

Lothian Bird Bulletin



The Newsletter of Lothian SOC 2005 : No 1

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Short-eared Owl © Graham Checkley

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Editorial

There's an international flavour to this issue of the Lothian Bird Bulletin, with articles on birdwatching in Cordoba and in Taiwan. Many thanks to the authors Graham Checkley and Gruff Dodd (and to Eleanor Hurley for supplying the Taiwan article). Thanks also to David Atkins for the review of the Mersehead outing.

As always, I hope you'll consider sending in an article for a future issue of the LBB.

Stephen

News

Full House for the Scottish Birdwatchers' Conference

The 2005 SBC was a great success, with around 230 delegates attending at the Royal Botanic Garden on 12th March. Visitors came from as far afield as Dingwall, North Uist, and Islay to hear the eight fascinating talks. We'd like to thank all of the speakers, the volunteers who kept the conference running smoothly, everyone who helped to publicise it, and of course all the attendees.

Lothian Bird Report

The 2003 LBR is now on sale. You can get a copy from Charles Frank, Rose Street, Edinburgh for £7.50. Alternatively we can post a copy to you: Send a cheque for £8.80 (inc p&p), made payable to *SOC Lothian Branch*, to
John Hamilton, 30 Swanston Gardens, Edinburgh, EH10 7DL

Book Sale

Many thanks to everyone who sent in bids for the books kindly donated by Roger Tozer and John Pringle.

Branch Meeting

The last branch meeting of the season is the Members' Night and AGM at Meadowbank Stadium on 12th April. After the summer break, we reconvene on 13th September.

Cordoba: Town Centre Birdwatching

For many people a visit to southern Spain would not be complete without a visit to the Coto de Donana. When I first visited it in 1980 you could drive freely into the area, or in my case crash into a bush, with the bridge at El Rocio providing a handy view of a good area of marsh. But if you don't have the time to arrange a visit to the Coto, don't despair, because the town of Cordoba may provide a worthwhile alternative.

Cordoba is most famous for its Mezquita, a fabulous eight century mosque, but it's the other aspects of Moorish engineering that have produced a good spot for birds.

Following the re-conquest of Spain, the Spanish monarchs allowed the mills and water works of the Moors to fall into decline, and this, plus subsequent downstream bridge construction, has allowed a stretch of the Guadalquivir River to silt up. This area, between the Roman Bridge and the east end of the Botanical Gardens, forms a good place to see a number of bird species that you would normally travel to the Coto to see.

So what are the best spots for birds?

On the north side of the river, just upstream from the Roman Bridge, is the Cattle Egret colony. This can be viewed from the bridge itself, or closer views of the birds may be obtained by looking into the trees along Paseo de la Ribera. The bridge is also a good spot from which to see Purple Gallinule, Little Egret, Squacco Heron, Night Heron and Cetti's Warbler. Water level and time of year can be critical factors here. A spring without too much water is best, allowing water birds easier access to river edge feeding. Too much water and Cattle Egrets may be the only "herons" you will see.

The bridge also acts as a good feeding point for migrating *Phylloscopus* warblers and Herondines. I've spent an hour or so here first thing in the morning watching Willow Warblers that I might next see in Holyrood Park.

A word of caution though. The Roman Bridge is accurately named and was never built to handle motor traffic. As a result the pedestrian footpaths are narrow and one birdwatcher on either side of the bridge can block them. So using binoculars here is ok but there is little space for a tripod.

Heading downstream from the Roman Bridge, still on the north side of the river, presents the birdwatcher with a couple of options in terms of paths.

The first path follows the old town wall and provides a slightly higher up view-point but further away from the river. The second path runs along the base of the town wall but requires a detour at its west end to get back onto the road and into the town. This latter path may also provide a (wet and muddy) access to the grass and bushes by the river. Look out for lots of Serin, the occasional Nightingale and Subalpine Warbler.

Approximately a kilometre downstream from the Roman Bridge a newer road bridge crosses the Guadalquivir River. It is worth walking out onto this bridge as the reed beds on its east side are an occasional haunt of Little Bittern. The south side of the river has always proven disappointing, apart from the occasional Crested Lark and apparently lost White Stork, so you're best retracing your steps.

