

Blackness Bay and its birds: supplementary information

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Background

I first became acquainted with Blackness Bay in 1990, when I moved to Linlithgow from Dumfries. During the first few years, I only made casual visits, but started more serious recording in 1993. This continued until 1997, when a change in work pattern (requiring many periods of absence away from home), plus the demands of a young family, made it too difficult to make regular visits. However, normal service was resumed in 2009 and has continued unbroken ever since.

During these recording periods, at least one visit was made to the site each month, with about 2-3 visits on average. More visits were made during the most productive times of the year, most notably during the autumn migration period.

Species overview

As there is so much information contained in the tables (see the following sections), and with 178 species on the Blackness list, I have chosen not to provide a species-by-species account, but to highlight a few areas of particular interest.

It is notable that some seabird species which are quite common in the Outer Forth are rare or absent at Blackness. These include Slavonian Grebe, Common and Velvet Scoters and Long-tailed Duck. The reason for this is that the Forth estuary gradually changes from freshwater to saltwater as it flows towards the sea, and it is probably mostly saline by the time it reaches the Forth Bridges.

As regards divers and grebes, only the Great Crested Grebe is regular, having been recorded in every month. Red-throated Diver is sporadically seen; all other divers and grebes can be classed as rare here nowadays.

A fairly recent development has been the appearance of large numbers of grey geese in the autumn. From August to October (and sometimes also in November and December) large numbers of locally (i.e. Scottish) breeding Greylag Geese congregate at the site, with 500-1,000 counts normal. Pink-footed Geese, too, have recently started to appear in ever greater numbers during this period, and it is suspected that there may even be a roost site nearby. Four figure counts are quite common, with 1,864 present on 12 October 2019, and many more (sometimes thousands) have been noted migrating up the Forth.

The flocks can be found resting at the mouths of both the Black and Abercorn Burns, with the latter being most favoured. It is quite exhilarating to stand at the mouth of the Abercorn Burn when flocks of both species are present, and with many more coming and going, though counting them can be a nightmare! But this is probably the best spectacle available to enjoy during the birding year.

Blackness is not particularly good for raptors. Peregrines do turn up from time to time and are probably under recorded. Kestrels used to be regular, but no longer. Buzzards are often found over the Wester Shore Wood, where the elusive Sparrowhawk can also be found, and there have been 1- 2 sightings of Merlin, but little else in this category is known to frequent the area.

Probably the most important function of the bay is as a feeding, resting and roosting site for ducks and waders. Of the ducks, Wigeon and Shelduck are commonest, with reasonable numbers of Mallard. Eider and Red-breasted Merganser are regular, but usually in small numbers. Any other ducks seen here can be classed as uncommon to rare. These include Gadwall, Shoveler, Common Scoter, Goldeneye, Long-tailed Duck and Goosander.

Of the waders, no species is dominant, though Curlew can turn up in large numbers during migration. Oystercatcher and Redshank come next numerically, followed by Lapwing, Dunlin and Ringed Plover. Bar-tailed Godwit are usually found, but with single figure counts. Numbers of Golden Plover, formerly abundant in autumn (772 on 23 October 1996), are now drastically reduced; 40 would be considered a good count nowadays.

Other wader species sometimes seen, but not regularly, include Knot, Black-tailed Godwit and Turnstone. Grey Plover have become rare. As there is almost no sand in the bay, Sanderling is also a rarity and Purple Sandpiper has never been recorded. Other species noted include Curlew Sandpiper, Little Stint and Ruff.

Gulls are common, with Black-headed, Great and Lesser Blacked-backed, Herring and Common all regular. Kittiwake is occasionally seen and Mediterranean and Little Gulls have recently been noted. As already mentioned, good numbers of Sandwich and Common Terns congregate here in autumn.

Auks are uncommon, though both Guillemot and Razorbill appear sporadically in autumn and winter. Little Auk and Puffin have been recorded.

The usual common passerines occur, but there is little of note in this group. Rock Pipits, rare this far west, are occasionally noted in autumn and winter. Spotted Flycatcher, formerly found in Wester Shore Wood in the breeding season and on migration, no longer occur. Tree Sparrow used to be common in and around the castle, but sightings of these seem to be declining.

The area around Abercorn Church is probably the most reliable site in West Lothian for Nuthatch (and it was also one of the first, birds probably 'migrating' there from nearby Hopetoun House).

Species formerly common, but no longer so, include Reed Bunting and Yellowhammer, and flocks of Fieldfare and Redwing do not occur with the same frequency in autumn as they used to. On the other hand, there have been several recent sightings of Raven – a new visitor.

