



## **Speyside, 5-8th May 2016**

Seventeen members enjoyed a weekend's birding in Norfolk. We stayed at Carrmoor Guesthouse in Carrbridge and were extremely well looked after.

We met on Thursday morning at Loch of the Lowes NR, a Scottish Wildlife Trust reserve north of Perth and highlights here included nesting Osprey, Common Buzzard, Lesser Redpoll and Yellowhammer. We had our lunch there and then carried on to Carrbridge and after checking in at the hotel followed by a cup of tea, we drove to Loch Garten RSPB reserve where we walked the Loch Mallachie trail. Highlights included Sparrowhawk, Goldeneye, Siskin and Treecreeper. We then all convened at the guesthouse to have a sumptuous evening meal. After eating, a small group drove down to the end of Station Road in Carrbridge where we had excellent views of Woodcock, Golden Plover, Long-eared Owl and a few Mountain Hares.

A pre-breakfast trip for a few on the Friday morning, again to Station Road, produced Black Grouse, Greylag Goose, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Common Gull, Jay and Common Sandpiper together with both Mountain and Brown Hare and Roe Deer. After a very hearty breakfast the whole group travelled up to a loch on the moorland north of Carrbridge. Highlights here included Red Grouse, Red Kite, Wheatear, Black-throated and Red-throated Diver and Osprey. We then proceeded to the coast at Burghead where we saw Gannet, Eider, Long-tailed Duck, Common Scoter, Great Northern Diver, Sandwich Tern, Brent Goose and Rock Pipit. We moved on to Lossiemouth to bird the estuary and the harbour where the highlights included Sanderling, Goosander, Pink-footed Goose, another Osprey and a White-billed Diver. Bizarrely there was also a young lady playing a keyboard in the sea. We then moved on to RSPB Roseisle where we had yet another Osprey which caught a fish in the sea and a Great Northern Diver. All the four Diver species in one day were all in summer plumage. Our day ended at the lower station at Cairngorm where the highlight was a singing male Ring Ouzel plus a few of the resident herd on Reindeer.

A few turned up again for the pre-breakfast walk on Saturday when we decide to go Anagach Woods at Grantown where the highlights were Great Spotted Woodpecker, Siskin and Scottish Crossbill. After yet another excellent breakfast the group travelled to the Findhorn Valley where sightings included Snipe, Red-legged Partridge, Common Sandpiper, Dipper, Peregrine, Raven plus fantastic views of a pair of Golden Eagle. We also had feral Mountain Goats and Red Deer. A short journey over the top of the moor took us to Loch Ruthven RSPB reserve where we had our lunch and a short walk yielded Red-throated Diver, Slavonian Grebe, Red-breasted Merganser, Stonechat and Tree Pipit. We then returned to the Speyside area and went to Uath Lochans in Glen Feshie. There was a dearth of birds here and the only ones we saw were Sand and House Martin, Swallow and Willow Warbler. Our final port of call for the day was to Insh Church where there is another Osprey nesting site and other sightings included Goldeneye, Pied Flycatcher, Treecreeper and a heard only Wood Warbler.

The pre-breakfast walk on the Sunday took us to Loch Garten RSPB reserve where the only decent bird that we saw was Great Spotted Woodpecker and a stop at a roadside pool outside Boat of Garten gave us Wigeon, Tufted Duck, Redshank and Little Grebe. After another great breakfast we said our goodbyes to Christine and Michael at the hotel and travelled to Cairngorm and were lucky that the funicular railway was running to the summit. The railway was shut for a fortnight for essential maintenance but because of a lot of snow there were hundreds of skiers and snowboarders, so they decided to open for the weekend. Standing in about 6-8 inches of snow surrounded by hundreds of people made it impossible to find Ptarmigan but our luck was in when 3 were spotted from the railway on our descent. We called at two other sites, Allt Mor in Glen Morlich and Loch en Eilein where the highlight was a male Redstart.

It was good to have Mike (Hems) with us for the two middle days. We ended up with 105 species

for the weekend but try as we might we couldn't find a Crested Tit anywhere. The weather stayed dry most of the time and although sometimes quite cold, everyone enjoyed their weekend's birding.

Ray Evans