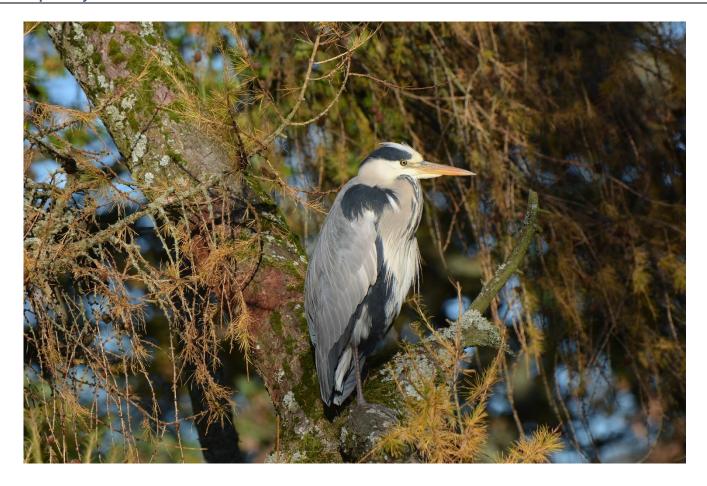
Fife SOC

Newsletter No. 210

Compiled by Elizabeth Irwin

December 2023



Grey Heron seen posing on our outing: Stewart Neilson

FROM THE EDITOR

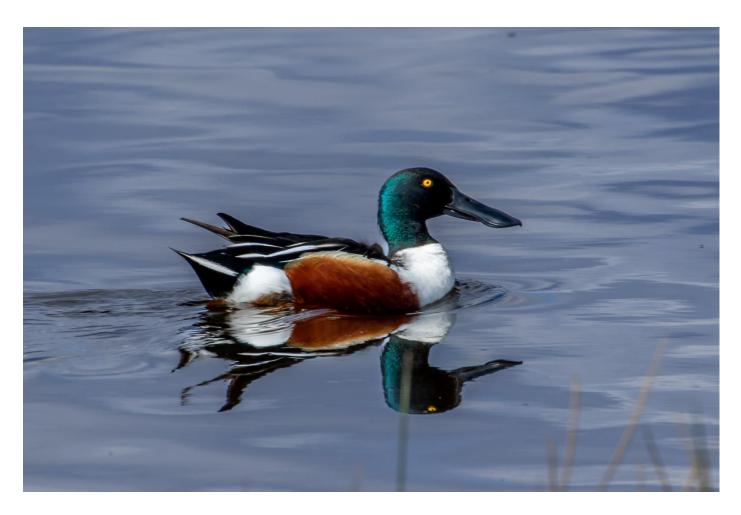
A Happy Christmas to all our Fife members, and I hope you have managed to see some lovely birds out and about this Autumn.

This newsletter has accounts of two outings that we managed to organise this Autumn. They were well attended, with a good mix of familiar faces and newer members. They were sociable events and whatever your level of experience we all find that spotting and sharing what we see makes for a very pleasant walk.

We are hoping to plan a regular series of outings next year because we can see that they are popular. The 'organisation' will continue to be very light touch so that we can manage the commitment. However, we need your help to fill some of the dates when Caroline, John and I aren't available. If you feel you might be able to help and want to find out more, please get in touch with Caroline or me.

Fife will also need to nominate and elect a new representative for SOC Council at our AGM in April. This is a great opportunity to be more involved in the SOC at a national level so do get in touch if you are interested.

Elizabeth Irwin



Shoveler: Allister Todd

Outing Report

Fife SOC Outing to St Andrews and Guardbridge, 23rd September 2023



A Wheatear at the parking area at the top of the West Sands got our outing off to a good start. We then walked over to the edge of the dunes and scanned the bay, finding 2 close in Black-throated Divers, a Red-throated Diver, Red-breasted Merganser, Gannets, Sandwich and 'Commic' Terns and Common Scoter. There were also quite a few Razorbills and Guillemots close to the shore.

