Moray Bird Club outing to Spey Bay and Portgordon – 28 January 2023

Martin Cook

We assembled at Tugnet, beside the Scottish Dolphin Centre, at 10 am on a chilly but fine morning. Numbers of waders on the estuary were small and the gull flock was disappointingly sparse so we only found the common species. Out to sea, a few ducks included Goosander, Red-breasted Merganser, Long-tailed Duck and Goldeneye.

We then walked upriver and negotiated a slightly swollen stream to gain access to the woodland. Here, a flock of Goldfinches was feeding on Alder seeds and, as we watched them, other woodland birds appeared, including Treecreeper and Goldcrest. Further along the path we encountered a flock of Long-tailed Tits. Emerging from the woodland, we retraced our steps to Tugnet, adding a selection of common farmland species as we went.

For the second half of the outing we migrated east to Portgordon to look for the small flock of Twite that had taken up residence near the mouth of the Tynet Burn for around a week. Sure enough, we located 11 of them feeding on weed seeds in the short grassland behind the beach. They allowed a close approach to afford excellent views and photographic opportunities. After a short flight, they landed on the edge of the shingle beside the burn and we were treated to brilliant views as they bathed and dried themselves in the sunshine only a few metres in front of us. Also in the area was a flock of Reed Buntings, and a singing Skylark tried to convince us that spring was not far away.

A most enjoyable outing finished with a total of 46 species seen:

Pheasant Redshank Wren   
Greylag Goose Black-headed Gull Goldcrest   
Wigeon Common Gull Treecreeper   
Mallard Great Black-backed Gull Starling   
Teal Herring Gull Blackbird  
Eider Red-throated Diver Mistle Thrush  
Long-tailed Duck Cormorant Robin  
Goldeneye Grey Heron House Sparrow   
Goosander Jackdaw Dunnock  
Red-breasted Merganser Rook Chaffinch   
Feral Pigeon Carrion Crow Twite   
Woodpigeon Coal Tit Linnet   
Oystercatcher Blue Tit Goldfinch   
Curlew Great Tit Reed Bunting   
Turnstone Skylark  
Dunlin Long-tailed Tit