

FIFE BIRD CLUB NEWS

APRIL 2017



Activities opened in March with a successful and enjoyable long weekend trip to the Dumfries and Galloway area and closed with a well-received talk about the Tay Reed Beds from Les Hatton. Congratulations go to Ken Shaw and Harry Bell who were presented with the rarest bird found in Fife and photograph of the year awards. On the species side of things, although we have been encouraged to look out for Goshawks in Fife, then Honey-buzzards later in the year, a couple of other raptors were prominent in March with Ospreys returning and a couple of welcome Red Kite sightings. Reports of Chiffchaffs and Sand Martins heralded the arrival of spring although regular geese sightings were a reminder of winter. What will April bring?

FBC DIARY

Next Indoor Meeting

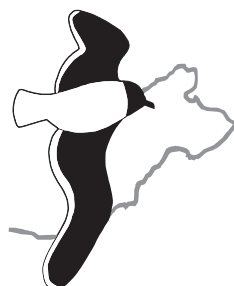
(Meetings are held in the Dean Park Hotel, Kirkcaldy @ 7.30pm unless otherwise stated.)

Thursday 8th June 2017
"Interaction Between Humans and Birds in Baja California Sur, Mexico", John and Elizabeth Irwin

Next Outdoor Meetings

Sunday 23rd April 2017Glen Turret

For all Outings please contact Ron McNab for further details and keep an eye on the FBC website for any changes to the schedule. **Intending participants should email Ron at ron.mcnab123@gmail.com at least one week before the date of the outing.** Members should bring a packed lunch and wear appropriate clothing and footwear.



MARCH SIGHTINGS

The first report of the month came from Letham Pools where one **Greenland** and one **Eurasian White-fronted Goose** were picked out among 1156 **Pink-feet**, while 26 **Reed Buntings** were in a field east of Wester Kilwhiss (3rd). Nine **Waxwings** were seen by the Crossgates junction of the A921 between Dalgety Bay and Aberdour then a **Common (Mealy) Redpoll** was reported from Dunfermline and noted as different to the bird recorded here last month (4th). A **Mediterranean Gull** flew south-west from Methil and two drake **Scaup** were at Kilconquhar Loch where a pair of **Red-breasted Mergansers** and two **Pochard** were also seen (5th). 19 **Waxwings** were at Mountcastle GP and there was an evening sighting of a **Barn Owl** at Waterless Bridge, Pittenweem (6th). Six **Hawfinches** were seen briefly at Kilmany, over 20 **Waxwings** were at Mountcastle GP again while a **Greenshank** was at Seafield. Freshwater counts included two **Great Crested Grebes**, 14 **Greylag Geese**, 26 **Wigeon**, 30 **Tufted Ducks**, 14 **Goldeneye** and two **Gadwall** at Mountcastle GP and eight **Mute Swans**, 16+ **Goldeneye**, six **Moorhens**, 30+ **Black-headed Gulls** and two **Goosanders** at Birnie & Gaddon Lochs LNR. Seawatching at Kinghorn produced singles of **Manx Shearwater**, **Kittiwake** and **Red-throated Diver**, along with 30+ **Razorbills**, five **Guillemots**, three **Long-tailed Ducks** and at least four **Gannets** (7th).

20+ **Waxwings** were still at Mountcastle GP, the two drake **Scaup** at Kilconquhar Loch were joined by three females, Ardross Farm hosted c20 **Corn Buntings** and a count from Edenside included four **Whooper Swans**, c15 **Brent Geese**, 36 **Shelducks**, 30 **Knot**, 66 **Black-tailed Godwits**, five **Lesser Black-backed Gulls**, a **Kingfisher** and two **Great Spotted Woodpeckers** (9th). **Hawfinches** were seen at Kilmany again with at least two in the morning and a minimum of three in the afternoon. Ladybank hosted a small party of **Common Crossbills** at South Annsmuir Wood, 19 **Red-throated Divers** and seven **Purple Sandpipers** were at Kingsbarns while Edenside held 23 **Whooper Swans** (10th). A **Red Kite** over Barns Farm was a particularly notable report. 34 **Slavonian Grebes**, three **Black-throated Divers** and 18 **Red-throated Divers** were seen off Lower Largo, a **Peregrine** was at Edenside and a count from Morton Lochs NNR included seven **Dabchicks**, two **Mute Swans**, 11 **Canada Geese**, five **Teal**, 21 **Mallards** and ten **Tufted Ducks** (11th). Ruddons Point produced a **Red-necked Grebe**, two **Slavonian Grebes** and a **Whimbrel**, Newton Sandpit held eight **Mute Swans**, two **Canada Geese**, ten **Teal**, 14 **Tufted Ducks**, 13 **Goldeneye**, 16 **Coots**, 28 **Lapwings**, nine **Snipe** and 86 **Black-headed Gulls** while Linkwood Pond and Floods hosted two **Canada Geese**, 36 **Teal**, 18 **Mallards**, 12 **Tufted Ducks**, five **Moorhens** and eight **Coots** (12th).

Two **Peregrines** were noted at Braefoot Point (17th), a **Chiffchaff** was singing at Morton Lochs NNR, a **Greenland White-fronted Goose** was at Letham Pools and the **Hawfinches** at Kilmany increased to six (18th). 12 **Corn Buntings** were observed at Coal Farm and a report from Birnie & Gaddon Lochs LNR included 14 **Greylags**, one **Barnacle Goose**, 33 **Tufted Ducks**, 17 **Goldeneye**, a pair of **Gadwall** and eight **Coots** as well as a **Chiffchaff** (19th). Seven **Waxwings** frequented Newburgh (20th).

