

# Ayrshire News



## The newsletter for BTO members and volunteers in Ayrshire & Cumbrae

February 2020



**Photo – Greenan Castle and the shoreline, south of Ayr.** On this day a Little Egret was feeding near the castle, and nearby a solitary Bean Goose was mingling with the Mallards. A lovely location.

Welcome to this newsletter for BTO members and volunteers in our Ayrshire & Cumbrae region. This is the first newsletter for quite some time, and as well as introducing you to your new BTO regional representative, it will highlight opportunities for further participation. Thank you for your continued support of BTO – it is much appreciated.

### **Welcome from Dave McGarvie, your new BTO regional representative**

I recently became your BTO Regional Representative in December 2019, after a spell of 4 years as the BTO's representative in the Scottish Borders, where I worked on making steady improvements to the main breeding bird surveys. I survey my own squares, and I particularly enjoy getting out in the wilds and doing my Upland Rovers squares.

Back in the day, I was a young member of the Ayr branch of the SOC, and joined when I was 9 years old, and lived in Dalrymple. I then moved to Dalmellington at age 13 where, as the only resident birdwatcher, I had great fun exploring the varied habitats, and finding species that weren't known to breed in the area. At age 16 I led the first SOC outing to Ness Glen.

I intend to be looking after Ayrshire for the long term, and I hope to hear from you in due course – sooner rather than later! I'm always happy to receive an email, so please feel free to contact me at [d.mcgarvie@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:d.mcgarvie@lancaster.ac.uk) and if a chat would be helpful to you, then it's no bother arranging this.

Finally, my email address merely reflects that I have an academic home at Lancaster University – I am actually based in southern Scotland. On Twitter I am [@subglacial](https://twitter.com/subglacial)

## Big News – Sunday 8 March 2020

In just under a month we are running a **training event** in Dalmellington, on Sunday 8 March. This will be an all-day event, designed to introduce people to the methods that the BTO use for its main breeding bird surveys. ID training will be included, though with an emphasis on songs and calls, and assuming a solid baseline skill level with respect to visual ID of upland species.

It's a great way of finding out more, and will be especially useful if you are wondering whether your bird skills are good enough to do the main breeding bird surveys – the Breeding Birds Survey (BBS) and Waterways Breeding Bird Survey (WBBS).

If you're not quite there yet, then you'll be able to get a good idea of where and how you need to improve. And you can also learn about other surveys that you could do that don't require such a high level of bird identification skills. Further details can be found at [Dalmellington BTO training day](#)

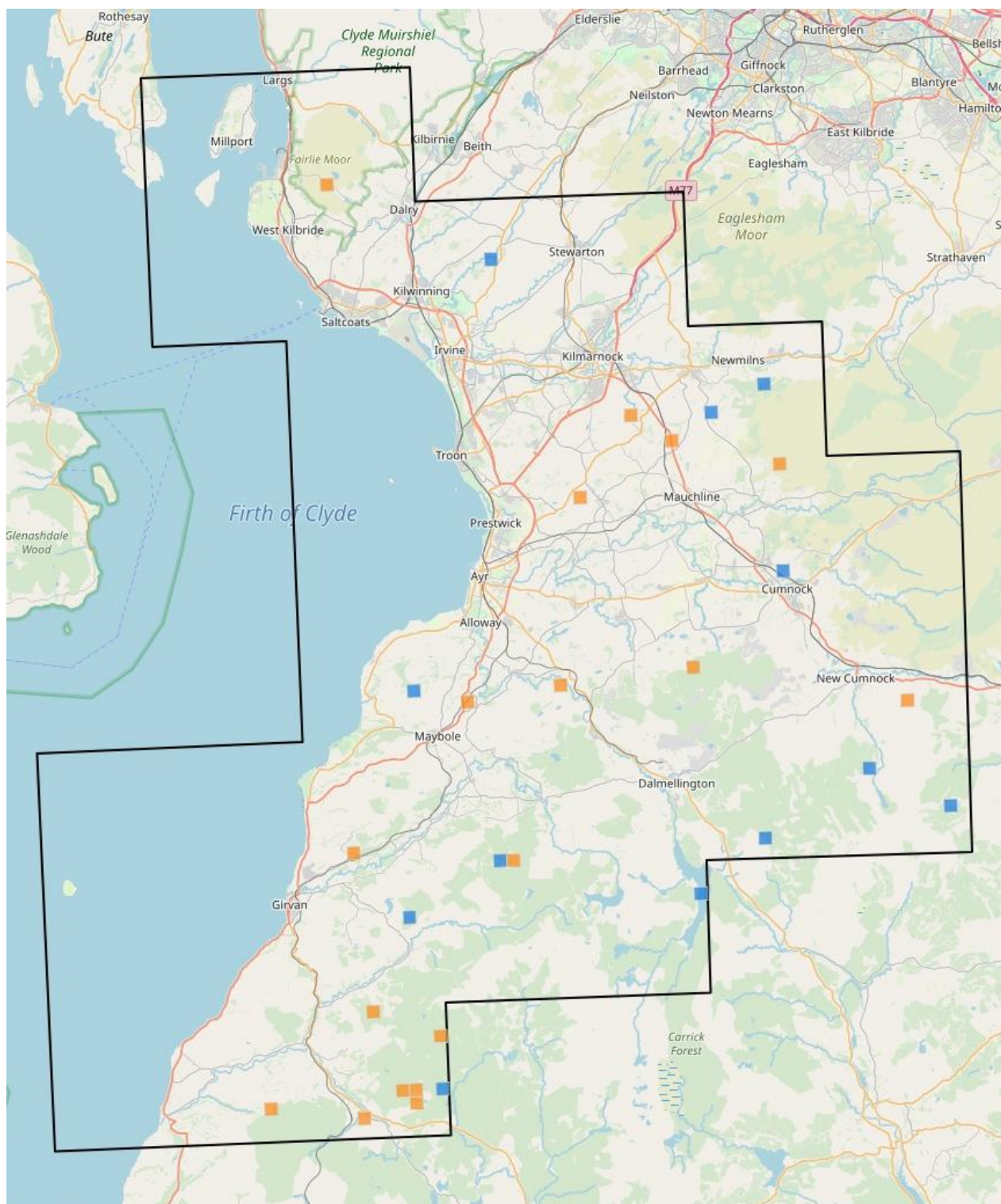
## Help needed to count our commoner breeding birds

The Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) and Waterways Breeding Bird Survey (WBBS) are the two main surveys that the BTO uses to monitor the population trends of our common and widespread birds. If you can identify commoner birds by sight and sound, then you can help with these surveys. Two visits in the breeding season are required to count the birds seen and heard as you walk through the square. In Ayrshire, we have 30 squares and only 10 of these are currently surveyed.

- If you would consider helping with these surveys, please see below.
- If you have a BBS square currently allocated to you but have not taken part in recent years, we would be delighted if you would give it another go, or failing that please let us know so that we can pass it on to another volunteer. Please email Dave McGarvie at [d.mcgarvie@open.ac.uk](mailto:d.mcgarvie@open.ac.uk)

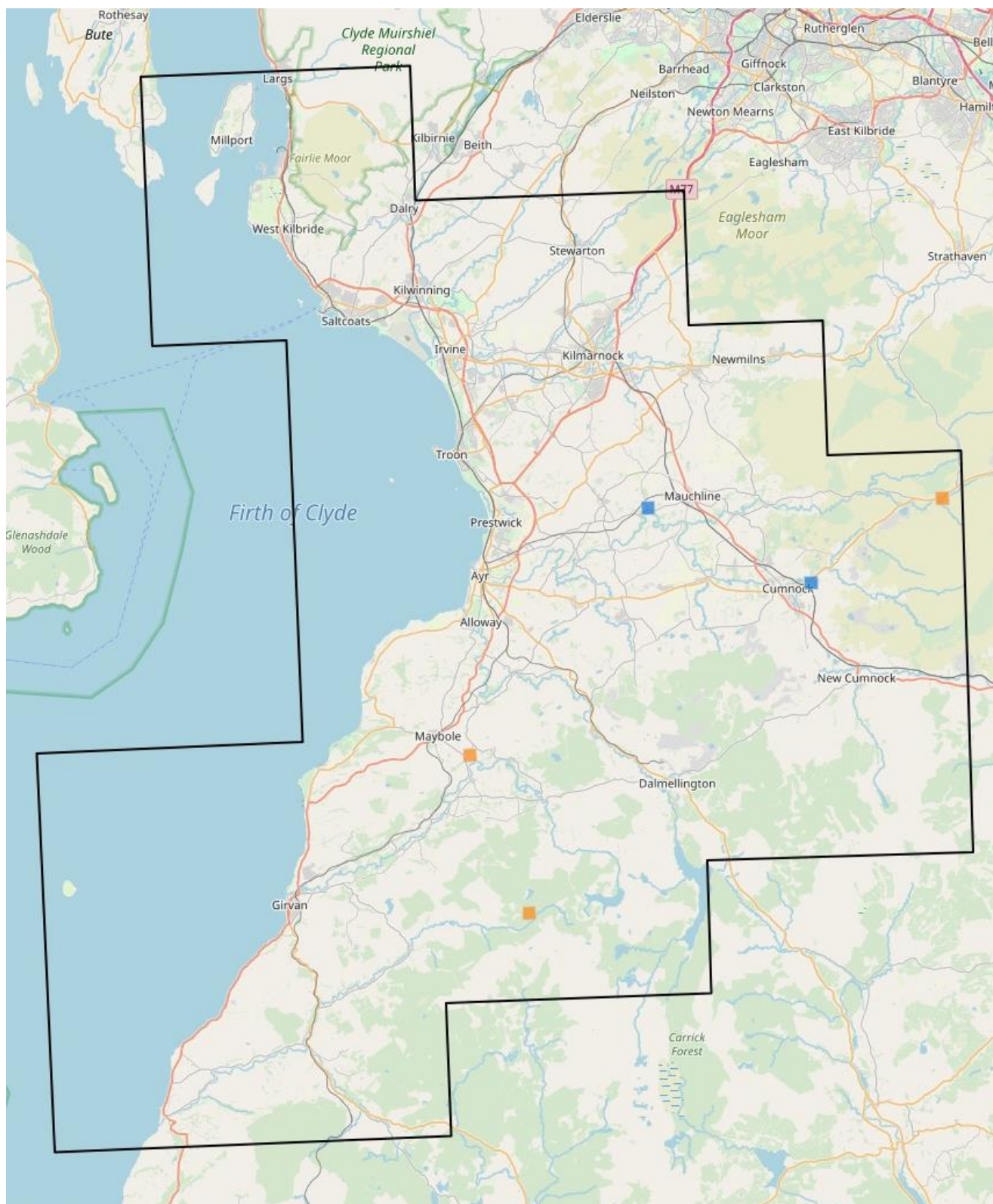
You can read more here: [BBS surveys](#) and [WBBS surveys](#)

Please see the maps below for locations of currently vacant BBS and WBBS squares. If you would like more details, such as detailed maps of the squares and survey routes (transects etc), please email Dave McGarvie at [d.mcgarvie@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:d.mcgarvie@lancaster.ac.uk)



Above – map showing allocated (blue) and available (orange) squares for the **Breeding Bird Survey (BBS)**.





Above – map showing allocated (blue) and available (orange) squares for the **Waterways Breeding Bird Survey (WBBS)**. The WBBS survey method is very similar to BBS, though with single line transects that follow watercourses, recording in 500 m count sectors.

## Upland Rovers – Into the Wild....

If you enjoy spending time in upland areas, with their expansive views and evocative birdsong, then you might be interested in making a one-off visit to a remote upland BBS square. We call these 'Upland Rovers' squares and you can see where they are online at [Upland Rovers](#)



