 28<sup>th</sup>) and Surf Scoters were off St Andrews. Long-tailed Ducks were numerous off Kinshaldy beach, a flock of Goosanders stayed at Birnie and Gaddon Lochs. Red-throated Divers were found at St Andrews Bay, Kinshaldy (11 on 20<sup>th</sup>), Kinghorn and Braefoot Point, with Slavonian Grebes at Kinshaldy (12 on 20<sup>th</sup>) and Manx Shearwaters going past St Andrews Bay and Kinghorn. A lingering female Marsh Harrier was noted on Mugdrum Island 2<sup>nd</sup>, and one flew over Elie Ness. Golden Plovers visited Crail (175 on 3<sup>rd</sup>) and a Little Stint stopped briefly at Balcomie beach (7<sup>th</sup>). Green Sandpipers and Black-tailed Godwits were at the Wilderness. There was a notable record of 23 Grey Partridges at Auchtermuchty on 14<sup>th</sup>. A fleeting Grey Phalarope was at St Andrews Bay (8<sup>th</sup>). Great Skuas were off Kinghorn, Pomarine Skuas off Outhead (two on 5<sup>th</sup>), Kinghorn and Carlingnose Point, Arctic Skuas off Outhead, Kinghorn and Carlingnose Point, Long-tailed Skuas off Outhead and Kinghorn and Little Gulls were in St Andrews Bay (8<sup>th</sup>), past Anstruther and Kinghorn. Mediterranean Gulls were noted at the Wilderness, East Weymss (in reduced numbers compared with September), Pathhead and Kinghorn. There was an isolated sighting of a Little Auk off St Andrews West Sands. Short-eared Owls were logged at St Andrews West Sands, the Goosepools and Saline. Outhead held four Wheatears (14<sup>th</sup>), and Ring Ouzels were seen at Kilrenny, Kinkell Braes (two on 12<sup>th</sup>), Craighead, Kittock's Den and Kincaig Point. Yellow-browed Warblers were in Denburn Wood, and in Kittock's Den, Boarhills and Spinkie Den. 52 Bearded Tits were counted over Mugdrum Island from the pier at Newburgh on 2<sup>nd</sup>, with a surprising record of one male on the gorse at Roome Bay, Crail on 6<sup>th</sup>. Two "Northern" Bullfinches were in Spinkie Den, St Andrews on 22<sup>nd</sup>. 20 Twite were noted at Kingsbarns and Crossbills were seen in St Andrews (30 over on 14<sup>th</sup>), in Spinkie Den (four on 22<sup>nd</sup>) and at Morton Lochs (35 on 24<sup>th</sup>).

## November 2018

Ferryhills logged Whooper Swans, Great Skuas, Black-throated Divers, Red-throated Divers, Great Northern Divers, Black-tailed Godwits, Little Gulls, a Woodlark, Jack Snipe, a Long-eared Owl, Twite and Bramblings.

Whooper Swans were past Kirkcaldy (15 on 13<sup>th</sup>) and at the Wilderness (78 on 13<sup>th</sup>), Balbuthie (14 on 24<sup>th</sup>), Loch Gelly and Cowdenbeath. Pale-bellied Brent Geese continued at Outhead, 105 Pochard were logged at Loch Gelly on 16<sup>th</sup>, Scaup were in St Andrews Bay (c45) as were c1000 Common Scoters, Velvet Scoters, two drake Surf Scoters (4<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup>), Long-tailed Ducks and Great Northern Divers. Common Scoters and Long-tailed Ducks were also off Seafield. Red-headed Smew were noted at Lochore Meadows, Cameron Reservoir (two on 26<sup>th</sup>) and Loch Gelly. Red-throated Divers were seen off Seafield, Fife Ness, on the inland Kilconquhar Loch, in St. Andrews Bay, at Outhead and off Kinghorn and Braefoot Point. Black-throated Divers and Great Northern Divers passed Fife Ness, Slavonian Grebes were at Outhead, Dalgety Bay and Braefoot Point with Great Crested Grebes noted at Outhead, Valleyfield Lagoons and Braefoot Point. Manx Shearwaters and Sooty Shearwaters were seen passing Fife Ness (7<sup>th</sup>) and Little Egrets continued in the Eden Estuary. A Hen Harrier was at Kingsbarns on 12<sup>th</sup>, a Goshawk was at Crail airfield and a Merlin at Tentsmuir NNR. Loch Gelly held two Water Rails, Purple Sandpipers showed at Seafield and Kingsbarns and Black-tailed Godwits continued in the Eden Estuary with 35 there on 15<sup>th</sup>. Woodcocks were noted at Fife Ness, Kilminning and Denburn Wood; Grey Partridges were at Gauldry (22<sup>nd</sup>), Jack Snipes were at Kilminning and Cockleburn Marsh. Great Skuas, Pomarine Skuas and Arctic Skuas in small numbers were seen off Fife Ness, Anstruther and Kinghorn. 11 Fulmars lingered on the cliffs at St Andrews (23<sup>rd</sup>), a Mediterranean Gull passed Kinghorn, and a Little Auk passed Fife Ness (2<sup>nd</sup>). Barn Owls hunted at Moss Plantation and Limekilns and Short-eared Owls were seen quartering Rossie Bog and passing over Elie Ness. A Water Pipit was an unusual visitor to Pittenweem beach on 10<sup>th</sup>. Waxwings arrived in Kirkcaldy and were there throughout the month with the flock building to 150 at one location on 30<sup>th</sup>. 21 were in Dunfermline with 10 at Dalgety Bay. The Red-breasted Flycatcher was still at the Fife Ness patch on 1<sup>st</sup>. Dunfermline held a Nuthatch on 5<sup>th</sup>. Flocks of Twite were at Kilrenny Mill, Kilminning (25 on 8<sup>th</sup>), Kingsbarns (120 on 15<sup>th</sup>) and Boarhills (30 on 26<sup>th</sup>). Crossbills were over St Andrews, in Devilla Forest and at Blair Adam. A single Snow Bunting went over Kincaig Point on 8<sup>th</sup> and a Lapland Bunting was at Kingsbarns.

*(Records of bird sightings for December to February, for inclusion in the March Newsletter should be sent by Friday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2019 at the latest to David Heeley at [dw.heeley@btinternet.com](mailto:dw.heeley@btinternet.com) or 50 High Street, Newburgh, Fife KY14 6AQ)*

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