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## Scotland's Bird Club Ayrshire Branch

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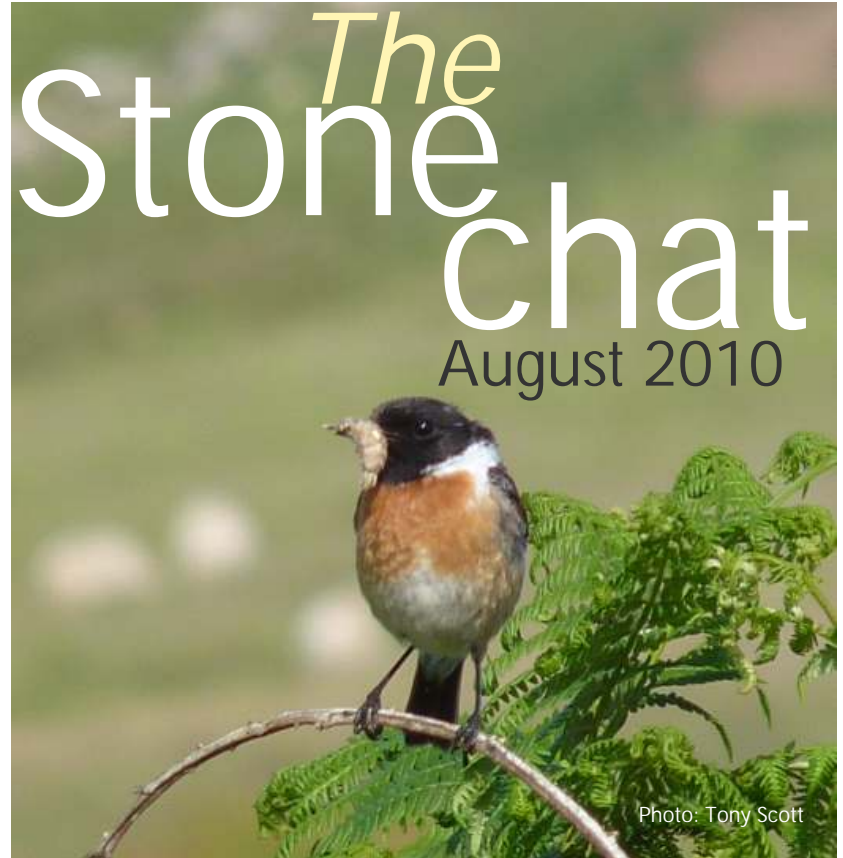
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For up-to-date information on all aspects of birding in Ayrshire, go online and visit our local website maintained by Kevin Waite:  
[www.ayrshire-birding.org.uk](http://www.ayrshire-birding.org.uk)

The Ayrshire Bird Report 2008 is available from Dick Vernon (Tel. no: 01292 442 195) and also from the Tourist Info Centre, Sandgate, Ayr; The Bookshelf in Ayr and Troon and from RSPB Lochwinnoch.



Welcome to the autumn edition of *TheStonechat*. I trust you all had a good summer and are still enjoying what remains of it, as the days turn shorter and hope still remains of a golden October (not to mention September). As you turn the pages, you'll see just what the local branch has in store for the coming season, and we hope you will take advantage of all the great speakers we have planned and the many field trips, including two by coach and one of these is a weekend trip to Leighton Moss, a new venture which we hope you will support. The trip should cost around £80 including coach travel and B&B if we have enough participants.

I would like to give a big welcome to our new Chairman and deputy Chairman, Gordon Riddle and Angus Hogg respectively. I'm sure you'll join me in wishing them every success in running the branch with the rest of the committee. As editor of our newsletter, could I once again ask you to send me articles - written long-hand or sent electronically, for the next edition which we are planning to have ready around Christmas time. So please sharpen your pencils, or get poised at the keyboard ready to create some minor literary masterpieces! In this edition we have articles from Angus Hogg and Dick Vernon, and also some superb photographs of raptors by Mike Groves.

