

Fife SOC

Newsletter No. 209

Compiled by Elizabeth Irwin

August 2023



Song Thrush: Allister Todd

FROM THE EDITOR

We have had new members from Fife joining SOC in the last few months, so if this is your first Fife newsletter can I extend a particular welcome and we hope to see you soon either in person or on 'Zoom'. Whether you are a 'new' member or an 'old' one, I hope you've all enjoyed some summer weather and been out and about. There have been some excellent bird sightings in Fife recently as the autumn migration starts.

We are still looking for folk to come forward and share the planning and running of events for Fife SOC, but I thought it would be useful to send out a newsletter that highlights what is happening.

As usual your best resource for forthcoming talks and outings is the Fife page on the SOC website – and of course you can also check out events in neighbouring branches as SOC members are welcome in any branch. The SOC is also holding a full programme of talks that will go out every month on Zoom to all members. I have not included information about those here, but again you will find details on the Branches page of the SOC website and as long as you have signed up to receive SOC emails, you will get the Zoom link and relevant information before each event.

I hope you enjoy everything that SOC has to offer.

Elizabeth Irwin

Upcoming Fife SOC events:

Details will be sent out by mailchimp nearer the time, so do make sure you are on The SOC mailing list and add to your 'safe senders'!

Wednesday September 13th online talk:

Professor Will Cresswell – “Corn Buntings in Fife: the numbers are going up but why aren't they going anywhere?”

NB: Would you like to host this meeting on Zoom? It is easy to do!
Please contact fifechair@the-soc.org.uk if you can help out with this.

Sunday September 24th outing:

To St Andrews and the Eden Estuary. Caroline Gordon will be the contact.

Thursday October 5th joint in person workshop

Steve Willis – BirdTrack workshop (in-person in Dundee). **Booking required - places limited**

(details to follow; please make sure you're signed up to receive [Branch News & Events - Talks & Workshops](#))

Wednesday November 8th online talk:

Yvonne Boles – RSPB Loch of Kinnordy Reserve

Saturday November 11th outing

To Loch Leven. Elizabeth and John Irwin will be the contacts.

Thursday March 7th joint in person workshop

Scott Paterson – Learning bird sounds workshop (in-person in Dundee). **Booking required - places limited**

(details to follow; please make sure you're signed up to receive [Branch News & Events - Talks & Workshops](#))



Garden Bird Feeder: Nigel Duncan

Outing Report

Fife SOC outing to Birnie and Gaddon Lochs 3rd March 2023

At an earlier reconnaissance meeting there was a large yellow notice at the entrance to the car park stating quite clearly that there would be no vehicular access to the lochs on March 2nd, 3rd and 6th. We are grateful too Fife Zoo for allowing us to use their car park for the day and 10 of us met there. As we were assembling, we were treated to a fly over of c1000 Pink-footed Geese, a great start to the walk.

Stuart had had problems with closed roads on his journey and arrived just as we were setting off towards the lochs. This turned out to be good for the bird list as he saw and heard the only Jackdaws of the day on his way to catch us up. He also saw a Grey Heron fly across the far end of the loch.

The path to the lochs went past a Rookery which was noisy as they usually are. The grass in front of the car park was quieter than usual with only a few Mallard and 2 Greylag Geese. There was a Mute Swan, Moorhen and Tufted Duck all easily visible from here. As we headed off around Birnie Loch the woodland gave us good views of Robin, Great Tit, Blue Tit and Long-tailed Tit. These were also making use of the bird feeders here. There was a group of 4 robins all in close proximity without any of the usual territorial aggressive behaviour. We saw several other groups of 3 or 4 Robins on the walk again happily co-existing. Perhaps they were part of a migrating group rather than residents?



Tree Creeper: Elizabeth Irwin

The woodlands also gave us Wood Pigeon, Coal Tit, Wren, Chaffinch, Bullfinch, Blackbird, Dunnock and 3 Treecreeper, two of these were obviously a pair, but all were actively feeding. There were fewer wildfowl than there sometimes are on the loch but the Goldeneye were looking particularly splendid and the males were displaying. The Widgeon were also very handsome. We saw Coot and Black-headed Gulls as we continued round towards Gaddon loch.

