

# Birds of Gaddon and Birnie Lochs

S.T. Buckland

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A selection of photos illustrating those bird species that I have managed to capture on camera at Gaddon and Birnie Lochs.

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# Canada goose

Not often recorded on the reserve.  This single bird was on Birnie Loch in mid-April 2024.





# Barnacle goose

The above bird was probably an escape. It paired up with a greylag, and they reared a brood of odd-looking hybrids each year for several years. Three of the young are shown below. These shots were taken at Birnie and Gaddon Lochs.







# Greylag goose

A few resident birds are joined by larger numbers in autumn and winter.









# Pink-footed goose

Pinkfeet often fly over the lochs but seldom land. The above bird was with greylags on Gaddon Loch in February 2018. Those below flew over in early April 2020.





# Mute swan

Common at Gaddon and Birnie Lochs.









# Shoveler

Although frequent at some sites nearby, shovelers are not often seen at the lochs. These were on Gaddon Loch in late November 2026.









# Gadwall

The Gadwall has become relatively common in the Howe of Fife, but only recently has become regular at Gaddon and Birnie Lochs.









# Wigeon

Common in autumn and winter. Below was a feeding frenzy on 8 Feb 2015 at Birnie Loch, which was mostly frozen over.







# American wigeon

A rare vagrant from North America.  Presumably the same bird was at Gaddon Loch in the winters of 2015/16 and 2016/17.







# Mallard

Common in suitable—and sometimes unsuitable — habitat.









# Pintail

Pintail are seldom recorded at Gaddon or Birnie Lochs.  This female was on Birnie Loch in early October 2026.





# Teal

Although common on nearby lochs, teal are not numerous at Gaddon and Birnie. The shot below left was taken in mid-December 2023, when around 30 teal were at the lochs, perhaps as a result of disturbance at the Wilderness.









# Pochard

An uncommon visitor to Gaddon and Birnie lochs.  The drake above was on Birnie Loch in early November 2026, while those below were part of a group of six there in early November 2022.







# Ring-necked duck

A North American duck that is occasionally recorded in Fife outside the breeding season. This female was with tufted ducks on Birnie Loch through winter 2022/23.









# Tufted duck

Common on Gaddon and Birnie lochs.





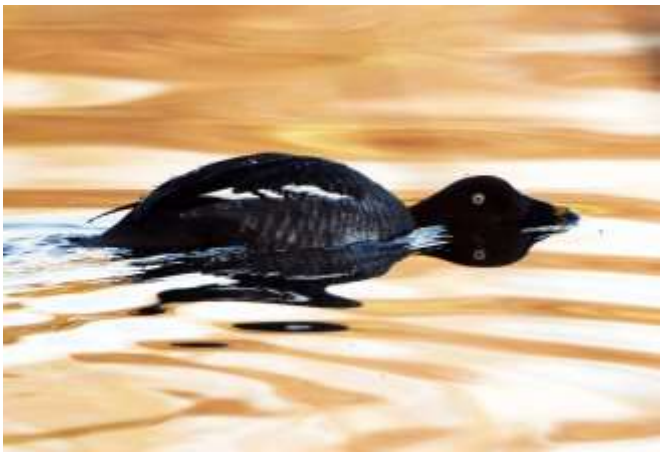




# Goldeneye

Common on both lochs, mostly in winter.









# Goosander

Common on the lochs in autumn and winter.







# Pheasant

Common in the Howe of Fife, but not normally coming onto the reserve. This cock was preparing to roost in a tree between the two lochs, near the car park.



# Stock dove

Smaller and far less numerous than the woodpigeon.  This bird flew from trees alongside the road close to the car park at Birnie Loch.





# Woodpigeon

Very numerous.







# Collared dove

The lochs do not provide suitable habitat for collared doves, but presumably this bird was attracted by the food available by the car park.





# Water rail

Often heard at the reed bed at Birnie Loch, but seldom seen.  This obliging bird was about 100m from the car park, by the path in April 2021.







# Moorhen

Common in suitable habitat.  There are usually birds near the car park at Birnie Loch.







# Coot

Common.







# Little grebe

The little grebe is becoming more common at the lochs, possibly due to displacement from Mountcastle (now called Eden Springs), where disturbance from anglers has significantly reduced numbers of waterfowl.







# Great crested grebe

Breeds nearby, but not usually here. These birds were at Gaddon Loch in April 2020. The displaying suggests an intent to breed.









# Oystercatcher

Occurs from late winter through the breeding season.





# Lapwing

Common passage migrant.





# Curlew

The lochs attract very few waders.  Curlews can often be seen at nearby Rossie Bog, and this bird, shot through vegetation, flew over Gaddon heading towards Rossie in early November 2023.



# Snipe

Common in suitable habitat, but seldom seen at the lochs.  The bird above and below left was near the car park at Birnie Loch in April 2021, and the bird below right was on an island in Gaddon Loch in December 2020.







