



SW Scotland, Friday-Sunday 6-8 February 2015

Over the weekend 16 members enjoyed birding S.W. Scotland. We stayed at The Bruce Hotel in Newton Stewart and were well looked after.

We met on Friday lunchtime at RSPB Mersehead on the Solway in fine weather and highlights here included hundreds of Barnacle Geese, Tree Sparrow, Yellowhammer, female Hen Harrier, a large mixed flock of Skylarks, Meadow Pipit and Reed Bunting and the first of our drake Green-winged Teal. After a late lunch, we travelled a short distance back east along the coast to Southerness where the highlights among the waders were a single Purple Sandpiper, Knot, Turnstone, Golden and Grey Plover, a skein of Pint-footed Geese flew over and a Harbour Porpoise in the Solway entertained us for a while. We then proceeded to Newton Stewart to check in to our hotel and enjoyed an excellent evening meal.

After a sumptuous Scottish breakfast on the Saturday we drove to Wigtown for a short walk along the marshes and highlights included a large flock of Pink-footed Geese, Snipe and Rock Pipit. We then proceeded towards Stranraer and birded a few different points around Loch Ryan. The weather was sunny but with a keen wind. Highlights included both Red-throated and Black-throated Divers, Black Guillemot, Eider, Scaup Wigeon, Goldeneye, Hooded Crow, Brent Geese, Slavonian Grebe, Common Scoter and a very confiding Twite. We then travelled south of Stranraer to Sandhead and Luce Bay where we saw another distant Slavonian Grebe together with more Scaup, Common Scoter and Red-breasted Merganser. The final destination for the day was West Freugh where the highlights were Hen Harrier, Short-eared Owl, Sparrowhawk, Common Buzzard, Kestrel and Raven.

We woke up Sunday morning to thick fog and after another filling breakfast and checking out, we set off east towards RSPB Ken-Dee. Even though the fog lifted on the way, by the time we got to our destination we were enveloped again. This fog remained with us the rest of the day and hampered our birding slightly. On the minor road down to Ken-Dee we saw numerous Red Kite and a Dipper and a walk at the reserve yielded a few woodland birds including Long-tailed Tit, Willow Tit, Nuthatch and Great Spotted Woodpecker. We saw a few Canada and Greylag Geese but were unable to see the majority of the geese because of the fog. A short stop at Calingwark Loch in Castle Douglas didn't give us any new birds and we carried on to Caerlaverock WWT reserve on the Solway. Highlights here included Whooper Swan, another drake Green-winged Teal, Treecreeper, Yellowhammer and a Water Rail.

We ended up with a list of 105 species and everyone, despite the fog on Sunday, enjoyed an excellent weekend's birding.

Ray Evans

S.W. Scotland, 17th - 19th February 2017

Eleven members enjoyed a weekend's birding in S.W. Scotland. We stayed at The Bruce Hotel in Newton Stewart and were well looked after.

We met on Friday lunchtime at RSPB Mersehead on the Solway in drizzle and mist and highlights here included hundreds of Barnacle Geese, Pink-footed Goose, Whooper Swan, Golden Plover mixed in with a flock of Lapwing, and a large mixed flock of Linnet and Reed Bunting. The weather picked up a little bit and we then travelled the short distance back east along the coast to Southerness where the highlights among the waders were a single Purple Sandpiper, Turnstone and Common Scoter. We then proceeded to Newton Stewart to check in to our hotel and enjoyed an excellent evening meal.

After a sumptuous Scottish breakfast on the Saturday we drove to Wigtown for a short walk along

the marshes and highlights included Pink-footed Geese, Little Egret, Bullfinch and Great Spotted Woodpecker. We then moved towards Stranraer and birded a few different points around Loch Ryan. The weather was sunny but with the odd shower. Highlights included Red-throated Diver, Black Guillemot, Guillemot, Razorbill, Eider, Scaup, Wigeon, Goldeneye, Brent Geese, Slavonian Grebe, Common Scoter, Gannet and a group of four confiding Twite on the Esplanade at Stranraer. Travelling north of Stranraer towards the Wig we caught up with the Cattle Egret in a roadside field. We moved on to Sandhead and Luce Bay where we saw some more distant Common Scoter and Red-breasted Merganser. The final destination for the day was West Freugh where the weather was sunny but with a keen wind. The highlights here included three ringtail Hen Harrier, Common Buzzard and Whooper Swan. We made our way back to the hotel and had another excellent meal.