The Blackness list

This is made up from records sent by all observers to the Recorder for Lothian Region. The current total of species recorded at the time of writing stands at 178 (to 31.12.2020).

The table also notes the date of the first record for each species. Records go back as far as 1979, which was the year when Lothian Bird Reports commenced. There are, of course, older records, but these are outwith the scope of this paper. Some may be found in the Scottish Ornithologists Club online bird report, to which older records are continually being added.

Species	Date of first record
Red-throated Diver	17/02/1991
Black-throated Diver	28/03/1993
Great Northern Diver	26/10/1993
Little Grebe	24/01/1994
Great Crested Grebe	20/01/1991
Red-necked Grebe	29/01/1997
Slavonian Grebe	16/09/1997
Fulmar	10/06/1994
Manx Shearwater	16/07/1996
Leach's Petrel (dead)	18/02/1979
Gannet	07/09/1991
Cormorant	17/03/1991
Shag	12/11/2006
Little Egret	10/10/2014
Grey Heron	10/10/1992
Mute Swan	22/06/1992
Whooper Swan	13/11/1995
Pink-footed Goose	24/12/1991
White-fronted Goose	12/11/2011
Greylag Goose	01/01/1995
Bar-headed Goose	10/09/2006
Snow Goose	02/09/2003
Canada Goose	04/10/1994
Barnacle Goose	25/09/1993
Brent Goose	04/10/1994
Shelduck	20/01/1991
Ruddy Shelduck	15/09/2019
Wigeon	20/01/1991
Gadwall	02/05/1993
Teal	24/12/1991
Green-winged Teal	03/12/2003
Mallard	20/01/1991
Pintail	20/10/1991
Shoveler	18/03/1995
Pochard	02/08/1998
Tufted Duck	12/08/1994
Scaup	17/02/1991
Eider	20/01/1991
Long-tailed Duck	12/12/2005
Common Scoter	18/07/1993
Velvet Scoter	29/10/1997
Goldeneye	20/01/1991
Red-breasted Merganser	20/01/1991
Goosander	16/01/1994
Sparrowhawk	26/08/1995
Buzzard	14/02/1993
Kestrel	18/07/1996
Merlin	10/10/1996
Peregrine Falcon	15/08/1993
Red-legged Partridge	13/01/2008
Grey Partridge	13/03/1998
Pheasant	22/02/1998
Moorhen	12/05/1994

Species	Date of first record
Coot	24/07/1993
Oystercatcher	20/01/1991
Ringed Plover	07/09/1991
Golden Plover	17/02/1991
Grey Plover	07/02/1993
Lapwing	07/09/1991
Knot	07/09/1991
Sanderling	13/06/1993
Little Stint	14/08/1996
Curlew Sandpiper	04/10/1996
Dunlin	20/01/1991
Ruff	28/08/1996
Common Snipe	20/12/1995
Woodcock	05/01/1994
Black-tailed Godwit	17/02/1991
Bar-tailed Godwit	17/02/1991
Whimbrel	10/07/1993
Curlew	20/01/1991
Spotted Redshank	05/09/1998
Redshank	20/01/1991
Greenshank	24/07/1993
Common Sandpiper	16/05/1992
Turnstone	20/01/1991
Pomarine Skua	03/10/1994
Arctic Skua	15/08/1993
Long-tailed Skua	03/10/1994
Great Skua	17/09/1997
Mediterranean Gull	02/10/2004
Little Gull	03/03/1994
Sabine's Gull	18/09/2017
Black-headed Gull	20/01/1991
Common Gull	20/01/1991
Lesser Black-backed Gull	16/05/1992
Herring Gull	20/01/1991
Iceland Gull	25/02/2007
Glaucous Gull	21/01/2005
Great Black-backed Gull	17/02/1991
Kittiwake	20/10/1991
Sandwich Tern	31/08/1991
Roseate Tern	15/06/2003
Common Tern	10/07/1993
Arctic Tern	28/09/1997
Black Tern	05/09/1998
Guillemot	01/01/1994
Razorbill	16/02/1994
Little Auk	06/01/2016
Puffin	26/03/2013
Feral Pigeon	16/01/2010
Stock Dove	26/05/1996
Woodpigeon	10/03/1995
Collared Dove	21/07/1996
Common Cuckoo	03/06/2001
Barn Owl	01/01/2005
Tawny Owl	23/10/1994
Long-eared Owl	03/10/2004
Short-eared Owl	05/01/2016
Swift	20/09/1993
Kingfisher	22/09/1998
Green Woodpecker	05/01/1995
Great Spotted Woodpecker	27/06/1994
Skylark	28/01/1995
Sand Martin	03/04/1995
Swallow	04/10/1994
Red-rumped Swallow	03/11/2012