Practicalities:

Getting to Cordoba from either Madrid or Seville is simple due the excellent AVE trains. Cordoba is about 45 minutes from Seville going north, and one hour 45 minutes south from Madrid. You have to book in advance but the service is very regular.

Accommodation. The Rough Guide to Andalucia is a good reference book in general and the Hotel Marisa is well located for the river.

Graham Checkley, February 2005

Taiwan in January

Earlier this year, Eleanor and Clive Hurley joined Gruff and Sara Dodd and local birder Wayne Hsu for a week's birdwatching in Taiwan. This is a heavily edited version of Gruff's 30-page account of the trip.

Taiwan is a destination for the connoisseur – you won't rack up a huge list here, but it has a relatively large number of endemic species, most of which are easy to see, and this combined with some stunning scenery has put it on my "want list" for several years. The amount of time we had in Taiwan was relatively short, and consequently we inevitably missed some species. However, we managed, with huge assistance from local birder Wayne Hsu, to see almost all the endemics as well as the large majority of our target birds. The only endemic we missed was Taiwan Bush-Warbler which is silent in winter, making it very difficult to find. We thoroughly enjoyed our time here – the birding was good, the weather clear although often cold, and the scenery often stunning. I still hope to make a return trip in April and May one year, though, to try to find the elusive bush-warbler, as well as some summer visiting species such as Fairy Pitta, and possibly even Chinese Crested-Tern!

Saturday 15th. Sara and I arrived in Taipei on time after a long flight, and were immediately met by Clive and Eleanor who had arrived a day earlier. We soon met up with Wayne Hsu, and drove south to Anmashan, where we crashed for the night.

Sunday 16th. Anmashan had been closed for some time after a landslide swept away a section of the road. The recent construction of a walkway across the landslide area meant that pedestrian access was now possible, although we would need to get there by dawn for the best chance of finding Mikado Pheasant.

As it started getting light we enjoyed our first views of the many Collared Bush-Robins we would see at this site. One bird, seen early on the walk when the light was still poor, looked different, and we were fairly sure that it was a White-browed Bush-Robin – when we eventually saw one well later in the trip, we became even more certain that our initial identification was correct. Just as we arrived at the park entrance, a female Swinhoe's Pheasant flushed from behind the building, and was seen well as it crossed an area of open ground and disappeared into the trees – getting such a key bird so early in the trip was a huge bonus! Inside the park Wayne spotted a pheasant running up a thinly wooded slope on the right of the trail – not a Mikado Pheasant but a cracking male Swinhoe's Pheasant. It stayed around for a couple of minutes and showed very well before vanishing into the trees. We arrived back at the road without seeing Mikado Pheasant, which wasn't a big surprise, as Wayne had warned us that this species had become harder to see at Anmashan recently.

Having returned to the car a little tired after a 16 km walk, we drove to where a large wooden viewing platform had been constructed next to a large fruiting tree. This tree had been attracting Island Thrushes in recent weeks, and the large crowd of photographers gathered there confirmed that a male and three females had been there just 20 minutes previously. While we waited anxiously for the thrushes to make a return appearance, we enjoyed the sheer spectacle of hundreds of birds flying into and around this tree – one tree held over a dozen Vivid Niltavas, while flocks of White-eared Sibias and Formosan Yuhinas exceeded 100 and 50 individuals respectively, and at least half a dozen Black-

browed Barbets were also seen. Eventually, after waiting for maybe 30 minutes, a superb male Island Thrush flew in and started feeding on fruit – well worth the wait.

Satisfied with a very good morning's birding, and an impressive start on our list of target birds, we drove down to Dongshih for lunch, and then eastwards on the old central cross-island highway as far as Guguan. Wayne knew of a good site in Guguan town where Formosan Magpie might be found. Before long we had found a Varied Tit perched on the top of a tall tree, and while we were watching this, Wayne noticed two Formosan Magpies fly up to the top of a tall tree on the horizon. Tickable views, certainly, but very distant and the light was poor, so not quite the magpie experience we'd hoped for. We returned down to the town, and across the bridge up to the highway, and just as we reached the junction a Formosan Whistling-Thrush jumped up onto a concrete post right next to the car, before dropping back down. Very brief views, but at point blank range!

