

Lothian Bird Bulletin



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Editorial

Welcome to the Lothian Bird Bulletin - possibly the best bird newsletter in Lothian.

In this issue LSOC branch secretary John Hamilton outlines the financial challenges facing Lothian Branch, Mark Holling writes about the SOC Discussion Group, and I visit the Lee Valley Regional Park near London.

Sorry to nag, but I really do need your input to the Lothian Bird Bulletin. Why not have a go at writing something? It could be serious, humorous, scientific, controversial... Even if you don't want to write anything yourself, please get in touch if you have any ideas for future articles, or if you know of any interesting news stories.

Stephen



Correction

Oops. It would appear that the LBB quality control department failed to intercept a couple of errors in the last issue. Firstly, I managed to get my own email address wrong. It has now been corrected on the page opposite. Secondly, the March mystery bird was (obviously) a Velvet Scoter - not a Surf Scoter.

News

Musselburgh Lagoons Development

According to the local press, planners at East Lothian Council have been forced to rethink their plans for Musselburgh Lagoons. Various concerns were expressed during the public consultation, and as a result a revised masterplan is expected to be produced by November. The nine-hole golf course is now unlikely to be situated close to the wader scrape, and the site of the football academy is also under review. Earlier this year the SOC were in discussion with East Lothian Council over the proposals, and suggested a number of changes to the plan, with the intention of minimising the impact on the area's wildlife.

Scottish Birdwatchers' Conference

Lothian Branch has been asked to host the annual spring conference in 2005. This year's event was held in Kilwinning by the SOC Ayrshire Branch and the BTO. The conference last came to Lothian in 1996.

Fundraising for Lothian SOC

We're looking for a 'fundraising consultant' to advise the branch on how best to generate extra income - for example by merchandising, advertising and sponsorship. See John Hamilton's article in this issue.

Lothian Bird Report

At the time of going to press, a few copies of the 2000 Lothian Bird Report are still available from Charles Frank (101 Rose Street, Edinburgh), direct from The SOC (see page 2), and from Ian Thomson (01875 870588).

New Members

A warm - if slightly belated - welcome to the following Lothian SOC members who joined the branch this year:

Cherry Abernethy	Mike McDowall
Sylvia Bates	Eric H Millar
Patrick Brown	Mike Robinson
John Gilligan	William Scott
George M Gladstone	James Smith
Anita Hogan	John Wallace

Branch Fortunes and Misfortunes

Financial implications for Lothian Branch, by branch secretary John Hamilton

At the Regional Committee meeting in March 2003, Branches were asked to endeavour not to be a drain on the Club and to be self-financing if possible. Your Branch Committee has been discussing how the Branch might move towards being self-financing, but there is no easy answer.

Indoor Meetings

The Club hires a Lounge at Meadowbank Sports Centre on our behalf for Indoor Meetings. Where speakers incur travelling expenses and overnight accommodation, these costs are also met by the Club. Branch members who attend the Indoor Meetings will be aware that during last session we introduced a small charge of £1 per meeting and in return free tea and coffee is provided at the interval. Usually 25 to 35 members attend an Indoor Meeting, so this brings in £25 - £35 per meeting. After the nominal costs of providing the tea and coffee, what is this money used for? Traditionally, speakers at Indoor Meetings, who might have travelled long distances, have been taken out for a meal with a Committee Member. The money collected covers this cost and from the surplus, in future, a donation will be made to the Club towards the costs it meets for us.

The hire of the Lounge at Meadowbank is around £50 per meeting and if the speaker has to travel from afar, there might also be travelling expenses and the cost of overnight accommodation. The costs of each meeting can easily run to over £100 and it will be seen that the attendance money collected does not go far to covering these costs. To fully cover our costs, the attendance charge per meeting would need to rise to around £3 to £4. But this would almost certainly have an adverse effect of the number of members attending, something that your committee wants to avoid. The move to Meadowbank has seen numbers attending Indoor Meetings rise and this trend is to be encouraged.