Wheatear: Allister Todd

A couple of Swallows flew past along the edge of the dunes. As we walked north towards Outhead, David picked up an Osprey heading in the same direction. The dunes held Yellowhammer, Linnet, Goldfinch, Skylark, Stonechat and Reed Bunting.

Once at Outhead, we found the Osprey again, sitting on one of the posts mid-stream with its catch.



Long skeins of Pink-footed Geese were flying in while out on the sandbanks, there were Golden Plover, Curlew, Ringed Plover, Sanderling and Oystercatcher, Little Egret and Shelduck plus several, rather distant, Brent Geese. There was another Red-throated Diver mid channel together with a group of 5 Slavonian Grebes. A few people also picked out a Red-necked Grebe in the same area.

Pink-footed Goose: Allister Todd

After returning to our cars, we drove along to the Guardbridge hide in time for lunch. A good selection of waders included Greenshank, Redshank, Golden Plover, Black-tailed Godwit, Knot, Curlew, Lapwing and Oystercatcher and we also added Goosander, Canada Goose, Cormorant, Mallard and Guillemot to the day's list.

Thanks to the dozen members who came along, and we were delighted to welcome three people on their first branch outing.

Caroline Gordon



Slavonian Grebe: Allister Todd

Fife SOC outing to Findatie, Saturday 11th November.

14 of us met at the car park at Loch Leven Lodges at 9.30. It was a beautiful, crisp Autumn morning and the views of the surrounding hills and Loch Leven were absolutely beautiful.



We spent the next three hours wandering down through the cut, along the River Leven past the bridge and into the woods. We then retraced our steps back to Loch Leven. At that point, some continued on to RSPB Loch Leven either by car or on foot, where lunch and toilets beckoned, followed by further bird watching.

We didn't see any rarities that morning, but we did see 35 different species, including some outstanding flocks of Fieldfares and all the birds we saw had their colours

highlighted by the low sunshine.

Grey Wagtail: Elizabeth Irwin



Birds seen:

Black-headed Gull, Blackbird, Blue tit, Buzzard, Carrion crow, Chaffinch, Coal tit, Collared dove, Feral pigeon, Fieldfare, Goldcrest, Goldfinch, Great-spotted woodpecker, Great tit, Grey heron, Grey wagtail, Herring gull, House sparrow,

Fieldfare: Elizabeth Irwin

Jackdaw, Jay, Kingfisher, Lesser black-backed gull, Long-tailed tit, Magpie, Mallard, Mealy Redpoll, Mute Swan, Pied wagtail, Pink-footed goose, Redwing, Robin, Rook, Treecreeper, Wren, and Yellowhammer

John and Elizabeth Irwin

Fife Waxwing Irruption!

I hope you were able to see at least some of the Waxwings that arrived here in November. I spent a few useless hours going both to where they **had** been reported, (and clearly moved on) and to scenic spots full of berries where I **hoped** they might arrive. Eventually I found them

down at David Russell apartments at the bottom of the High Road in St Andrews, and although I only had my phone with me, managed to take this rather unflattering picture of a waxwing hungrily eyeing up the yellow Sorbus berries. I thought this waxwing looked very different from the usual cheery 'cute' pictures we see!