Just before we crossed into Gaddon Loch Stuart saw a single Redwing in the bushes and there was a hybrid goose on the loch as we approached. It is difficult to be certain, but the consensus was a Greylag x Barnacle Goose. As we went around the loch, we had good views of a pair of Buzzard circling and we heard a Song Thrush singing. There were more Greylag Geese and Mute Swans on Gaddon Loch and we had good views of a Great Cormorant sitting on a rock in the water. We also added Herring and Common Gulls here.

The woodlands also gave us Carrion Crow, more Bullfinches, Tits, Blackbirds and Robins and Elizabeth found another single Redwing. This was some distance from the first one but it might have been the same bird. We were also treated to the return flight of the masses of Pink-footed Geese.

After taking about 2 hours to cover the 2 miles 8 of us adjourned to the Fife Zoo café for an agreeable and social lunch.

John Irwin



**Minutes of the AGM held on
Wednesday 12th April 2023
Via Zoom**

1. **Apologies:** Apologies were received from Peter Davey and David Heeley.
2. **Minutes of 2022 AGM:** The Minutes of the 2022 AGM were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting, proposed by Elizabeth Irwin and seconded by John Irwin.
3. **Matters Arising:** There were no matters arising.
4. **Chairman's report:**
Elizabeth Irwin gave an overview of the events and activities over the past year.

We have organised a number of outings, to Ruddons Point, Kinghorn and Kirkcaldy and the Howe of Fife, which were fairly well attended with some new members coming along. We also had a guided walk at Findatie on Loch Leven led by Scott Paterson which was both very enjoyable and useful, though only 6 members signed up.

The club-wide online meetings have continued with some excellent, high calibre speakers, and with the benefit of being able to watch on catch up for those members who missed it on the night. We had one branch specific online event, a presentation on Gull ID by Mark Lewis, the SOC's Birding and Science officer, picking up various tips which we then tried putting into practice on our outing to Kinghorn and Kirkcaldy later in January.

Elizabeth noted that the problems with the availability of St Andrews town hall for indoor meetings are ongoing. Even if a venue was available, she also flagged up the issue of staffing if she and John were unable to be there.

5. **Accounts:** John Irwin presented the branch accounts. A donation of £250 was made to support young birders to attend the SOC conference. Those attending the guided walk in March paid a £10 fee and the event broke even. The invoice is still be paid. With no indoor meetings, there was no other income. There have been no applications for the small grants offered to students. The current account balance at the end of March was £1269.28.

The accounts were approved, proposed by Caroline Gordon and seconded by Andrew Riches.

6. **Committee and Future Plans for the Branch:**

John Irwin has agreed to remain as Treasurer. Elizabeth noted that while the 'operating committee' wants to keep the branch going, she and others are not willing to commit more time to organising activities but are willing to try to keep things going at a level we can manage for the coming year, an approach that is being encouraged from HQ.

There was discussion of the need for change - though it seems that is not a widespread feeling across all branches. While Fife will not be re-introducing face to face meetings in the foreseeable future, Jane Allison at HQ has offered to organise 2 speakers and 2 workshops, all online, for the branch and this will be followed up.

Andrew Riches suggested informal outings, which don't need to be organised far in advance, should be considered and it was agreed that we would discuss this idea further.

Gillian Strugnell commented on the positive approach in Aberdeen where SOC and local RSPB groups have joint events and we agreed with Keith Ballantyne, chair of Fife Bird Club, to look at how we can better share information about any events that either group organises.

Allister Todd asked about the potential of Facebook and other social media to bring more people in. It seems that where the SOC has used this, it has generated a good level of interest from younger people, but branches are not able to use this directly themselves as all social media has to be done through HQ.

Elizabeth noted that she still sits, for now, on both SOC Council and the Strategy Group. However, she would encourage anyone who is interested in getting involved, either with these groups or the branch, to come forward.

7. **AOCB:**

No other matters were raised and the meeting closed at 8.25pm.