After another filling breakfast and checking out on the Sunday morning, we set off east towards RSPB Ken-Dee Marshes. On the minor road down to Ken-Dee we saw a few Red Kite and a flock of White-fronted Geese on the shores of the loch from the car-park. A walk at the reserve yielded a few woodland birds including Willow Tit, Coal Tit, Nuthatch and Bullfinch together with Raven, Sparrowhawk and Red Squirrel. A short lunch stop at Calingwark Loch in Castle Douglas gave us close views of the drake Ring-necked Duck from the car-park together with Goldeneye, Tufted Duck, Goosander and Little Grebe. A little light drizzle again moved us on west along the A75 towards Dumfries and during a short stop at Auchunreoch we saw another Goosander together with a female Smew. We then proceeded to Caerlaverock WWT reserve on the Solway. Highlights here included Whooper Swan, two drake Green-winged Teal, Yellowhammer, Tree Sparrow, hundreds of Barnacle Goose including a leucistic bird and Pink-footed Goose.

We ended up with a list of 103 species, and everyone enjoyed an excellent weekend's birding.

Ray Evans

S.W. Scotland -29th February - 1st March 2020

Fifteen members enjoyed a wild, wet and windy weekend's birding in S.W. Scotland. We stayed at The Bruce Hotel in Newton Stewart and were very well looked after yet again – this was our 4th stay.

We met just before Friday lunchtime at RSPB Mersehead on the Solway in fairly persistent rain, and highlights here included hundreds of Barnacle Geese, Wigeon, Shoveler and a small flock of Linnet. We had our lunch drying out in the visitor centre where the feeders had Tree Sparrow, Yellowhammer and Siskin. We then travelled the short distance back east along the coast to Southernness where the wind was so strong it was difficult to stand up and the tide was so high we couldn't see any waders but highlights included Little Egret and Common Scoter. The birding was curtailed early for the day and we left for Newton Stewart to check in to our hotel to dry out all our wet weather gear. We enjoyed an excellent evening meal.

After a sumptuous Scottish breakfast on the Saturday we drove to Wigtown and in benign weather we had a short walk along the marshes and highlights included Pink-footed and Barnacle Geese, Little Egret, Goldcrest and a fine Merlin. The bad weather was forecast for the afternoon and we decided to move early towards Stranraer to bird a few different points around Loch Ryan. Highlights at Cairnryan included Red-throated Diver, Black Guillemot, Guillemot, Eider, Shag and Fulmar. Moving nearer to Stranraer and a lunch stop we saw Scaup, Wigeon and Goldeneye. Our final destination at Loch Ryan was the Wig and by this time there was a strong gale force wind again making birding nigh impossible. We saw a flock of Brent Geese but little else. A short roadside stop at Glenside gave us two Long-tailed Ducks and a single Slavonian Grebe. The final destination for the day was West Freugh where the weather had now turned very wet as well as windy and birding was confined to the cars. We saw a herd of Whooper Swans in that general area. Birding was curtailed early again and we made our way back to the hotel and had another excellent meal.

After another filling breakfast and checking out on the Sunday morning, we set off east towards RSPB Ken-Dee Marshes. The weather on the Sunday was windy but mercifully not raining. On the minor road down to Ken-Dee we saw Red Kite. A walk at the reserve yielded a few woodland birds including Willow Tit, Coal Tit, Nuthatch, Treecreeper together with Raven and Red Squirrel. En route to Carlingwark Loch a small group of White-fronted Geese were in a roadside field in a mixed flock of Greylag and Canada Geese. A lunch stop at Carlingwark Loch in Castle Douglas gave us

views of Goldeneye, Tufted Duck and Goosander. We then proceeded to Caerlaverock WWT reserve on the Solway. Highlights here included Whooper Swan, Yellowhammer, hundreds of Barnacle Goose, Black-tailed Godwit and Knot and we finished the day with a Red-legged Partridge on a roadside near the reserve.

We ended up with a list of 91 species, and despite the horrendous weather everyone enjoyed an excellent weekend with good company, good beer, good food and some good birds.

Ray Evans