

Fife SOC

Newsletter No. 196

Compiled by Elizabeth Irwin

December 2019



Wren photographed on the Angus Lochs outing: Allister Todd

Our next Newsletter will be Issue No. 197 for March 2020. Articles, letters, reports and photographs in jpeg or tiff format for publication should be sent, by Monday 2nd March at the latest, to Elizabeth Irwin at Drumcarrow Cottage, Pettycruik, Strathkinness KY16 9XP or email: fifechair@the-soc.org.uk

FROM THE CHAIR

Welcome to the last Fife SOC newsletter of the decade. I hope you have enjoyed some great birds over the last three months, whether you have been watching the autumn migration out on your own or with a group, or from your own window and during your everyday activities. I have been enjoying the stunning skeins of Pink-footed Geese that have been filling the skies and the fields where I live. They, at least, seem to have benefitted from the soft muddy fields after all the rain.

In December's newsletter you will find information about forthcoming Fife meetings and outings, and about SOC events and news. We have trip reports from the last three outings and once again I would like to thank everyone who has contributed articles, photographs and of course Dave Heeley who compiles the bird sightings for us.

I hope to see you soon at one of our events and wish everyone a Happy Christmas.

Elizabeth Irwin

Forthcoming meetings at 7.30 pm in the Town Hall St Andrews: -

Wednesday 11th December:	Members' night: join us for three informal presentations from Monique L. Mackenzie (<i>Vultures</i>); Stewart Neilson (<i>the birds of Colorado</i>) and John Irwin (<i>the importance of height for the birds of Chile</i>)
Wednesday 8th January 2020:	Graham Sparshott: <i>Recording our Birds</i>
Wednesday 12th February:	Phil Taylor: <i>Seafood, Sustainability and the Future of Scotland's Seas</i>
Wednesday 11th March:	Daisy Burnell: <i>Seabirds count: Taking stock of the seabirds of Britain and Ireland</i>

Forthcoming outings: -

Members wishing to go on outings must let the leader know that they intend to go by the Thursday before the outing at the very latest. You can do this via the Secretary, Caroline Gordon (fifesecretary@the-soc.org.uk), or Chair, Elizabeth Irwin (fifechair@the-soc.org.uk)

Saturday 14th December	Christmas Lunch 12 noon for 12.30 (at the Fairways Restaurant, Elmwood, Cupar)
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NB If you have not already booked, and would like to join us, please book and pay in advance through the treasurer, John Irwin (jirwin735@gmail.com)

Please note that all outings are weather and bird dependent, so the programme may vary to suit the conditions at the time. 'Mailchimps' will be sent out with details about:

Saturday 11th January	The Howe of Fife with Norman Elkins
Sunday 16th February	Scone Palace and Glen Quaich with Andy Falconer
Saturday 14th March	Loch Leven and Portmoak Moss with Caroline Gordon

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.

Dates for your diary:

Fife Branch Galloway weekend, Friday 15th – Monday 18th May: we will send further details in the new year to all Fife members who are signed up to receive branch notifications so that you can start planning if you are interested in joining the trip.

Scottish Birdwatchers' Conference 2020: Organised jointly by the SOC and the BTO, this year's conference will be on **Saturday 21st March** in Elgin (with optional field trips on Sunday). The theme is *Northern Seas and Coasts*, and details are on the SOC website. Booking is open now.

Planning for the **SOC autumn conference** has also started. This year's conference was a great success, with around 225 members attending - including a good presence from Fife Branch. Next year's conference will be at the same venue between Friday 20th and Sunday 22nd November. Look out for details in your Scottish Birds magazine and on the SOC website.

Did you know that young birders can receive discounted places at SOC conferences? If you know any 'young birders' then please pass on this information. There is also a Facebook group called 'Youth Connect' that helps young birders to keep in touch with each other, share ideas and information and link up for outings and birding. You can find information about all of this (and much more besides) on the SOC website: www.the-soc.org.uk. If you haven't visited the website recently, take a look and see what has changed.

Branch news: At the recent SOC AGM in Pitlochry, **Paul Taylor was presented with the Fife Branch Award**. Paul has contributed much over many years both to Fife SOC and to the organisation nationally, so it was great to have an opportunity to acknowledge this. As you know he recently stepped down from the committee so that he can fulfil his duties as a grandparent based on the other side of the Forth. However, he remains a Fife Branch member, and continues to keep involved and support our activities.

Branch raffle: famous artist and SOC member Keith Brockie has very kindly donated a signed copy of his latest book *Glen of the Lapwing* as the prize for our Christmas raffle. Tickets are on sale at meetings or you can email the treasurer John Irwin (jirwin735@gmail.com) if you would like to support the Branch and buy some tickets. They are £1 for a strip of five, and the raffle will be drawn at the Christmas lunch on December 14th.

