

Wings



BirdWatchIreland
protecting birds and biodiversity



Special Report
Roseate Tern LIFE
Project gets off
to a flying start



also ...

Garden Bird Survey
Barn Owl casualties on our roads
Wild Islands Appeal: please help

National Parks and Wildlife Service

The mission of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) is:

- To secure the conservation of a representative range of ecosystems and maintain and enhance populations of flora and fauna in Ireland
 - To implement the EU Birds and Habitats Directives and the Wildlife Acts
 - To designate and ensure the protection of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs), having regard to the need to consult with interested parties
 - To manage and develop the State's six National Parks and 78 Nature Reserves
 - To implement international Conventions and Agreements to which Ireland is party, relating to the natural heritage
-

NPWS provides BirdWatch Ireland with financial support to undertake:

- The Irish Wetland Bird Survey (I-WeBS)
- The Countryside Bird Survey (CBS)
- Seabird monitoring and wardening at Kilcoole and other important seabird colonies

NPWS also contracts specific work packages to BirdWatch Ireland, including the development of agri-environment schemes for breeding waders on the Shannon Callows.

The NPWS is also funder and partner in the programmes to restore the Grey Partridge and reintroduce the Golden Eagle, White-tailed Sea Eagle and Red Kite.



An Roinn Ealaíon, Oidhreachta,
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Roseate Tern (Photo: Ita Martin)

Welcome

From the **Interim CEO**



Lots to do this winter...for birds and for yourself

Ireland's islands are of vital importance for a wide range of different bird species, yet they often fail to receive the conservation attention they deserve. Their remoteness and isolation, the very factors which make them such attractive refuges for our wildlife, also mean that it can be very difficult to monitor and protect the birds and other creatures which live there.

On page 11, you will find details of BirdWatch Ireland's new **Wild Islands Appeal**, which we are launching in order to address this very problem and to help to safeguard Ireland's magical islands as havens for wildlife. We are aiming to raise €40,000 to fund a series of urgent works and measures at various key islands around our coast. These will benefit a diverse range of birds, ranging from Puffins and Gannets to Dunlins and Corncrakes.

I would encourage you to please give as generously as you can: every euro makes a difference.

As is traditionally the case with our winter edition of *Wings*, you will notice a strong garden-bird theme in this issue. Those bird species which visit our homes and schools are, without doubt, the most universally popular amongst the Irish public... which is great news for our annual **Garden Bird Survey**.

This "citizen science" survey is the main way in which the health of Ireland's garden bird populations are monitored, and the more of you that take part, the more informative are the results.

This winter, please give the survey a go yourself, and please also encourage as many of your friends and family as possible to do so too. The data you send us will allow us to identify distribution patterns and changes in the fortunes of our most familiar birds, something which is vital both to inform their conservation and to identify the impacts of environmental problems such as climate change.

The survey is easy to do, a great way to learn more about the birds who live around your home or school and, most importantly, great fun.

BirdWatch Ireland's volunteer-run branches form the backbone of much of our local conservation and outreach work. Running hundreds of free events every year, conducting surveys and conservation projects and enthusing local communities about Ireland's wildlife, they are utterly vital to the success of our organisation.

We are delighted to announce that in early December we will be holding a special **national workshop** for BirdWatch Ireland branch

RARE BIRD NEWS Unfortunately, owing to pressures of space, we have no 'Rare Bird News' report in this issue of *Wings*. It is, however, available online at <http://bit.ly/2dn9Few>.



Baird's Sandpiper (from North America) at the Cunnigar, Dungarvan, County Waterford, on September 17th 2016. **Photograph:** Dick Coombes

representatives. This will be the first in a planned series of such gatherings, aimed at providing more support for our branches, increasing the connections between them and ensuring that our branch network will grow stronger and stronger.

On that note, if you have never attended a local BirdWatch Ireland branch event before, I would highly recommend that you do so this winter; beginners, in particular, are always very welcome. Our branches have a great programme of talks and outings lined up over the coming months. You can find full details of what they have planned for you on pages 32-34 of this magazine.

Declan O'Sullivan,
Interim CEO, BirdWatch Ireland



BirdWatch Ireland
protecting birds and biodiversity

Wings is the quarterly membership magazine of BirdWatch Ireland (Cairde Éanlaith Éireann). Contributions of photographs, drawings, letters, news items and articles are welcomed and should be addressed to the Editor. The opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the Editor or of BirdWatch Ireland.