Elizabeth Irwin

Fife Bird Sightings

August 2023

Highlights: A Brown Booby passed Fife Ness on 17th. Fife Ness logs also included Cory's, Balearic, Sooty and Manx Shearwaters (362 on 16th); Arctic, Long-tailed, Pomarine and Great Skuas; Little Gulls (300+ on 25th); Arctic, Common, Roseate and Black terns; Common and Velvet Scoters; Red-throated Divers; Redbreasted Mergansers; Whimbrels; Little Egrets, Greenshanks; Golden Plovers; Black-tailed Godwits; Knot and Merlins. Kilminning held a Red-backed Shrike; a Pied Flycatcher; Barred, Wood and Grasshopper Warblers and a Yellow Wagtail. 334 Tree Pipits were over Ferry Hills on 14th. The Eden Estuary held 11 Little Egrets on 2nd. Ospreys were at Clatto reservoir, Letham Pools, Kilmany, Eden estuary, Outhead, Ferry Hills and Dunfermline. A Red Kite quartered Drumcarrow hill. Marsh Harriers visited Letham Pools, Wormiston, Crail airfield, Kilconguhar Loch, Carnbee, Anstuther, Ferry Hills and Stenhouse Reservoir. Honey Buzzards passed over Ferry Hills on 23rd and 24th; a Hobby was at Kilrenny. Little Stints showed at Tayport, Tenstmuir and the Eden Estuary Centre (two). Tayport also held a Curlew Sandpiper and a Spotted Redshank. Green Sandpipers were logged at Guardbridge, Boarhills and Kilminning. There were Common Sandpipers at Wilderness, Cameron Reservoir, Eden estuary, St Andrews, Tayport, Kinghorn, Newmills Bay and Stenhouse Reservoir. Greenshanks were at Wilderness, Drumoig, Eden Estuary and Cameron Reservoir. Mediterranean Gulls continued to build at East Wemyss with 107 noted on 22nd. A Cuckoo passed through Kilrenny Common; a Barn Owl was at St Andrews; Short-eared Owls were at the Rossie estate, Fife Ness and Balcomie beach; Common Redstarts were seen at St Andrews, Boarhills, Fife Ness patch, Crail and Ferry Hills; Whinchat were at Kilmany, Outhead, Kingsbarns and at Ferry Hills; Spotted Flycatchers were at Kilmany (two), Cameron Reservoir, Fife Ness patch, Ferry Hills and Barns Farm. Crombie churchyard held a Nuthatch. A number of Ravens were noticed on 26th with eight at Lindores Loch and 10 at Kilmany.

September 2023

Highlights: a Pallid Harrier was noted near Crail (2nd), a Blyth's Reed Warbler was caught and ringed at Fife Ness 'Patch', a Turtle Dove was over Kilconquhar Loch (3rd). Fife Ness logged a Brown Booby (6th), a Grey Phalarope (23d), a Red-necked Grebe (28th), Balearic, Sooty, Cory's and Manx Shearwaters (383 on 12th), Leach's and Storm Petrels, Great, Arctic, Pomarine and Long-tailed Skuas, Common and Velvet Scoters, Brent, Greylag, Pink-footed, Barnacle and Canada Geese, Shelducks, Goosanders, Red-breasted Mergansers, Wigeon, Pintails, Black Guillemots, Greenshanks, Dunlin, Knot, Curlew and Purple Sandpipers, Black and Bar-tailed Godwits, Whimbrels, Golden Plovers, Red-throated and Great Northern Divers, Sabine's and Little Gulls and a Hen Harrier. Kilminning held a Barred Warbler, Whinchats, Stonechats, Ravens, a Merlin, and a Short-eared Owl. Ferry Hills vis mig included a White-tailed Eagle, a Honey-buzzard, Ospreys, Great, Arctic, Pomarine and Long-tailed Skuas, Bar-tailed and Black-tailed Godwits, Red-throated Divers, Short-eared Owls, some 1600 Meadow Pipits on 21st, Siskins, Lesser Redpolls, Nuthatches, Merlins, Spotted Flycatchers and Crossbills. Kinghorn held a Brown Booby (5th), Balearic and Manx Shearwaters, Great, Arctic, Pomarine and Long-tailed Skuas, Black Terns (juv) and Little Gulls. Mediterranean Gulls continued along the Dysart / East Weymss coast. Pochards were at Loch Gelly (64) and Lindores Loch, Black-throated Divers were at Crail and Elie, Little Egrets were noted at Newburgh, Guardbridge (27), Tayport, Boarhills, Newmills Bay and Carlingnose Point. A Red Kite passed over Fairmont (28th). Marsh Harrier continued at Newburgh (two) with others at Wilderness, Kilconguhar and Cameron Reservoir. Kittocks Den held a Goshawk (26th). A Hobby went through Foodieash. Little Stints were at Outhead, Tayport and Guardbridge, and there were Green Sandpipers at Wilderness, Angle Park (six), Stenhouse Reservoir and Cullaloe, and Spotted Redshanks at Wilderness, Tayport and Outhead. Black-tailed Godwits were at Wilderness, Luthrie, Outhead, Tayport and Guardbridge, Ruff were at Guardbridge, Tayport, Stenhouse Reservoir and Wilderness. Roseate Terns were noted at St Andrews and Carlingnose Point, with Black Terns logged at Coble Shore, Edenside (three on 29th), Dalgety Bay, Stenhouse Reservoir and Hawkcraig Point. Lundin Links and Lower Largo had Black Guillemots, a Yellow Wagtail (ap) was briefly at Burntisland and there were Wheatears at Outhead, Cocklemill Burn, Kingsbarns, Ruddons Point and Culross.