SOC news: The SOC'S development officer, **Jane Allison**, has just left her role temporarily in order to take maternity leave. Although we will miss her, we are looking forward to working with **Alyssa Parker** who has been appointed as SOC Communications Officer, which covers SOC website maintenance, managing our social media content, administering the mobile app, and dealing with the promotion of branch activities (Mailchimp reminders, newsletter circulation, posters etc).

Alyssa's email address is communications@the-soc.org.uk so please direct any correspondence (relating to the communications side of branch activities) to this address. Jane Allison's email addresses won't be active.

Golden Eagle Project: I am sure that those of you who came to the November meeting enjoyed Rick Taylor's account of the reintroduction of Golden Eagles to the South of Scotland. Beautifully illustrated, it was a fascinating narrative about the ups and downs of the project. He also included some interesting insights into the behaviours of the Eagles and how that is informing the project. If you want to find out more about their progress (remember Beaky?) the website is worth looking at, and there are good videos and photos that I think all ages would enjoy. Go to www.goldeneaglessouthofscotland.co.uk

Elizabeth Irwin

Trip reports

Outing to Eden Estuary 14th September 2019

We started at Out Head. It was low tide and there was more exposed sand than I think I've seen there before. There were also two White-tailed Eagles perched on posts out in the estuary. A nice start. Stewart picked out a Wheatear on the fairway near the viewing area, but it disappeared as a group of golfers arrived on the tee and was not seen again.

In the dunes there was a flock of about 30 Linnets flitting about and Swallow and House Martin passing over. Upriver, a dozen Bar-tailed Godwits were feeding along with Curlew. The number of Oystercatchers scattered across the sandbanks was into the hundreds. A very distant Little Egret was spotted but we hoped for better views from Guardbridge. Turning our attention out towards the sea, a group of 10 Common Scoter flew in and splashed down not far off the beach followed by a large flock of about 80 Goosander. There were also some terns on the beach right by the water's edge. One was a Sandwich Tern, but the others were too far away to be sure so went on the list as 'Comic'.

Moving on, we made our way to the Eden clubhouse and walked out into the increasingly strong wind to the George Evans hide. We quickly found a couple of Ruff among the resting gulls but later picked out others taking our final tally to 4. Other waders were fairly scarce but included 17 Black-tailed Godwits and two Lapwing. Among the many

Shelduck, there were also Mallard and a few Wigeon. Out on the edge of the river, a party of grey seals were hauled out.

Finally, we headed to the Eden Estuary Centre at Guardbridge for lunch and to wait for the incoming tide to bring the birds closer. We were glad of the shelter from the wind. With the help of another birder already in the hide, we soon found a Curlew Sandpiper in among Redshank and Dunlin. There were Greenshank too; we counted half a dozen. We did get better views of Little Egret with seven flying past the hide down river. There was a single Osprey, perched on one of the posts, head down into the wind. When all the waders took off, all eyes turned to look for and find the Peregrine which caused all the excitement. There was a single Great Crested Grebe along with Eider and Cormorant in the far channel. Nigel had stopped by the hide on his way to Out Head in the morning and had seen a Kingfisher but sadly it didn't put in a return appearance for us. At the feeders were Tree Sparrow, Blue Tit, Dunnock, Chaffinch and Robin. Soon the tide was right in and we headed home after a successful trip.

Caroline Gordon

Sunday 13th October: Gartmorn Dam, RSPB Black Devon wetlands and Torry Bay mudflats

We set off on the morning journey to Gartmorn Dam in thick mist with the forecast promise of heavy and continuous rain in the afternoon. We nearly cancelled but ever the optimists, we carried on.

Six Fife SOC members were joined by one from Lothian in the carpark at the Dam. The mist had lifted and there was no wind making loch viewing easier. The predominant birds here were Mute Swans, Black-headed Gulls and Mallard. There are picnic tables here and seed had been provided for the birds at this site, so they are used to food and people. The plan was to walk the three miles around the lake and see if there were any wintering wildfowl and to look for woodland and farmland birds as this is an excellent mixed habitat.

The trees around the carpark gave us Carrion Crow, Wood Pigeon, Chaffinch, Wren, Robin, and Blue Tit with a scan of the lake showing Moorhen, Coot, Common Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Goldeneye and Tufted Duck. Coot do flock at this time of year although the numbers were not too large here. The Robins were however very numerous all around the lake, with some of them being very curious and approaching very close.