After stopping for some food, we continued to the turning for Pahsienshan Forest Recreation Area. The entrance road wound up along an almost dry riverbed, and we had only travelled a short distance before Wayne called that he had seen a Formosan Magpie. We piled out of the car, and sure enough a flock of these cracking birds were feeding in the streambed. They flew up into nearby trees and bushes, and gave superb views for about 5 minutes at very close range – much more satisfying!

Monday 17th. Our destination this morning was Peitungyenshan. Dawn saw us driving along this road, before arriving at the gate in the hope of finding a Taiwan Partridge, which are often found in this area at first light. However, despite hearing something rustling away in the undergrowth, we couldn't see anything. We started walking along the road, hard work as we were still aching from yesterday's walk. Before long we found our first Yellow Tits – Wayne had been surprised that we hadn't seen this species along the road at Anmashan, and as a few other birders seem to have struggled with this species, it was one I had been worried about, but they seemed quite common at this site at least. Birding was, however, a little slow along this walk.

Tuesday 18th. We started this morning birding the famous Reiyenhsi reserve, generally referred to by Western birders as the Blue Gate / Continuation (Pipeline) trails. We got here early again and started out along the Continuation Trail in the hope of finding a Mikado Pheasant. This trail has been severed after 1.5 km by another massive landslide, with most of the best Mikado habitat inaccessible on the other side. The Mikados apart, other birders have reported that this trail is also among the best for Taiwanese endemics but, unfortunately, we were far less successful, with the birding very quiet indeed during our walk. The highlight was probably a huge flock of Ashy Wood-Pigeons, probably around 100 birds in all, apparently picking up grit along the side of the trail.

We arrived back at the car by 10:00, and started our drive up to Hohuanshan. We stopped at all the rest areas along the way, most of which were productive. It was much colder by the time we had climbed up to the stop at Kunyang, where we enjoyed watching the extremely confiding White-whiskered Laughingthrushes around the car park, and a good flock of Streak-throated Fulvettas around a rubbish dump near the toilet block. The next stop was at Wuling, at the top of the pass, where there was plenty of snow and ice to enthrall the many tourists, and we eventually enjoyed extreme close-up views of half a dozen Alpine Accentors at this spot – a few biscuit crumbs attracted one bird as near as 1 metre away. There were no birds at the next stop at Hehuan Mountain, so we pressed on down the eastern side of the pass to Siaofongkou. I had been getting worried about our

lack of success in finding Flamecrest, but we soon found a good-sized flock among the stunted pines here, mixed in with larger numbers of Coal Tits.

After lunch we continued on the long drive towards Taroko Gorge. By now we were starting to get very worried about the time – the main birding reason to come this far east was to find Styan's Bulbul, and it was already mid-afternoon with still some distance to travel to get us into range of these birds. We pressed on to the town of Tienhsiang, the nearest area to Wushe and the main birding sites in central Taiwan where Styan's can be found. We wandered around for a while before I heard some calls coming from behind me, and found a mixed flock of bulbuls. Most birds seemed to be Chinese x Styan's hybrids, but at least 2 birds were seen which looked like pure Styan's Bulbuls. Many reports confirm quite correctly that there is extensive hybridisation in this part of the Styan's range, and also indicate that hybrids do not show evidence of their mixed origins until two or three generations have elapsed. Sadly, it seems that unless urgent action is taken, this species may well soon be hybridised out of existence. We watched the bulbuls for perhaps a minute, just enough time to confirm the identification features, before they flew off and could not be relocated. We also failed to find any more of these, and so must feel lucky to have found this bird at all. We just had enough time to drive down through the stunning Taroko Gorge, and appreciate this spectacular sight, before the light faded and we started on the long drive back to Wushe.

Wednesday 19th. Our original plan had been to spend the majority of our time in the Wushe area. However, we had now seen most of the endemics and specialities with the one glaring exception of Mikado Pheasant, which seemed to be difficult in this area. Wayne had, however, heard good recent reports of this bird being seen in Yushan National Park to the south, so we decided to relocate down there this morning.

Before then, however, there was time for some more local birding. Clive and I started off around the hotel, then set off with Wayne for Peitungyenshan for one last attempt at Taiwan Partridge. Hearing some birds rustling around in bamboo very near the road, we tracked their movements until one started calling, confirming that they were Taiwan Partridges. Seeing them was a totally different matter - it took over 30 minutes to get a brief glimpse, but sometimes you have to take whatever you can get!