Lothian Bird Bulletin (LBB)

For the past couple of years, your Committee has produced and distributed LBB free of charge to all members in Lothian. This doubles as the Branch Newsletter. I feel passionately that the Branch Committee should make more use of LBB and communicate what it is doing to members. Hopefully, this small article will be the start. SOC HQ give us enormous help by copying and distributing LBB, but it still costs about £50 per issue for us to produce. LBB generates no revenue itself, so this is another cost to be met from monies collected at Meadowbank.

Bird Report

Your Branch publishes the Lothian Bird Report (LBR). LBR 2000 retails for £7 per copy which on the print run of 100 will bring in just short of £700 (after a very few complimentary copies). This money is needed to pay the printing costs of the next Bird Report and so the cycle goes on. The Committee is considering sponsorship and selling advertising for future Bird Reports so the the sale of the report makes enough of a profit to contribute to the costs discussed above. But it won't be easy.

Field Trips

The Branch receives no income from field trips or weekends away. The costs of these outings are private financial arrangements among those members attending.

Branch Subscription or Fundraising?

To belong to the RSPB Edinburgh Group costs about £4 per annum, in addition to the Subscription in the RSPB. Would your Committee be right in thinking that it would lose members if it tried to introduce a Branch Subscription just when our parent body, The SOC, has substantially increased its subscription rates?

Then the solution to move towards self sufficiency would appear to be some form of fundraising – social events, raffles, sale of merchandise (with Branch logo), etc? To be completely self sufficient, the Branch would require to raise in excess of £1,000 per annum.

What do you think? Any suggestions? We need your ideas!

No one on the Branch Committee has experience of fundraising, so if there is anyone out there who can help us...

PLEASE GET IN TOUCH - WE NEED YOUR EXPERTISE.

We would be pleased to receive your comments on the matters raised above. You may e-mail the Branch Secretary at john.r.hamilton31@btopenworld.com.

John Hamilton, August 2003

SOC Lothian Discussion Group

The SOC Discussion Group meets every month between September and April, on the first Wednesday of the month at 7.30 pm, in the Education Room at Newhailes (National Trust for Scotland), near Musselburgh. Topics include planning and findings of local surveys, BTO surveys, and conservation issues.

This winter, there will be discussions on the proposals for Musselburgh Lagoons, looking at detailed plans if they become available, and reviewing recent BTO surveys on heronries, Woodcock and Swallows. Fieldwork for the forthcoming winter gull roost survey will be organised here, along with the SOC's own annual count of birds along the rocky shore between Gullane and the English border, which takes place around a low tide on a January weekend. Regulars at the meeting include the Lothians BTO Regional Rep Alan Heavisides, RSPB Conservation Officer Pete Gordon, local bird recorders for both Lothian (Dave Kelly) and Borders (Ray Murray) and the SOC President Ian Andrews. We have members coming from as far as Coldingham in Berwickshire and the Manor Valley in deepest Peebleshire, so it's not all a Lothian flavour. Once or twice each season we have a guest from even further away or someone to lead a discussion on a particular topic. Last year Jon Mercer of the Scottish Borders Biological Record Centre showed us what can be done with bird records the centre collects and how they can help conservation. This autumn we expect a visit from Ian Francis, one of the organisers of the new North East Scotland Atlas project. Our own local Atlas was a constant item on the agenda during most of the 1990s, and discussions have already started about a replacement, perhaps in parallel with the next BTO Atlas which is due to start fieldwork in 2007-08.

This variety is typical of our meetings. However, perhaps the highlight of the meeting is the tea break when generous time is given for attendees to chat about birds over a cup of tea or coffee and cakes or biscuits provided by one of the members at the meeting. This is when you can catch up on news, get involved, or just enjoy being sociable with like-minded individuals.

