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Scotland's Bird Club Ayrshire Branch

We are always on the look-out for more articles, cartoons and photographs to include in the future editions of [Stonechat](#). Please think about contributing and send any work for publication to me: Tony Scott / Editor, at 4 Hilltop Place, AYR KA7 3PB - or e-mail me at: da.scott@tiscali.co.uk

Sightings to:
Ayrshire Bird Recorder
Fraser Simpson. E-mail:
recorder@ayrshire-birding.org.uk

For all local birding info: please go to www.ayrshire-birding.org.uk Thanks go to Kevin Waite for his excellent work in keeping this superb website on the go.

September 2012

The Stone chat



Stonechat. Upper Guiadiaro Valley
near Ronda, Andalucia Photo: Gerda Scott

Hello everyone, it's that time of the year again! Just amazing how quickly summer has passed us by, and here we are in autumn once again at the start of a new season for all our birding activities. First of all I would like to thank Gordon Riddle for his sterling work as chairman of this branch over the past two years, and at the same time say a big welcome to our new chairman (who also needs no introduction), Angus Hogg. Working together with our local RSPB branch, we have enjoyed numerous coach field trips, including our long-weekend to the Farne Islands. In the coming season we are organising a four-day trip to the isles of Mull and Iona in April 2013. Full details of this and all other field trips and evening meetings in this edition of 'Stonechat'. You will also find an article by Angus entitled "How to get the best out of.....Doonfoot" and a trip report on the Ayrshire Birders 2012 holiday in Spain, visiting Andalucia and Extremadura. They are planning a trip to Tarifa in September for the autumn migration in 2013 - more details inside. We hope you enjoy this edition and look forward to seeing you this season.

Welcome to the Ayrshire Branch of SOC



It's the start of another season of indoor meetings and outings and I'd like to welcome you all to the Ayrshire Branch where we have our usual, tremendous variety of talks and activities lined up for you. I hope you'll find that there's something in this year's programme for everyone. As always, Ayrshire's SOC branch has never stood still, and we hope to introduce some new activities this year. Members have frequently asked about the introduction of some sort of identification course and we hope to include this as part of club outings this year. Hopefully, next year may also see the branch adopt a species to become the focus of a county-wide survey in Ayrshire. I would also like to try another "social event" if possible - bird race, quiz night, or.....?

All of the above underlines the fact that this is your club, and much of what is arranged for each year is down to the hard work of your branch committee - although I'm still looking for someone to provide free wine at each meeting!! Seriously though, we'd really welcome your input - whether it be ideas about how to improve our publicity or our membership figures. We'd like to hear your views on club activities, meetings and publications. Can you help us with issues like sponsorship, events or articles for [Stonechat](#), the local newsletter?

We do need to encourage more members and I know that each one of you reading this will probably know someone who is "interested" in birds, but hasn't yet ventured to join a local club. Can I ask you to bring a friend to one of our meetings, and introduce them to the SOC - I feel sure that they'd enjoy it and might just allow them to take their hobby a bit further. The SOC is unique among Scottish birding clubs inasmuch as it is really the only organisation dedicated to the collection and verification of ornithological information - now, at last, fully recognised by both local and national organisations for this work. We belong to a club which, in the last decade, has produced the highly acclaimed [Birds of Scotland](#) and totally transformed its quarterly publication, [Scottish Birds](#). All of this requires a great effort, from everyone within the club. Can you help contribute to the club in Ayrshire?

Ayrshire Birders in Spain

A birding and cultural trip to Extremadura and Andalucia
A report by Tony Scott and Angus Hogg



Our group. Photograph taken by Manu (Manuel Mojarro - local bird guide) at La Rabida on 17 May 2012

Getting away from a pretty dire set of weather conditions in Scotland seemed a good idea, so on the 9th of May this year we headed off to southern Spain, full of hope for good weather, good birding, good company and many other wonderful visual and culinary experiences. We were not disappointed by any of these aspirations. We are pleased to say that everything worked as planned and the logistics ran more or less like clockwork. At the end of the trip, our sightings list numbered 173 species, which we think is pretty good. The group voted on their top three birds and the result was - in first position - firecrest. Two - eagle owl. Three - little bittern. (With many runners up!). But now, back to the beginning.....it all started with an on-time flight and a smooth transfer from Malaga airport to our luxurious accommodation for the first two nights - the immaculate Parador at Antequera (and some of us even added tawny owl to our list as we travelled north). After checking into our spacious rooms, we all met in the balmy air of the open terrace for a small buffet with a selection of local vino tinto and vino blanco. A great way to end our very first day, and to get to know some of the group who were joining us for the very first time.



