

## Branch Reports Summary – AGM 25<sup>th</sup> June 2016



**BirdWatchIreland**  
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### Branch Reports, BirdWatch Ireland AGM 25<sup>th</sup> June 2016

We were pleased to receive 23 reports from branches, up from 13 reports last year. Some are short and reflect less activity and others by contrast, full reports of fund raising, events and conservation work carried out by our volunteers through the branch network.

**Reports received:** Carlow, Clare, Cork, Donegal, Fingal, Galway, Kildare, Kilkenny, Laois, Limerick, Louth, Meath, Mayo, Monaghan, Roscommon, Sligo, South Dublin, Tipperary, Tolka, Westmeath, West Cork, West Kerry, Wicklow.

**Awaiting Reports:** We look forward to receiving branch reports from Cavan, Kerry, Leitrim and Waterford.

Many branches maintain a bank account to host funds raised and as an outlet for payment of expenses in the course of running a branch. Some branches have never held a bank account and run events without cost.

#### ***From the Branch Reports:***

**Carlow** A change of venue from the Lord Bagenal Hotel to the Tinryland Parish Hall was undertaken this year due to an increase in the cost of renting the room. The Tinryland Parish Hall is free to use and our last talk had 47 people in attendance, showing the growing strength of the branch. We intend to focus on membership recruitment in the coming year.

**Clare** The Branch financial situation remains more or less the same as last year with around €10,000 in our bank account. Some of this money is ear-marked to upgrade our website [www.clarebirdwatching.com](http://www.clarebirdwatching.com). We are also discussing investing in other local birding conservation projects. We organise events regularly with the Limerick Branch of BWI. Frank King advertises our outings on his Radio Kerry weekly slot every Thursday morning and also reads reports from our outings.

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**Cork** Harper's Island bird hide finally became a reality for Cork's birding community in 2015, although only briefly. A few minor issues with regard to the site's management are preventing the venue from being open to the public, however branch members were given the green light to use the facility for an outing and it was very well received. Behind the scene negotiations should see it open on a permanent basis shortly. Cash at Bank: €939.00

**Donegal** The branch organises around 6 outings each year. We have no funds at present. All our meetings are free and the County Museum makes no charge for our indoor events.

**Fingal** Rogerstown Turvey Hide: The 2015/16 season consisted of 60 dates which were warded by 24 volunteers, down 1 volunteer on last season. A warden was pre-scheduled for 58 dates. 63% of the volunteers did 2 or more days, with 5 doing 4 or more. The number of visitor was down by about 6.5% (724 as opposed to 776 in 2014/15).

- **Main fundraising activities:** Annual Table Quiz – Successful evening with 13 tables participating. Quiz and raffle prizes were donated by branch members and local businesses.
- **Public talks:** Talks are open to the public and free of charge with an option to make a small donation at the end of the evening. The numbers attending were down this year resulting in the talks barely breaking even.

Financial: The Branch holds funds of €7,697.00.

**Galway** The branch has lacked a committee for the past few years when the existing committee members after years, indeed decades, of service decided not to continue. Efforts have been made to get members to stand for a new committee but we still await success. However, the branch continues in a modified manner with individual people taking on various tasks and events. This includes a series of monthly short outings at Nimmo's Pier Galway City organised by Tom Cuffe, which has attendances of up to 30, including good numbers of young people, and these seem much enjoyed and very worthwhile. The winter I-WeBS Inner Galway Bay counts is organised by Chris Peppiatt with teams of counters for each of the four large sections. In the same way Marianne ten Cate organises the Lower Lough Corrib counts with a similar teams of birdwatchers. In the county generally members carry out I-WeBS counts on many wetlands and lakes. In conjunction with Helen Boland Marianne also organised the recent NEWS survey for which the Co. Galway coastline is an important sector, The quarterly newsletter and county bird report goes out, by e mail, to more than 400 people and by all accounts is much appreciated by Galway BirdWatch members. We have a bank account in the name of BirdWatch Galway with a balance of circa €1500. Finally, members continue to field phone and other queries on birds and related matters and to generally do their utmost to represent in Galway the interests of birds and their conservation.

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**Kildare** held monthly talks each month with the exception of August in the Townhouse Hotel in Naas. We also held monthly outings each month.

Attendance numbers averaged 30 throughout the season as we made a point of availing of free advertising on local radio (KFM) and in local newspapers (Leinster Leader, Kildare Nationalist, Liffey Champion).

Erected over 40 barn owl boxes and 25 Kestrel boxes in support of Barn Owls and Kestrels and are monitoring these on an ongoing basis. These were largely funded by various grants we applied for and received. Ongoing monitoring of nest box schemes in NUI Maynooth, Donadea Forest Park and Castletown estate.