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COVER PHOTOGRAPH:
Sparrowhawk (male)
by Tom Ormond
(see Photo Gallery, page 18)
Inset: Roseate Tern
by Brian Burke
(see Special Report, page 22)


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Note: Please provide your name and postal address at end of letter. Letters may be edited or cut. Publication does not imply endorsement; the views expressed in any letters published on this page are not necessarily those of BirdWatch Ireland.

HELEN O'BYRNE



Wryneck, Ballinaboola, Co Wexford, in September

Scarce migrant seen in garden

Sir, – On September 20th I saw this unusual bird [see photo] in my garden in Co Wexford. I think it's a Wryneck woodpecker: am I correct?

HELEN O'BYRNE
Ballinaboola, Co Wexford

Dear Helen, – That is indeed a Wryneck, a rather un-woodpecker-like member of the woodpecker family which turns up in Ireland as a vagrant, especially in autumn. It is an excellent sighting – many thanks for letting us know. – **Niall Hatch**

NICK BAILEY



Leucistic Swallow

Leucistic Swallow

Sir, – On August 5th, we had a visit from a leucistic Swallow – it flew around all afternoon with our local Swallows. It has a pale russet body and pure-white wings [see photo]. Do you know how frequently these birds are seen in Ireland and whether there have been any more reports this year?

NICK BAILEY
Pallasgreen, Co Limerick

Dear Nick, – We receive a handful of reports of albino (lacking all pigment) and leucistic (lacking some pigment) Swallows each year, and this year we heard of at least three others. They are very rare, but we receive more reports of all-white or abnormally pale Swallows than of most other species. It might be that, given their fidelity to nest sites where they were reared, they are prone to inbreeding, with an increased likelihood of genetic mutation. – **Niall Hatch**

Woodcock feathers

Sir, – I found some feathers [see photo] in my workshed. This shed is usually closed, except when I'm working on the garden. I found no more of the unfortunate bird, so I assume that a cat made off with it. Can you please let me know what bird the (flight?) feathers belonged to?

KEVIN CONNEFF
Ballymore Eustace, Co Kildare

Dear Kevin, – They belonged to a Woodcock. Although they are curved in shape, suggesting that they might be flight feathers from the wing, they are in fact tail feathers – Woodcocks have strongly curved tail feathers, with the outermost feathers being particularly bowed in shape. The white tips to the feathers give the species a prominent white band at the end of its tail. – **Niall Hatch**

KEVIN CONNEFF



Woodcock tail feathers found in workshed

Collared Doves' tails

Sir, – We've had Collared Doves accidentally caught up in our chicken pen as we recently put on a net roof. I've been letting them out until we can get any holes plugged.

Whenever I corner a hen, I make a grab for the tail before getting a good grip. When I tried this with one of the doves, its tail feathers came away immediately in my hand. Is this a defence mechanism similar to lizards' tails coming off? I won't be doing that again to any doves! It flew off strongly and on a straight course, so I think it should be okay.

CAROLINE JOLLEY
Blackrock, Co Dublin

Dear Caroline, – Yes, that's exactly what it is. The tail feathers of many birds have evolved so that they can be pulled out very easily, allowing the bird to escape should a predator such as a cat or a fox pounce on its tail. The tail feathers usually grow back pretty quickly, so there is no cause for alarm in this case. – **Niall Hatch**

MIKO O'GRADY



Female Sparrowhawk with Jackdaw prey

Sparrowhawk with prey

Sir, – A pal of mine, Miko O'Grady, was on his way to church in Mitchelstown, Co Cork, one morning when he snapped this charming (ahem!) picture [see photo] of an avian breakfast scene. He says it's a Kestrel, I say it's a female Sparrowhawk – who is right?

Also, about a year ago, a male Sparrowhawk perched outside my kitchen window for half an hour or so and I was able to observe him at close range without him seeming to notice me. Can birds not see people through glass?

EDWARD HANLON
Kilkenny, Co Kilkenny

Dear Edward, – You are correct: the bird is a female Sparrowhawk (a juvenile, judging by the brown tone to the plumage and the coarse barring on the chest). We can tell it's a female on account of its large size relative to its unfortunate Jackdaw prey: a male Sparrowhawk would be significantly smaller.