When we started our walk, we quickly found Jay, Tree Sparrow, Great Tit, Blackbird and heard and then saw five Whooper swans fly overhead. Unfortunately, these did not land on the lake but carried on flying. At the first ploughed field there were several Meadow Pipits and Pied Wagtails. The latter were constantly chasing the Yellowhammers that were trying to feed on the ground. Buzzard, Magpie and Grey Wagtail were also seen here, and two large skeins of Pink-footed Geese flew over. Stewart spotted a Great Spotted Woodpecker which showed well for a while and we heard several Jackdaws.

A little further on the lake came back into view and we saw Little Grebe, Great-crested Grebes and Wigeon. At the far end of the loch the path leaves the loch for a short while and passes through a farm. We saw House Sparrow, Mistle Thrush, Goldfinch, Starling, Dunnock, Rook and Long-tailed Tit. The walk back down to the dam gave us our only wintering wildfowl, a small number of Canada Geese. There was also a larger group of Coot and a Grey Heron. There were so many birds to stop for that the walk took slightly longer than we anticipated, and it was lunchtime. The swans at the picnic tables were very interested in our sandwiches and one took quite a fancy to Nigel's lunch in particular.

Because of the time we did discuss missing Black Devon and heading straight to the mudflats, but the consensus was that we should call in especially as the rain had not started yet. This RSPB site is not well signposted, and most of the group wanted to know where it was. There is a pleasant half mile walk through bushes and an open field to a hide overlooking a pool where a Mute Swan pair had a very healthy brood of five large cygnets.

Nigel had been here in the Spring and said that it was full of Whitethroats, Sedge Warblers with the odd Grasshopper Warbler thrown in. Given that it was October we did not expect to see any of these, but we did see and then hear a Chiffchaff. This site added Kestrel, Herring Gull, Pheasant, Long-tailed Tit, Goldcrest, Lapwing and Feral Pigeon to our list. There were more large skeins of Pink-footed Goose and 2 Canada Geese flew by. We also saw a flock of about 20

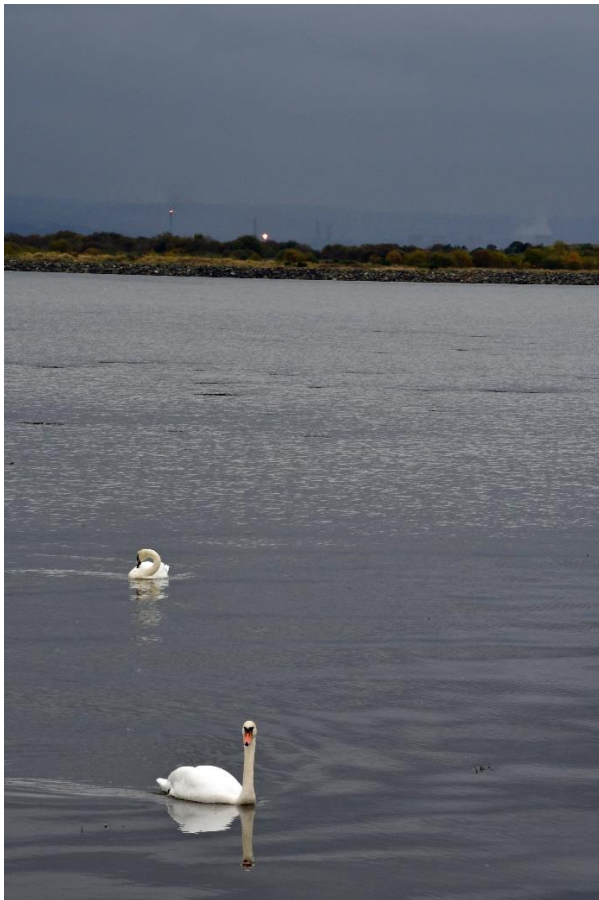
Long-tailed Tits which was very nice. The only other interesting observation at this site was a fencepost that looked very like a large owl for some considerable time until Elizabeth managed to get a clear photograph!



We arrived at Torry Bay before high tide but after the mudflats were covered. It is nice bay and the locals kept us informed of the local bird life depending on time of year and time of day. We did add a single Curlew, a single Redshank, two Oystercatchers, Shelduck, Greater Black-backed Gull and a skein of Greylag Geese. One of the locals suggested that if we waited for a few minutes we would see Pink-footed Geese. We waited and the geese came in their hundreds, circled and chose to roost somewhere else and flew off again!

As we were packing the cars the promised rain started but by then we had enjoyed a good day's birding (over 50 species) in a variety of habitats and in the dry.

John Irwin.



Storm clouds gather over Torry Bay – with Mute Swan and Pink-footed Geese: Elizabeth Irwin

Angus Lochs, 16th November 2019

On a somewhat grey but dry morning, 10 of us met at the Tay Bridge car park and after sorting out car sharing headed up to Loch of Kinnordy. On the drive up several flocks of Pink-footed Geese were seen from the A90. On arrival at Kinnordy we went to the Gullery Hide, where a range of wildfowl were seen. The calm, still conditions were punctuated by volleys of gunfire from a local shoot, leading to flight views of several species! Most notable among these were a



number of Goosander (almost all drakes) which repeated fly-pasts. Also present were Wigeon, Teal, Tufted Duck and Goldeneye with a couple of Whooper Swans and many Greylags.