We hope you enjoy this edition. *Best wishes, Tony.*

## The rough and the smooth – or a tale of two birds

by Dick Vernon



I guess we all have a few special birds we really want to see. I like 'em big so, high on my list were wandering albatross and Steller's sea-eagle. Not clever choices as both are found in ridiculously remote parts of the world, which are ferociously expensive to get to. Also, to see either usually requires a boat trip. Now I am not a good sailor. When I am on board there is no need to bring 'chum' to attract birds! But for this pair, there is no real option but to bite the bullet (or 'Quell' to be more precise) and take to sea.

### *The rough: Kamchatka*

Kamchatka really is the back end of nowhere, but it is home to Steller's sea-eagle, a huge black and white job with an enormous yellow beak – the largest of all eagles and a bird I have long fancied. Now all birding trips to Kamchakta seem to involve a cruise along the coast usually with a sail across the Pacific to the Commander Islands. Another feature of such tours is their immense cost, something which decidedly does not appeal! But then, out of the blue last spring, came details of a tour at less than half the usual cost – less than £2,000 all in - real bargain! I thought briefly, then followed Oscar Wilde's excellent advice re temptation and succumbed. The news was passed on to Angus, who immediately found space in his crowded diary, and thence to Andrew Stephenson, and so we had a team, which two months later arrived at Petropavlovsk Kamchatsky, the main town of Kamchatka. Now the Russians do dilapidated very well, but it would seem they had made a special effort with this place; it was beyond grim! Its only claim to fame seems to be that it was attacked by a British-French fleet during the Crimean War – no doubt someone wanted to open a second front or thought it a good place from which to march on Moscow. Whatever, we found our ship here, a scruffy converted Russian ice-breaker. All luxury had been spared, but the bunks were sound, the loos worked and the food was better than expected. Add to this there was complimentary wine with dinner, which added to its robust charm. The ship held about 100 passengers, but only about 70 had signed up; all European, not a single transatlantic accent to be heard! Indeed, there were only seven from the UK, with large contingents from Italy, Germany and Russia, which made it very cosmopolitan and added a lot to the interest. Most were there just to see the place and hopefully a bear, and had little interest in birds; we, our notional UK group leader Steve Cale, a couple of Dutchmen and a Dane made up the birding contingent.

Once on board we got the news that sailing was to be delayed for 24 hours due to an impending storm, so I was saved for a while. The following day was filled in by a visit to a 'native village' manned by locals in fancy dress. But this was ok as it was in some pleasant woodland well-stocked with such delights as Siberian rubythroats. That night we set off down the channel towards open sea. I felt fine; this sailing thing seemed ok afterall. There was plenty to see: tufted puffins, all in black but with ridiculous yellow head-dress, glaucous-winged gulls, ancient murrelets to name but few. Steadily the swell increased and then, the inevitable, where's the side, 'chum' ahoy. Eventually I crawled in to my bunk feeling like death. Angus

was so impressed by my antics that he called the ships doctor, who muttered something defamatory in Russian before administering an injection and all was black. I awoke, or maybe came to is more correct, the following morning to find we had arrived at Morzhovaya, a pleasantly sheltered fjord, which was supposed to have Steller's sea-eagles. The bird team were soon up and out on deck hopefully scanning the cliffs. A possible one was detected at great distance up a branch of the fjord, but frustratingly we sailed away from it. Then it was out onto the zodiacs for a trip ashore. Where we landed was uninspiring – a shingle beach backing on to thick scrub. This was ideal for hiding bears and I noticed several of the crew on the look out, armed with rifles. Kamchakta bears are large brown jobs, which I think are a sub-species of grizzly bear. This was the animal that all wanted to see – from a safe distance of course, but in fact they are remarkably elusive. With not much doing, we persuaded one of the zodiac drivers to take us back to the boat via the place we thought we had seen the eagle. We were joined by two very attractive young Russian women. One fortunately spoke a little English. Half along the fjord she suddenly started shouting 'burr', 'burr'. I thought she had seen an eagle, but, no, it was a bear, quietly grubbing about, someway up a hillside. We stopped briefly to admire it before swinging round into the next bay, where quite close on a small cliff was not one but two Steller's. Pictures look impressive, but the real thing is something else – a huge, striking bird every bit as good as I hoped. The birds also had a good sense of humour, flying off just before a second zodiac came round the corner. So, back to the boat for a very happy lunch, while the ship sailed further north along the coast to the mouth of the Zhupanova River. A zodiac trip here took us to a Steller's nest, a vast wooden structure, topped by a large eagle all in a ridiculously small tree. The bird looked uncomfortable, probably realising how undignified it looked. We, however, were beginning to realise that these birds were not uncommon and indeed we saw over ten during the trip, mostly excellent views too.