All SOC members are welcome; if you are interested in participating in or just hearing about fieldwork locally, then this meeting is for you. Come armed with your diary and notebook! Directions to the Newhailes venue were given in SBN 64 (June 2002). Basically you turn into the estate from the A6095, enter the car park on the left, and follow the lights to the buildings ahead and into a courtyard where the meeting room is the only one lit up.

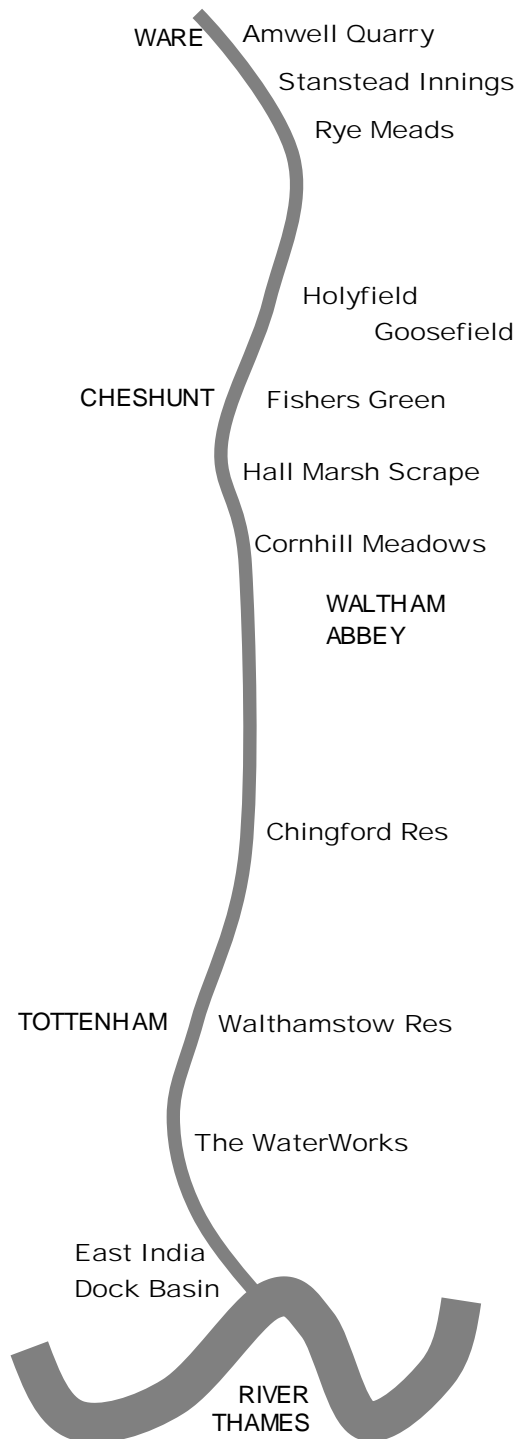
Dates for this session are: 1st October, 5th November, 3rd December, 7th January, 4th February, 3rd March and 7th April.

More details can be obtained from the Chairman, Mark Holling, at the SOC Edinburgh meetings, or on 01620 894037.

Mark Holling, September 2003

Lee Valley Regional Park

Last month I spent two and a half days exploring the Lee Valley Regional Park - a 10,000 acre area extending for 26 miles to the north of London. The park hosts a wide variety of bird species, most famously a wintering population of Bitterns. The Lee Valley is easily accessible by train, and boasts many miles of walks and cycle paths.



Traditionally the LBB editor chooses the wrong times of the year to go bird watching, and my visit to the Lee Valley was no exception. Despite this, there was still more than enough to keep me occupied - in fact I didn't even have time to visit the southernmost four sites. The descriptions below are a combination of my own observations, and information from the park guides.

Amwell Quarry is a former gravel pit. The reserve can be viewed from a riverside walkway and from a public hide. There are scenic countryside walks to either side of the valley - sadly I didn't have enough time to explore them properly. Species include Bittern, Little Ringed Plover, Smew, and occasionally Hawfinch.