A view from the terrace, Parador of Antequera



Laguna de Fuente de Piedra with greater flamingoes

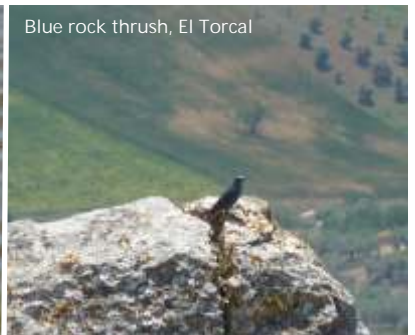
Thursday 10th of May dawned fair with clear blue skies and rapidly warming air. Our first stop was at the reserve of Laguna de Fuente de Piedra, an occasional breeding site for greater flamingo. This was to prove a great 'taster' for the trip with fantastic views over the lagoon. The flamingoes had decided not to breed due to the high water levels, but there were still around 700 present, adding to the splash of colour provided by waders such as curlew sandpiper and little stint. Nightingales rattled away from the scrub, and we saw the first of many hoopoes. A visit to the high ground of El Torcal around mid-day provided further superb views of the surrounding countryside and gave us our first views of Griffon vultures. The area around the car park was fairly productive, with blue rock thrush, melodious warbler, rock bunting and Cirl bunting. El Torcal is a massive high plateau of eroded grey limestone dating from the Jurassic period where a lush growth of hawthorn, ivy, wild rose and thirty species of orchid flourish. It is also one of the most geologically arresting natural parks of Andalucia. In the afternoon we paid a visit to a group of prehistoric dolmens on Antequera's northern outskirts. There was an impressive Centro de Interpretación where we viewed a well produced short film on the history of the area. The most impressive of the two dolmens here is the Cueva de Menga, its roof formed by massive stone slabs, among them a 180 ton monolith. Dating from 2500 BC, a columned gallery leads to an oval burial chamber which was suitably impressive. For some, this experience may well have been surpassed by a nice view of a male Iberian pied flycatcher - so something for everyone once again! Then, it was time to relax, a glass of wine on the terrace before an excellent dinner.



Dinner at Parador Antequera



Black-winged stilt



Blue rock thrush, El Torcal

The old city of Córdoba with the Rio Guadalquivir and the Mezquita



From left: The Mezquita; Bee-eater; night heron

The 11th of May and off on the road again with Antonio, the driver of our 50-seat coach from Ramirez of Córdoba, which just happened to be our first stop on our journey north into Extremadura. We were scarcely off the bus when the building site opposite produced four bee-eaters for us. Much of the morning was spent watching the riverside trees and bushes with their cattle egrets and black-crowned night herons, plus the occasional diversion such as Cetti's warbler and yellow (Iberian) wagtail. However, the real 'find' of the day was a European nightjar sitting on the branch of a tree by the river. The other option which was taken by more than a third of the group, was to visit the historic centre of the city and the Mezquita in particular. This is the most grand and beautiful mosque ever constructed by the Moors, standing in the city centre surrounded by the Judería, the old Jewish and Moorish quarters. We all had time for a light lunch before departing for Torrejón el Rubio and our second hotel, the wonderfully situated Hospederia Parque de Monfragüe. En-route, we saw three gorgeous Montagu's harriers floating across cereal fields, and began to see an ever-increasing number of white storks.

The next day, 12th of May, we headed straight for Peñafalcon, within the Monfragüe National Park. Here we were greeted by lots of spiralling Griffon and black vultures as they prepared to head off on foraging trips. A few Egyptian vultures put in an appearance, but the big surprise was the presence of a young Rüppell's vulture. If you add some cracking views of short-toed eagle and black kite to the tally, its easy to see why this must be one of Western Europe's raptor hot-spots. At the visitor centre, we were well entertained by black stork, woodchat shrike and our first honey buzzards. Continuing our own foraging trip, we headed up the narrowing and rocky valley to the Mirador de Bascula, where a splendid male Dartford warbler was coaxed into view, using an MP3. Our final morning destination was the valley of the Río Tietar where our luck was in, and we had great views of some eagle owl chicks in the nest. After lunch back at the hotel, we ventured out in the late afternoon to Peñafalcon again, where we were treated to views of rock bunting and Subalpine warbler, as well as more fabulous sightings of Griffon and black vultures. We were then ready for a beautifully prepared and well served dinner back at the Hospederia.