Grey Wagtail: Allister Todd

Fife Bird Sightings

March 2023

Largo Bay held a White-billed Diver and Red-throated, Black-throated and Great Northern Divers; Slavonian, Great Crested, Black-necked and Red-necked Grebes; Black Guillemots; Common and Velvet Scoters and Long-tailed Ducks. Fife Ness logged Manx Shearwaters, Great Northern, Black-throated and Red-throated Divers, Common Scoters, Long-tailed Ducks, Black Guillemots and a Short-eared Owl. Whooper Swans were at Letham Pools, Coaltown of Weymss (72), Cellardyke and Loch Fitty (64), White-fronted Geese at Bow of Fife (Greenland race), Pitlessie (over) and Loch Fitty (European and Greenland races) and a Tundra Bean Goose was at Loch Fitty on 3rd. Balgove Bay held 110 Pintails, a pair of Mandarin Ducks appeared at Ladybank (21st), the Ring-necked Duck remained at Angle Park, and the drake Smew at Cameron Reservoir. Black-throated Divers were in St Andrews Bay, a White-billed Diver was noted off Elie Ness (21st) and Slavonian and Red-necked Grebes were in St Andrews Bay. Rossie Bog and Tayport had Little Egrets. Ospreys were over Kirkcaldy, and Ruddons Point. Red Kites showed at Dunshalt, Glenrothes, Lomond Hills and Cullaloe LNR. The overwintering Marsh Harrier was at Mugdrum Island, and a Hen Harrier was seen at Cassindonald Farm. A Merlin was hunting over Letham Pools. Seafield held 53 Purple Sandpipers on 8th. The Green Sandpiper continued at Lochore Meadows, a Whimbrel was at Luthrie, and there were Woodcocks at Kilminning and the Fife Ness 'Patch'. A Jack Snipe was at Cocklemill Burn. There was an Iceland Gull at Leven, a Barn Owl at Bow of Fife, and a Short-eared Owl at Arncroach. Early Wheatears were noted at Letham Pools, Kilrenny Mill and Fife Ness, a Ring Ouzel as at lower Kilminning. Nuthatches were at Falkland Estate and Fordell (two). Twite lingered at Harperleas Reservoir (50 on 11th) and Cocklemill Burn (30), and a few Snow Buntings remained at Tentsmuir and Outhead (five),

April 2023

Highlights: Largo Bay held a Stejneger's Scoter (from 28th) and four White-winged Scoters (30th) all off Lower Largo, three Surf Scoters (one off Ruddons Point and two off Lower Largo), a number of rafts of Common Scoters of c2500 birds, Velvet Scoters, a King Eider off Elie (from 23rd), Long-tailed Ducks, Black-throated and Red-throated Divers, Red-necked, Slavonian and Great-crested Grebes, Puffins and Black Guillemots. St Andrews Bay held Great Northern, Black-throated and Red-throated Divers, Scaup, Common and Velvet Scoters, Long-tailed Ducks, Red-breasted Mergansers and Purple Sandpipers. Fife Ness logged Arctic Skuas, Manx Shearwaters, and Sandwich and Common Terns, A Stone Curlew stopped briefly at Anstruther on 10th. A White Stork was over Guardbridge on 15th. A drake Lesser Scaup was at Loch Gelly (14th - 19th). Whooper Swans were at Kingskettle (30), Wilderness (54) and Loch Gelly, a drake Mandarin Duck was at Wilderness and an American Wigeon showed in the Eden Estuary (at Balgove Bay). The Ring-necked Duck continued at Angle Park. Little Egrets were in the Eden Estuary and Great White Egrets at Letham Pools and Edenside. Ospreys were over Dunshalt, and fishing at Cameron Reservoir, Outhead and Coble Shore. Red Kites were seen at Mount Hill, Cupar, Kirkcaldy, Kilmany, Morton Lochs, Dalgety Bay and Loch Fitty; there were Merlins at Letham Pools, Loch Fitty and the Eden Estuary. Tayport held a Spotted Redshank. Whimbrels migrated through Ruddons Point (five), Caiplie (three), Fife Ness (nine) and Elie (three) and there were sightings of Jack Snipes at Letham Pools (two) and Ruddons Point. Little Gulls were at Tayport and Letham Pools (one) and an imm. Iceland Gull was noted at Leven. 'The Patch' at Fife Ness held a Long-eared Owl and there was a Short-eared Owl at Ardross Farm and a Ring Ouzel at Boarhills. Grasshopper Warblers were 'reeling' at Kilminning, Outhead, Loch Fitty (three) and Letham Pools.