Stanstead Innings features a large lake, with some smaller gravel pits. Bitterns and Greenshanks can be seen.

Rye Meads RSPB reserve features a circular walk with 10 hides overlooking a variety of habitats. The reserve is a good site for breeding Kingfishers, and includes 2 artificial nesting banks. Common Terns and Grasshopper Warblers also breed on the reserve. Bitterns, Green Sandpipers, and Water Pipits can be seen. Note that the reserve closes at 5pm (or dusk if earlier).

Holyfield Goosefield features a large lake with muddy margins which are ideal for passage waders. There are 2 hides, although sadly these are only open to the public at weekends. Species include Hobby, and a variety of ducks and waders.

Fishers Green is part of the River Lee Country Park, which also includes Hall Marsh Scrape and Cornhill Meadows (see below). The Country Park is a large area of open water, wooded islands, reedbeds and marsh. Species include Bittern, Smew, Long-eared Owl, and Nightingale. There are 2 hides, including the Bittern Watchpoint.

Hall Marsh Scrape is an area of shallow water and shingle islands, which hold breeding Little Ringed Plover. Other species include Green Sandpiper, Greenshank, and Hobby. Migrants have included Little Stint and Spoonbill. There are 3 hides, but these are only open to the public at weekends.

Cornhill Meadows is an area of meadow, ponds, hedgerows, scrub, and woodland, and is a good place for Hobbies. Various waders can be seen on passage. Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers are also present. The Dragonfly Sanctuary is a great place to watch...er...dragonflies (and damselflies), with over half of Britain's species having been seen.

Chingford Reservoirs are owned by Thames Water, and designated an SSSI. Access is only allowed by permit. A variety of passage migrants can be seen, and Black Redstarts are present in the summer.

Walthamstow Reservoirs comprise 10 water-filled basins surrounded by grassland, scrub and trees. The area contains one of the country's largest Heronries, and Smew are present in winter. Entry is by permit only. There are 2 hides.

The WaterWorks is a new nature reserve, featuring a large circular hide overlooking 6 different habitats. Species include Great Spotted and Green Woodpecker, Wood Sandpiper, and Kingfisher. Open daily to 4pm.

East India Dock Basin is situated by the River Thames. The area contains a variety of wetland habitats. Little Ringed Plover, Black Redstart, and Yellow-legged Gull are regularly seen in summer.

More information: www.leevalleypark.com (tel 01992-702200).

Stephen Hunter, September 2003

Lothian SOC Outings

Aberlady - 6th July

This was the annual **birds, beasties and botany** outing to Aberlady. Things were fairly quiet on the birds front, with a few warblers, a Canada Goose, and some Puffins off Gullane Point. We were more successful with beasties and botany, but I'm afraid you'll have to ask someone else about this...I have enough trouble identifying birds without attempting insects and plants as well.

Port Edgar and Hound Point - 17th Aug

After a brief visit to Port Edgar in search of terns, we headed for a spot of seawatching at Hound Point. Highlights were a couple of distant Arctic Skuas and a Manx Shearwater. (On a personal note, thanks to all who contributed sandwiches to the 'feed the LBB editor' appeal.)

Coming Up...

28th Sep: Northumberland
 19th Oct: East Coast Migrants
 9th Nov: Slamannan - in search of Bean Geese
 14th Dec: Aberlady, with Christmas Lunch

2004

11th Jan: Fife Coast and Vane Farm
 8th Feb: Ayrshire Coast. Also the LBB editor's birthday.
 28th Mar: Glen Artney, Perthshire
 23-25th Apr: Speyside Capercaillie Weekend

Contact the Lothian Bird Bulletin for details.