Species	Date of first record
House Martin	01/08/1998
Tree Pipit	06/06/1999
Meadow Pipit	31/01/1998
Rock Pipit	02/10/1994
Yellow Wagtail	02/05/1995
Grey Wagtail	02/01/1994
Pied Wagtail	10/06/1994
Bohemian Waxwing	18/01/2010
Dipper	15/09/2012
Wren	15/02/1996
Duncock	03/07/1995
Robin	22/06/1995
Redstart	26/05/1998
Black Redstart	20/11/2011
Whinchat	04/08/1981
Wheatear	25/04/1993
Blackbird	07/02/1994
Fieldfare	15/02/1996
Song Thrush	07/02/1996
Redwing	28/01/1995
Mistle Thrush	03/07/1995
Grasshopper Warbler	14/07/2005
Sedge Warbler	01/06/2005
Lesser Whitethroat	17/05/1994
Whitethroat	12/06/1995
Garden Warbler	20/06/1995
Blackcap	23/07/1995
Wood Warbler	01/05/1996
Chiffchaff	24/03/1997
Willow Warbler	03/07/1995
Goldcrest	28/01/1995
Firecrest	06/01/1995
Spotted Flycatcher	20/06/1994
Long-tailed Tit	14/02/1993
Coal Tit	15/02/1996
Blue Tit	20/06/1995
Great Tit	20/06/1995
Nuthatch	04/08/2009
Treecreeper	28/01/1995
Red-backed Shrike	26/05/1995
Jay	02/02/1995
Magpie	24/01/1998
Jackdaw	15/02/1996
Rook	02/12/1999
Carrion Crow	12/05/1994
Common Raven	17/09/2019
Starling	22/02/1998
House Sparrow	03/05/1998
Tree Sparrow	07/10/1994
Chaffinch	15/02/1996
Brambling	26/10/1993
Greenfinch	15/02/1996
Goldfinch	06/07/1994
Siskin	03/04/1995
Linnet	08/09/1997
Lesser Redpoll	13/11/2010
Bullfinch	15/02/1996
Yellowhammer	28/01/1995
Reed Bunting	12/05/1994
Corn Bunting	04/08/1981
Saker Falcon	26/02/2000

Birds recorded by the author

These are my own records collected over the years. They cover the period from 1993 to 1997 and from 2009 to date, with a few ad hoc records in between (the reasons for the gap are explained in the introduction). Here can also be found the highest count for each species, the dates of these counts, and the months in which each species has been recorded.

My current species list stands at 144, so 34 species are 'missing.' It can be safely assumed that all of these are locally rare.

Species Name	Highest Recorded Count	Highest Count Date	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Mute Swan	20	20/08/2012	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Whooper Swan	19	05/11/2015										X	X	
Pink-footed Goose	1864	12/10/2019	X		X		X				X	X	X	X
Greater White-fronted Goose	23	12/11/2011											X	X
Greylag Goose	994	15/09/2019	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Canada Goose	19	24/08/2019								X	X	X	X	X
Barnacle Goose	37	22/09/2020									X	X		
Brent Goose	10	10/10/2020									X	X	X	
Ruddy Shelduck	1	15/09/2019									X			
Common Shelduck	316	10/10/2015	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Eurasian Wigeon	487	19/10/2010	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Gadwall	2	10/05/2014					X				X			X
Eurasian Teal	35	12/11/2011	X	X		X					X	X	X	X
Mallard	167	18/01/2010	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Northern Shoveler	2	02/10/2020								X		X		
Northern Pintail	8	17/09/2019	X		X						X	X		
Tufted Duck	24	03/01/1995	X			X					X			X
Common Eider	143	17/12/2010	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Long-tailed Duck	1	21/12/2019											X	X
Black (Common) Scoter	16	04/07/2020							X			X		
Common Goldeneye	32	28/10/2019	X	X	X		X				X	X	X	X
Red-breasted Merganser	23	19/01/2019	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Goosander	18	20/06/2018	X			X		X	X	X	X		X	X
Grey Partridge	2	13/03/1998		X	X									
Common Pheasant	2	15/09/2012	X	X	X	X		X			X	X	X	X
Red-throated Diver	4	16/11/2011	X								X	X	X	X
Great Northern Diver	1	19/10/2009										X		
Little Grebe	1	31/05/1996			X		X							
Great Crested Grebe	82	31/01/1998	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Northern Fulmar	3	02/06/1995				X		X		X	X	X		
Manx Shearwater	4	16/07/1996							X					
Northern Gannet	31	25/09/1997									X	X	X	
Great Cormorant	48	11/10/1996	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
European Shag	1	10/11/2009									X		X	
Little Egret	1	10/10/2014										X		