The walk to Swamp Hide was thankfully dry. Several small birds were seen including Tree Sparrow and Treecreeper, and Dave Heeley pointed out signs of beaver activity. Close to the hide a rather sickly Whooper Swan was seen in a small ditch. A few Pinkfeet were among a large number of Greylags seen from the hide and there were some nice close Wigeon to admire. The highlight here was a large flock of Whooper Swans which flew in from the west and landed further along the loch. In order to get better views of these we finished up at the East Hide, where in addition to at least 65 Whoopers on the loch a flock of small birds included Goldcrests and Long-tailed Tits.

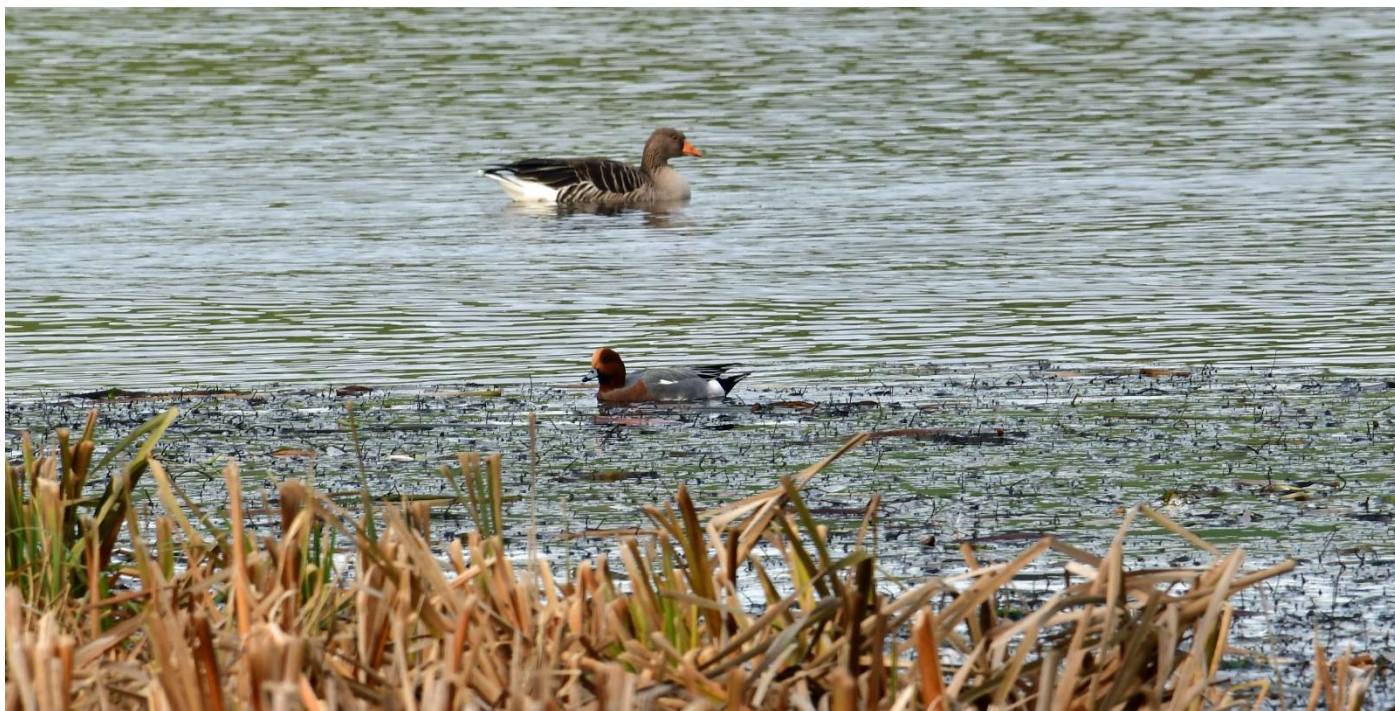
From Kinnordy we headed west to Loch of Lintrathen, seeing a flock of Fieldfares en route. We visited the new hide, where there was little of note on the water but a flock of finches in the larches and spruces by the loch included Siskins, Goldfinches and a few Lesser Redpolls. Allister saw a Brambling, which proved elusive for most of us. Also elusive was a vocal Green Woodpecker – which promptly shut up as soon as we started to search for it.