Photo – camping the night before doing an Upland Rovers square near Dalmellington.

## Heron

Is there a heronry near you? The Heronries Census celebrated its 90th anniversary in 2018.

It is the longest running bird survey in the world, which is quite an achievement.

Back in 1928 the survey was aimed at Grey Heron only, but more recently Cormorants have been counted, and now the survey picks up Little Egrets too. You can read about the Heronry Census here: [Heronries](#)

Help is needed to check whether some heronries are still active, and if they are, to count occupied nests. This work does not require a high level of bird identification skills, and is very valuable as these birds do move around from year to year.

If you think that you can help, please contact Dave McGarvie at [d.mcgarvie@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:d.mcgarvie@lancaster.ac.uk)



## Finally....

I am keeping this first newsletter deliberately brief despite there being a lot of wider BTO news to tell you about. Expect another email with wider BTO news later in the Spring.

For now, I shall leave you with a mystery photo – can you identify the location? (Hint, Ospreys regularly nest nearby....)



### Contact details:

**Regional Representative:** Dave McGarvie – [d.mcgarvie@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:d.mcgarvie@lancaster.ac.uk)

**WeBS Local Organiser:** Dave Grant – [daveg466@gmail.com](mailto:daveg466@gmail.com)

**BTO Website:** [www.bto.org](http://www.bto.org)

We'd love to receive short contributions from you for future issues. Please contact Ben Darvill at BTO Scotland (email: [ben.darvill@bto.org](mailto:ben.darvill@bto.org) )