Species Name	Highest Recorded Count	Highest Count Date	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Stock Pigeon	4	23/08/1996				X			X	X	X	X		
Common Wood Pigeon	165	10/03/1995	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Eurasian Collared Dove	25	15/10/2011	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	
Common Cuckoo	1	03/06/2001						X						
Tawny Owl	1	07/05/1996				X	X		X					
Common Swift	13	04/08/2009					X	X	X	X				
Kingfisher	1	01/10/2016										X		
Green Woodpecker	1	10/04/2015				X								
Great Spotted Woodpecker	3	19/06/1995	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Skylark	7	19/09/2020									X	X		
Sand Martin	1	10/08/2009								X				
Barn Swallow	12	04/08/2009				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
House Martin	109	04/08/2009					X	X	X	X	X			
Meadow Pipit	24	31/01/1998	X								X	X	X	
Rock Pipit	2	07/10/1996	X								X	X	X	X
Yellow Wagtail	2	02/05/1995					X							
Grey Wagtail	4	21/09/2013	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Pied Wagtail	31	27/08/1996	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
White-throated Dipper	2	23/11/2012									X		X	X
Winter Wren	11	21/04/2008	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Hedge Accentor	2	01/10/2009	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
European Robin	11	21/04/2008	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Black Redstart	1	20/11/2011											X	
Northern Wheatear	2	28/08/1996					X			X	X	X		
Common Blackbird	12	07/02/1994	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Fieldfare	116	30/10/1997			X							X	X	X
Song Thrush	3	07/06/2008	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Redwing	48	11/10/1993	X		X							X	X	X
Mistle Thrush	4	12/02/2010	X	X		X		X	X		X	X	X	X
Sedge Warbler	1	03/05/1995				X	X							
Lesser Whitethroat	1	17/05/1994					X							
Common Whitethroat	2	12/06/1995					X	X	X	X	X			
Garden Warbler	1	20/06/1995					X	X						
Blackcap	7	16/04/2011				X	X	X	X		X			
Common Chiffchaff	6	21/04/2008			X	X	X	X	X		X			
Willow Warbler	1	04/08/2009				X	X	X	X	X	X			
Goldcrest	1	25/11/2007	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Firecrest	1	06/02/1995		X	X									
Spotted Flycatcher	2	22/08/2009					X	X	X	X	X			
Long-tailed Tit	14	04/10/2010	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X
Coal Tit	3	25/11/2007	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Blue Tit	6	20/06/1995	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Great Tit	4	20/06/1995	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Wood Nuthatch	2	22/09/2020	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	
Eurasian Treecreeper	3	08/01/1996	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X

Species Name	Highest Recorded Count	Highest Count Date	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Red-backed Shrike	1	26/05/1995					X							
Eurasian Jay	2	08/07/2011	X		X				X	X	X	X	X	
Black-billed Magpie	7	28/08/2009	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Eurasian Jackdaw	100	08/07/2011	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Rook	27	10/08/2009	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	
Carrion Crow	19	07/06/2008	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Common Starling	60	09/10/2014	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Common Raven	2	22/11/2019								X	X	X	X	
House Sparrow	24	10/08/2009	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Eurasian Tree Sparrow	8	10/11/2009	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	
Chaffinch	7	21/04/2008	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
European Greenfinch	10	18/02/2011	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
European Goldfinch	63	05/09/2009	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Eurasian Siskin	7	02/02/2008		X		X					X			
Common Linnet	60	26/11/2009	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Lesser Redpoll	12	13/11/2010					X						X	
Common Bullfinch	4	11/12/2011	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Yellowhammer	17	27/01/1997	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Reed Bunting	2	02/06/1995	X				X	X	X	X	X		X	

Monthly counts of selected species

Again, my own records only. This table comprises monthly counts of selected species. The species chosen are those which occur with sufficient regularity and in sufficient numbers to make counting worthwhile. The majority are wildfowl and waders. An “n/c” or an empty box means there was no count that month.

These figures are useful for trying to establish declines and increases in numbers over the years. Even the gap between 1997 and 2009 is not without value, as it provides a natural break for comparing older counts with those of the more recent past. Many species have remained fairly constant, but some show quite substantial changes (e.g., autumn counts of Golden Plover).