**Kilkenny** The Branch is re-launching. The new committee is as follows: Chairperson: Ken Kinsella ; Vice Chairperson: Ian McCullagh; Secretary: Mary Durkin; Treasurer: Mary Rice; Other committee members: Richard Dwyer, Maire Ni Mhorain, Linda Williams, Aidan Fitzpatrick.

They are all very interested and enthusiastic members. We look forward to a new, exciting and revitalised branch.

**Laois** 2015 was a busy and successful year for the Laois branch of BirdWatch Ireland with events throughout the year. In May and June, members participated in the Breeding Curlew Survey and established the presence of four breeding pairs in Laois. I-WeBs surveying in the Durrow Curragh continued for a fifth year, and this work continues to build up data on the numbers and type of non-breeding wetland birds in Laois, and in particular numbers of wintering Whooper Swans. The extensive flooding on the Nore and Erkina during the winter made for some dispersal of the birds from the usual sites.

Work on monitoring and ringing of Hen Harriers and Peregrines continued during 2015. Members also continued to work on the schools nestbox project and it is hoped that in time a number of the boxes will be occupied and we can build on the work done in existing schools.

The branch also provided delegates to wider representative bodies in the County. Martina Cripps represented us on the Laois Heritage Forum and Des Finnermore on the Laois Public Participation Network.

**Limerick** The Branch have hosted monthly outings in Limerick City, County and Counties Clare, Tipperary and Kerry. Attendances have averaged 18 persons per outing. In keeping with BWI and our own policy we hold joint outings with the Clare Branch and Kerry, and Tipperary Branches.

A Grant of €400 was received under the LA21 funding to develop/improve the Branch's capacity to provide a more structured approach to its work. A series of talks on Birds/Wildlife and Habitats has continued following receipt of the Grant. Five talks have been held and attracted 25-30 attendees per talk.

Financial: in bank €1,200.00 including LA 21 Grant.

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**Louth** The branch continues to operate the Oscar Merne Hide at Lurgangreen. During 2014 a scrape was dug and further developed (using spades) in 2015. The bank of earth that was excavated was also seeded with 1 kilo of wild flower seeds (maritime/coastal species).

Rat poison was laid at Gyles quay to remove rodents which were predated black guillemot eggs.

A series of Events, Talks, Walks were organised in the autumn.

Finances: Cash in kitty: €56, Bank: €735.

**Mayo** New ideas and fresh minds are really required to reinvigorate the branch, however finding individuals who are able to commit their time and effort is not easy. One suggestion we discussed at our Branch AGM was to build up momentum by joining up with other branches and arrange joint events.

We have discussed the option to ‘re-launch’ the branch – perhaps involving one or more high profile speakers, but this will involve time and commitment to arrange. Options such as a Heritage Grant should be investigated, and I am hoping that the work Siobhan Egan at BWI is undertaking in relation to a Branch Day could, perhaps, address issues raised.

Activities: we have undertaken 9 events over the last 12 months, ranging from visiting a Falconry for a personal display of birds of prey, to events by the sea looking for waders and other wetland birds and a talk on the Celtic Explorer by Niall Keogh. We are always grateful for the support given by BirdWatch Ireland in providing speakers and the support of Niall Hatch and other staff in providing advice when we need it.

Chair Mick Hogan, Secretary Ruth-Ann Leak, Treasurer Martin Leak. Finance: €789 at bank.

**Meath** Branch Officers: Franck Le Moënner (Chairman), Paul Gallagher (Membership/Media/Treasurer)

<b>Outing:</b> Evening walk in Headfort, Kells, April
<b>Outing:</b> Dawn Chorus, May
<b>Talk:</b> Michael Creegan. Meath Heritage Week, August

**Monaghan** This year we had outings to Dundalk Bay. Local outings were to Slieve Beagh and the Dawn Chorus was held at Derrygorry Forest.

Illustrated talks and walks on birds of the locality were given to schools and community groups. Branch members partook in BirdWatch Ireland Surveys.

Financial activities: No Funds – members finance outings.

**Roscommon** Activities: The branch organises a dawn chorus walk and evening walks to survey nesting Swifts. Financial: The branch holds funds of €110.00.

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**Sligo** A full calendar of events was organised in 2015. The Sligo Branch of BWI collaborated with Sligo Tidy Towns on a number of projects over the previous year which has helped raise the profile of both organizations. Branch Chairperson, Michael Bell, has produced a booklet on the Birds of Sligo Town and a Garden Bird poster, both of which were funded by Sligo Tidy Towns and have been given out to the public at various Sligo BWI events and to local schools.

Michael Bell also designed six bird information panels that are placed at various bird watching sites around Sligo Town. This project was also funded by Sligo Tidy Towns. The Sligo Branch obtained funding from Sligo County Council during the year to replace a bird sign at Cartron Bay that was irreparably water damaged.

