

SOC - SCOTLAND'S BIRD CLUB

Highland Bird News

No 105

FEBRUARY 2007



EDITORIAL

After what was the warmest January for nearly 100 years, perhaps a spell of normal, cold weather will now be upon us. Last week, I took my regular mid-week walk along the canal. It was on the hot side of warm and the ducks and gulls were sunbathing, quite unwilling to give up their sunbeds, even at a close approach. With just three blasts of frost and the winter more than half over, something must surely be wrong. The birdlife does not seem to be wildly different from those of colder winters, but perhaps fewer birds are around than might be expected. Our garden is almost deserted, hardly a finch to be seen, very few tits and just one loyal Robin. It was the same last weekend when we did the one-hour Garden Birdwatch. Six birds in one hour, four of them Chaffs!

This same birdwatch generated a Black-throated Thrush sighting on the Isle of Bute and, by a quite astonishing coincidence, Jenny and I found ourselves not just at Rothesay on Saturday, but right in the very lane, by the very garden this much-reported Siberian gem frequented. It seemed churlish not to spend a few hours in its company, so we did. It was a bit shy, "elusive" in the lexicon, and gave itself up for just 15 minutes after 3 tense hours.

There are a few good birds around in Highland at the moment. The drake American Wigeon is still at the river mouth at Alness, a Green-winged Teal can be seen - with difficulty - at Loch Flemington and a scattering of Iceland and Glaucous Gulls can be found around the coasts, both east and west. More reports of Jays suggest that this is a good winter to see them and they may even be spreading, ever closer to the city boundaries. Plenty of reasons to get out and about!

AL

Welcome to tonight's speaker, David Parkin

OUTING ALONG THE MORAY COAST SUNDAY, 10TH DECEMBER

We set off on a dark, wet, overcast and gusty morning, heading east towards better weather, we hoped.

We never had a drop of rain until we were back in the cars after our last stop! First, we went to Roseisle and started to scan the sea. Then the Coastguard drove along the send where just to the west, a dead **Sperm Whale** had washed up overnight. We went along to look at it as it is fairly unusual for such a big whale to come ashore in the Moray Firth.

Walking back through the pinewood, we had a fine view of the **Goldcrest**, **Wren** and **Long-tailed Tits** that were about. There was a large flock of **Fieldfares** and one of **Linnets** on the fields at Roseisle. We then went to the east side of Burghead, the west wind still being very strong. There were not a great many birds about and those present were hard to see in the grey, choppy water.

We then stopped for a short time at Hopeman – **Ringed Plover**, **Redshank**, **Long-tailed Duck** and **Goldeneye** – before a longer spell at Lossiemouth. Here, there were good views of **Wigeon**, **Dunlin**, **Knot**, **Cormorant** and others.

From Lossiemouth, we turned inland to visit Loch Spynie where the light was still good. There were numerous **Mute Swans**, **Wigeon**, **Tufted Duck**, **Cormorants**, **Coot**, one **Moorhen** and one **Pochard**. Two **Red Squirrels** were also feeding on the peanuts.

With the light beginning to fade, we had a last stop at Findhorn where we found **Common Scoter**, **Slavonian Grebe** and more. We made a count of 60 species with Feral Pigeon, over which there was some discussion! Very many thanks to our leader, David Galloway, for a very good day after an unpromising start.

Níva

Seagull

By Brian McCabe

We are the dawn marauders.
We prey on pizza. We kill kebabs.
We mug thrushes for bread crusts
with a snap of our big bent beaks.
We drum the worms from the ground
with the stamp of our wide webbed feet.
We spread out, cover the area -
like cops looking for the body
of a murdered fish-supper.
Here we go with our hooligan yells
loud with gluttony, sharp with starvation.
Here we go bungee-jumping on the wind,
charging from the cold sea of our birth.
This is invasion. This is occupation.
Our flags are black, white and grey.
Our wing-stripes are our rank.
No sun can match the brazen
colour of our mad yellow eyes.

We are the seagulls.
We are the people.



[Chosen for inclusion by Ann Sime, the person who should be sued by the author for any breach of copyright!]

BITS AND PIECES

2006 RECORDS

Thanks to the many who have submitted their bird records for 2006. But are you one of that happy breed of men and women? If not, please send your precious records to me asap. The usual addresses: by snail mail to 4 Balnafettack Place, Inverness, IV3 8TQ; by e-mail to aj.mcnee@care4free.net. All submissions gratefully received and acknowledged.

MOROCCO 2008

The fearless 13 – you know who you are – are asked to send a cheque for £100 each made out to Birdwatching Breaks by the end of March. The address is -

**Birdwatching Breaks
Cygnus House,
Gordon's Mill,
Balblair
Ross-shire
IV7 8LQ**

OUTING

This Sunday's outing is to the Carrbridge area, led by Alex Joss. Meet as usual opposite Pizza Hut in the Retail Park at 9am. It should be good!

CONTRIBUTIONS

I would welcome further contributions to the newsletter - this time, particular thanks to Nira.