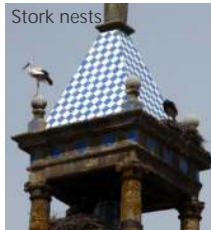
Great bustard watch near Santa Marta



Lunch in Trujillo



Lesser kestrel



Stork nests



Corn bunting

May 13th and we're off to the Cáceres and Trujillo Steppes to look for bustards. A slight hiccup en-route to La Aldea Obispo held up proceedings (we got stuck in a narrow village street and Antonio had to reverse the coach for at least one kilometre!!). Had this not happened though, we would not have seen an obliging little owl on top of a dyke, while a roadside Egyptian vulture was a welcome sight. Arriving at a good open stretch of steppe land near Santa Marta de Magasca we were not long in finding a group of great bustards, but the other, minor version, continued to elude us. Calandra larks were singing everywhere, red kites and more Montagu's harriers drifted lazily around and some stunning rollers posed on roadside wires. We were back in the picturesque town of Trujillo for lunch, around 14.00 hrs. Sitting in the Plaza Major in one of the many restaurants and shaded from the sun, we could combine eating with watching the numerous white storks on the towers, roofs and spires as they performed their mating rituals. In addition both swifts and crag martins were swooping around and wonderful views of breeding lesser kestrels were enjoyed. Time always seems to stand still in this sixteenth century stage set of escutcheoned mansions, stork-topped towers and castle walls, birthplace of Francisco Pizarro, conqueror of Peru. A bronze statue of him stands victorious in the centre of the square and with many of the unchanged architectural gems surrounding us, not least the Palacio de la Conquista, one of Trujillo's grandest mansions. What a place to sit and dream and to eat superb regional dishes such as Esparragos trigueros a la parilla con vinegreata de Miel crema de torta. A delightful way of serving green asparagus with a honeyed vinaigrette and a little cream filled tart to garnish. With temperatures soaring to a scorching 38 C it was maybe a good afternoon to take things easy and just adopt the Spanish lifestyle. We returned to our country hotel for dinner at 20.30 hrs.

The following day, 14th May, was a real contrast, with a trip to the Jerte Valley with all its cherry orchards on vertiginous slopes, before heading into an area of rich, broad-leaved woodland. The reserve of La Garganta de Los Infernos (The Maw of Hell) proved really eventful, with sightings of lesser-spotted woodpecker, short-toed treecreeper, more honey buzzards and lots of golden orioles. Lunch at Jaraiz de la Vera was followed by a drive up the rather tortuous road to the pass above the village of Piornal. A short stop here produced both woodlark and spectacled warbler. Stopping in Piornal, we had great views of booted eagle and pallid swifts, the latter screaming past us at breakneck speed. It was then time to return to our hotel at Torrejon el Rubio.



The high pass above Piornal



Pallid swift



Honey buzzard



Bird list time at the Hospederia

Sad as it was to leave such a spectacular place as Torrejón, the 15th of May saw us on the road south to the Coto Doñana. A break in the journey at Mérida, the former capital of the Roman province of Lusitania, allowed half of the group to visit the old Roman bridge over the Río Guadiana, an area of slow flowing water and reed beds, with a large egret colony in the riverside trees. With common, pallid and Alpine swifts wheeling around and constant action from the numerous cattle egrets, it was hard to know where to look next. However, the find of the day was a superb little bittern right next to the bridge. The other half of the group visited the Teatro Romano and the Anfiteatro, just two of the many Roman remains in this city which contains more than any other in Spain. The Teatro is one of the best preserved Roman theatres anywhere in the Roman empire. Constructed around 15 BC, it was a present to the city from Agrippa. Adjoining is the amphitheatre, a slightly later and much plainer design, it could seat as many as 15,000 people - almost half the current population of Mérida. They would most likely be watching gladiatorial combats and fights with wild animals. From here we drove south to Santiponce on the outskirts of Sevilla, where we had lunch and a chance to see more Roman remains at the adjacent site of Italica, the birthplace of the emperors Trojan and Hadrian, and one of the earliest Roman settlements in Spain, founded in 206 BC. From here, it took us just under two hours to reach our third hotel, the Tierra del Mar on the Atlantic coast at Matalascañas, ideally situated to visit the Doñana National Park the following morning. Since we arrived in Matalascañas too late to do any birding last night, there was a great sense of anticipation about today's trip (16th May) to the Doñana National Park. We were lucky enough to have the same driver/guide we had back in 2009, and he proved no less informative and enthusiastic as before. No Imperial eagles this time, and an unusually dry wetland area, but still lots to see as we drove around the park. Two honey buzzards in off the sea were unexpected, and some stunning views of Audouin's gull, slender-billed gull, Caspian tern and black tern made the trip along the beach a memorable one. An afternoon visit to the park centre at El Acebuche gave most of the group chance to catch up with Thekla lark, and the pools held a good selection of waterbirds including spoonbill and purple swamphen. Azure-winged magpie was a bird most people wanted to see, and they were around in abundance today.



