



BirdWatchIreland
birdwatchireland.ie
protecting birds and biodiversity

Annual Report 2017



Welcome

From the **Chairperson**



Chairperson's Report

The board met on ten occasions over the past year and priorities included continuing to stabilise the finances to allow us to focus on core values to protect birds and biodiversity. I was delighted therefore to welcome **Catherine Casey, Jim Fitzharris** and **Breffni Martin** to the board, all of whom bring a wealth of experience in conservation. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank **Tony Culley** and **Jim Dowdall**, who step down from the board as part of our regular rotation, and to all board members for their support during the year. I have set out below a schedule of board meetings for the term.

The day to day management of BirdWatch Ireland is overseen by our Interim CEO, **Declan O'Sullivan**. I would like to thank Declan for his dedication to the role and for the quality of the monthly board information pack, which includes updates from each division within the organisation.

For the last two years, BirdWatch Ireland has been campaigning against the **Heritage Bill**, which would allow cutting of hedgerows and scrub in August and burning of vegetation in March, weakening laws that protect our breeding birds. I was immensely proud of the professionalism of our **Policy and Advocacy Team** in campaigning against the Heritage Bill (see page 7), and especially of their excellent presentation to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in this regard.

In addition to managing our reserves and seabird projects, our **Species and Land Management Team** also oversees key projects such as **Co-operation Across Borders for Biodiversity (CABB)**, helping to conserve populations of breeding waders, including the Curlew.

It is vitally important that all of our work is underpinned by the accurate scientific information provided by our **Surveys and Monitoring Team**. Their work is supported by a network of hundreds of volunteers from our membership, without whom our understanding of underlying population trends would be incomplete.

Our **Conservation and Policy** division is overseen by **Mark Robins**, who joined us from RSPB at the beginning of 2018 to take over from **Olivia Crowe**. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome Mark, and also to wish Olivia the very best for the future and to thank her for her many years of devoted service to BirdWatch Ireland.

On the **Administration** front we have continued to roll out our **IT Strategy** with upgrade and replacement of computer hardware and software and more robust back-up processes. The next phase will see the upgrade of our finance systems and deployment of an online portal allowing members and friends to more easily connect,

join, renew and donate and will provide us with an up-to-date platform to help us to grow our membership.

Around the country our **branch network** continues to host a huge range of regular events and talks, providing ready access to birds and nature to members and the general public alike. The unflinching dedication of our branch committees and volunteers is personified by members such as **Neil Sharkey**, Galway Branch stalwart since 1979, and Kerry Branch activist, **Frank King**, who celebrated his 90th birthday recently.

As always, our ongoing work in protecting birds and biodiversity is overseen by the professionalism, expertise and dedication of our **staff at BirdWatch Ireland**. I would like to express sincere thanks from the members and board to our staff who, day in and day out, carry out such excellent work on our behalf.

Thank you again for your support.

Gerry Lyons,
Chairperson, BirdWatch Ireland

Attendance at BirdWatch Ireland Board meetings during the latest term.

	24 th Aug 2017	27 th Sept 2017	25 th Oct 2017	22 nd Nov 2017	13 th Dec 2017	24 th Jan 2018	21 st Feb 2018	21 st Mar 2018	25 th Apr 2018	22 nd May 2018
Catherine Casey		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Tony Culley	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
Jim Dowdall	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x
Jim Fitzharris	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
John Lynch	x	x	x	x		x		x		
Gerry Lyons	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Breffni Martin	x	x	x		x		x	x	x	
Stephen Wilson	x	x		x		x	x	x		x

BirdWatch Ireland Directors in 2017

Gerard Lyons (Chairperson)

Jim Fitzharris (appointed on 17 June 2017,
Secretary)

James Francis Dowdall (Secretary until
17 June 2017)

Catherine Casey (appointed on 17 June 2017)

Anthony Culley

David Fay (resigned on 17 June 2017)

Brian Francis Lavery (resigned on 17 June 2017)

John Lynch

Breffni Martin (appointed on 17 June 2017)

Stephen Wilson

Published by: BirdWatch Ireland,
Unit 20, Block D, Bullford Business Campus,
Kilcoole, Greystones, Co Wicklow, A63 RW83
Telephone: (01) 281 9878
Email: info@birdwatchireland.ie
Web: <http://www.birdwatchireland.ie>
BirdWatch Ireland complies with the Governance
Code for the Community, Voluntary and Charitable
Sector in Ireland.
Charity number: Registered Charity No CHY5703



COVER PHOTOGRAPH:
Corncrake
by Andrew Kelly



BirdWatchIreland
protecting birds and biodiversity



*BirdWatch Ireland is the BirdLife International
partner in the Republic of Ireland*

Annual Report 2017

Surveys, Research & Monitoring

The weather during the 2016/17 winter was relatively calm and unremarkable, good news for birds hoping to make it through to the following spring. The five species recorded most in our gardens during our **Garden Bird Survey** were Robin, Blackbird, Blue Tit, Chaffinch and Great Tit. For more on this, see bit.ly/2jToATm.