Brambling: Allister Todd

From Loch of Lintrathen we headed up to Backwater Reservoir. Kestrels were at the roadside on the drive up to the dam, where we had a remarkably birdless lunch. We then drove slowly up to the top car park, with some seeing Mistle Thrush, and others a Stonechat. There was no sign of the Great Grey Shrike but there were a number of Goldeneye on the reservoir. The drive back along the loch produced a final bonus when I picked up a couple of Blackcock in flight. Turning the cars, we were able to locate one of them on the ground, which gave some nice views. A female Bullfinch was seen in a larch by the roadside. We had thought of a final visit to the old hide at Lintrathen but fading light meant that we called it a day. A sensible decision as we drove into deteriorating weather on the way south. It had been an enjoyable outing with some nice birds, even without the shrike.

Rob Armstrong





Wigeon and Greylag Goose, Loch of Kinnordy: Elizabeth Irwin

Fife Bird Sightings:

September 2019

Wilderness held Whooper Swans, Pink-footed Geese (80 over), Curlew Sandpipers, Ruff, Black-tailed Godwits, Snipe (18 on 1st), Greenshanks, Ringed Plovers, a Whimbrel, Dunlin, a Peregrine, a Marsh Harrier (juv.) and Tree Pipits. Fife Ness logged Great Skuas, Arctic Skuas, Pomarine Skuas, Manx Shearwaters (34 on 8th), Sooty Shearwaters (8th), Little Gulls, Black-throated Divers, Red-throated Divers, Barnacle Geese (400 past on 27th), a Green Sandpiper, Purple Sandpipers, Whimbrels, Wheatears; and at The Patch a Red-breasted Flycatcher, Pied Flycatchers, Lesser Whitethroats and Yellow-browed Warblers. Kilminning again attracted migrants with Pied Flycatchers, Spotted Flycatchers, Chiffchaffs, Yellow-browed Warblers (22nd – 30th), a Barred Warbler, Lesser Whitethroats, a Little Bunting (23rd), Golden Plovers (16 on 30th), Song Thrushes, Mistle Thrushes, Merlins, Peregrines, Tree Pipits, Redstarts, Whinchats, and Siskins all noted. Activity at Ferryhills watchpoint included Great Skuas (10 on 26th), Arctic Skuas (45 on 29th), Pomarine Skuas, Red-throated Divers (104 on 22nd), Black-throated Divers, a Great Northern Diver, Barnacle Geese, Whinchats, Tree Pipits and a Hawfinch lingering 27th – 28th. The Eden Estuary held a Spoonbill on 1st, Little Egrets (12 counted), Whinchats, Stonechats, Wheatears, Ospreys (six on 11th), Kingfishers, Pintails, Pink-footed Geese, Goosanders, Goldeneyes, a Red-throated Diver, Little Gulls, White Wagtails, Ruff, Black-tailed Godwits, Bar-tailed Godwits, Greenshanks, Spotted Redshanks, Knot, Dunlin, Curlew Sandpipers, Ringed Plovers, Peregrines, Kestrels, White-tailed Eagles, a Marsh Harrier, Whimbrels and a Mediterranean Gull. The Outhead log for 17th included 32 Manx Shearwaters, 940 Little Gulls, 14 Arctic Skuas, three Great Skuas, a Black-throated Diver, five Slavonian Grebes, six Scaup and two Long-tailed Ducks with 248 Barnacle Geese past on 25th.

A Whooper Swan was at Loch Gelly, Barnacle Geese were over St David's Harbour, Brent Geese were off Tentsmuir Point, a Scaup was on Loch Gelly, and Long-tailed Ducks were noted at Pathhead. A late Quail sang at Kilmany on 19th. Red-throated Divers were seen at Crail, Kingsbarns, Kinghorn and St David's Harbour, with Black-throated Divers at Pathhead and Kinghorn and Red-necked Grebes at St Andrews. Manx Shearwaters passed Crail and Kinghorn, and Sooty Shearwaters were noted past Anstruther on 30th and Kinghorn on 22nd. Little Egrets continued to expand their range with sightings at Pathhead (two on 29th), Tayport and Morton Lochs, and a Great White Egret paid a brief visit to Morton Lochs on 13th. A White Tailed Eagle passed over Balmullo, a Red Kite was in the vicinity of Kilminning - Wormiston on 10th and Marsh Harriers were noted at Lindores Loch, Kilconquhar Loch and Kilrenny. A Honey Buzzard was logged going