There was a late night sighting of a **Barn Owl** south of Lindores Loch (22nd) and the following day brought reports of 16 **Waxwings** at both Carnock and Kemback. Seawatching at Ruddons Point brought five **Slavonian Grebes**, four **Red-throated Divers** and a **Red-necked Grebe** as well as one **Whimbrel**. A **Sandwich Tern** flew past Fife Ness (23rd). The following day was a busy one starting with an early morning **Sand Martin** in off the sea at Kinghorn, a **Chiffchaff** singing at nearby Kinghorn Loch, an **Osprey** over Loch Glow, a **Little Egret** at Tayport then a redhead **Smew** and a **Water Rail** at Lochore Meadows CP while Cullaloe NR held a **Chiffchaff** and a **Kingfisher** (24th). A **Chiffchaff** was singing at Lundin Links (25th). Seven **Sand Martins** and a **Wheatear** were at Pathhead with a **Great Northern Diver** offshore there whilst an **Osprey** flew over the Chapel area of Kirkcaldy. An **Osprey** was also over Bath Moor and there was another fine raptor sighting at Blairadam Forest, this time a **Red Kite**, while three **Waxwings** flew over Aberdour (26th). **Waxwings** were also at Glenrothes with 21 there. An Edenside report included 37 **Shelducks**, 33 **Wigeon**, 18 **Teal**, one **Goldeneye**, one **Long-tailed Duck**, two **Great Spotted Woodpeckers** and three **Tree Sparrows** (27th). Seven **Common Crossbills** were at Heatherhall Wood and a **Wheatear** appeared at Kinghorn (28th). Off Lower Largo were three **Red-necked Grebes**, two **Black-throated Divers** and 12 **Slavonian Grebes** (29th). A **Chiffchaff** was at Auchtermuchty Common and there were two of this species at Tayfield, where two **Kingfishers** were also noted, whilst an **Osprey** circled above the Valley Gardens area of Kirkcaldy (30th). The month concluded with 17 **Red-throated Divers**, a **Sandwich Tern** and four **Corn Buntings** at Kingsbarns then a **Peregrine**, 470 **Knot**, 1120 **Pink-feet** and two **Barnacle Geese** at Edenside (31st).



BIRD FOR APRIL - CHIFFCHAFF



↑ Chiffchaff by Willie McBay

The Chiffchaff is a small, dumpy, leaf warbler. The spring adult of the western nominate subspecies *P. c. collybita* has brown-washed dull green upperparts, off-white underparts becoming yellowish on the flanks, and a short whitish supercilium. It has dark legs, a fine dark bill, and short primary projection (extension of the flight feathers beyond the folded wing). As the plumage wears, it gets duller and browner, and the yellow on the flanks tends to be lost, but after the breeding season there is a prolonged complete moult before migration. The newly fledged juvenile is browner above than the adult, with yellow-white underparts, but moults about 10 weeks after acquiring its first plumage. After moulting, both the adult and the juvenile have brighter and greener upperparts and a paler supercilium.

This warbler gets its name from its simple distinctive song, a repetitive cheerful *chiff-chaff*. This song is one of the first avian signs that spring has returned. Its call is a hweet, less disyllabic than the hooet of the Willow Warbler or *hu-it* of the Western

Bonelli's Warbler. When not singing, the Chiffchaff can be difficult to distinguish from other leaf warblers with greenish upperparts and whitish underparts, particularly the Willow Warbler. However, that species has a longer primary projection, a sleeker, brighter appearance and generally pale legs. Chiffchaff also has rounded wings in flight, and a diagnostic tail movement consisting of a dip, then sideways wag, that distinguishes it from other *Phylloscopus* warblers.

Chiffchaffs breed across Europe and Asia east to eastern Siberia and north, with isolated populations in northwest Africa, northern and western Turkey and northwestern Iran. It is migratory, but it is one of the first passerine birds to return to its breeding areas in the spring and among the last to leave in late autumn. When breeding, it is a bird of open woodlands with some taller trees and ground cover for nesting purposes. These trees are typically at least 5 metres high, with undergrowth that is an open, poor to medium mix of grasses, bracken, nettles or similar plants. Its breeding habitat is quite specific, and even near relatives do not share it; for example, the Willow Warbler (*P. trochilus*) prefers younger trees, while the Wood Warbler (*P. sibilatrix*) prefers less undergrowth. In winter, Chiffchaffs use a wider range of habitats including scrub, and is not so dependent on trees. It is often found near water, unlike the Willow Warbler which tolerates drier habitats. There is an increasing tendency to winter in western Europe well north of the traditional areas, especially in coastal southern England and the mild urban microclimate of London. The Chiffchaff has an enormous range, with an estimated global extent of 10 million square kilometres and a population of 60–120 million individuals in Europe alone. Although global population trends have not been quantified, the species is not believed to approach the thresholds for the population decline criterion of the IUCN Red List. None of the major subspecies is under threat, and there is a slow population increase in the Czech Republic. The range of at least *P. c. collybita* seems to be expanding, with northward advances in Scotland, Norway and Sweden and a large population increase in Denmark.

Like most Old World warblers, this small species is insectivorous, moving restlessly through foliage or briefly hovering. It has been recorded as taking insects, mainly flies, from more than 50 families, along with other small and medium-sized invertebrates. It will take the eggs and larvae of butterflies and moths, particularly those of the Winter Moth. The Chiffchaff has been estimated to require about one-third of its weight in insects daily, and it feeds almost continuously in the autumn to put on extra fat as fuel for the long migration flight.