Now it was due east across the Pacific to the Commander Islands. These were named after Bering, the Dutch sailor who discovered them. Sadly he got to know one better than he intended getting ship-wrecked there and dying before he was rescued. The islands are in fact the western-most tip of the Aleutian chain, which stretches across the Pacific from Alaska. On route the sea was mercifully calm, and, well –topped up with Quells, I was able to come to terms with my stomach and enjoy the sail. And some sail it was. The sea was alive with birds: mottled petrels, sooty and short-tailed shearwaters, fork-tailed storm petrels, horned and tufted puffins, to name but few. We even ran into a patch of Laysan albatross (one of the few species which prefer the northern oceans). Plenty of cetaceans too, with close views of hump-backed whales and more distant views of sperm and finn whales.

Arriving at Bering Island itself late afternoon, we enjoyed another zodiac trip to Arij Kamen, a bird island, well, a large rock sticking out of the sea to be precise. Whatever it had a colony of red-legged kittiwakes, while on the sea we found our first auklets (crested and parakeet). The following day we landed near North Cape and had a pleasant walk through acres of wild flowers to a large fur seal colony. A couple of Arctic foxes lurked on the edge, while a family of sea otters played in the sea; all very satisfying. Then on to Nicholskoye village, the main 'town' of the islands and a Russian military base. What a place, it even made Petropavlovsk seem exciting; a posting here would most certainly be viewed as automatic grounds for divorce! Most of the party went off to see more rivetting native dancing etc, while the bird group thrashed through a nearby marsh hoping to flush a Solitary snipe.

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But any such bird in the area stuck to its name and kept its head well down!

An overnight sail brought us to Medney Island, the most easterly of the two Commander Islands, mercifully now uninhabited. A zodiac trip produced yet more sea otters, while two landings allowed us to enjoy the profusion of wild flowers of the place and a lot more birds, although nothing novel of note. That evening we were entertained by a superb sunset followed by a barbecue and dance on deck; this, off an uninhabited island way off the coast of one of the most remote parts of Asia. Something to remember!

Next day it was back to Bering Island and a visit to the bay where Bering himself ended up (literally – his grave is there). One last landing at Peregrebnaya Bay with its vast red-legged kittiwake colony and then all stations west back to Kamchatka, again through pleasingly calm seas filled with birds. The following morning we awoke to find the sea thronging with vast flocks of migrating phalarope, both red-necked and grey (the Americans call them red which is much more appropriate for the birds in summer plumage). We sailed down the coast of the peninsula, stopping here and there. More sightings of eagles, bears, sea otters etc and even, for the serious birders, another highlight –Middendorf's grasshopper warbler, a wee brown job amongst all the exotica, its best feature being its name!

So, back to Petropavlosk and the flight home. Sadly we had seen little of the spectacular mountain scenery of Kamchatka due to persistent low cloud for much of the trip, but following take off as we broke through the cloud, all was revealed – one superb snow capped volcano after another. Where was the camera? In the over-head locker of course! Whatever, a great trip with an excellent bird in the bag.