We arrived back at the hotel, collected Sara and Eleanor and checked out before starting the long drive to Jhushan. The Tropical Botanical Gardens in this town currently have a resident Malayan Night-Heron, and a Forest Wagtail, a rare vagrant to Taiwan and a Taiwanese first for Wayne, was also present. We wandered around for a while before Wayne stumbled across the Forest Wagtail at the far end of the gardens. We watched it for a while, before I wandered off to try to find the heron. I searched for a while without success, until Wayne called over from behind the information centre just inside the entrance. We walked over to him, and there, just 20 metres in front of him, was a superb immature Malayan Night-Heron! It proved to be a very confiding bird, and gave great views at short range until we eventually decided to leave it alone and press on for Alishan.

Thursday 20th. Our main target this morning was Mikado Pheasant, which is often found feeding at the side of the road at dawn in Yushan National Park. Our first sweep along the road into the national park was unsuccessful, but a little further along we spotted a White's Thrush on the ground at the side of the road. We stopped for a look, and then Clive noticed a pheasant creeping away up the slope below some bushes – a female Mikado Pheasant just 10 metres away! Driving back towards Tatachia, Eleanor and Wayne, on the right hand side of the car spotted a male Mikado Pheasant just in the process of

disappearing into roadside vegetation. They both saw it well, Clive who was driving saw it briefly, and I, on the other side of the car, didn't see it at all – very annoying! We drove a little further, but came to a halt as 3 more female Mikado Pheasants were seen on the grassy roadside. We drove past them, and turned around, just in time to see them vanish into the scrub. We parked up and waited, and this time got our reward – just a few minutes later something startled them and they flushed from cover. We enjoyed unbelievable views of these outstanding birds for about 15 minutes, before they eventually decided to drop back down into cover and disappeared – fabulous birding.

Friday 21st. We arrived at Tainan late morning, and found our way to the famous Tsengwen (Zengwun) River Estuary. This is an excellent area for birding, but unfortunately we didn't have time to do it justice. Fortunately, we had only one target bird, Black-faced Spoonbill, and these proved very easy to find. We drove past the visitor centre to the first hide, walked in, and immediately saw a flock of c. 250 of these birds in front of us – perhaps 20% of the world population in just one flock, with a further 45% elsewhere in Tainan County – sobering stuff!

Saturday 22nd. Our last morning in Taiwan and we opted to spend it at Guandu, north-west of Taipei. We started off in the south east corner of the reserve; from here we continued along the road around the reserve to the south west corner, where a short circular boardwalk leads around a patch of woodland, and skirts an area of marsh. From here we returned eastwards, then followed the road northwards beyond the reserve area and into an area of rice paddies beyond - an excellent birding spot. Back at Yangmingshan we dropped Wayne off with our sincere thanks for the excellent job he had done for us, returned to the hotel to check out, and made our way to the airport.

Gruff Dodd, February 2005

Lothian SOC Outings

Aberlady - 12th December

To be honest we didn't see much in the way of birdlife on this trip, but it didn't really matter as we enjoyed a stroll around the reserve in what seemed more like a glorious summer's day than a Christmas outing. Star birds were a couple of Peregrines hunting over the saltmarsh, and 38 Sanderlings on the beach. (At least that was all I wrote down in my notes - perhaps I was distracted by the prospect of a pint of beer and Christmas lunch at the Kilspindie House Hotel.) Once again there was an impressive turnout for lunch, which was followed by an entertaining quiz devised by David Atkins.

Scone Palace & Vane Farm - 16th January

The main target species of this trip was the elusive Hawfinch, and after a search of the Scone Palace grounds we were not to be disappointed, with good views of a flock of around 20 birds. Some of the group were also fortunate enough to spot an Ermine Stoat dash across the path in front of us. Later at Vane Farm we located the 'resident' Little Egret, but couldn't find the Green-winged Teal and Smew which had been present.