Thekla lark



Audouin's gull



Caspian tern



Azure-winged magpie, Doñana



Lunch at Punta Umbria



The 17th of May took us to the Odiel peninsula and the Huelva/La Rabida area. Stopping first at the visitor centre at the Marismas del Odiel, we saw a variety of migrant waders including knot and whimbrel. More waders were seen as we drove down to the very tip of the peninsula, where a pair of stone curlews with at least one chick provided some entertainment for us all. The only osprey of the trip was seen on a platform in the marshes as we drove back. We enjoyed lunch at a very fine seafood place at Punta Umbria, the 'Restaurante Chiringuito Camarón', where Cazuela de Pescado en Amarillo, a flavoursome seafood casserole, was just one of the many delightful dishes on offer at this well situated eatery overlooking the wide expanse of beach. After lunch we drove back to the Christopher Columbus statue at La Rabida to meet our local guide for the afternoon, Manuel Mojarro (Manu). Although we were a little short of time, he packed in a terrific variety of bird species, including grey plover, curlew sandpiper, whiskered tern, penduline tit and our only squacco heron. He even managed to show us Moorish gecko and Egyptian grasshopper in the brief but most enthusiastically conducted visit. On the 18th of May, it was back to the marshes, beginning in El Rocío. Distant views of a perched Spanish Imperial eagle was the perfect start. Impressive sightings of beautiful curlew sandpipers and greater flamingoes followed, but our attention was grabbed by a group of collared pratincoles which seemed to materialise out of thin air. The visit to the marshes at Isla Mayor proved a little disappointing with most birds being fairly distant and the rice paddies being strangely birdless. However, a return to El Rocío where we first had lunch at the fine and well known 'Hotel Toruño Restaurante' (a favourite place of birders as it overlooks the marsh), followed by a stroll along the 'promenade', which produced another little bittern and an amusing conversation with a great reed warbler. We went on to nearby La Rocina for a late afternoon walk around this lovely, shady woodland reserve with marshy pools which held spoonbills, purple herons and glossy ibis. We then returned to our hotel for the bird list and a another fine dinner.