#### *The smooth: Antarctica*

To see most species of albatross means a trip to Antarctica or, to be more precise, the sub-antarctic islands such as South Georgia, where they breed. This means sailing on the Southern Ocean. Now coming from the north, 'the south' has connotations of warmth, calmness etc, but this is not the Southern Ocean, which is probably the nastiest, roughest meanest ocean of the lot; just perfect for me. Nevertheless there are lots of cruises in the area ranging from the small, bone-breakers like the one we enjoyed in Kamchatka to vast great liners holding thousands of passengers. But, there are a number of medium sized, modestly-priced, vessels which take a few hundred passengers in reasonable comfort and, very importantly, they have stabilisers!

So south I went, following the *via normale* via Buenos Aires and Ushuaia. The latter is a grimy port at the tip of Tierra del Fuego from where most cruises start. I found I had a small comfortable cabin to myself with en suite facilities, where I could suffer in solitude. I had, however, learnt of the magic 'patches' on the Kamchatka trip – things which you stick on your neck and which are supposed to stop all seasickness – well maybe! What they do in fact is to slowly release a travel sickness drug which is absorbed through the skin.

So off we went. Initially down the sheltered waters of the Beagle Channel and then due east for the Falklands. I soon found that there were about half a dozen souls like me who wanted to see birds, but were not good sailors. There were another ten or so who had some interest in wild life, scenery etc, but the other 350 or so seemed to be there just to get fat – well fatter to be precise. Food was everywhere, most of it very good, and if one ventured near the eating areas

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Images by Dick Vernon



one had to endure the sight of the obese waddling around with plates piled high with yet more calories. We small band of bird enthusiasts avoided this most of the time by staying on deck, which was mostly devoid of folk and provided excellent views of everything that chose to appear. The movement of the ship churns up food which brings in seabirds in droves. All we had to do was enjoy them and try to identify them!

We saw our first albatross – all black-browed in the Beagle Channel, fine birds but they were dwarfed the following day when the big ones began to appear, mostly southern royals in these waters, with a few northern royals. Then came our first wandering albatross, an immature bird, with dark wings, with marked white patches and black trimmings on its tail. All these superb birds had the same mournful expression on their faces while they skimmed the waves with effortless ease looking for morsels to eat. Just to add a little variety a grey-faced and unexpectedly a sooty also put in an appearance. Five species of albatross in a day. Brilliant!

The next day we arrived at Stanley in the Falklands for a little land relief. I took a trip over to Berkeley Sound to see a rockhopper penguin colony. Penguins can't fly or run fast so their only means of defence is to entertain and they are very good at that. Most took a lot of photos here! The drive over to the site was quite revealing – a grim landscape of moorland and bog, with a few sheep scattered here and there, very much like parts of Scotland on a bad day. Back on board it was east again for two days to South Georgia with its breeding colony of wandering albatross. These birds are the snowy race of wanderers; the adults are particularly fine with white heads and bodies, and a lot of white on the wings. One can never be satiated with sightings of such birds, but those two days at sea produced over eighty of them with both adults and younger birds at various stages of maturity. A few grey-faced albatross also turned up and as we reached South Georgia, a sixth species, the very attractive light-mantled sooty albatross began to appear. It wasn't all albatross of course; at the other end of the size spectrum we had myriad prions skipping across the waves, plus various petrels of all shapes and sizes including some stunning, all-white snow petrels.

South Georgia itself is a tough looking island, glaciated and littered with impressive snow covered peaks. We called in at Grytviken and Stromness; the former is still inhabited (just), but was really just a mass of rotting metal, relics from busier if nastier times. Stromness is where Shackleton ended up after his incredible journey from South Shetland (two weeks at sea in a small boat, then crossing the mountain back bone of the island, to get a ship to rescue his men from Elephant Island. Sadly, while all were rescued from that epic, most died in the First World War). Our last port of call in South Georgia was meant to be Gold Harbour with its large penguin colonies, but as we approached the bay where we could see the penguins lining up to greet us, the wind increased dramatically and the captain ordered a swift strategic retreat. So we left the island in a gathering storm, the ship rolling impressively as it slalomed through an iceberg filled sea. This was some storm, but as one of our American friends said 'You ain't seen nothin' yet!' Whatever, whether it was the size of the boat or the miraculous patches, my stomach and I remained at peace!