October 2023

Highlights: A Pallid Harrier was over St Andrews on 3rd. A Great Grey Shrike was at Boarhills (21st - 22nd). Fife Ness logged Grey Phalaropes (14th), Leach's Petrels, Manx, Sooty and Balearic Shearwaters, Barnacle and Pink-footed Geese, Long-tailed Ducks, Little Auks, Great, Arctic and Pomarine Skuas, Little Gulls, Great Northern, Red-throated and Black-throated Divers, Black Guillemots, Slavonian and Little Grebes, Purple Sandpipers, Knot, a Kestrel, a Little Egret and Snow Buntings. A similar range of species was reported from sites on the inner Forth (Kinghorn - Carlingnose Point). The Fife Ness "Patch" had a Coal Tit of the continental race, a Corncrake, a Hawfinch, a Short-eared Owl, Woodcocks and Mealy Redpolls. Kilminning held Yellow Browed Warblers, a Pallas's Warbler (30th), a Firecrest, c100 Goldcrests (9th), Chiffchaffs, Willow Warblers, a Garden Warbler, Pied Flycatchers, Black Redstarts, a northern race Bullfinch, Mealy Redpolls, Bramblings, a Hawfinch, Short-eared Owls, a Long-eared Owl, a Little Bunting, Green Sandpipers, Jack Snipes, Golden Plovers, Ring Ouzels, a Little Egret and a Merlin. Black-necked, Red-necked and Slavonian Grebes were off Ruddons Point. Waxwings appeared on 16th with sightings from Crail, St Andrews, Kilminning, Cowdenbeath, Morton Lochs, Kingsbarns, Cameron Reservoir, Cellardyke, Leven and Ferry Hills. Whooper Swans were at Newburgh, Angle Park, Eden Estuary, Strathkinness, Ferry Hills, Dalgety Bay and Kinghorn; Carnbee Reservoir held two drake Pochards; Great Northern Divers were noted at Crail, Boarhills, St Andrews, Pittenweem, Kingsbarns, Dalgety Bay, Kinghorn, Culross, Aberdour and over Ferry Hills. Slavonian Grebes were at Beveridge Park, Pittenweem, Kilconguhar Loch, Coble Shore, Ruddons Point, Edenside, Leuchars (roadside puddle), Cameron Reservoir, Culross and St Margaret's Marsh. Leach's Petrels and European Storm Petrels were logged at Crail, the Eden Estuary Centre, Kingsbarns, St Andrews, Coble Shore, Elie Ness, Kingsbarns, Pittenweem, Kinghorn, Dalgety Bay, Ferry Hills, Carlingnose Point, Inverkeithing and Aberdour. Marsh Harriers were seen at Mugdrum Island, Tayport, Kilmany, Elie and Loch Fitty and there were Hen Harriers (all ring-tailed) at Coaltown of Balgonie, Arncroach, Cellardyke, Ferry Hills and Loch Fitty. Merlins passed through Lindores Loch, Kilmany, Coble Shore, Boarhills and Crail. Star of Markinch held a covey of Grey Partridges. Jack Snipes were at Tayport and Anstruther. The Mediterranean Gull roost at East Weymss numbered c52 on 13th. A Black Tern was at Kirkcaldy, and a Long-eared Owl was at Fairmont. Short-eared Owls were at Craigrothie, Kilrenny, Crail, Wormiston Beach, Kingsbarns, Elie Ness, Pittenweem, Crail, Boarhills, Inverkeithing and Ferry Hills. Black Redstarts were recorded at Balcomie, Crail and Pittenweem. c7400 Redwings passed over Ferry Hills on 9th. Ring Ouzels showed at Balcomie, Kittock's Den, Kingsbarns, Anstruther, Fairmont, Wormiston, Boarhills and St Margaret's Marsh. c68 Bramblings were at Ferry Hills on 22nd. Twite were at Shell Bay, Tayport, Coble Shore (c40), Ruddons Point (c60), Edenside, Ferry Hills, Boarhills and Balcomie Beach; there were Mealy Redpolls at Boarhills, Denburn Wood and St Andrews, and Outhead recorded two Snow Buntings.