GREAT CRESTED GREBE

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1993											33	
1994						19	15	40	67	23	20	6
1995	35	47	18	4	9	13	3	33	37	41	8	6
1996	34	8	1	19	19	6	25	38	23	32	11	
1997	15	40	22	20	7	3	2	43	45	19	23	12
1998	82											
2009								7	13	3	3	8
2010	6	10	8	2	4		19	23	25	3	5	
2011	16	14	8	5	1	1	11	14	16	2	8	6
2012	5	5	5	12	1	12	11	63	44	24	3	7
2013	5	2	1	0	3	26	17	32	20	10	15	11
2014	7	22	17	0	2	2	18	23	44	47	37	20
2015	4	9	7	4	6	0	34	48	61	53	10	21
2016	7	11	17	11	6	4	13	7	17	32	8	15
2017	3	12	8	4	0	0	36	22	23	24	0	10
2018	4	13	7	0	0	5	9	12	18	28	15	17
2019	22	17	10	6	3	5	10	11	25	35	5	21
2020	8	11	9	n/c	1	0	20	30	31	36	17	6
Maximum	82	47	22	20	19	26	36	63	67	53	37	21

GREYLAG GOOSE

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2009	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	214	0	2	0
2010	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	97	429	0	0	23
2011	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	249	0	15	41	441
2012	0	1	332	0	0	0	0	0	391	409	0	88
2013	15	102	0	0	0	0	0	378	490	657	380	0
2014	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	406	585	504	172	0
2015	13	0	28	0	0	0	0	548	871	883	0	4
2016	0	0	1	0	0	0	6	486	711	601	0	18
2017	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	364	789	569	18	7
2018	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	333	667	371	379	55
2019	0	0	0	0	0	0	80	445	994	376	0	12
2020	0	0	0	n/c	0	0	0	388	783	252	4	3
Maximum	15	102	332	0	1	0	80	548	994	883	380	441

EIDER

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2009									56	65	16	5
2010	15	29	24	10	8		6	5	38	128	78	143
2011	14	7	78	22	7	28	40	14	103	58	4	3
2012	8	12	22	30	7	12	20	18	40	16	3	5
2013	4	6	7	5	0	7	34	20	39	17	2	3
2014	2	4	2	3	11	7	28	9	45	48	18	22
2015	13	20	10	11	5	1	23	9	91	13	0	5
2016	10	10	14	15	5	3	2	12	34	6	2	4
2017	1	5	22	17	5	10	16	8	36	6	3	2
2018	0	5	4	7	7	4	23	7	21	2	4	8
2019	3	2	7	13	19	20	19	19	17	5	2	3
2020	3	9	6	n/c	13	7	15	17	19	8	2	1
Maximum	15	29	78	30	19	28	40	20	103	128	78	143

MALLARD

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1993												
1994						51	53	63		68		143
1995	101	48	43	18	15	35	57	49	45	64	110	
1996	47	20	6	26	43	15	37	123	54	57	71	104
1997	78	62	19	7	6	62						
2009								19	55	22	10	23
2010	167	40	2	2	0		13	20	26	22	87	
2011	11	15	30	3	0	6	8	47	19	24	20	20
2012	27	44	0	2	0	0	2	6	14	38	15	76
2013	17	27	2	4	0	2	0	81	34	33	22	27
2014	58	18	11	6	6	14	5	36	63	23	27	18
2015	40	92	6	8	12	18	6	72	39	8	19	46
2016	25	14	4	4	0	9	20	61	24	40	33	50
2017	42	16	19	11	6	10	36	61	67	25	26	67
2018	78	31	19	3	1	27	5	48	70	36	33	54
2019	25	25	6	8	2	21	40	28	25	13	32	49
2020	37	16	7	n/c	1	13	14	73	40	25	28	30
Maximum	167	92	43	26	43	62	57	123	70	68	110	143

WIGEON

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1993												
1994			2	0	0	0	0	0	306	319		126
1995	120	73	80	13	0	0	0	0	106	255	304	138
1996	123	180	44	9	1	0	0	4	246	383	148	
1997	155	133	3	3	3	0	0	0		191	115	
2009								3	101	265	117	134
2010	217	218	98	4	0		0	0	176	487	425	
2011	247	179	53	0	0	0	4	0	98	327	279	267
2012	194	114	30	34	0	4	0	0	245	239	336	211
2013	223	36	61	46	0	0	1	36	188	298	263	93
2014	232	63	118	23	4	0	0	21	282	456	285	237
2015	165	199	34	12	0	0	0	17	149	396	289	68
2016	10	75	50	10	0	0	0	10	380	272	200	72
2017	79	23	158	14	0	0	0	6	103	241	41	74
2018	127	9	51	2	0	2	0	0	80	138	143	198
2019	156	15	21	13	0	0	0	3	206	348	205	185
2020	128	40	64	n/c	0	0	0	1	144	330	245	179
Maximum	247	218	158	46	4	4	4	36	380	487	425	267