May 2023

Highlights: The Stejneger's Scoter, White-winged Scoters and Surf Scoters remained in Largo Bay until 21st. Letham Pools held Dunlins, Jack Snipes, Grasshopper Warblers, Wood Sandpipers, Whinchats, Common Sandpipers, Ringed Plovers, Little Gulls (ad.), Pochards and Barnacle Geese. Kilminning logged Tree Pipits, Red-breasted Flycatcher, Lesser Whitethroats, Whinchats, Pied Flycatchers, Spotted Flycatchers and Whimbrels (over). A Hoopoe was briefly at Anstruther (10th); a Pacific Diver was at Lower Largo (13th); a drake Mandarin Duck was at the Wilderness (8th); a drake American Wigeon was at Coble Shore and then at Guardbridge with a drake Green-winged Teal. A pair of Garganeys was at Clatto Reservoir, the Ring-necked

Duck continued at Angle Park. Quail were heard at Upper Kenly (31st). 61 Manx Shearwaters went past Fife Ness on 28th; a White Stork was over Cambo (8th). Otterston Loch held a Marsh Harrier on 6th; a Little Stint was at Outhead; Dunlins were at Luthrie with three Wood Sandpipers there on 10th with a Common Sandpiper. Whimbrels were at Fife Ness (11 on 7th) and Cameron Reservoir (20 over on 8th). A Roseate Tern was noted East Braes (19th) with a Black Guillemot (summ. plum.) there also. A Barn Owl was at Markinch. Redstarts visited Balcomie and Crail G.C. Whinchats continued in Glen Vale (pair). An influx of Lesser Whitethroats saw records from Seafield, Cellardyke, Kilminning, Balcomie, Fife Ness, Kingsbarns, St Andrews, Burntisland and Loch Gelly. Grasshopper Warblers were reeling at Kilmany, Outhead, Bankhead Moss (two), and Cameron Reservoir.

June 2023

Highlights: A Bee-eater was over Strathkiness on 17th; a Hobby was past Fife Ness on 16th; Letham Pools held Black-tailed Godwits, Greenshanks, Redshanks, Snipes and Little Gulls. The Green-winged Teal remained at Edenside until at least 19th. Quail were heard calling at Dunino and Kingsbarns. Red-throated Divers were off Ruddons Point, Fife Ness and in St Andrews Bay; a Great Northern Diver was at Kinghorn. Manx Shearwaters passed Anstruther, Fife Ness (157 on 25th) and Kinghorn. Wilderness held a Wood Sandpiper; Dalgety Bay had Black-tailed Godwits. Whimbrels were noted at Outhead, Tentsmuir NNR, Cellardyke and St Andrews Bay (26 on 28th). A Great Skua was over Crail; an Arctic Skua passed Ruddons Point; Mediterranean Gulls were at Anstruther, Billowness and Cellardyke; a Black Guillemot was in St Andrews Bay. Glen Vale held six Whinchats (3F, 2M, 1y) and a Spotted Flycatcher, with another Spotted Flycatcher logged at Clatto Reservoir.

July 2023

Highlights: A Black-crowned Night Heron was at Methil on 19th. Fife Ness logs included Great, Arctic and Long-tailed Skuas; Balearic, Cory's, Sooty and Manx Shearwaters (428 on 26th); Little Gulls; Sandwich, Common, Arctic and Roseate Terns; Whimbrels; Puffins (1955 on 6th); Common Scoters; Red-breasted Mergansers; Red-throated Divers; Knot; Sanderlings and an out-of-season Long-tailed Duck. The Wilderness held Black-tailed Godwits, Common Sandpipers, Greenshanks, Ruff, Crossbills (incl juv.) and a Mandarin in eclipse. Quail called at Kilmany, Craigrothie, Kingsbarns, St Andrews Fairmont and Carnbee. A record 13 Little Egrets were at Guardbridge on 31st. A Hen Harrier was at Colinsburgh (30th) and a dark morph Honey-buzzard was over Kinghorn on 8th. Torry bay held 30 Ringed Plovers on 29th; Wood Sandpipers were noted at Ruddons Point and Guardbridge; a Green Sandpiper visited Angle Park; a flock of 50 Black-tailed Godwits was over Ferry Hills on 29th. Whimbrels were seen at East Weymss, Guardbridge and St Andrews Bay. Morton Lochs and Guardbridge held Ruff. Little Gulls were at St Andrews Bay and Outhead, Mediterranean Gulls continued at East Weymss gull roost, Cuckoos passed through Rossie Bog, Kilminning and Cameron Reservoir. A Kingfisher showed at Letham Pools on 25th. Auchtermuchty Common held a Spotted Flycatcher.

Sightings should be sent to David Heeley at dw.heeley@btinternet.com or 50 High Street, Newburgh, Fife KY14 6AQ.)



Sanderling: Allister Todd