November 2023

Highlights: a Great Grey Shrike was at Kilminning (1st). There were widespread reports of Waxwings including counts of 120 in Kirkcaldy, 50 in Dysart, 65 in St Andrews, and 50 at Dalgety Bay. Whooper Swans were noted at 19 locations with 26 at Howe of Fife. A Shore Lark was at Outhead 16th - 17th along with a Lapland Bunting (17th). Fife Ness logs included Little Auks, Little Gulls, Sooty and Manx Shearwaters, Redthroated, Black-throated and Great Northern Divers, Long-tailed Ducks, Common and Velvet Scoters, Black Guillemots and Purple Sandpipers. St Andrews Bay held good numbers of Common and Velvet Scoters, Longtailed Ducks, Scaup, Great Crested Grebes and Eider Ducks. Scaup were also at Loch Gelly, Leven and on the River Tay at Newburgh. Surf Scoters were off Tentsmuir Point and Ruddons Point. Newburgh held a flock of 90 Goldeneyes. Red-throated, Black-throated and Great Northern Divers passed over Ferry Hills. The 73 Red-throated on 21st included a flock of 32. Slavonian Grebes were seen at Beveridge Park, Outhead, Kilconquhar Loch, Tentsmuir Point, Coble Shore, Cameron Reservoir, Leven, Lower Largo, Loch Fitty, Loch Gelly and Aberdour Harbour. Red-necked Grebes were at Ruddons Point and Aberdour. A Leach's Petrel was recorded passing Anstruther on 15th. Cameron Reservoir held a Great White Egret (10th). White Tailed Eagles continued in the Eden Estuary, Marsh Harriers were at Mugdrum Island and Rossie Bog (two juv.) and a ring-tailed Hen Harrier was at Cocklemill Marsh. A Goshawk showed at Morton Lochs, Merlins were at Newburgh and Fife Ness. Kilminning and Cameron Reservoir held Woodcocks with three noted at Boarhills. Dunshalt, Freuchie, Falkland and Burntisland held Barn Owls, a Long-eared Owl was at Burntisland, and there were Short-eared Owls at Boarhills, Methil, and Valleyfield Lagoons. Black Redstarts were briefly at St Andrews, Crail Sauchope and Crail Roome Bay, a Ring Ouzel was at Kilminning. A Coal Tit of the continental race was a good find at Magus Muir (10th). The Nuthatch continued at Beveridge Park. Kilminning held two northern race Bullfinches (3rd). Bramblings showed in St Andrews, at Magus Muir and Morton Lochs. Twite were noted at Coble Shore (120), Elie Ness, Kingsbarns, Lower Largo and Cocklemill Marsh. Mealy Redpolls were at Kilminning, St Andrews and Tentsmuir Point. Clatto Reservoir, Pitmedden, The Wilderness, Star Moss, Cameron Reservoir, Kinghorn Loch and Ferry Hills had Crossbills. Snow Buntings appeared with reports from Craigmead (15), Outhead, Tentsmuir (23) and Coble Shore.

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

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