SHELDUCK

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1993			8						14	47		
1994		8	44	44	14	22		18	155	201	33	8
1995	8	22	27	27	8	20	19	74	244	266	69	5
1996	0	1	12	36	21	16	45	141	302	238	55	
1997	11	24	36	32	12	28			121	92		1
2009								52	192	221	76	76
2010	47	14	63	45	23		12	75	179	181	65	
2011	10	10	28	8	7	9	16	116	245	147	78	20
2012	15	42	40	19	11	26	64	66	193	151	20	6
2013	4	7	6	28	19	3	71	181	124	106	79	16
2014	21	28	51	21	27	26	34	91	156	115	96	211
2015	92	58	73	42	30	28	13	45	291	316	157	138
2016	84	26	53	47	23	12	9	117	230	157	77	24
2017	20	28	33	45	11	7	1	100	270	167	76	47
2018	33	48	14	17	15	2	3	26	185	120	95	59
2019	37	60	47	18	11	22	18	15	230	184	51	25
2020	20	34	75	n/c	18	20	68	112	209	173	49	23
Maximum	92	60	75	47	30	28	71	181	302	316	157	211

OYSTERCATCHER

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1993										64	103	
1994	24	141		7	10	59	10	10	74	65	138	69
1995	163	87	95	21	3	25	40	19	44	119	66	96
1996	109	102	75	20	7	25	28	39	80	121	217	109
1997	124	96	32	42	28	54	12		22	70	70	144
2009								195	180	184	114	73
2010	171	176	129	78	8		53	144	78	166	208	
2011	310	161	103	92	13	73	47	119	105	180	242	254
2012	211	71	92	45	20	19	29	25	77	53	58	27
2013	52	30	52	44	12	15	33	47	21	56	35	104
2014	41	74	26	19	30	8	57	62	38	52	28	39
2015	56	33	31	12	7	8	24	34	69	46	40	44
2016	44	58	46	19	10	5	39	52	107	54	99	148
2017	84	40	75	75	28	14	30	76	81	58	119	108
2018	72	152	34	24	51	19	24	98	111	110	100	181
2019	143	98	56	17	4	16	68	103	67	95	104	71
2020	73	79	65	n/c	10	8	43	70	52	64	75	76
Maximum	310	176	129	92	51	73	68	195	180	184	242	254

LAPWING

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1993								21	102			
1994	16	13	0	0	1	4	88	140	70	130	60	91
1995	117	0	4	3	1	3	34	79	103	228	52	105
1996	27	0	0	0	0	17	51	116	57	201	123	89
1997	71	86	0	0	0	10	24	360	280	309	41	74
2009								60	52	71	25	26
2010	34	0	0	0	0		38	84	27	17	28	
2011	2	0	0	0	1	0	42	19	28	12	6	0
2012	0	0	0	0	0	1	12	99	148	8	0	1
2013	2	0	0	1	0	0	9	64	29	117	7	1
2014	0	36	0	0	0	0	88	77	76	132	33	0
2015	0	0	0	0	0	0	33	109	146	42	43	5
2016	1	2	7	0	0	0	27	36	11	30	27	4
2017	0	14	0	0	1	0	0	61	47	5	0	2
2018	0	0	0	0	0	0	23	88	55	77	31	12
2019	4	0	0	0	0	0	8	16	7	18	2	13
2020	14	0	0	n/c	0	0	40	91	45	30	27	5
Maximum	117	86	7	3	1	17	88	360	280	309	123	105