The fieldwork for the second **European Breeding Bird Atlas** (EBBA2) finished in 2017. One of the most ambitious biodiversity mapping projects ever attempted, the project collated bird records with breeding evidence from across Europe. In Ireland, volunteers contributed records through **BirdTrack**.

During 2017, our **Citizen Science & Outreach** team continued our work with the OPW, completing bird surveys at a number of sites, including Farmleigh House and Iveagh Gardens in Dublin. Our **OPW Swift Survey** also continued, with surveys at four OPW heritage sites across Ireland.

In collaboration with **Offaly County Council**, we completed our first **county-wide Swift survey**, in Offaly, the results of which will provide the backbone for Swift conservation in the county.

LA21-funded projects were conducted in Laois, Tipperary and Westmeath, with the aim of developing Swift-friendly towns in these counties. With continued funding from the **Heritage Council**, we also coordinated the **National Swift Survey** in 2017. We also initiated the '**Nesting Riverbirds in Built Structures**' Survey in cooperation with the **National Biodiversity Data Centre**.

Our successful collaboration with **Dublin City Council** on the **Urban Birds Project** continued, focusing on the iconic Brent Goose in the capital. The **Dublin Bay Birds Project** (DBBP) continued its mission of addressing the knowledge gaps that exist on how waterbirds use Dublin Bay. Funded by the **Dublin Port Company**, with additional funding in 2017 from the **Dublin Bay Biosphere**, the project entered its fifth season of waterbird and breeding tern monitoring. Key findings included how higher numbers of birds are recorded in the bay at low tide compared to on a rising tide, and that significant numbers of waterbirds are present in the bay year-round, not just during the winter months.

In January 2017, the highest ever count of **Light-bellied Brent Geese** was recorded, with more than 7,000 birds being counted during a special dawn census. Also, in January 2017, more than 39,000 waterbirds were counted during a low-tide survey, representing the highest number of birds recorded in Dublin Bay to date.

The significance of the Dublin Port area for **breeding terns** continued in 2017, with more than 400 pairs of Common Terns and a small number of Arctic Terns nesting on structures along the Liffey channel.

The **wader colour-ringing database** has now exceeded 3,000 observations and we are beginning to learn more about the birds' movements, including that many of Dublin's Oystercatchers migrate to Iceland and Scotland each summer to breed. We hope that the DBBP dataset will inform sustainable decision-making processes regarding developments and activities planned for Dublin Bay.

Participation in the **Irish Wetland Bird Survey** (I-WeBS) continues to be good, while the required threshold of survey squares for the **Countryside Bird Survey** (CBS) was met and surpassed, with the second highest number of squares ever covered. Both projects benefit from training workshops funded by the **EPA** and, during early 2017, these were held in Leitrim, Limerick and



ANDREW KELLY

Barn Owl chicks. In 2017, BirdWatch Ireland continued its research into factors influencing mortality of Barn Owls on major roads.

Mayo. They resulted in the recruitment of 35 new survey volunteers across both projects.

During August and September 2017, a selection of sites around the Irish coast were surveyed for **post-breeding tern aggregations** by volunteer counters, coordinated by the I-WeBS Office. Forty-seven sites were covered across eleven counties, which was an increase on the coverage and participation in the first run of this survey in 2016. Much new information was uncovered.

Raptors

In terms of raptor research and conservation, a primary focus in 2017 was continued research into the extent and factors influencing mortality of **Barn Owls** on major roads, funded by **Transport Infrastructure Ireland** (TII).

For the second year, GPS dataloggers were deployed on adult breeding Barn Owls to assess their movements and foraging behaviour in relation to road networks. This provided new information about the relationship between Barn Owls and roads. For videos showcasing this work, see bit.ly/2L211Ul.