Recently the Branch also received funding from the County Council to purchase ten swift nest boxes to be erected at Ballymote National School where a single pair of swifts nested last year. These are the last known swifts to be nesting in the town and it is hoped that this project will save swifts from disappearing from the town altogether. Funding has also been obtained to provide a speaker and support an event at the Lissadell 'Goose Field' to celebrate Sligo's Barnacle Goose population when the geese return next autumn.

**South Dublin** The report for the branch recalls another year packed with some superb presentations from a variety of speakers, matched by a list of great outdoor events. The Branch meetings continue to be well supported with average attendances of 70. Finances: the branch has funds of €9,900 plus a dedicated account for the Booterstown Marsh Appeal fund with funds of €4,090 on deposit.

**Tipperary** The main effort in 2015 was in raising money to rebuild the Hide at Ashton's Callows. It is good to report that the Hide was finished in October 2015.

The final cost to complete the rebuild was €8,995. We will receive grant aid of €1,000 from the Offaly Heritage Officer and €3,000 from the Tipperary Heritage Officer.

We were very sorry to lose Dan Hogan off the committee after the last AGM after long years of service to the branch. Malcolm Tanner took over from Stephanie Harte as Treasurer and we thank Stephanie for her hard work too. We still need new enthusiastic members to join our committee.

**Tolka** Activities: Talks were held in the Botanic Gardens, our regular venue. Outings included a trip to Wexford and a link up with the Sligo Branch for a weekend visit to the county.

Finance: Bank Balance as of June 2016: € 3,128.94

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**Westmeath** The Branch has approximately 50 members who are regular attendees and the average attendance at our monthly meetings is about 26.

### *Regular branch activities*

Our indoor meetings are from October to May, while our outdoor events are year round.

### *Officers and Committee*

The officers and committee were elected at the AGM on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2015 and are as follows:

*Chairperson:* Tom O’Callaghan

*Secretary:* Ina Kelly

*Treasurer:* Margaret Fagan

*IT and Communications:* Richella Duggan

*Committee Members:* Peter Fagan, Donal Kelly, Patricia O’Reilly, Tim O’Rourke, Stephen Powell.

*Activities* The branch organises a regular series of indoor and outdoor events as well as taking part in national surveys and volunteering for events such as Bloom.

### *Finance*

Branch contributed €500 to Shannon Callows Hide Restoration Fund. This comprised some Branch funds and individual contributions from members.

We had €875 in our bank account at our AGM on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2015. This fund has accumulated over the past 4 years and will go towards the purchase of a Branch laptop. This is necessary for the efficient presentation of audio/visual content at our monthly meetings.

### *National support from BirdWatch Ireland*

We acknowledge the excellent support from BirdWatch Ireland in providing specialist speakers at our monthly meetings.

### *Working with other branches*

We plan to link in with Branches in Kildare and Roscommon in jointly hosting outdoor events during the next twelve months.

### *Advocacy*

We advocate protection and improvement in relation to birds, habitats and related environmental issues, when we are aware of them.

We will assist/lobby in any way required to secure an acceptable outcome to review currently under way by EU in respect of Habitats and Birds Directives.

**West Cork** The Branch Facebook Page continues to attract more followers with 665 by the end of the year. The Committee have continued try to put on a range of different types of events, which we hope are the sort of events that people want to attend. My thanks go to all the leaders who have given their time to lead our events and to all of those involved in organising the trips. Also my thanks go to the members of the Committee who also freely give their time and for their work in organising our events programme. 2015 events started in January with a visit to Kilcolman National Reserve and our third Annual Talk, organised with the Cork Branch, to raise funds for conservation and education projects in county Cork. Funds raised to date are €2,833 There were twenty-one further events held during the year.

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### **Financial**

The Cumulative Fund increased from €3,563 at 31st December 2014 to €3,852 at 31st December 2015.

David Rees left us in September 2015 to take up a post with the RSPB in Wales. On behalf of the Committee I would like to extend my thanks to David for his support since first being elected as Chairman in 2013. Under his stewardship the Branch has continued to grow with increased numbers attending our ever varied events and a greater social media.

**West Kerry** We completed IWEBS counts on the Dingle peninsula, as we have done for 17 years and the NEWS priority sites and some non-priority sites. Also raptor monitoring in our kestrel and barn owl nest box sites.

We keep up our Facebook page, answer lots of queries, help with injured birds, follow up sightings of rarities such as Glossy Ibis and Great White Egret.

Since February I have been monitoring the Disney Lucas Star Wars activities on Ceann Sibeal, Dunmore head and An Fearran. A small group has got together to look critically at the weaknesses in the consultative process.

**Wicklow** We have a mailing list of 316 and maintain a facebook page ( 1307 Likes) Finance cash in bank: €201.57 [birdwatchwicklow@gmail.com](mailto:birdwatchwicklow@gmail.com)