over Dunfermline (25th). Merlins have moved to the coast with sightings from Kingsbarns, Crail airfield and Elie Ness. A Dotterel was over Burntisland on 21st. Knot stopped over at Balcomie Beach, St Andrews West Sands (400 on 5th), Tentsmuir Point and Pettycur Sands, Purple Sandpipers were noted at East Weymss and Kingsbarns; Little Stints at Levenmouth and Balcomie Beach; Sanderlings at Balcomie Beach; and Curlew Sandpipers at Balcomie Beach and Kingsbarns. A Green Sandpiper and a Little Ringed Plover took up residence in a flooded field at Kilconquhar – Shell Bay from 14th onwards. Another Green Sandpiper was at Cullaloe. Black-tailed Godwits were at Cullaloe, and Bar-tailed Godwits were at Balcomie Beach, Tentsmuir Point, Pettycur Sands and Culross. Whimbrels visited Seafield, (five on 4th), Carlingnose Point and Valleyfield Lagoons. Grey Partridges were sighted at The Gauldry with 12 on 19th. Ruff were at Sauchope. Great Skuas were recorded at Crail, Carlingnose Point, Kinghorn and St David's Harbour; Pomarine Skuas at Seafield; and Arctic Skuas at Seafield, Anstruther, Kinghorn, Culross and St David's Harbour. Little Gulls were noted at Kinkell Braes (200 on 7th), Boarhills, St Andrews Bay, St Andrews West Sands (40 on 25th), Anstruther, Incholm and St David's Harbour. Mediterranean Gulls are now well established with records from Seafield, Dysart (12 on 30th), East Weymss (20 on 11th), Pathhead, Buckhaven (12 on 3rd), Kingsbarns, Anstruther, Elie Beach, Leven Beach, Levenmouth and Kinghorn. A Roseate Tern was at Carlingnose Point and Black Terns (juv.) at Dysart and Kinghorn. A Black Guillemot was also at Kinghorn. A group of White Wagtails were on Balcomie Beach, and Yellow Wagtails (sp) were at Barnsmuir - Crail and Sauchope Beach. Wheatears stopped on Balcomie Beach (18 on 1st) and Outhead, with Whinchats noted at Pathhead, Outhead and Barns Farm. A Garden Warbler was at Boarhills. Yellow-browed Warblers appeared at Crail airfield, Wormiston, and Balcomie. Other migrants included Spotted Flycatchers at Kingsbarns and Wormit, and Pied Flycatchers at Balcomie. A Nuthatch was again seen at Saline. Ravens continued in the Lomonds, with other sightings coming from Auchtermuchty and Strathkiness. A Lapland Bunting was noted just outside Anstruther on the 13th.

October 2019

A Lady Amherst's Pheasant was in the garden of one of the St Andrews University buildings on 1st; a Pallas's Warbler was at Upper Kilminning (9th – 11th); a dark-bellied Dipper (*C. cinclus cinclus*) was in Kinessburn, St Andrews from approx 24th – 27th (it was trapped and ringed); 8 northern race Bullfinches (*P. pyrrhula pyrrhula*) were at Ferryhills 26th – 27th accompanied by 20 common Bullfinches. The log for birds past Fife Ness included Whooper Swans (16 on 19th), Pale-bellied Brent Geese, Barnacle Geese (28 on 14th), Pink-footed Geese (50 on 2nd), Common Scoters (32 on 5th), Velvet Scoters, Long-tailed Ducks, Greater Scaup, Common Guillemots (1730 on 20th), Razorbills (540 on 20th), Puffins, Great Skuas, Arctic Skuas, Goldeneyes, Red-throated Divers (36 on 20th), Black-throated Divers, Great Northern Divers (three on 21st), Goosanders, Red-breasted Mergansers, Little Auks, Sooty Shearwaters, Manx Shearwaters (seven on 5th), Little Gulls (302 on 20th), Great Crested Grebes, Purple Sandpipers, a Shore Lark (12th), Twite, Short-eared Owls, Peregrines and a Kingfisher. "The Patch" at Fife Ness attracted Reed Warblers, Lesser Whitethroats, Ring Ouzels, Chiffchaffs and Tree Sparrows (80 on 8th); Upper Kilminning held Yellow-browed Warblers, Redwings (300 on 7th), Fieldfares, Chiffchaffs (30 on 10th), Redpolls (over), Goldcrests (three on 15th), Woodcocks, Common Snipe, a Jack Snipe (5th), Bramblings, Bullfinches (eight on 26th), Siskins (20 on 26th) and Ring Ouzels; Lower Kilminning held a Barred-Warbler (up to 4th), Yellow-browed Warblers, Wheatears, Goldcrests, Lesser Whitethroats, Stonechats, Ring Ouzels and Merlins. Whooper Swans were at Wilderness (124 on 26th), Ferryhills, Lochgelly, Letham Pools, Elie Ness, Randerston and Tayport; Taiga Bean Geese were seen at Ferryhills (two on 17th), Barnacle Geese were over Ferryhills (125 on 1st) and Blairhall, Brent Geese (pale-bellied) were logged at Kirkcaldy, Buckhaven and Dalgety Bay, and Brent Geese (dark-bellied) at Ferryhills (six on 27th). Pintails were off Outhead (15 on 19th) as were Scaup (165 on 19th). The Eider flock at Tentsmuir Point numbered 5000 on 15th. Common Scoters were at Kinshaldy, Velvet Scoters were at East Weymss (13 on 15th), Kinshaldy and Buckhaven and Long-tailed Ducks were seen at East Weymss, Carnbee reservoir, Kinshaldy, Outhead, Dalgety Bay, Kinghorn, Pettycur and Outhead. Red-throated Diver numbers increased with sightings at Outhead, Kinshaldy (16 on 21st), Ferryhills (30 on 12th), Kinghorn, Pettycur (seven on 19th) and Inverkeithing. Black-throated Divers were at Ferryhills and Pettycur, and Great Northern Divers were noted at Kingsbarns, and over Ferryhills. Kilconquhar Loch (9th) and Elie harbour (17th) held Black-necked Grebes and there were Slavonian Grebes at Kinshaldy (19 on 15th), Outhead (four on 19th) and in Dalgety Bay. Great Crested Grebes were off Outhead and in Dalgety Bay, with Red-necked Grebes showing at Dalgety Bay and off Braefoot Point. A Sooty Shearwater was a late season record at Crail (19th) and there was a notable