Meeting Manu at La Rabida



Birding the marshes, Isla Mayor



El Rocío



Images of Jeréz



Leaving Matalascañas on the 19th of May, our next main stop en-route to Ronda, was Jeréz. Here, the group divided, with the birding element heading for a windy Laguna de Medina and the others visiting the historic centre of Jeréz with its Moorish Alcazar surrounded by beautifully flowering Jacaranda trees, the nearby Catédral de San Salvador, and one of its famous bodegas, Gonzalez Byass, the producers of the famous Tio Pepe fino sherry. They also produce a raft of other olorosos and many vintage brandies. The bodega visit was greatly enjoyed, not least the sampling part of the trip. Meanwhile, the birders got good views of some gorgeous black-necked grebes, although the strong breeze was partly responsible for white-headed duck and crested coot playing hard to get. Our drive then continued through the mountainous terrain, passing Arcos de la Frontera and steadily climbing to reach the famous white town of Ronda, perched precariously on the edge of the deep chasm known as the Tajo Gorge. After checking into the traditional 'Hotel Maestranza' in the town centre, we managed a late afternoon walk to the bridge which spans the gorge and divides the two parts of the town. Ronda is never disappointing, and can be relied upon for spectacular views of not only the surrounding countryside, but of the many red-billed choughs indulging in aerobatics which made a mockery of the windy conditions. Also on view were crag martins, Griffon vultures and blue rock thrush. It was then time to head back to the hotel for dinner, followed by a later walk around the narrow streets to find a cosy bar where we enjoyed a local brandy. May 20th was a day which started with something a bit different - rain! Our first stop near Cartajima was a little damp to say the least, and the sight of several 'drookit' Griffon vultures adequately conveyed the sense of disgust they were feeling about this unwanted weather. However, as the sun came through, they were up and off to dry their wings, while the nearby hillside produced a fine pair of black-eared wheatears along with a brief glimpse of a passing golden eagle. Further down the valley we pulled into the side of the road near Farajan and made the best of the improving weather. Two firecrests came out to investigate Angus's MP3, a Cirl bunting rattled out his song from the top of a bush, a crested tit put in an appearance, and a Bonelli's eagle indulged in some breathtaking sky dancing. More raptors appeared, with two honey buzzards, some black kites and a few short-toed eagles migrating northwards. This was a very fine place indeed, but we had to move on.

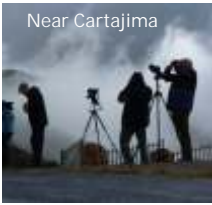


Red-billed chough

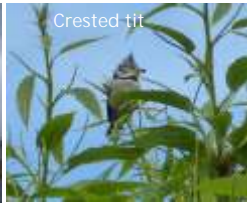


Ronda





Near Cartajima



Crested tit



Firecrest

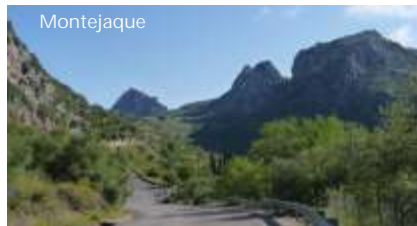


Kentish plovers

Our drive down to the coast at Estepona took well over an hour, so it was 14.50 hrs by the time we got there, and around the time most Spanish folk think of having lunch. The main birding party followed Angus to the beach (and one of the beach cafes) where the ideal combination of birds and food was enjoyed by all. No seabirds on offer, but three more honey buzzards in off the sea. Finally, a trickle of fresh water flowing into the salt water held a couple of Kentish plovers, conveniently comparable to the nearby ringed plovers. The smaller part intent on visiting an excellent seafood restaurant inadvertently and most fortuitously stumbled on during our last visit here in 2009. We were in luck, as Restaurante Casa Pablo was still in business and still with the same owner. Our group of six made some good choices, and we chose a 'real' paella especial which we had sampled the first time around. It certainly did not disappoint, every bit as good as we remembered. The accompanying wine, a nicely chilled 2010 Albariño from Martín Codax of Pontevedra, Galicia (Rias Baixas D.O) was perfect. We all met again at 17.00 hrs and returned to Ronda by the quickest route possible, along the coast via San Pedro de Alcántara, then into the mountains, twisting up the A376 to arrive at our hotel for 18.30. Dinner was at 20.00 hrs, so we had plenty of time to relax and do our bird list. 21st May, our last day in Spain. As our flight was not until the evening, we had ample time for a pre-lunch birding trip. We were fortunate to visit a new area, the beautifully scenic landscapes of the upper Río Guadiaro valley and the small town of Montejaque. We were also lucky to pick up on a couple of new birds for the trip. Stunning views of Griffon vultures getting airborne started things off, and this was accompanied by a fine array of other raptors including short-toed eagle, booted eagle and our first hobby. Three rock sparrows appeared on cue, two black wheatears bounced around a cliff face and the incessant calling of hoopoes echoed from deep in the countryside. This was a great finale to a wonderful trip, one where it had been difficult to know just what event or bird had left the biggest impression, but one where the birds and the country were the real stars. After lunch back in Ronda, we still had time to pay a visit to the Tajo Gorge again and say goodbye to those wonderful choughs - even time for some to visit the oldest bullring in Spain or make some last minute purchases before saying goodbye to Antonio Rubio, our excellent driver. He brought us safely down to the airport at Málaga and our 21.30 flight back to Glasgow (which left at 21.15) and got us in to Glasgow ahead of schedule. As we said, a super trip with great company. The trip was organised by Tony and Gerda Scott, with Angus Hogg (helped by Mary) as bird leader.