As part of this study, and in collaboration with Transport Infrastructure Ireland, we developed Barn Owl survey guidelines specific to Ireland, to increase best-practice survey standards. These guidelines can be downloaded at bit.ly/2L3fkrs, together with an excellent practical video at bit.ly/2L2tJ7q.

Dublin Zoo has supported our raptor monitoring, conservation and education work on an ongoing basis, including work on Kestrel, Merlin, Long-eared Owl and Barn Owl. The **Heritage Council** has funded the production of videos to disseminate our work on raptors, including a piece on Barn Owls: see bit.ly/2Jf1LrG.

In 2017, the project entitled **Supporting Hen Harriers in Novel Environments (SHINE)**, in which BirdWatch Ireland is a partner, was initiated by **University College Cork** with funding from the **Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine**. We also undertook a survey of **Merlins** in upland north Cork and east Kerry through the **IRD Duhallow RaptorLIFE Project**; and we provided assistance to the **Irish Raptor Study Group** on a national **Peregrine survey**.

Species & Land Management

In 2017, BirdWatch Ireland continued to focus on the protection and management of key populations of ground-nesting farmland birds and seabirds. 2017 saw the launch of the **Cooperating Across Borders for Biodiversity (CABB)** project, a five-year programme of action across the border region of Ireland, Northern Ireland and western Scotland. Six organisations including BirdWatch Ireland, led by RSPB Northern Ireland, have been granted over €4m by the European Union's **INTERREG VA Programme**, with matching funding from the governments of each region. Our focus in CABB is on the monitoring and management of key **breeding wader populations**. In 2017, a survey of machair waders on the western seaboard revealed that, although wader populations were declining still at many sites, at three sites where we had erected predator-proof fences, populations, particularly of **Lapwings**, had increased. There are also plans to erect a further two fences at key machair sites.

Other aspects of the project include the protection and restoration of **blanket bogs** at two sites owned by the National Parks and Wildlife Service – Fiddandarry, Co Sligo, and Pettigo National Nature Reserve, Co Donegal – and the writing of three **Conservation Action Plans** for Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) in Donegal.

Under contract to NPWS, the national **Breeding Curlew Survey** was completed. The final tally was just under 150 pairs, confirming the decline of over 90% indicated by the 2007-2011 Bird Atlas. 2017 also saw the establishment of the **Curlew Task Force** by Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Heather Humphries TD, who finally responded to pressure from BirdWatch Ireland and others to take action to save the Curlew from extinction in Ireland.

Late in 2017, BirdWatch Ireland was granted funding for an Environmental Innovation Project on the Curlew, funded by the **European Commission** and administered by the **Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine**. BirdWatch Ireland is lead partner in the project, with the **Irish Natura and Hill Farmers' Association**, the **Irish Grey Partridge Trust** and **Teagasc**. The project will trial the training of farmers in predator control for Curlews, as well as undertaking management of habitats.

The **Results-Based Agri-Environment Schemes (RBAPS)** continued to trial 'results-based' management agreements with farmers who have breeding waders on their land in the Shannon Callows. 2018 will see a final report and recommendations being sent to the European Commission.

In 2017, again under contract to the NPWS, BirdWatch Ireland engaged a **Corncrake fieldworker** in Co Donegal. The national Corncrake census in 2017 found 140 calling males, a 17% decline from 168 recorded in 2016 and the third yearly decline in a row.

It is possible that current Government measures, such as the Green Low-carbon Agri-environment Scheme (GLAS) and the Corncrake Farm Plan Scheme (FPS), will need to be enhanced to provide better conservation measures for Corncrakes, especially to make provision for the creation of early cover. BirdWatch Ireland also continues to work with landowners on **Tory Island, Co Donegal**, to improve conditions for Corncrakes nesting there.

Seabird projects

During the year, BirdWatch Ireland's long-term **tern management projects** on the east coast continued to set new records, with 1,603 pairs of **Roseate Terns** nesting on Rockabill, Co Dublin, and 141 pairs of **Little Terns** nesting at Kilcoole, Co Wicklow; the latter



BRIAN BURKE

Roseate Tern: Rockabill hosted record breeding numbers in 2017.

colony produced 269 fledglings, an average of 1.81 young per pair.

Elsewhere, there were some disappointments. **Little Terns** failed to settle and breed at the Baltray, Co Louth colony for a second successive year, and although very good numbers (128 pairs) of mostly **Arctic Terns** nested at Dalkey Island in south Dublin, their breeding success was poor. At Dalkey, the continued presence of Brown Rats was almost certainly a factor inhibiting their success; removing this harmful species will be a key focus in 2018.