record of five Common Cranes over St David's Harbour on 19th. Little Egrets continued in the Eden estuary (four on 9th) and Outhead (seven on 19th). An imm. Spoonbill was over Ferryhills on 17th. White Tailed Eagles continue in the Eden estuary (at least two), a Red Kite drifted over Dumbarnie (9th) and a juv. Marsh Harrier was seen several times in the Newburgh - Mugdrum Island area. Hen Harriers (all ring-tailed) were noted in the Cleish Hills, at Pittenweem and Ferryhills. A Peregrine was at Bankhead Moss. Merlins showed at Markinch, Bishop Hill (two on 15th), Balcomie and Shell Bay. Bankhead Moss also held a Water Rail. A flock of 160 Ringed Plovers were at Tentsmuir Point NNR on 15th and a remarkable flock of 1000 Golden Plovers flew over Crail on 25th. Knot were recorded at Tayport, St Andrews (200 on 25th) and the Eden estuary (50 on 12th). A Curlew Sandpiper was a straggler in the Eden estuary. The flooded field by the entrance to Shell Bay held a Green Sandpiper and a Little Ringed Plover 9th – 17th. A Spotted Redshank was at Edenside, and Greenshanks were in the Eden estuary (eight on 9th) as were Black-tailed Godwits. Whimbrels were at Buckhaven, Ruddons Point and Crail; Woodcocks at Pathhead (10th, 12th), Anstruther (14th) and Denburn Wood (15th); Grey Partridges at Lochhead Farm (20 on 24th) and Jack Snipes at Boarhills, Carnbee and Camilla Loch. A single Ruff flew over Ferryhills. Great Skuas were off Crail, Pomarine Skuas were noted at Ferryhills (five on 1st) and Kinghorn, Arctic Skuas at Ferryhills, Kinghorn, and Pettycur, and Long-tailed Skua at Kinghorn (five on 19th). Little Gulls were sighted at Lower Kilminning, Tayport, Ferryhills and Pettycur. Mediterranean Gulls continued along the Forth coast with records from East Weymss (13 on 12th), West Weymss, Dysart, Pathhead, Buckhaven, Levenmouth, Dunfermline and North Queensferry. A juvenile Sabine's Gull was with Kittiwakes off Kinghorn on 19th. Large flocks of Kittiwakes moved past Ferryhills with at least 670 there on 1st. A Black Guillemot was noted at Kingsbarns (17th). Short-eared Owls showed at Pathhead, Balcomie, Outhead, Randerston and Elie Ness. One Waxwing was spotted in Kirkcaldy (28th), a Black Redstart visited Balcomie (24th), and Whinchats went through Outhead. Ring Ouzels showed up at St Andrews (two on 7th), Ferryhills (eight on 6th) and Pathhead. Lesser Whitethroats were recorded at Balcomie with Chiffchaffs logged at Pathhead, Kingsbarns, St Andrews, Bankhead Moss, Guardbridge, Dunfermline and Newburgh. There was an influx of Yellow-browed Warblers with records from Balcomie, Boarhills, Kingsbarns, St Andrews, Ferryhills, Burntisland and Inverkeithing. Guardbridge held a Firecrest on 14th, there was a post-breeding dispersal of Bearded Tits over Mugdrum Island with 12 counted on 14th. Ravens were at Bankhead Moss (five on 14th), Hawfinches stopped over at Ferryhills, and there were sightings of Bramblings at Balcomie, St Andrews, New Gilston, Boarhills, Bathmoor plantation, Ferryhills and Balgownie Woods. Twite were seen at Boarhills (five on 23rd), Outhead, Ruddons Point, Cocklemill Burn, and Ferryhills. Mealy Redpolls (14) and a Common Redpoll were at Bankhead Moss, and Crossbills were at Pitmedden Forest (35 on 13th), Bankhead Moss, Ferryhills, Balgownie Woods (40 on 27th), and Morton Lochs. Snow Buntings appeared at Outhead (10 on 30th) and Anstruther (five on 19th), Lapland Buntings at Boarhills (26th) and Guardbridge (27th) and there were welcome records for the county of Corn Buntings at Crail (10 on 14th) and Pitkierie (19 on 18th).