A white town in Serranía de Ronda



Montejaque



How to get the best out of....Doonfoot

Text and photos by Angus Hogg

One of Ayrshire's prime birding locations, the estuary at Doonfoot attracts birdwatchers from many parts of Scotland. It possesses a rich combination of mussel scar, sand flats and shingle beach, backed largely by a marram grass dune system. Here, the River Doon empties into Ayr Bay and brings with it rich feeding opportunities for a wide variety of birds. But.....how do you get the best out of it?

Doonfoot on a cold winter's day



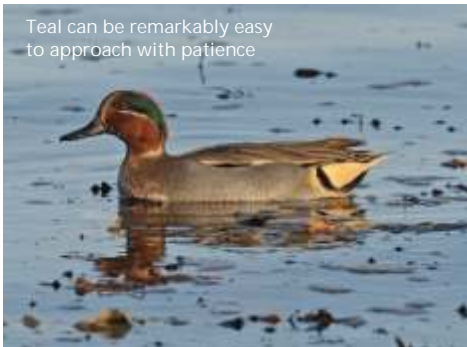
Starting in January, the foreshore is sometimes a good place to seek out over-wintering buntings and finches. A walk along the edge of the marram grass zone to the south of the estuary can bring the reward of a snow bunting, a mixed group of yellowhammers and reed buntings, or a noisy fly-past of twites. The shore can hold impressive numbers of wildfowl, waders and gulls, especially if the weather is cold and inland areas are ice-bound.

Look for greenshanks among the redshanks, and practice your skills separating goosanders from red-breasted mergansers. In some years Arctic gulls such as Iceland gull or glaucous gull may occur, and there's always the chance of an American visitor like ring-billed gull. But, the days are short and the weather often inclement, so it's best to plan your trip here carefully. A visit should be timed to coincide with the period either two hours before, or two hours after high tide, since that's generally when birds are most active - at least it'll save you from frostbite!

A snow bunting brightens up the foreshore



As the year progresses, March and April usually see a big increase in gulls as they move north. Offshore, you may spot some divers (mainly red-throated), or perhaps a flock of common scoters. There's a lot going on as spring advances, and patience becomes the watchword. So, once again, your approach to birding here can make a difference. If you're approaching from the Doonfoot car park (Blackburn Drive), try to make sure that you don't break the skyline since birds feeding in tidal pools near the high water mark can be spooked easily. A quick check to ensure that your outline is partly masked by the background of the sand dune system can often allow you to get very close to the feeding groups of teal, dunlin and turnstone. From the end of March, you should also be aware that a lot of birds will simply fly straight over without stopping, especially during the early morning. Northwards movement of pipits, swallows and the occasional raptor can add something special to your spring visit. So keep an eye on the sky too.



Teal can be remarkably easy to approach with patience



A flock of black-tailed godwits back from Iceland

With summer comes the "quiet season" or, at least, that's the way it can appear! However, from late July onwards, the estuary can suddenly fill up with parties of migrant waders returning south. Some luck is needed with visits at this time of year since many will only appear briefly, leaving as the tide comes in to continue their journey. But, a magical encounter with small flocks of sanderlings or a majestic fly-past by a group of Icelandic black-tailed godwits can suddenly quicken your pulse. Post-breeding flocks of Sandwich terns can often hide single common, Arctic or even black terns. One of the main problems at this time of year is the increase in human activity. Whether it's dog walkers who can't control their charges or "grown up" kids on quad bikes, your patience will be stretched. However, most birds will settle back down once the disturbance has passed - it all depends on how long you spend here.

Arguably the most exciting and unpredictable season is autumn at Doonfoot. Larger groups of birds start to assemble and searching through that pack of waders in the hope of finding something unusual can add to the usual challenges. It's important that you find somewhere to sit or stand where you can be comfortable and, if possible, out of the wind (not an easy task here!). The edge of the dune system where the Doon flows into the sea can give you a good view of the river mouth as well as a view along the beaches to both north and south. By September the variety of gulls and waders should have increased and, as the end of the month approaches, the presence of geese and swans will often be a feature, with Brent geese, barnacle geese and whooper swans dropping in. There's a great buzz about the place which builds to a climax in October - the swallows suddenly vanish, groups of pink-footed geese pass overhead, a few goldeneyes start to appear in the mouth of the river, and there may, somewhere, be the 'clatter' of inbound groups of fieldfares.