RSPB Mersehead - 20th February

Three cars and 11 club members made the two-hour journey to the north shore of the Solway Firth to visit the excellent RSPB nature reserve at Mersehead. Being just a few miles along the coast from the WWF Caerlaverock reserve meant that we were in for a

feast of geese and other birds which gather in that part of the country during the winter months. It was a beautifully sunny day, although the fresh breeze ensured a bit of wind chill to keep us well wrapped up.

Even before everyone had made their way into the visitor centre, there was some excitement when one or two of the party reported seeing a jack snipe right in front of the viewing window. Some doubts persisted all day until the claim was later withdrawn when a group of common snipe was observed in exactly the same spot – the things some folk will do for a bit of attention! However, the feeding station immediately outside a large picture window in the centre did afford lovely, close views of finches, tits, etc., and one very smart-looking tree sparrow. We had also seen our first barnacle geese by the time we started our walk round the reserve.

We first headed off to the new hide, overlooking a large area of open water, with yellowhammer, reed bunting and stonechat on view en route. The light was fantastic as we were privileged to a wonderful gathering of ducks and other waterbirds. Pintail, teal, and wigeon abounded, but the huge numbers of shoveler was a surprise. Seven grey herons stood sentinel on the grass bank. Lots of barnacle geese to be seen, as well. Here, too, we watched a brown hare trying to make itself invisible to us in the field right in front of the hide.

After calling into the other hide and viewing over some dry meadows - a fast-moving sparrowhawk was seen here - we walked through a narrow stretch of woodland to our lunch stop. The wind had dropped a bit by then and we ate our picnics by a fallen tree in warm sunshine. One or two people even dozed for a while – quite idyllic. Birds on offer here included an obliging treecreeper, plus numbers of chaffinches, linnets, yellowhammers and reed buntings flitting between meadow and tree to test our identification skills.

The walk back to the visitor centre, along the beach (the tide was as far out as it gets) and then alongside the merse (unusually dry on the day we were there), was fairly quiet, although we did add kestrel and skylark to the day's list, plus those definitive snipe.

Time allowed us to spend half an hour overlooking the Firth at Southernness Point, a couple of miles east of Mersehead. Waders here included ringed plover, turnstone and bar-tailed godwit, with red-breasted merganser, great crested grebe and red-throated diver on the sea. A harbour porpoise appeared briefly for some of us, together with a grey Atlantic seal.

With the tide so far out, we decided not to call into Carsethorn, even though it has a good reputation for scaup in winter. We saw 57 species in all during the day

In spite of relatively low numbers of geese, and none of the rarer birds of prey on show on the day of our visit, I think Mersehead is under-rated and always produces some good birds in a lovely setting, especially in winter. It's well worth a day trip from Edinburgh if you're looking for something a little different. Who knows, you might even see a jack snipe if you're very lucky!

Glen Artney - 6th March

Following a successful trip last spring, we had decided to make a return visit to this area, which is about 10 miles to the north of Doune. Highlights this time were some superb views of Black Grouse on Braco Moor and perched in trees in Glen Artney, plus several Red Kites - presumably from the Argaty reintroduction scheme a few miles away. In 2004

the sadistic tour leader had subjected the group to a 2-hour cross country hike along the glen (well, it didn't look very far on the map), and this year we embarked on a walk from the car park to the end of the glen, then north into the scenic Srath a' Ghlinne. A bit of exercise never did anyone any harm...

Coming Up...

8th May: Aberlady at Dawn
5th Jun: Perthshire
24th Jul: Aberlady - Birds, Beasties, and Botany
14th Aug: Pencaitland

Contact Gillian Herbert on 0131 337 0767 for details.