Two days sailing southwest brought us to Elephant Island where Shackleton's crew were marooned on a remarkably small piece of shingle. The island itself was just another heaving mass of snow covered peaks, very similar in appearance to South Georgia, but if anything even colder looking. From here we sailed past various islands of the South Shetlands group to the

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Antarctic Sound which separates the Antarctic Peninsula from Joinville Island. A landing at Hope Bay pleased all as folk were standing on the Antarctic mainland, albeit the most northerly tip of the continent. Equally pleasing was a large colony of Adele penguins, a particularly attractive species of the genera, which again knew how to perform for an audience.

That afternoon we cruised to the eastern end of the Antarctic Sound, where it runs in to the ice-choked Weddell Sea. Returning west that evening I found myself alone on deck watching the most desolate landscape I have ever seen slip slowly past – just white snow and black rock framed by a steel grey sky and sea, and added to this the complete silence of the lifeless. Everyone else was down below indulging in other important activities such as buying expensive photos of themselves meeting the captain, but being alone just added to the sheer pleasure of the situation.

The following day another planned landing on one of the South Shetland Islands was abandoned through very strong winds and all too soon we were heading north back across the Drake Passage to Ushuaia. Initially it was all too good to be true. Modest seas scattered with albatross, including more wanderers, plus plenty of other birds. As we neared Cape Horn of all places, the Southern Ocean decided to remind us who was boss. A major storm blew up incredibly quickly; the captain chose to run not fight. Even so the ship was tossed around as if nothing. There was mayhem in the restaurant; all the elegant glass display cabinets in the shop were smashed, and later that evening when I had retired to my cabin, the thud of a wave sent the drawers of a small chest-of-drawers by my bed flying across the room. Impressive! But not as impressive as what I saw when lurking on deck earlier in the storm, where I watched my last wanderer cresting the monster waves being whipped up, with nonchalant ease. Some storm; some sea; some bird; some memory!

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## Raptors of the Angus Glens

Notes and photos from Mike Groves



Although this year, we only have a single female hen harrier in Angus, I managed to catch up with her and watch her sky dancing to a non-existent audience on the 26th of June. Pretty sad to say the least! I've taken a few other images of another favourite of mine - the short-eared owls (and one of the young birds was almost ready to take to the air).

8th of July. Today, while watching a merlin site, I had the company of three white-tailed eagles; a magnificent sight. Most young merlins are in the air now, slightly later than usual. Here are a few of the photographs of the merlins, short-eared owls, a young white-tailed eagle and a buzzard.







Young merlin (Here and above)

All images by Mike Groves

Short-eared owl (Here and above)



Short-eared owl



Common buzzard



## Western Isles Spring

by Angus Hogg

Black stork on Berneray, North Uist. 10.06.10



For some years now, I've been promising myself that I would have to visit the Western Isles again but, instead of my usual autumn jaunt, a spring visit was needed. This year, I finally managed to do it, and was not disappointed by the result. Having a base in South Uist helps enormously, and my thanks are due to Andrew Stevenson for his continuing tolerance of "sooth-moothers" dropping by on yet another birding trip. The sail from Uig in Skye crossed a "glassy" Minch producing scattered groups of common dolphins, while one or two very distant, larger, rolling lumps may well have been Minke whales. On arrival at Andrew's house, I'd barely got out the car when two people approached the gate, one of whom was Mark Holling from Lothian. He and his colleague were camped at nearby Rubha Ardvule – and how useful did that turn out to be?! The following morning found Bornish shrouded in mist and, as breakfast was being slowly dismantled, the 'phone rang. "Hello, Mark here – we think we've got a great snipe. Can you both come down?" No second invite required. We soon arrived, and the trip got off to a remarkable start as we managed to raise the bird twice – enough to clinch the identification of this rare wader. Having duly thanked Mark and his colleague, Phil, we decided we were on a roll, and headed up to Berneray, North Uist, where a black stork had been holding out for a couple of days. After a wee bit of searching, the bird was duly found, and added to the wonderful collection of birds I've seen over the years in the Western Isles.