Whooper swans touching down at Doonfoot



We've come full circle and birds have settled in for the hardships of winter. Doonfoot can provide some wildlife spectaculars, but you can make a difference by preparing for your visit there in advance. AH.

Join our field trip by coach on Saturday 24 November 2012 [to the EDEN ESTUARY & ST. ANDREWS](#). Coach tickets £23 - available at the first meetings. Itinerary: Meet at Dodds coach depot in Ayr for 07.45. There will be one stop en-route to Guardbridge, where we visit the hide overlooking the estuary. On to Tip Point and Balgove hide before moving on to St. Andrews later in the day. Dinner will be organised for around 17.45 hrs. Come along and take the chance to look for grebes, divers, scoters, long-tailed ducks, grey plovers and more.

Art and book reviews



Charles Harper's Birds & Words

[An Alternative Audobon](#)

Charles Harper was an American original. For over 60 years he painted in a style he referred to as minimal realism in his home studio in Cincinnati, Ohio. About his singular style Charley liked to say, "I could never get close enough to count the feathers, so I just count the wings."

The great auk swam like a fish, walked like a penguin, and flew like a stone. But he adapted happily to ocean life, prospering from Iceland to Florida, while heading the menus of North Atlantic islanders for three hundred years. Then the professional hunters invaded his nurseries, butchering relentlessly for oil and feathers, encrusting Funk Island with discarded carcasses. The last of the great auks was clubbed to death in 1844, heading the obituary column of American birds.

From 'America's Vanishing Birds' Ford Times, November 1957.



This long out of print 1974 classic collection is available from AMMO Books, distributed in the UK by ORCA Book Services at £14.95. www.orcabookservices.co.uk

Join us for a four day coach trip (Saturday 27 to Tuesday 30 April 2013) to **THE ISLES OF MULL AND IONA**

Jointly with RSPB Central Ayrshire during the optimum time for breeding and migrant bird activity. Crossing from Oban to Craginure, we intend to visit the top birding spots on the island with white-tailed eagle, golden eagle, hen harrier and more being our focus. We will visit Glen More, Mishnish Lochs, Lochdon, Loch na Keal, Loch Scridain and the sacred island of Iona. We will base our initial price on bed and breakfast in a good en-suite hotel. We anticipate the cost to be in the region of £295 and this would also include all coach travel and ferry fares. The maximum number of participants will be limited to 17, due to the size of vehicle we can reasonably use on some of the narrow roads on Mull. Full details will be available at our meetings from October onwards.

Art and book reviews

From “A Spicing of Birds” Poems by Emily Dickinson

Some keep the Sabbath going to Church -
I keep it staying at Home -
With a Bobolink for a Chorister -
And an Orchard, for a Dome -

Some keep the Sabbath in Surplice - I just
wear my Wings -
And instead of tolling the Bell, for Church -
Our little Sexton - sings.

God preaches, a noted Clergyman -
And the sermon is never long,
So instead of getting to Heaven, at last -
I'm going, all along.



BOB-O-LINK.
(*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*.)
Adult male in Spring.

This is a singular and beautifully illustrated anthology, pairing poems from one of America's most revered poets with evocative ornithological art. Emily Dickinson had a great love of birds - in her collected poems, birds are mentioned 222 times, sometimes as the core inspiration of the poem. This book contains thirty-seven of Dickinson's poems featuring birds common to her Amherst, New England, home. It is published by Wesleyan University Press, Middletown CT 06459, USA. It is available from www.wesleyan.edu/wespress at US\$22.95.



September 2013

RAPTOR MIGRATION IN CÁDIZ PROVINCE AND THE STRAITS OF GIBRALTAR

with Angus Hogg and Tony + Gerda
Scott **Contact info:** Tel: 01292 281
085 E-mail: da.scott@fiscali.co.uk