Lothian Bird Sightings

FEBRUARY

At *Aberlady*, a female/immature **Merlin** on 7th; a pair of **Pintails** on 7th; a **Snow Bunting** on 7th; a **Woodcock** on 7th; 2 **Shore Larks** on 23rd. At *Blackness*, a **Greenshank** on 19th; a **Spotted Redshank** on 20th; a **Little Auk** (W) on 27th. At *Duddingston*, a drake **Smew** from 8th and an adult Mediterranean **Gull** from 19th. At *Musselburgh*, an adult **Mediterranean Gull** at the rivermouth on 4th and 11th (2 different birds), at Fisherrow on 6th, and on the boating pond on 24th; a **Little Auk** on 5th, 2(E) on 23rd, 2(E) on 24th, 23(E) in 10 mins, plus 4(W) and 28(E) in 30 mins on 25th, 2(W) in 5 mins on 26th; a **Surf Scoter** on 1st; a **Snow Bunting** on 22nd; a 1st winter **Little Gull** on 24th; 50 **Stock Doves** on 24th; 30 **Little Auks** (W) past Fisherrow in 140 mins on 26th; 2 **Little Auks** (E) on 27th. At *Silverknowes*, a **Little Auk** offshore on 24th, 16(W) in 15 mins on 25th; 5 **Barnacle Geese** until 24th at least; 1500 **Fieldfares/Redwings** on 24th. At *Tynninghame* up to 96 **Twite** from 5th-12th; 2 **Shore Larks** on 5th. In *Edinburgh*, an adult **Mediterranean Gull** at *Eastfield* on 4th; a **Goshawk** over *Tollcross* on 5th; 11 **Little Auks** (N) past *Barns Ness* on 14th; 5 **Little Auks** off *Portobello* on 24th, 2 on 25th; 2 **Little Auks** off *Eastfield* on 24th, 3(E) on 25th; a **Little Auk** at *Joppa* on 24th, 2(E) on 25th; 33 **Little Auks** (W) in 30 mins at *Cramond* on 25th; 2 **Little Auks** at *Granton* on 26th; **Waxwings** reported from Dean Bank Lane in Stockbridge, and Asda at Brunstane. In *West Lothian*, a redhead **Smew** at *Cobbinshaw Reservoir* on 19th; **Waxwings** reported near the football stadium in Livingston, and at Murraysgate Industrial Estate in Whitburn. In *East Lothian*, 4 **Snow Buntings** at *Fenton Barns* on 3rd; a 2nd winter **Glaucous Gull** off *Gullane Point* on 5th; a **Black Redstart** at *North Berwick* on 12th and 21st; 48 **Little Auks** (E) at *Gosford* in 35 mins on 25th; 9+ **Little Auks** at *North Berwick* on 25th; a **Little Auk** at *Port Seton* on 26th; **Waxwings** reported from School Road in Aberlady, Old Craighall (near Musselburgh), Tesco at Musselburgh, and Fenton Barns. In *Midlothian*, a **Nuthatch** at *Dalkeith CP* on 1st; an adult **Mediterranean Gull** east of *Howgate* (nr Penicuik) on 5th; 4 **Bramblings** at *Crichton* on 19th.

JANUARY

At *Aberlady*, a female/immature **Merlin** on 3rd; 2 **Shore Larks** from 9th-23rd; a **Jack Snipe** on 18th; 4 **Little Auks** (W) on 21st; a 1st winter **Little Gull** (W) on 21st; a pair of **Pintails** from 22nd-23rd; a dark-bellied **Brent Goose** on 23rd; a **Great Northern Diver** from 23rd-26th. At *Gosford Bay*, a **Black-throated Diver** on 11th; a **Black-necked Grebe** on 22nd and 26th. At *Joppa*, an adult **Mediterranean Gull** on 14th; a **Black-throated**