Leith High Tide Tables

OCT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	0643	0743	0857	1022	1145	0004	0105	0154	0236	0314
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
0348	0421	0451	0520	0548	0620	0702	0805	0935	1102	1209
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	
0016	0108	0155	0239	0222	0307	0353	0441	0535	0637	

NOV	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	0749	0906	1020	1123	1215	0023	0107	0146	0222	0255
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
0328	0359	0431	0507	0551	0651	0803	0917	1023	1120	1211
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30		
0022	0113	0203	0253	0343	0435	0530	0628	0730		

DEC	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	0835	0939	1040	1135	1222	0033	0117	0157	0236	0312
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
0348	0424	0503	0545	0635	0731	0832	0935	1038	1137	1233
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	
0054	0151	0245	0337	0428	0519	0610	0701	0754	0849	

The tables show the first high tide of each day. Times are BST up to 25th October, and GMT from 26th October. Note that Lothian SOC cannot guarantee the accuracy of these times.

Lothian Bird Sightings

JUNE

At *Aberlady* a **Quail** was heard calling on the 2nd, with an **Osprey** and a **Peregrine** noted on the same day. A single **Black-tailed Godwit** was present on the 4th, a **Little Gull** and 4 **Crossbills** on the 8th, and a **Little Stint** on the 13th. The female **King Eider** was noted on most days at high tide.

At *Gladhouse* a **Great White Egret** was present on the 13th, and a **Quail** was calling on the 13th and 14th. A first summer **Mediterranean Gull** and a **Whooper Swan** were noted on the 16th.

At *Musselburgh* a **Wood Sandpiper** and 2 **Little Stints** were present on the 6th. A **Little Ringed Plover** was noted on the 9th and 14th. A **Peregrine** was noted on the 9th and the 11th. A first summer **Mediterranean Gull** was present on the 11th and the 15th, with 3 **Shovelers** and 4 **Black-tailed Godwits** on the 15th. A **Quail** was calling on the 14th.

At *Tynninghame* a **Quail** was calling on the 1st, when 20 **Crossbills** were also present. A **Little Stint** was noted on the 5th, with 2 **Greenshanks** and 50 **Crossbills** on the 14th.

A single **Roseate Tern** was noted at *Port Edgar* on the 6th and the 16th. A **Great Northern Diver** flew past *Portobello* on the 21st.

JULY

At *Aberlady* a **Yellow Wagtail** and a **Greenshank** were noted on the 5th. 2 **Black-tailed Godwits**, a **Greenshank**, a **Whimbrel**, and 59 **Sanderlings** were present on the 25th.



At *Cramond* 118 **Arctic Terns**, 8 **Common Sandpipers** and 6 **Whimbrels** were counted on the 19th. The 26th saw 10 **Manx Shearwaters**, 11 **Common Sandpipers**, 5 **Scaup**, a **Red-throated Diver**, a **Black-tailed Godwit**, and a **Whimbrel**.

At *Musselburgh* 57 **Manx Shearwaters** flew past on the 1st. A **Little Gull**, 2 **Black-tailed Godwits**, 2 **Whimbrel**, 5 **Common Sandpipers** and 116 **Sand Martins** were noted on the 7th, with 4 **Little Gulls** and 10 **Black-tailed Godwits** on the 8th.

A **Little Ringed Plover** was noted from the 11th - 20th, with a **Greenshank** from the 20th - 25th. The 20th saw 2 **Arctic Skuas** and an adult **Mediterranean Gull**. 11 **Black-tailed Godwits**, a **Scaup**, and a **Red-necked Grebe** were present on the 25th.

A **Pomarine Skua** and 7 **Manx Shearwaters** flew past *Silverknowes* on the 1st. A female **Mandarin** was at *Gladhouse* on the 6th, with a **Red-throated Diver** on the 8th. An **Osprey** flew over *Bruntsfield, Edinburgh* on the 14th. Around 31 **Red-necked Grebes** were in *Gosford Bay* on the 25th. 22 **Greenshanks** and an adult **Curlew Sandpiper** were at *Tynninghame* on the 27th.