BirdWatch Ireland is grateful to its partners and funding agencies for continued support for its tern work, particularly to **NPWS**, the **EU LIFE Nature Programme** and **Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council**.

A new initiative, funded by our **Wild Islands Appeal**, saw BirdWatch Ireland base a part-time fieldworker on **Ireland's Eye** in the Dublin Bay Biosphere. A short ferry-ride from Howth Harbour brings visitors to this small island, in summer packed with eleven cliff-nesting seabirds species, including several pairs of Puffins. The island also hosts the only gannetry located next to a capital city.

BirdWatch Ireland's work focused on assessing the breeding success of several seabird species, including the globally threatened **Kittiwake**. We also helped visitors to enjoy the seabird spectacle without disturbing the ground-nesting Great Black-backed Gulls.

In common with other east coast colonies, very few young Kittiwakes fledged on Ireland's Eye this year. We need to continue our surveillance of this species on the east coast and to try to elucidate the underlying causes of its worrying decline.

Cape Clear Bird Observatory

2017 saw a number of improvements made to the Cape Clear Bird Observatory building, thanks to funds raised through the **Wild Islands Appeal**. BirdWatch Ireland is extremely grateful for the generosity of all who supported the appeal. Two packed-out wildlife courses were run in September, and guest numbers at the 'Obs' increased significantly.

Some very interesting rarities were recorded on the island, including three vagrants from North America: Spotted Sandpiper, Swainson's Thrush and Lesser Yellowlegs. Full details are in the observatory's annual report, available for download at bit.ly/2IPFx0d.

Our Reserves

BirdWatch Ireland's reserves portfolio increased early in 2017 with the formal acquisition of **Kilcolman Nature Reserve**, near Buttevant, Co Cork. In 1969, the late conservationists **Richard and Margaret Ridgway** established a wildfowl refuge at Kilcolman, 21 hectares of which was their own property.

BirdWatch Ireland, now owner of this reserve, home to important fen habitat, rich in plant, insect and bird life, seeks to build on the Ridgways' legacy, enhance the nature conservation value of the reserve and provide opportunities for people to explore, learn and enjoy nature.

Some of BirdWatch Ireland's reserves hold numbers of an iconic breeding wader that is suffering large-scale declines – the **Lapwing**. On our reserve and in surrounding fields at **Rogerstown**, Co Dublin, a minimum of 15 pairs nested in 2017, though the number of chicks raised was relatively low, as in the previous year.

Where protective fences to deter mammalian predators such as foxes have been installed, Lapwing numbers have increased, such as at our **Sheskinmore Lough** reserve in Co Donegal, where nine pairs bred, up from six the previous year.

Over the past six years, breeding Lapwing numbers at our **Annagh Marsh** reserve in Co Mayo have increased from three pairs to 18, which in 2017 managed to raise 23 chicks, while two to three pairs are now breeding again at **Termoncarragh Lake**, where BirdWatch Ireland has another reserve.

Annagh Marsh was the most southerly regular breeding site in the world for **Red-necked Phalaropes** from the early 1900s until the early 1980s, when they disappeared. We are encouraged to see a small turn-around in their fortunes: in 2017, they were recorded within the marsh for the third summer in a row. Ongoing management at the marsh is focused on breeding waders and, during autumn 2017, the main pool systems were cleaned out to expand the area of open water and create the extensive muddy edges favoured by the phalaropes.

A key reserve nationally for wintering waterbirds is **Wexford Wildfowl Reserve** in Co Wexford, jointly owned by BirdWatch Ireland and NPWS. The **Greenland White-fronted Goose** is the most important bird occurring there. The annual spring count in 2017 recorded over 7,000 of them, numbers that are of international importance for this declining population. Ongoing management continues to focus on providing undisturbed feeding grounds for these and other wintering geese and swans.

Further north, at BirdWatch Ireland's **East Coast Nature Reserve** in Newcastle, Co Wicklow, seasonally flooded grasslands attracted increasing numbers of waterbirds. During the 2016/17 winter, around 1,500 birds (mainly ducks and geese) were recorded regularly, providing a wonderful spectacle for visitors.

The reserve also holds important habitats, the rarest being its **fens**. Parts of these are classed as 'calcareous fen with Great Fen-sedge *Cladium mariscus*,' a priority habitat under the EU Habitats Directive. A **fen assessment audit** in summer 2017 found this fen type to be largely in favourable condition on the reserve.