Diver on 21st; a **Red-necked Grebe** on 21st; a drake **Pintail** on 28th. At *Linlithgow Loch*, a readhead **Smew** on 23rd and 30th; a **Water Rail** on 30th. At *Musselburgh*, a **Black-throated Diver** on 14th; an adult **Mediterranean Gull** on various dates from 15th-23rd; a **Kildeer** on 22nd; a **Little Auk** on 26th. In the *Pentlands*, a **Green-winged Teal** at *Gladhouse* on 3rd. At *Seafield*, an adult **Mediterranean Gull** on 28th; 4 drake **Pintails** on 28th. At *Tynninghame*, 3 **Shore Larks** throughout the month; up to at least 127 **Twite** throughout the month; a **Greenshank** from 8th-15th; up to 7 **Snow Buntings** from 8th-30th. In *Edinburgh*, 5 **Barnacle Geese** at *Silverknowes* on 23rd; **Waxwings** reported from *Bruntsfield Links*, *Cameron Toll*, *Tesco at Canonmills*, *Colliesdene Avenue (Joppa)*, *Cumberland St*, *Drummond Place*, *Joppa Terrace*, *London Rd*, *Mardale Crescent (Merchiston)*, *Milton Road East (Portobello)*, *Princes Street Gardens*, *St Andrew Square*, *St Stephen Street*, *Woodside Terrace (Joppa)*. In *Midlothian*, a **Nuthatch** at *Vogrie CP* on 19th. In *West Lothian*, 10 **Bramblings** in the *Harburn* area on 5th; a drake **Pintail**, *Glendevon Pond*, *Winchburgh*, on 16th; an adult **Glaucous Gull** at *Midhope Burn mouth*, *Hopetoun*, on 21st; a **Jack Snipe** at *Tailend Moss*, *Bathgate*, on 30th; a **Greenshank** at *Blackness* on 30th; **Waxwings** reported from *Macmerrie council recycling depot*, *M8 Junction 4 near Whitburn*, *Tailend Moss*. In *East Lothian*, a female/immature **Black Redstart** by the *Seabird Centre*, *North Berwick*, for most of the month; 6 **Little Auks** past *Dunbar Harbour* on 4th; a **Woodcock** in *Butterdean Wood*, *Gladsmuir* on 16th; 3 **Northern Bullfinches** at *Glenkinchie*, *Pencaitland*, on the 19th; a **Great Northern Diver** at *Gullane* on 26th; 2 **Nuthatches** at *Smeaton (East Linton)* on 26th; 3 **Snow Buntings** at *Yellowcraig* on 30th; **Waxwings** reported from *Aberlady Community Hall*, *Aberlady saltmarsh*, *Law Road (North Berwick)*, *St Mary's Church (Haddington)*.

DECEMBER

At *Barns Ness*, a **Water Pipit** on 3rd-4th; a **Jack Snipe** on 3rd. On *Linlithgow Loch*, a redhead **Smew** for most of the month; a **Red-necked Grebe** on 15th. At *Musselburgh*, up to 4 **Short-eared Owls** throughout the month; an adult **Mediterranean Gull** throughout, with 3 on the 11th; a **Black-throated Diver** on 23rd (on the boating pond) and 24th. At *Tynninghame*, a pale-bellied **Brent Goose** on 5th; up to 161 **Whooper Swans** at *West Barns* throughout; up to 140 **Twite** throughout; 3 **Shore Larks** throughout; up to 6 **Snow Buntings** on various dates. In *Edinburgh*, a drake **Smew** on the *Water of Leith* at *Newhaven Rd* on 4th; 4 **Barnacle Geese** at *Silverknowes* on 19th, and 5 on 31st; **Waxwings** reported from *Boswall Drive*, *Broughton St/Belvue Cres*, *Bruntsfield Links*, *Calder Rd*, *Cameron Toll*, *Tesco at Canonmills*, *Chalmers St*, *Coates Cres*, *Comely Bank sorting station*, *Connaught Pl*, *Craigmillar Castle Ave/Niddrie Mains Rd*, *Dean Cemetery*, *George St*, *Gorgie Mills*, *Gorgie Rd*, *India St/Gloucester Lane*, *Joppa Terr/Joppa Gdns*, *Leamington Terr*, *Leith Links*, *Queen Charlotte St (Leith)*, *Milton Rd/Harry Lauder Rd*, *Moray Pl*, *Homebase at Parkside Terr/Parkside St*, *Pinegrove Gardens*, *The Pleasance*, *Milton Rd East (Portobello)*, *St Marks Pl (Portobello)*, *Telferton ind est/allotments (Portobello)*, *Princes St Gardens*, *St Alban's Rd*, *St Andrew Sq*, *Stockbridge Colonies/Glenogle Rd*, *Victoria Park*, *Willowbrae Rd*. In *Midlothian*, a **Nuthatch** at *Vogrie CP* on 7th; **Waxwings** reported at *Melville Golf Course*, *Dalkeith*. In *West Lothian*, a **Greenshank** at *Blackness* on 12th and 29th; 3 **Crossbills** in the *Crosswood Reservoir/Camilty area* on 12th; 4 **Bramblings** in the same area on 12th, and 2 on 29th; 6 **Bramblings** in the *Harburn* area on 29th; **Waxwings** reported near *Blackness Church*. In *East Lothian*, a **Merlin** near *Kingston*, *North Berwick*, on 1st; a **Water Pipit** at *Skateraw* on 5th and 16th; 6 **Snow Buntings** at *Aberlady* on 9th; 30 **Bramblings** over *Saltoun Big Wood* on 12th; an adult **Mediterranean Gull** at *Seton Sands* on 18th; a male **Surf Scoter** at *Port Seton* on 29th; **Waxwings** reported from *Aberlady LNR*, *Blackness church*, *Melville Golf Course*, *Dalkeith*, *Longniddry*, *Clayknowes Dr (Musselburgh)*, *James St/Millhill*