November 2019

Kilminning held Woodcocks, Blackcaps, a Long-eared Owl, Chiffchaffs, a Siberian race Chiffchaff, an influx of Blackbirds, Bramblings, Goldcrests, Treecreepers, Common Redstarts and Corn Buntings. Fife Ness logged Manx Shearwaters, Great Skuas, a Pomarine Skua, Great Northern Divers, Red-throated Divers (24 on 10th), Black-throated Divers, Red-breasted Mergansers, Long-tailed Ducks, Common and Velvet Scoters, Scaup, Little Auks, Mediterranean Gulls, and Purple Sandpipers. A Ring-necked Parakeet was in Beveridge Park (30th); a male Northern Bullfinch was at Shell Bay on 9th; a Hooded Crow was at Inverkeithing; a flock of 1000+ Pink-footed Geese were over Ferryhills on 10th. Lingerin migrants included a Puffin off Kincaig Point, Barn Swallows at Elie, Burntisland and Crombie Point, a Black Redstart at Balcomie, a Whinchat at Outhead and a Lesser Whitethroat at Cellardyke. Whooper Swans were at five locations including a count of 81 at Kingskettle; Brent Geese were at Seafeld and continued in the Eden Estuary; a Pochard was in Dalgety Bay, and a flock of 150 Scaup were at St Andrews with others noted at Outhead (84), Ruddons Point, Largo Bay and Loch Gelly. Red-headed Smew were noted at Lochore Meadows, Cameron Reservoir and Kilconquhar Loch. Red-throated Divers were past Outhead, Elie Harbour, Kinghorn, Ferryhills, Dalgety Bay and Pettycur, with Black-throated Divers in Largo Bay and off Anstruther, and Great Northern Divers at East Weymss, Kilminning and Dalgety Bay. Outhead and Elie Harbour held Black-necked Grebes; Slavonian Grebes were at Outhead (17 on 16th) in Largo Bay and Dalgety Bay and off Burntisland; Great Crested Grebes

were logged at Outhead (seven on 16th), Dalgety Bay (19 on 25th) and Valleyfield Lagoons; and Red-necked Grebes showed at Inchkeith Island and Dalgety Bay. Two Little Egrets were at Tentsmuir Point NNR. The local White Tailed Eagle was regular in the Eden Estuary and the overwintering 1st cy. Marsh Harrier was at Mugdrum Island, Newburgh. A Hen Harrier was noted in the Cleish Hills at Knockhill. A Goshawk was a good record near Crail on 29th, and Merlins were at Knockhill, Tentsmuir Point, Balcomie and Ferryhills. Elie held Ringed Plovers and Golden Plovers (27 on 10th), a late Grey Plover in summer plumage showed at Outhead with Sanderlings also there. Greenshanks were at three locations and Bar-tailed Godwits remained at Valleyfield Lagoons and Kinghorn. Jack Snipes included five at Cocklemill Marsh. Pomarine Skuas passed Dysart and Anstruther. Little Gulls and Mediterranean Gulls were recorded from several locations along the Forth. Kinghorn logged a passage of 203 Kittiwakes on 3rd. A Black Guillemot was off the Abertay Sands. Short-eared Owls came in off the sea at Fife Ness, Ruddons Point and Outhead. Kingfishers were noted at three coastal areas. Seven locations held Waxwings, Bearded Tits showed at Valleyfield Lagoons and there were records of Bramblings from Camilla Loch, Ferry Hills and Balgownie Woods. Twite continued at Kingsbarns, a “pale” Mealy Redpoll showed at Balcomie, and Snow Buntings were at Outhead (four on 6th) and on the Lomond Hills (nine on 18th).

(Records of bird sightings for December to February, for inclusion in the Marchnewsletter, should be sent by Sunday 1st March 2020 at the latest to David Heeley at dw.heeley@btinternet.com or 50 High Street, Newburgh, Fife KY14 6AQ.)



Cattle Egret in Stirling: Stewart Neilson

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