During the year, work at the East Coast Nature Reserve focused on providing an improved visitor experience through upgrading and regularly maintaining all access paths, as well as maintaining picnic areas, seats, three observation hides and a variety of information boards. This work was assisted by a **Reserve Volunteer Group**

formed from within the local community and wider County Wicklow area as well as from our Wicklow Branch. We are very grateful for the enormous help and assistance received from all.

Introductory 'walk and talk' events were held on the reserve, including a pre-Christmas walk and wreath-making event, where materials for the wreaths were sourced from the reserve itself.

Other reserves also hosted **events** during the year, some in partnership with other organisations. For example, Annagh Marsh hosted the **National Biodiversity Data Centre's** annual recorders' event in July, which focused on bumblebees, particularly the rare Great Yellow Bumblebee.

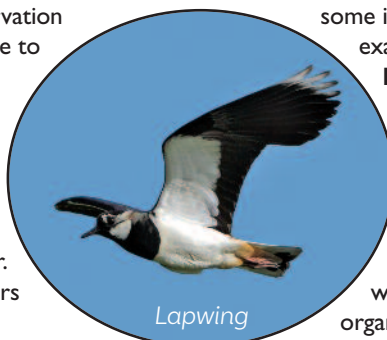
Improving **visitor access** to some of BirdWatch Ireland's reserves, so that people can explore without compromising wildlife value, is an aspect that the organisation is continuing to progress. During

2017, working with the **Knockadoon**

Enhancement Project group in Co Cork, a walking trail was completed along the boundary of our reserve on **Knockadoon Head**. It offers views over the coastal habitats and across to our **Capel Island** reserve.

The **Harper's Island Wetland Centre** at Glounthaune, outside Cork city, was officially opened to the public in late 2017. The centre was developed by the owners **Cork County Council** in partnership with BirdWatch Ireland, its Cork Branch and Glounthaune community groups. The infrastructure gives access to an impressive hide overlooking Harper's Island where, through ongoing development of the habitats, increasing numbers of migratory waterbirds, including Black-tailed Godwits, are seen.

In December, BirdWatch Ireland launched a **Nature Reserves Appeal**. The funds raised, along with help from BirdWatch Ireland's branch members and volunteers, and with support from the **Heritage Council**, various county councils and partnerships, will enable the organisation to continue to develop its reserves. To everyone involved, we are extremely grateful.



Lapwing

COLUM CLARKE

NIAL HATCH



Pictured at the opening of the hide in Harper's Island Wetland Centre in Cork in December (from left): Jim Wilson (Cork Branch), Minister of State in the Department of Justice and Equality, David Stanton TD, and Declan O'Sullivan (Interim CEO, BirdWatch Ireland).

Media, Social Media And Publications

BirdWatch Ireland's media profile continued to grow in 2017, with frequent coverage in particular on *Mooney Goes Wild* on RTÉ Radio 1, and on both the *Today Show* and *Ear to the Ground* on RTÉ television. We also played a prominent role in RTÉ's week-long series of *Big Week on the Farm* live television broadcasts in April, attracting more than 350,000 viewers. Our staff and branches also played a major role in RTÉ Radio 1's **International Dawn Chorus** programme in early May, a six-hour live broadcast transmitted in over 20 countries.

In total, the organisation was featured in print and broadcast media on a record 694 occasions during the year.

A key highlight of the year was our hosting of **HIH Princess Takamado of Japan**, Honorary President of BirdLife International, on a visit to Dublin's Lambay Island and Rockabill Island in July to view Puffins and other seabirds and to see the work of the organisation's Roseate Tern Conservation Project wardens on Rockabill.

By year's end, 24,595 people were receiving our free monthly *eWings* e-zine. Our social media presence also increased to a total of 21,299 page 'likes' on Facebook and to 15,235 followers on Twitter, an increase of 2,355 (+12%) and 3,673 (+32%), respectively, since 2016.

Our extensive range of publications includes *Wings*, *Bird Detectives*,



DICK COOMES

HIH Princess Takamado of Japan on Rockabill, Co Dublin, with BirdWatch Ireland's Rockabill wardens Shane Somers, David Miley and Caroline McKeon and Senior Seabird Conservation Officer Steve Newton (second from right).

Irish Birds, *eWings*, *I-WeBS News* and *CBS News*. We also publish a sales catalogue, a calendar and several project blogs.

