

South–West Scotland 21-23 January 2025

Our first holiday of the year was to Dumfries, Scotland and we visited three reserves on the Solway Firth. This is one of Britain's largest estuaries and is of international importance for wildfowl and waders. It consists of large areas of saltmarsh, bog, wet grassland and farmland.

We left Lincoln at 8 am with 25 members and headed for Campfield Marsh in Cumbria on the English side of the Solway Firth. We had a break at a Farm Shop on the A66 and arrived at the reserve at 1 pm. In the trees and bushes near the Visitor Centre we saw Rooks, Jackdaws, House Sparrows, Tree Sparrows, Chaffinches, a Pied Wagtail, Woodpigeon, Blackbird, Blue Tit, Great Tit and Reed Bunting.

We then went along the track towards Bowness Common and at the first hide overlooking the wet meadows we spotted a Little Egret, Curlew, Black-tailed Godwit, Redshank, Ruff, Grey Heron, Common Snipe and Lapwings. Also there were Canada Geese, Greylag Geese, Mallards, Wigeons, Shovelers, Pintails, Gadwalls and Teals. On the grass banks we found Redwings, a Mistle Thrush, Starlings and Carrion Crows. Further along the track a Robin, Pheasant, Sparrowhawk, Great Spotted Woodpecker and Common Buzzard were seen and we had a great view of a male Stonechat. We then returned to the main road where we could view the Solway Firth. The tide was a very long way out but we managed to find a Red-breasted Merganser, Goldeneye, Common Gull, two Great Black-backed Gulls, Black-headed Gulls, Herring Gulls, Oystercatchers, Shelducks and Dunlins. A large skein of Pink-footed Geese came over and we had a good view of a Peregrine Falcon flying over the beach. A Stock Dove was spotted in a nearby tree and one person reported the sighting of a male Bullfinch further down the road.

Soon it was time to go to our hotel in Dumfries but shortly after setting off a Barn Owl was spotted quartering a field on the road side. What a superb ending to a lovely day.

On the second day we went to RSPB Mersehead which is on the Solway Firth approximately 17 miles from Dumfries. On arrival we went to the feeding station where we saw Tree and House Sparrows, Chaffinches, Goldfinches, a Greenfinch, Coal Tit, Blue Tit, Great Tit and Dunnock. We then set off along the Wetland Trail where we found a male Bullfinch, Wren, Robin, Dunnock, Yellowhammer and Linnets.



The white Barnacle Goose at Mersehead

This reserve attracts thousands of Barnacle Geese and we were soon viewing large flocks of them in the fields. One of the flocks also contained a white Barnacle Goose. We saw the same wildfowl as the previous day with the addition of a Mute Swan and Greylag Geese. A Great White Egret, female Marsh Harrier and Red Kite, also new birds, were spotted and we again saw a Peregrine Falcon. Further along the Wetland Trail we came to a picnic area and we had excellent views of Siskin, Nuthatch, Goldcrest, and Treecreeper. Other birds seen were Meadow Pipits, Skylarks, Curlews, Lapwings, Magpies, Pheasants, Rooks, Carrion Crows, a Little Egret, Grey Heron, Herring Gull and Song Thrush.

On the final day we left the hotel and went to Caerlaverock Wetland Centre which is also on the Solway Firth. It was a dismal, wet day but we did see some new birds such as Collared Doves, Little Grebe, Water Rail, Moorhen, Kingfisher, Merlin and Whooper Swans, which are fed daily. The same wildfowl were there and also Redshanks, Little Egrets, Blackbirds, Great Tits, Chaffinches, Tree Sparrows, a Robin, Dunnock, Greenfinch, Common Snipe and Common Buzzard.

In view of the weather we left early and arrived back in Lincoln at approximately 7.50 pm. We had a great time, the weather was good, apart from the final day and we saw 78 bird species. Our thanks go to Geoff and Graham for organising the holiday and to our driver Keith.

Ray Daniels
RSPB Lincoln Local Group