However, birding in the Western Isles has a lot more to offer than a couple of temporarily "lost" rarities, exciting though these may be. A week of cool northerly winds followed, with crystal-clear blue skies. The end of May sees thousands of Arctic waders making their way to their breeding grounds in Iceland, Greenland and Canada, and this wind just wasn't helping their cause. As the week progressed, the numbers swelled and summer-plumaged sanderlings and dunlins began to appear in huge flocks along the beaches. For most of us who see sanderlings during the autumn or winter, very little can prepare you for the shock of seeing the bird in late spring. It's a total transformation! Of course, a more careful look through these wader flocks revealed "strangers" in their midst – a little stint (which had no doubt misread its road map like the great snipe!) and a beautiful red-necked phalarope. While this hectic rush northwards is happening, the "locals" are getting on with the business of rearing the next generation, and it's the sheer number of breeding waders which makes you realise what we've largely lost down here in Ayrshire. Controversy over the elimination of misguidedly introduced hedgehogs has certainly raised the profile of the islands' importance for species such as lapwing, ringed plover, dunlin, common snipe and redshank.

As week two started, my attention switched to other aspects of the islands' bird life, largely as a result of the wind direction having changed, precipitating a mass exodus of migrant waders. The Uists are rightly acknowledged as key breeding areas for a mixture of farmland birds as well as holding healthy populations of raptors. Both corncrake and corn bunting have

disappeared from most of mainland Scotland, but the islands still provide a refuge for both species. While corn bunting numbers have declined, the corncrake still continues to maintain a stronghold in these islands thanks largely to the presence of various farm-friendly schemes aimed at protecting the habitat required by the bird. The RSPB reserve at Balranald must still be one of the best places to see both species.

People have commented that the Uists must be one of the easiest places to see some of our scarcer raptors like golden eagle, hen harrier and merlin. This is absolutely true, although you're often left wondering how they all survive in such a small area of land with such an apparently limited amount of food (it's also worth considering what we could have in much of mainland Scotland if we were free of the continued problem of raptor persecution!). Added to this already impressive list, is the magnificent white-tailed eagle which has recently started breeding in the islands. And..... as if this wasn't good enough, all of this can be seen from almost any of the roads around the islands!

It's very easy to spend a couple of weeks in the Western Isles and find that the time has gone by in a flash, especially when the weather is as good as it was this spring. However, it's when you have time to sit down and reflect on just what you've been privileged to see at close quarters, and without too much difficulty, that you realise just what an amazing place this is. Will I be back? You bet!!!



Both Corncrake and corn bunting (below) can still be seen without too much difficulty at RSPB's Balranald reserve



A summer-plumaged sanderling at full tilt on the beach at Peninerene



A female hen harrier, just one of the Uist's many raptor species

A lapwing sits tight on a dewy machair morning



## Birding Norfolk and Humberside

Great areas for early summer birding, from the seabird city of Bempton Cliffs, to the lagoons and reedbeds of Titchwell Marsh and the broadland beauty of Strumpshaw Fen. *Tony Scott*

Angus Hogg and I are planning a birding trip down here from Saturday 18th to Sunday 26th of June 2011. We will be booking a coach once again from Dodds of Troon and invite you to join us on this expedition. We will first be heading south-east for a night near Hull, where we can take advantage of two excellent reserves before moving on down to the Fakenham area for six nights to enjoy all the wonders of Norfolk, the Brecks and Broadland. On the way north we intend to call at the Old Moor Reserve at Dearne Valley in South Yorkshire and will spend the last night in this area around Wombwell, just 5km from this reserve.