Building & Supporting Our Networks: Branches, Members & The Public

BirdWatch Ireland branch volunteers and staff together hosted more than 450 free public events during 2017, with a range of activities taking place in every county.

Our showcase event once again was **Bloom**, Ireland's largest garden and food event, which attracted over 120,000 people over five days. Other key public engagement events included the **Seabird Festival** at the Cliffs of Moher, the **Dublin Horse Show** and Dublin City Council's **Rose Festival**. A range of family events were also run on behalf of the **Office of Public Works**.

A well-attended **branches workshop** for our national branch representatives was held in Limerick in April, and key branch initiatives during the year included, amongst many others, our Meath Branch's 'Year of the Yellowhammer', our West Cork Branch's annual bird race, our Kildare Branch's work to provide

Barn Owl, Swift and Dipper nest boxes in the county, our Cork Branch's annual 'Know Your Nature' Primary Schools Quiz, and our South Dublin Branch's public tern viewing evenings at Coliemore Harbour, overlooking Dalkey Island, throughout July.

Our membership base continues to provide much-needed support for the organisation. At year's end, the organisation had approximately 6,500 membership subscriptions.

In December, we launched our **Nature Reserve Appeal**, seeking financial support to maintain and improve our national network of 19 reserves as havens for wildlife where people can explore, learn and enjoy nature.

We would like to thank all of our members for their contributions through their subscriptions, donations and shop purchases and for their ongoing support for our work.

Education and Raising Awareness

2017 saw the conclusion of our **Lifelong Learning through Nature** project, funded by the European Commission through its **Erasmus+** funding stream. This culminated in the production of an environmental education **Action Guide for Primary School Teachers**, developed in collaboration with our project partners in Malta, Poland and the UK. A special training session for this guide was organised for 60 teachers in Dublin Zoo in July.

We also entered the second year of our **Empowering Teachers and Pupils for a Better Life** project, funded by **Nature Erasmus+**, which in 2018 will culminate in an international teacher training conference in Maynooth, Co Kildare, attended by teachers from Ireland, Poland, Spain, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Macedonia.

Over 7,000 records of migratory birds were submitted to **Spring Alive**, our annual migration monitoring project for children and families.

Our Dublin Bay Birds Project team also visited several schools as part of the **Brent Goose Ambassador** scheme, run in conjunction with Dublin City Council.

We were one of the key organisations involved with the hugely successful **'Go Wild' Festival** in Galway during Biodiversity Week in August. We also partnered with Galway County Council, with funding from the Heritage Council, to deliver the very first **'Go Wild' Nature Camps** in the county, which focused on engaging children with their local environment. For a video showcasing the camps, see bit.ly/2sfLyJj.

Policy: Defending our Birds and their Habitats

Ireland's birds, their habitats and other biodiversity are under increasing pressure from a variety of sources, such as ongoing habitat loss and climate change and also, unfortunately, from a lack of political will to protect them. However, we are seeing a groundswell of public support for better nature protection, so there is hope.

BirdWatch Ireland continued to work for the **Curlew** through the **Curlew Task Force**, and for other species under serious threat, such as the **Hen Harrier**.

We continued to work on the improvement of forestry for the benefit of birds. We finalised a scoping report for **Forestry Sensitivity Mapping** with the aim of identifying areas that are sensitive for birds.

We continued to make submissions on policies, proposals and planning applications, and to raise the concerns of our members on key issues.

In 2017, the potential environmental impact of **Brexit** became an important aspect of our work as the possibility of so-called 'regulatory divergence' on the island of Ireland – a single biogeographic unit – signalled a potential race to the bottom for nature protection.

In 2017, debate started in earnest on the next reform of the **Common Agricultural Policy**. As the European Commission launched a consultation on the future shape of the policy, BirdWatch Ireland, in partnership with civil society organisations across the EU, led the line in Ireland for positive change through the '**Living Land**' Campaign. At the same time, we contributed to the shared BirdLife International **vision on a future for food and farming** in the EU, and advocated this vision to Irish and European politicians and decision-makers.

Late in 2017, in partnership with BirdLife International, the European Environmental Bureau and other environmental NGOs, we secured funding from the German Federal Environment Ministry to work on how best a reformed CAP could tackle **greenhouse gas emissions** from agriculture.