(Musselburgh), Sydney Terr/Portobello Rd (Musselburgh), Rowanhill Dr/Cedar Dr (Port Seton), beside Dunedin Vets in Tranent.

NOVEMBER

At *Aberlady*, a **Lapland Bunting** on 1st and 2nd; a **Snow Bunting** on 7th; a **Merlin** on 7th; a **Pintail** on 7th. At *Barns Ness*, 24 **Little Auks** on 19th; a **Snow Bunting** on 28th. At *Dunbar*, 2 **Snow Buntings** on 12th; 12 **Little Auks** on 14th. At *Humbie*, a **Nuthatch** at Keith Marischal on 6th; a probable **Northern Bullfinch** on 21st. At *Musselburgh*, 2 adult **Mediterranean Gulls** on 7th, 1 from 21st-27th; 14 **Snow Buntings** on 13th; a **Black-throated Diver** on the boating pond from 19th; a **Merlin** on 19th; 2 Pale-bellied **Brent Geese** on 21st; a **Smew** on 21st and 29th. At *Tynninghame*, up to around 200 **Twite** throughout the month; up to 195 **Whooper Swans** throughout; 3 **Shore Larks** from 20th. In the *Pentlands*, a ringtail **Hen Harrier** at *Bavelaw* on 7th. In *Edinburgh*, a **Peregrine** at *Bruntsfield* on 1st; 5 Pale-bellied **Brent Geese** at *Cramond* on 6th and 7th; **Waxwings** reported from Crosswood Ave (Balerno), Johnsburn Rd (Balerno), Broughton Street, Bruntsfield Links, Bruntsfield Place, Cameron Toll, Charlotte Square, Coates Cres, Colinton Rd, Bryce Rd (Currie), Currie High School, Echline Drive (Cramond), Whitehouse Rd (Cramond), Dean Bank Lane, East Trinity Road, Findhorn Place, Fords Road, Gayfield Square, Glenogle Road, Gosford Place, Harry Lauder Rd, Abercorn Park (Joppa), Joppa Gardens, Joppa Terrace, Pitville Street (Joppa), Leith Links, The Meadows, Merchiston Ave, Milton Rd, Moray Place, Portobello High Street, Princes Street Gardens, Bo'ness Road (South Queensferry), St Catherine's Place, Newhaven Road, Victoria Park, Willowbrae Road. In *East Lothian*, a **Black-throated Diver** at *Ferny Ness* on 20th; 4 **Northern Bullfinches** near *Gifford* on 13th; **Waxwings** reported from Aberlady, Gullane, Gullane Point, Haddington, Aberlady Road, Humbie, Seton Road (Longniddry), Douglas Road (Longniddry), Campbell Road (Longniddry), the boating pond at Musselburgh, James Street (Musselburgh), Loretto School (Musselburgh), Millhill (Musselburgh), Ravensheugh Road (Musselburgh), Musselburgh Station, The Glebe (North Berwick), North Berwick Sports Centre, Ormiston, Pencaitland Graveyard, Tranent. In *West Lothian*, a second winter **Mediterranean Gull** at *Blackness* on 6th; a **Water Rail** at *River Almond Pools* on 14th; **Waxwings** reported from Craigshill (Livingston) and Uphall.

Thanks to Eleanor Hurley and everyone who contributed to these records.

Mystery Bird

Identify the species pictured below. The answer will be published in the next issue, and on the LBB page of the LSOC website.



The last mystery bird was a Short-eared Owl, photographed at Musselburgh.

Christmas Quiz Answers:

1. A
2. Edin, Edin, Mid, East, West, Edin, Mid, East, East
3. ONE! (In Musselburgh, 6-21 Jan)