RINGED PLOVER

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1993					11							3
1994	5		4		11			7	3	5	0	4
1995	11	17	3	1	6	0	3	36	5	0	0	12
1996	5	12	3	0	3	0	3	46	14	10	7	3
1997	4	11	0	1	0	0	0	22	0	12		
2009								24	62	34	21	
2010	13	0	10	0	47		5	19	17	32	11	
2011	0	0	0	0	15	0	4	71	34	0	0	35
2012	0	0	0	2	10	14	0	14	19	0	0	0
2013	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	102	4	0	4	0
2014	0	0	0	1	22	0	16	19	4	48	7	0
2015	0	0	0	0	24	3	41	38	4	18	14	34
2016	0	0	0	0	43	0	8	28	41	45	38	0
2017	0	4	0	0	3	0	1	68	67	55	2	0
2018	0	12	0	0	0	5	15	86	29	20	33	19
2019	0	25	4	0	11	3	19	82	31	45	3	32
2020	40	22	3	n/c	5	2	13	123	69	34	27	28
Maximum	40	25	10	2	47	14	41	123	69	55	38	35

BAR-TAILED GODWIT

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1993												
1994								1			5	
1995	4	7	5	1	0	0	0	1	3	3	5	4
1996	4	0	2	3	0	0	0	0	3	0	1	0
1997	2	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
2009									15	22	7	1
2010	7	0	29	0	0		0	15	35	41	12	
2011	9	23	56	45	0	0	2	20	21	46	39	25
2012	123	110	164	0	0	0	0	0	7	8	33	0
2013	3	9	35	1	0	1	0	10	6	4	9	23
2014	45	48	14	1	0	0	0	2	4	4	4	30
2015	9	0	7	0	0	0	4	2	10	5	7	2
2016	0	10	17	6	0	0	0	4	16	22	10	0
2017	13	13	0	1	0	0	0	8	3	0	0	4
2018	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	14	8	6	3	11
2019	4	16	3	0	0	0	1	6	14	25	6	29
2020	10	3	8	n/c	0	0	0	0	5	3	3	7
Maximum	123	110	164	45	0	1	4	20	35	46	39	30

TURNSTONE

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1993										3	7	
1994	1	2	2	0	2	0	0	3	14	12	17	21
1995	11	21	10	9	9	0	0	2	13	9	16	9
1996	14	26	0	20	2	0	8	10	18	24	19	
1997		13	24	23	1	0	0		11	11		13
2009								1	3	3	1	1
2010	2	1	6	0	0		0	0	1	2	5	
2011	0	1	6	0	0	0	0	3	0	3	1	5
2012	4	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	15	10
2013	0	4	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1
2014	0	8	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0
2015	1	1	0	9	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
2016	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
2017	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
2018	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
2019	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	1
2020	0	2	0	n/c	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	1
Maximum	14	26	24	23	9	0	8	10	18	24	19	21

GOLDEN PLOVER

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1993								63	339	212		5
1994	47	27	0	0	0	0	24	290	151	290	29	74
1995	45	30	0	0	0	0	43	137	68	535	159	18
1996	29	0	28	0	0	3	48	15	217	772	367	69
1997	26	0	0	0	0	0	10	2	105	503		
2009								39	64	50	5	0
2010	0	0	0	0	0		0	25	31	134	1	
2011	0	0	0	0	0	0	47	20	29	0	0	0
2012	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	38	86	0	2
2013	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	14	0	132	21	0
2014	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	10	71	124	0	0
2015	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	5	24	47	82	8
2016	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	16	30	72	5
2017	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	12	0	0	14
2018	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	27	0	0
2019	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	12	33	48	0
2020	0	0	0	n/c	0	0	0	0	1	38	3	0
Maximum	47	30	28	0	0	3	48	290	339	772	367	74

DUNLIN

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1993		140		10	10							112
1994		105	52	19	120	4	7	22	55	74	76	144
1995	102	43	204	67	46	0	0	15	16	32	47	68
1996	16	12	4	10	10	0	21	26	106	183	117	
1997	23	52	28	49	49		4		11	21		9
2009								23	11	9	47	6
2010	120	13	8	0	9		60	28	31	87	174	
2011	43	153	0	0	4	0	2	13	2	58	420	4
2012	10	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	14	5	15	0
2013	0	0	0	0	0	0	26	63	24	41	58	16
2014	42	65	48	2	11	0	17	17	21	34	125	137
2015	21	0	0	0	20	0	23	69	52	1	174	68
2016	3	2	0	0	11	0	3	37	55	31	50	133
2017	1	0	0	0	0	0	15	37	29	4	3	4
2018	0	11	0	0	0	0	6	49	22	8	0	2
2019	0	5	14	0	0	0	13	34	41	60	13	66
2020	65	73	68	n/c	0	0	5	37	62	12	15	12
Maximum	120	153	204	67	120	4	60	69	106	183	420	144