Elsewhere in the debate on the future of food and farming, we attended the High-Level Implementation Committee of FoodWise 2025 in March and the Foodwise 2025 conference in December. At both events, we voiced our concerns on aspects of Ireland's **agri-food policy** to the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, senior civil servants and other agencies.

BirdWatch Ireland works closely with national and European partners to deliver for nature and we work on a range of issues with a coalition of 26 national environmental NGOs in the



BIRDWATCH IRELAND

Policy Officer Fintan Kelly outside the European Parliament in Brussels in December 2017. Our work with our European partners to end overfishing resulted in successful lobbying of the Parliament on EU North Sea fisheries management. In addition, we have continued to keep the pressure on the Irish Government and relevant stakeholders to end overfishing by 2020.

Environmental Pillar, to represent the views of the environmental sector.

On a more local level, we work closely with **farmers** and other stakeholders to positively influence future policies in relation to farming and biodiversity. For example, we are part of the five-year **BRIDE (Biodiversity Regeneration In a Dairying Environment) Project** in Co Cork, which is supported under the European Innovation Partnership measure of Ireland's **Rural Development Programme**.

Building on progress in 2016, and with funding from the **Irish Environmental Network**, we continued to develop work on connecting people, particularly rural communities, with nature through the **BALANCE (Biodiversity and LEADER:Assisting Nature by Community Engagement) Project**. Early outputs from this work were presented at the Burren Winterage Weekend in October, and we continue to develop this interesting area of work through the **National Rural Network**.

In September 2017, we initiated Phase 2 in the development of a **Marine Renewables Sensitivity Mapping** tool for Irish seabirds. The tool will highlight offshore areas where seabirds are most sensitive to wind, wave and tidal energy developments. We hope that this tool will help to minimise any potential conflict between developers and our important seabird populations.

Our campaign against the Heritage Bill

In 2017, BirdWatch Ireland's campaign against Sections 7 and 8 of the **Heritage Bill 2016** took us out onto the streets of Dublin. Leading a coalition of conservation organisations, BirdWatch Ireland representatives called on the Government to remove these sections of the bill as they would negatively impact breeding birds and pollinators in our hedgerows and upland habitats. The proposed legislation would roll back our nature protection laws at a time when more and more of our bird species are Red-listed and in need of greater protection, not less.

We held briefings with Seanad representatives and party officials, and the Seanad passed **significant amendments** to the bill to restrict August hedge-cutting to roadside hedges only, protecting 80% of hedgerows and the wildlife they support.

The work on the bill continues as it goes forward for debate in the Dáil. BirdWatch Ireland branches and members from all over Ireland have played a huge role in the campaign, writing to, phoning or meeting their local Councillors, TDs and Senators to ask for their support.

Science always underpins the conservation and advocacy work of BirdWatch Ireland. During the summer of 2017, we surveyed late-nesting birds to gather data on the ecology of important hedgerow species, especially Yellowhammer, Greenfinch, Goldfinch and Blackbird. Funded by the **Heritage Council** and community grants from **Meath County Council**, and with the support of our branches, supporters and enthusiasts, nearly 50 recorders submitted 442 records from 18 counties, including 383 records of Yellowhammers and many records of confirmed nesting throughout August – a critical period for hedgerow protection, currently under threat from the Heritage Bill.

Summary of Accounts 2017

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

2017 was the third year in a row that BirdWatch Ireland achieved a net surplus from its operations. The total incoming resources generated a surplus of €21,883. Compared to the previous year's results of €353,733, which was made up of the donation of the Kilcolman National Nature Reserve, valued at €340,000, and an operating surplus of €13,733, the operating surplus for 2017 was an increase of nearly 60%. Administration expenses included one-off rationalisation costs of €45,306 and the successful implementation of a new, more streamlined staffing structure, designed to allow the organisation, ideally, to focus on engaging in more large-scale bird conservation and habitat-related projects over the next five to ten years.

Thanks to all of our donors for their kind generosity and support for BirdWatch Ireland. Conservation income of €1,316,100 increased by nearly 10% compared to the previous year and this increase is expected to continue into 2018 and later years, with some new large-scale projects coming on-stream.

The Shop (operated by the BirdWatch Ireland subsidiary, BWI Retail and Services Limited) continued to grow in both Revenues (+4.8%) and Gross Profit (+11.2%). Early results in 2018 show a continued healthy growth due to the Shop's products and services having been actively advertised and promoted during the last quarter of 2017. Administrative expenses include BirdWatch Ireland recharges of €29,202 (2016, €32,367).