AUGUST

At *Aberlady* 43 **Black-tailed Godwits** were present on the 3rd, with a **Marsh Harrier**, 5 **Greenshanks**, 2 **Whimbrel** and a **Ruff** on the 9th. A **Greenshank**, a **Black-tailed Godwit**, and an **Osprey** were noted on the 17th. An adult **Roseate Tern** was present with 430 **Sandwich Terns** on the 18th. An **Osprey**, a **Mediterranean Gull**, a **Peregrine**, an **Arctic Skua**, and a **Little Stint** were noted on the 23rd.

At *Barns Ness* a seawatch on the 28th produced a **Fea's Petrel**, a **Sabine's Gull**, 2 **Long-tailed Skuas**, 5 **Arctic Skuas**, 13 **Great Skuas**, 40 **Manx Shearwaters** and a **Sooty Shearwater**. On the following day 2 **Pomarine Skuas**, 22 **Great Skuas**, an **Arctic Skua**, 88 **Manx Shearwaters**, and a **Roseate Tern** were noted. The 31st saw 10 **Great Skuas**, 4 **Arctic Skuas**, 35 **Manx Shearwaters**, a **Sooty Shearwater**, and a **Little Gull**.

At *Hound Point* 2 **Pomarine Skuas**, an **Arctic Skua** and a **Great Skua** were noted on the 4th. There were 9 **Black-tailed Godwits** on the 14th, and 2 **Pomarine Skuas**, 2 **Great Skuas** and a **Long-tailed Skua** on the 15th. 10 **Arctic Skuas** and 5 **Great Skuas** were noted on the 17th.

At *Musselburgh* 22 **Manx Shearwaters** were near the harbour on the 1st. 18 **Black-tailed Godwits**, a **Ruff**, a **Little Gull** and 7 **Sanderlings** were noted on the 3rd. 23 **Black-tailed Godwits** and 380 **Sandwich Terns** were present on the 4th. 3 **Greenshanks**, 3 **Ruff**, 18 **Snipe**, a **Whimbrel**, a **Little Gull** and a **Little Stint** were present on the 7th (with the Stint remaining until the 17th). There were 10 **Ruff** on the 9th, a **Wood Sandpiper** on the 9th and 10th, and 18 **Whimbrel** on the 10th. A **Yellow Wagtail**, a **Mediterranean Gull**, 4 **Manx Shearwaters** and an **Arctic Skua** were noted on the 17th.

At *Tynninghame* 3 **Black Terns**, 21 **Greenshanks**, 5 **Whimbrel**, 4 **Black-tailed Godwits**, a **Ruff**, 3 **Green Sandpipers** and 75 **Mistle Thrushes** were counted on the 2nd. 26 **Greenshanks** and 2 **Whimbrel** were present on the 12th, with an adult **Roseate Tern** on the 12th and 13th. A **Little Stint** was present on the 20th, with a **Marsh Harrier**, 25 **Greenshanks**, a **Ruff** and 3 **Kingfishers** on the 23rd.

10 **Roseate Terns** were at *Port Edgar* on the 3rd. A **Quail** was calling near *Kirkliston* on the 3rd, with 5 calling at *Pitcox Farm, Dunbar* on the 10th, and 2 on the 11th. A **Little Gull** was in *Belhaven Bay* on the 7th. A **Green Sandpiper** was at *River Almond Pools* on the 9th. A **Black-tailed Godwit** was present at *Threipmuir Reservoir* from the 16th - 23rd, with 3 **Greenshanks** on the 16th, and 4 **Greenshanks**, 2 **Green Sandpipers** and a **Common Sandpiper** on the 23rd. A **Pomarine Skua**, a **Great Skua**, and 4 **Arctic Skuas** flew past *Cramond* on the 16th. 3 **Yellow Wagtails** were near *Dunbar* on the 17th. 15 **Pomarine Skuas** were counted at *Seafield* on the 27th.

Thanks to Eleanor Hurley for these records.

Mystery Bird

Identify the species pictured below. The answer will be published in the next issue.



(The June 2003 mystery bird was a **Lapwing**.)