**So what exactly are the highlights?** For starters - Bempton Cliffs, easily the best place in England to see, hear and smell seabirds! More than 200,000 birds from April to August make the cliffs their home, with adults bringing food to their nests and young chicks making their first flights. Gannets, common guillemots, razorbills, kittiwakes, fulmars and puffins create a cacophony of sound to delight the ear. We'll maybe head down to Hornsea Mere before an overnight stop just outside Hull. Next morning we head over the Humber to Blacktoft Sands, another RSPB reserve well worth seeking out. 270 species have been identified and the tidal reedbed is the largest in England. Its an important breeding area for bearded reedlings, bitterns and marsh harriers. Some rare waders in recent years have included black-winged stilt, avocet, Temminck's stint, pectoral sandpiper, broad-billed sandpiper and Hudsonian godwit. Naturally, seeing a rarity would be special, but the regulars such as water rail, grey partridge, grasshopper warbler, reed warbler, sedge warbler and corn bunting are all great to see. From Humberside we head south for six nights around the Fakenham area, where we will make excursions along the North Norfolk coast and into Breckland and Broadland.

We'll maybe start with a visit to Titchwell Marsh, where a walk from the RSPB visitor centre down to the sandy beach takes in reedbeds and shallow lagoons on the way. Avocets breed on the lagoons and the islands are nesting places for gulls, terns and waders. At this time of year we could see spoonbill, common scoter, marsh harrier, osprey, hobby, little gull, sandwich, common and little terns, yellow wagtail and lesser whitethroat. Both redpoll and tree sparrow are resident here. Holkham and Wells-next-the-Sea are also a must; with lesser-spotted woodpeckers (and others) in the woods, as well as goldcrest, marsh tit, nuthatch and common crossbills listed amongst the resident birds. Blakeney Point will be reached by boat and is a peninsula of shingle and sand, extending westward for almost 5 kilometres from Cley beach. Amongst the creeks edged with sea purslane and saltings ready to turn purple with sea lavender, the constant cry of terns and gulls, and the piping of plovers make this an exciting and romantic place to be. The large colonies of breeding seals add to the interest as do the many ringed plover families and chicks running around the bright white sands. This is a place not to be missed. Near here, the Norfolk Wildlife Trust's Cley Marshes reserve is another 'must visit' site, having been a reserve since 1926. During June, we may expect to see little egret, spoonbill, shelduck, garganey, shoveler, marsh harrier, hobby, quail, avocet, little ringed plover, maybe broad-billed sandpiper if lucky, black and bar-tailed godwits, green sandpiper, wood and common sandpiper, little gull, yellow wagtail, grasshopper, sedge and reed warbler and more. Salthouse and Kelling Heaths are not far from here, and if we have warm summer evenings we will make excursions to see roding woodcock and also look for nightjar. Long-eared owls are also in this area.

For the rare stone curlew and woodlarks, we will drive inland to Weeting Heath; the nearby Lakenheath Fen is an area RSPB have converted from arable farmland into a large wetland, consisting mainly of reedbeds and grazing marshes. Golden orioles breed in the remnant poplar woodland, along with blackcaps, garden warblers and woodpeckers. Hundreds of pairs of reed and sedge warblers, as well as bearded reedlings and marsh harriers have been attracted by the new reedbeds. Hickling Broad is another wonderful wild place for birds, as well as dragonflies and butterflies, including the beautiful swallowtail. We also intend to have a day at Minsmere in Suffolk, a very special place. We will also build in a few extra alternatives, not only birds and wildlife, but en-route visits to any historic buildings and gardens, as well as lovely villages with their wonderful old inns serving great food and real ale! Steam has its place here too, with the North Norfolk Railway operating from Sheringham to Holt on the well named 'Poppy Line'. All of these things are there for exploring on this nine day holiday with the Ayrshire Birders team.

**We are estimating the cost at around £850.00 to include all coach travel, accommodation and breakfast in en-suite rooms and dinner most nights.** If you are interested, please let Angus or Tony have your name and we'll get full details to you. The full itinerary will be available from October, when booking will commence.

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## SOC Ayrshire and RSPB Central Ayrshire field trips

Saturday 25 September 2010

[Loch Ryan, Stranraer and Wig Bay](#)

Meet at Ballantrae shore car park (toilets) at 10.30 hrs. Whole day trip, please bring a picnic lunch. A garden centre with café and toilets is a short drive from Wig Bay.

