

Wildlife notes 39, 23rd May 2023

Dear Friends,

This is just a quick wildlife note, with some interesting records, in both senses for the word!

Firstly, thanks to those who came to watch the bats last Friday, which proved to be a very successful evening, with the bats cooperating and putting on a fine show. I thought I should follow this up by actually counting how many bats are currently living in the space in my flat roof, so last night I settled down with my cup of tea, woolly hat and rug over my knees and watched the roost from about 9.20pm until 10.10pm, by which time they had nearly all left. So – I have a new record number of bats, as I counted 359! This is more than I have ever had before, and this count is before any of the babies have been born and are flying. Potentially I could have double that number in July when the babies start to leave the roost! The bats at my house are all Soprano Pipistrelles, which are the commonest species in Scotland, but nevertheless, this is a good sized roost and they obviously like it, as their numbers are increasing each year.

Also increasing is the colony of beautiful Early Purple Orchids beside the Cults road, just before the hairpin bend if you are travelling from Burnturk. This year we have counted at least 220 individual



plants, again, very nearly double the previous highest count. Some of the flowers are really quite large (about 8 to 10cm, which is large for these orchids), and the whole show is gorgeous. Well worth taking a look if you are walking or driving up that road.

And finally a more unusual record, from Clatto reservoir, where Carol and I do the monthly counts of waterbirds. There wasn't a lot to be seen, but one pair of ducks took my attention. In fact, I didn't know what they were! So, when we got home, out came the identification books and they turned out to be a pair of Garganey! These are Europe's second smallest duck, after the Teal. They are generally summer visitors to the UK, and are widespread, but not at all common. Indeed, I found out later that this pair are the first to be seen in Fife in 2023, so that is another good wildlife record for our area!

Alison