The details given below are a summary of accounts for BirdWatch Ireland and BWI Retail and Services Limited in 2017. A full set of accounts for the year ended 31st December 2017 is available from BirdWatch Ireland on request.

	2017 €	2016 €
Income		
Membership subscriptions	206,831	237,691
Donations & bequests	39,315	399,926
Grants	107,443	57,827
Developments & events	77	1,410
Other income	70,390	87,477
Advertising income	9,622	8,623
Conservation projects	1,316,100	1,197,121
Investment income	25	111
Total income	1,749,803	1,990,186

Expenditure

Conservation project costs	(1,279,579)	(1,067,447)
Administration expenses	(448,341)	(569,006)
Total	(1,727,920)	(1,636,453)

Net surplus for year	21,883	353,733
-----------------------------	---------------	----------------

Total funds brought forward	2,140,679	1,786,946
Total funds carried forward	2,162,562	2,140,679
Revaluation reserve	(365,060)	(365,060)
	1,797,502	1,775,619

Represented by:

Fixed assets	2,699,372	2,691,015
Net current assets/(liabilities)	841	18,677
Other creditors	(902,711)	(934,073)
Total	1,797,502	1,775,619

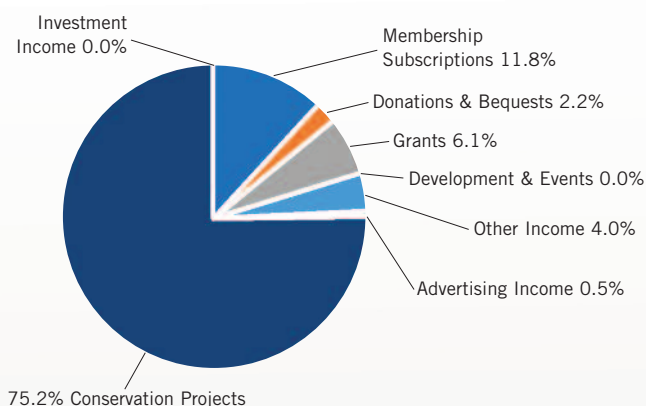
BWI Retail and Services Limited

Turnover	105,170	100,318
Cost of sales	(53,837)	(54,137)
Gross profit	51,333	46,181
Administrative expenses	(49,896)	(46,181)
Interest payable	(131)	0
Profit for the year	1,306	0
Total funds brought forward	(290)	(290)
Total funds carried forward	1,016	(290)

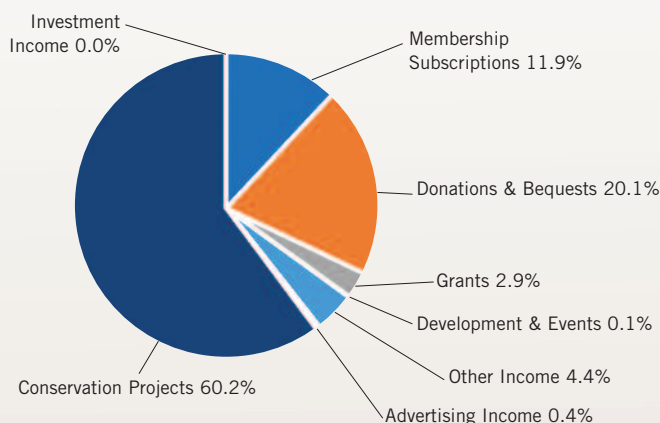
Represented by:

Fixed assets	1,132	1,328
Net current assets/(liabilities)	(116)	(1,618)
Total	1,016	(290)

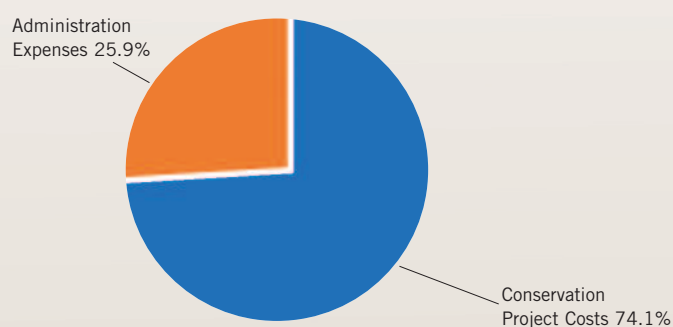
INCOME 2017



INCOME 2016



EXPENDITURE 2017



EXPENDITURE 2016