Join Angus Hogg for seven full days in one of the prime birding regions of southern Spain, to observe the migration of raptors, storks and many other species as they move south across the Straits of Gibraltar into Africa. Or take time out from birding to **join Gerda and Tony Scott** as they explore the villages and towns of the Costa de la Luz, such as the haunting Moorish hill town of Vejer, the ancient Roman settlement of Baelo Claudia, the town of Tarifa and the harbour town of Cádiz, one of the oldest settlements in Spain. Apart from the spectacle of the autumn migration here, the Tarifa hinterland is rich in breeding species of rocky, wooded country. There are some very large vulture colonies, with Griffon, Egyptian and a few black vultures. There have been recent records of Lammergeiers, Rüppell's vultures, long-legged buzzards and Lanner falcons, especially in the autumn. We hope to stay at the Meson de Sancho (3*), a traditional style Andalusian mansion, close to Los Alcornales Nature Reserve and just inland from Tarifa. **We anticipate the final cost will be in the region of £950 per person for all flights, coach travel, dinner, bed and breakfast for eight nights.** Full details from October.

Upcoming events

Evening meetings

at [Monkton Community Church Hall and Pioneer Café](#) (19.00 for 19.30 hrs)

Contact: Angus Hogg / Chairman on 01655 740 317 or Anne Dick on 01292 541 981

[11 September 2012 Geoff Sheppard - Barn Owls in Galloway](#)

09 October 2012 Cat Barlow - Moorland demonstration project

[13 November 2012 Eric McCabe - Wildlife photography](#)

11 December 2012 Members Night - The Farne Islands trip

[08 January 2013 Angus Hogg - Scotland's Western Isles](#)

12 February 2013 Ray Murray - Rainforest birding

[12 March 2013 John Threlfall - Artist in conservation](#)

09 April 2013 AGM followed by Andy Robinson - Offshore wind farms

Field Trips and tours jointly with RSPB Central Ayrshire Local Group

Saturday 29 September 2012 [LOCHMABEN & APPLETREEGARTH](#)

Meet at Lochmaben Main Street for 11.00 hrs. (toilets nearby). Visit Castle Loch before moving on to Appletreegarth Reserve later. Please bring picnic lunch. All day.

Saturday 27 October 2012 [WWT CAERLAVEROCK RESERVE](#)

Meet at the reserve car park at 11.00 hrs. All day birding trip. Café, bookshop and toilets on site. Picnic tables available for eating packed lunches. Finish ca. 16.00 hrs.

Saturday 24 November 2012 [EDEN ESTUARY & ST ANDREWS BY COACH](#)

Meet at Dodds coach depot, East Road, Ayr - at 07.45 hrs. Return for 22.00 hrs. Please bring a picnic lunch. Dinner will be organised. Coach tickets cost £23.00.

Saturday 08 September 2012 [LOCH RYAN & WIG BAY, STRANRAER](#) All day trip

Meet at Ballantrae seafront car park for 10.30 (toilets). On to bird Loch Ryan and Wig Bay. Please bring picnic lunch. A garden centre with café and toilets is a short drive from Wig Bay.

Saturday 19 January 2013 [FULLARTON WOODS, TROON HARBOUR, BARASSIE](#)

Meet at Fullarton Woods car park for 10.15.(toilets). On to Barassie and Troon later. Finish 15h.

Saturday 16 February 2013 [DOONFOOT & GREENAN SHORE, AYR](#)

Meet Greenan Castle car park at 10.00. Birding the bay and coastal strip. Finish 12 noon.

Saturday 30 March 2013 [SOUTH AYRSHIRE COAST & PINMORE](#)

Meet Maidens Harbour car park at 10.30 (toilets). Bird from here along the coast to Girvan, then inland to Pinmore village. Please bring a picnic lunch. Finish 15.30 hrs.

Saturday 27 to Tuesday 30 April 2013 [THE ISLES OF MULL & IONA BY COACH](#)

Three-night / four-day trip. Leaves from Dodds coach depot at 07.30. Returns on 30 April around 21.30 hrs. Indicative cost based on B&B (en-suite rooms), coach and ferry - £295.00.

Saturday 25 May 2013 [LOCH DOON & NESS GLEN](#) All day trip

Meet at the 'Round House' cafe/toilets for 10.15. Walk Ness Glen and bird the loch shores. Hot and cold food available at the 'Round House' or bring a picnic lunch. Finish around 16 hrs.

Saturday 22 June 2013 [BROWNSIDE BRAES, PAISLEY](#) with Tom Byars all day trip

Meet at Brownside Braes Farm car park at 11.00. Looking for lesser whitethroat and more.

Please note: local membership costs as last year. £6 per person. £10 per couple.