

Scotland Trip (24th July – 7th August, 2007)

Loch of Strathbeg, Speyside, Applecross Peninsula, North Skye, Fort William and finally Loch Lomond.



The trip started wet and windy, which was to remain with us throughout this two week trip to Scotland visiting areas such as Loch of Strathbeg, Speyside, Applecross Peninsula, North Skye, Fort William and finally Loch Lomond.

Our first stop was at Mintlaw (24th – 26th), which was nice and handy for an early morning visit to the Loch of Strathbeg. A **Common Buzzard** and a female **Marsh Harrier** were seen shortly after arriving, along with at least ten **Tree Sparrows**. Two **Corn Buntings**, several **Linnets**, a **Sedge**

Warbler, a family of **Wrens** and two **Goldfinch** were observed en-route to the hide.

Shoveller (2 females), **Shelduck** (1), **Common Terns** (50+), **Arctic Terns** (10+), **Ruff** (2), **Greenshank** (2), **Redshank** (1), **Common Snipe** (2), **Black-tailed Godwit** (3) and **Oystercatcher** (2) were in and around the pools. **Common Swift** (1), **Sand Martin** (5+), **House Martin** (2), **Swallow** (50+) were also there.

The loch itself held at least seventy **Mute Swans** (no sign of the summering Whoopers), at least fifty female **Goldeneye**, thirty **Cormorant**, ten **Pochard**, one **Tufted Duck**, two **Great Crested Grebe** and a further three **Corn Buntings**.

Later on the same day (25th), a photography session at Deer Abbey near Mintlaw provided us with the journey's first **Ospreys**, which showed very well as they drifted over, heading in an easterly direction.

An evening visit to St. Coombes produced **Kittiwake** (30+), **Gannet** (10+) and **Common Tern** (30+). The best find here was a single **Long-tailed Skua**, which was seen resting briefly on the sea before continuing south.

The next day we travelled to Speyside (26th – 29th). By now, a total of seventy-three different species had been seen

Siskin (3), **Spotted Flycatcher** (2), **Willow Warbler** (2) and **Chiffchaff** (1) were seen with a mixed flock of tits at Dalraddy. **Red Squirrels** (3) were also seen here.

Ospreys were seen at three separate locations. One was seen carrying a fish that it had just caught, presumably from Loch Alvie. One was at Loch Vaa and two were seen at Loch Insh. **Common Buzzards** were at several locations and a **Pergegrine Falcon** was seen near Dalraddy. The surprise find where raptors is concerned was a **Hobby**, which was seen amongst a large group of herundines on the 27th (am).



Mistle Thrush (3), **Great Spotted Woodpecker** (1) and **Chaffinch** (10+) were seen at Boat Of Garten, with three **Red Squirrels**.

Crested Tits were seen at three separate locations, but there was no sign of any **Crossbills**.

Next was the short trip to Lochcarron (29th – 31st), where we hoped to see **Ptarmigan** on what the locals call the pass of the cattle. The total now was eighty-three different species.

An early morning visit to the north end of Lochcarron (30th) produced a total of eleven **Grey Herons**, two **Common Buzzard** and a very quick glimpse of what could have been the trips first **Golden Eagle**.

Loch Kishorn was quite, but productive. **Greenshank** (1), **Common Sandpiper** (1), **Northern Wheatear** (5+), **Stonechat** (1), **Meadow Pipit** (10+), **Goosander** (3+) and **Eider** (10+) were a selection of the birds seen here.

The target bird of **Ptarmigan** was not found on the pass of the cattle, but there were **Raven** (3), **Golden Plover** (1 in full summer plumage) and a single **Wheatear** on the summit. This journey is definitely not for the cautious or the nervous driver, but I believe the journey isn't too bad once you adjust to the height. Pick a fine day, because poor visibility will make finding **Ptarmigan** very hard (as in our case).



Amongst the more regular birds, Applecross produced **Red-throated Diver** (3), **Black-throated Diver** (3), **Red-breasted Merganser** (10+), **Rock Pipit** (2), **Shag** (10+) and **Black Guillimot** (2).

The poor weather continued in to the second week, visiting North Skye, Fort William and finally Loch Lomond. The birdwatching was hard going in the sometimes very wet and windy conditions, but we still managed to see some good birds bringing the trip total to 113.



In North Skye (31st July – 3rd August), Uig bay had **Gannets** (seen at close range) and a selection of **Gulls**. A **Black Guillimot** (1) **Common Buzzards** (2), **Hooded Crow** (3+), **Peregrine Falcon** (1) and **Stock Dove** (10+) were also seen at Uig.

At least thirty **Twite** were at Kilmuir, along with three **Rock Doves**, two **Whinchat** and several **Northern Wheatear**. Five **Raven**, at least ten **Hooded Crows**, three **Sedge Warbler** and a single **Grasshopper Warbler** (seen reeling) were close-by.

An adult **Golden Eagle** and two **White-tailed Eagles** (Juvenile & a second year) were seen at Portree. A **Merlin** was observed chasing three **Meadow Pipits** at very close range close to Quiraing. The hunting ability of the **Merlin** was fantastic to watch and will stay with us for a very long time, excellent.



Fort William (3rd – 5th) provided some pleasant birdwatching.

Loch Linnhe held at least thirty **Red-breasted Mergansers**, at least twenty **Canada Geese**, ten **Eiders**, three **Mallards**, five **Cormorants** and three **Curlews**.

The surrounding area proved to be very productive. One road held **Whinchat** (3+), **Stonechat** (2+), **Meadow Pipit** (30+), **Tree Pipit** (2+), **Spotted Flycatcher** (1+), **Willow Warbler** (3+), **Chiffchaff**

(2), **Siskin** (10+), **Greenfinch** (4+), **Chaffinch** (10+), **Bullfinch** (1), **Raven** (3) and **Common Buzzard** (2+).

Several **Scotch Argus** butterflies were seen at Glen Nevis.

Loch Lomond (5th – 7th) was surprisingly quiet. The highlight here being the sighting of a single **Osprey**, which was seen over Loch Lomond.

Glen Fruin was once again the most productive location here. **Swallows** (20+), **Meadow Pipit** (20+), **Pied Wagtail** (3+), **Grey Wagtail** (2), **Stonechat** (2), **Pheasant** (20+), **Common Buzzard** (2), **Kestrel** (3+), **Carrion Crow** (20+) and **Hooded Crow** (4+) being at their usual locations.



There was strong evidence showing that the **Barn Owl** was still present, although not seen on this occasion.