Saturday 23 October 2010

[RSPB Mersehead Reserve & Southernness](#)

Meet at 11.00 hrs at the Reserve car park. (Toilets on site). Whole day trip, please bring a picnic lunch. We intend to move on to Southernness Point early afternoon.

Saturday 27 November 2010 by coach

[Largo Bay \(Fife\) & RSPB Vane Farm Reserve](#)

Meet at Dodds coach depot, East Road, Ayr at 07.45 hrs. Arrival at Vane Farm 10.30. Here until 14.30, then on to Largo Bay for 15.00 until dusk. Dinner will be arranged before a return to Ayr for 21.30. Tickets (£20 each) available at the September and October meetings of RSPB / SOC Ayrshire.

Saturday 11 December 2010

[WWT Caerlaverock Reserve](#)

Meet at the reserve car park for 11.00 hrs. Entrance charge applies for non WWT members. Café, shop and toilets on site.

Whole day trip, please bring packed lunch.

Saturday 22 January 2011

[Maidens and Culzean Country Park](#)

Meet at 10.30 hrs at Maidens Harbour car park. On to Culzean around 12.15. Café and toilets here. Entrance charge may apply to non NTS members. Finish around 15.00.

Saturday 19 February 2011

[Greenan Shore and Doonfoot](#)

Meet at 10.00 hrs at Greenan Castle car park. Trip finishes at 12.00 noon.

Saturday 26 March 2011

[Threave Wildfowl Refuge and Belymackhill red kite feeding station](#)

Meet at Castle Douglas main car park (toilets here) at 10.30. Please bring picnic lunch, all day trip. Entry charge at the red kite feeding station (currently £3.00).

Saturday/ Sunday 16/17 April 2011

[Weekend trip to RSPB Leighton Moss Reserve and Morecambe Bay by coach](#)

Meet at Dodds coach depot, East Road, Ayr at 07.45 hrs. At Leighton Moss for lunch (café here) until 18.00 hrs. Overnight in a nearby hotel. Sunday visit to Morecambe Bay hides and in the afternoon the far

flung corners of Leighton Moss reedbeds. Lots of time to explore and search for booming bitterns, bearded reedlings, marsh harriers and more! [Cost - including coach, bed and breakfast - around £80 - £85](#) depending on numbers. Bookings taken from October onwards. We hope to get 20 participants.

Saturday 23 April 2011

[Early morning birdwatch at Glen Afton](#)

Meet at the Burns Memorial just outside New Cumnock on the Glen Afton road - at 07.00 hrs. Don't forget to bring breakfast!

We intend to finish around 11.00 hrs.

Saturday 21 May 2011

[RSPB Wood of Cree Reserve](#)

Meet at the reserve car park at 11.00. All day trip, so please bring a picnic lunch.

Finish around 16.00 hrs.

Saturday 18 June 2011

[RSPB Mull of Galloway Reserve](#)

Meet at Ardwell Bay picnic area (toilets) at 11.00. All day trip, picnic lunch advisable, or try the lovely café at the Mull. Finish at around 16.00 hrs.

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## SOC Ayrshire evening meetings

Tuesdays at Monkton Community Church Hall 19.30 hrs. Doors open 19.00.

14 September 2010

[RSPB's Paul Walton](#)

Birds in a Marine Environment

12 October 2010

[Bobby Smith](#). Applegarth Wildlife Sanctuary update.

09 November 2010

[Bob McGowan](#)

Tiree Frigatebird and Other Tales

14 December 2010

[Ian English](#). Field Craft

11 January 2011

[Liz Leyden](#). Maybe Madagascar?

08 February 2011

[BTO's Mandy Cook](#)

BTO Nest Record Scheme

08 March 2011

[RSPB's Anne McCall](#). Futurescape

12 April 2011

[AGM followed by Russell Nisbet](#)

How Good is Your Bird ID?

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