KNOT

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1993											3	
1994								1		65	200	19
1995	4	3	35	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	27	42
1996	70	96	3	1	0	0	0	2	11	8	0	
1997		33	1	0	0	0	0	0		0		
2009								0	0	0	154	0
2010	31	5	66	0	0		0	0	0	22	6	
2011	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	25	2	0	33	7
2012	8	10	102	28	0	0	0	0	2	0	4	40
2013	2	0	75	0	0	0	0	11	0	54	6	0
2014	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	130
2015	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	10	24	0	3	0
2016	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	0
2017	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2018	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2019	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	7	7	1	5
2020	12	3	1	n/c	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	32
Maximum	70	96	102	28	1	0	1	25	24	65	200	130

CURLEW

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1993											60	
1994		298				3	10	115	86	86	130	101
1995	139	80	340	25	13	8	78	25	98	96	183	131
1996	193	254	32	41	8	4	104	55	196	112	144	125
1997		239	376	32	8	48	8		47	78		105
2009								132	66	109	143	208
2010	28	55	105	1	5		64	192	132	126	106	
2011	1	240	238	2	2	1	46	252	154	107	182	70
2012	27	11	407	4	13	21	91	83	204	4	8	42
2013	85	111	49	8	1	17	114	166	104	36	9	4
2014	5	12	65	5	1	3	95	181	138	171	74	11
2015	107	212	127	83	4	0	151	272	196	185	47	32
2016	32	191	126	42	5	1	144	139	139	141	84	49
2017	138	221	118	13	1	2	64	170	233	68	5	14
2018	102	129	5	0	4	9	51	198	155	61	8	24
2019	6	27	13	49	4	32	245	96	27	137	66	3
2020	77	317	153	n/c	15	16	173	139	188	207	219	297
Maximum	193	317	407	83	15	48	245	272	233	207	219	297

REDSHANK

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1993												
1994			106		3		51		90	146	89	85
1995	95	118	113	72	4	1	4	103	177	149	120	65
1996	53	49	27	60	1	0	53	117	146	172	148	47
1997	45	60	44	48	0	1			34	84		59
2009								70	83	101	22	19
2010	67	59	54	50	0		39	98	127	139	82	
2011	41	30	14	20	0	0	6	71	59	51	61	65
2012	27	16	17	39	0	0	8	15	88	54	97	78
2013	83	77	41	29	4	0	0	37	44	74	42	31
2014	41	39	17	40	0	0	56	31	116	110	103	51
2015	45	29	37	8	1	0	21	23	109	110	64	73
2016	33	87	40	55	0	0	16	45	73	86	65	72
2017	49	17	28	37	0	0	51	51	105	103	120	74
2018	49	75	39	2	0	0	0	38	87	74	58	128
2019	40	21	33	6	0	0	2	54	72	124	93	74
2020	62	54	22	n/c	0	0	5	102	70	73	90	59
Maximum	95	118	113	72	4	1	56	117	177	172	148	128

SANDWICH TERN

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1993						22	63		76	1		
1994				2	16	40	2	230	64	30		
1995				1	14	7	56	67	87	6		
1996				2	7	2	21	167	76	42		
1997				0	0	3	3	205	42	3		
2009				0	0			37	60	13		
2010				0	0		26	73	32	4		
2011				0	0	0	66	23	28	7		
2012				0	0	0	4	73	76	0		
2013				0	0	1	6	38	14	0		
2014				0	0	0	64	22	137	4		
2015				0	0	0	168	46	91	0		
2016				0	0	5	24	68	28	1		
2017				0	0	3	14	23	31	0		
2018				0	0	2	31	34	103	0		
2019				0	0	0	82	45	104	13		
2020				n/c	1	0	55	218	112	11		
Maximum	0	0	0	2	16	40	168	230	137	42	0	0

Conclusion

Blackness Bay is not somewhere to go in search of rarities. The main reason for this is its location in the upper Forth, which means it is too far from the coast to attract exhausted migrants. Nevertheless, there is plenty to see, especially with careful planning and local knowledge. I hope that the information given in this paper will provide enough of that to enable anyone contemplating a trip to the site to get the best out of their visit.

Having been a regular visitor for 30 years now, I can say that I still get the same amount of pleasure from Blackness Bay now as I did when I first started going there. There may be few rarities on offer, but I know that, every time I go, there is a good chance that I will find something of interest – an unusual species, a large count or something out of season. I am rarely disappointed, and that is as good a recommendation as any I could give for having a look at this underrated site.

Photographs



Satellite image of Blackness Bay



General view of the bay looking towards the east



View looking west, with Blackness Castle in the background



View from the middle of the bay looking east



The high tide wader roost, from the sea watching point



The foreshore looking towards the Black Burn