# Common sandpiper

A passage migrant that is seldom recorded at Gaddon and Birnie.  This bird was on Birnie Loch in late April 2022.





# Black-headed gull

Usually the most numerous gull species at the lochs.









# Common gull

Common at the lochs.









# Lesser black-backed gull

Common in spring and summer.





# Herring gull

Common on the lochs.









# Cormorant

Becoming increasingly common at Gaddon and Birnie. The above bird is of the continental race, *sinensis*.









# Grey heron

Common.









# Great white egret

A rare visitor to Fife, the bird above and below was one of several that arrived in Fife in 2024. It was seen at Gaddon Loch on several dates in January and February 2025. The one on the right was at Birnie Loch in December 2025.









# Sparrowhawk

Common in the area, but not often seen on the reserve.  This female was by the railway just south of Gaddon Loch, hunting redwings, in late October and early November 2020.







# Common buzzard

After its recent return to the area, it is now common.  The one below left is being harried by a carrion crow.







# Kingfisher

An infrequent visitor to the lochs.  This one was at Gaddon Loch in early March 2026.





# Great spotted woodpecker

Not often seen on the reserve, presumably because the woodland is not mature enough. These birds were in tree tops just across the railway line from the reserve.





# Kestrel

A bird can sometimes be seen hunting near the railway embankment immediately to the south-east of Gaddon Loch, which is where these images were taken.









# Peregrine

Rarely occurs at the lochs.  These poor images were of a bird flying over Gaddon Loch in mid-February 2021.





# Jay

Jays occur in the woodland just across the railway from Gaddon Loch, and occasionally visit the reserve, mostly in autumn.  This bird flew over Gaddon Loch in early November 2023.





# Magpie

Until recently, the magpie did not occur in the Howe of Fife.  It is now becoming common.







# Jackdaw

Jackdaws often fly over the lochs (above), and several pairs breed in the mature trees just north and west of Birnie Loch.







# Rook

Common.  There is a rookery by the entrance to the car park at Birnie Loch.







# Carrion crow

Very common.  They are often remarkably tame on reserves and in urban areas where they are unlikely to be shot.





# Coal tit

Common woodland species.









# Blue tit

Very common.









# Great tit

Common woodland species.









# Sand martin

Summer migrant.  This species used to breed at Birnie Loch, but now mostly occurs on migration.





# Swallow

Summer migrant.  The one below was an early-returning bird, at Gaddon Loch on 1 April 2021.





# House martin

Less often seen at the reserve than either sand martin or swallow.  These were with a large flock of all three species in mid-April 2024.





# Long-tailed tit

Fairly common resident.  The bird below right was nest-building in mid-March.









# Willow warbler

Common summer visitor in woodland.





# Chiffchaff

Summer visitor in woodland, and becoming more common.









# Sedge warbler

A few birds occur on the reserve, mostly on the islands.





# Blackcap

Common summer visitor in woodland.





# Garden warbler

A summer visitor, appreciably less numerous than the similar blackcap.







# Whitethroat

Scarce breeding bird in scrub habitat at Gaddon Loch.







# Goldcrest

Common, mostly where conifers are present.  Numbers increase in winter with continental migrants arriving.







# Wren

Common in scrub around the lochs.









# Treecreeper

This species is sometimes seen with tit flocks.  It can look rather mouse-like as it moves up a tree trunk.







# Song thrush

Less common than it used to be, but still present in the breeding season.







# Redwing

Most likely to be encountered at Gaddon and Birnie in late autumn.









# Blackbird

Common throughout the year.  Male above and below left, female below right.







# Fieldfare

Most likely to be encountered at Gaddon and Birnie in late autumn, often with redwings. The apples at Gaddon continue to attract a few birds into winter.









# Robin

Common throughout the year, although numbers increase each autumn with migrant birds arriving.









# House sparrow

A few visit the car park at Birnie Loch for the food put out by visitors.









# Dunnock

Common throughout the year.





# Grey wagtail

Prefers faster flowing waters than those immediately around the lochs.  This male was beside the burn that runs through Collessie, just north of the lochs.





# Pied wagtail

Although the habitat appears good for pied wagtails, this is the only one I have photographed there, and it was just across the railway from Gaddon Loch, at the quarry.





# Chaffinch

Common throughout the year.







# Bullfinch

Occurs throughout the year.









# Greenfinch

A resident species that visits the lochs in small numbers.







# Lesser redpoll

When it occurs, it is likely to be seen with siskins, but it occurs far less often than siskins at Gaddon and Birnie.









# Goldfinch

Can sometimes be seen around the edges of the reserve.





# Siskin

Often seen in winter feeding on alder cones around the lochs.









# Yellowhammer

Not often seen on the reserve, but occasionally occurs between the railway and Gaddon Loch.







# Reed bunting

Scarce at the lochs, despite the apparently suitable habitat.  Can occasionally be seen in the reed bed near the car park at Birnie Loch.