When it comes to seeing through glass, if there is a strong glare on the surface or it is dark inside the room, birds can be quite oblivious to windows. In particular, raptors often fail to notice them. – **Niall Hatch**

Troublesome squirrels

Sir, – Regarding your reader's problem with squirrels eating food intended for birds ['Letters,' Wings, Autumn 2016], a good friend introduced me to a solution – placing a small dog kennel over the bird table!

I have Robins, Blue Tits, Dunnocks and Coal Tits as regular visitors.

ANNA KING
Blackrock, Co Dublin

Dear Anna, – That's certainly one way to do it! If you'll forgive the shameless plug, our BirdWatch Ireland shop sells a range of squirrel-proof feeders – for more details visit our website, www.birdwatchireland.ie. – **Niall Hatch**

Winter diary

By Dick Coombes



Blue Tit, adult.
Photo: Dick Coombes

In November, look for...

Blue Tit

Colourful garden visitor



Blue Tit: one of the most popular visitors to garden feeders.
Photo: Kevin Murphy

A birdwatching trip to Texas in spring to see the blinding array of brightly-plumaged warblers on migration or, indeed, a viewing of a documentary featuring exotic tropical birds could all too easily spark an ill-judged "Oh-I-wish-we-had-colourful-birds-in-Ireland" quip. Familiarity and all that! Next time you see one, just take a good look at a Goldfinch or a Yellowhammer or, for that matter, one of our most familiar garden birds, a Blue Tit.

Azure skull-cap, bright-blue wings and tail, lemon-yellow underparts, green back and a striking white facial pattern all make for a very smart uniform and, along with a cheeky demeanour, it is no surprise that

the Blue Tit is one of the most popular visitors to our feeders.

They are feisty, too, bravely sitting tight to defend the nest, earning them the name "Billy Biter" in England – many a bloody-fingered bird ringer will attest to the appropriateness of this moniker. The Irish name Diarmaid Beag (Little Dermot) is intriguing and must have a story behind it.

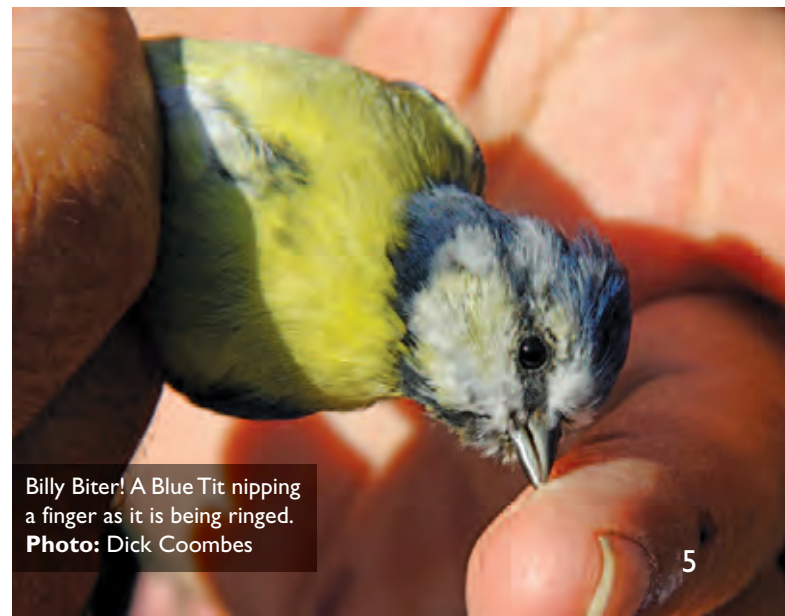
The Blue Tit's predilection for tearing young buds apart in search of insects has made it unpopular with fruit growers, and they were formerly regarded as pests. Many were killed – one farmer in southern England claimed to have killed some 400 in the 1950s. Unthinkable now,

mouse traps were apparently the mode of catching. Today, we know differently and we see Blue Tits for what they are – voracious consumers of aphids and caterpillars and thereby valuable pest controllers.

Those of a certain age will remember the Blue Tit's annoying, yet endearing (in rose-tinted retrospect) habit of prising open foil milk bottle tops to get at the energy-rich cream, which rose to the top. The days of full-cream milk, glass bottles and, indeed, milkmen are gone, alas, but it is interesting that this activity, first noted in Southampton in 1921, had become widespread within twenty years. It is not known when it hit Ireland.

Blue Tits are pretty sedentary throughout Europe, but in certain years when, for example, the beech mast crop is poor; northern populations can undergo mass autumn movements. In one week in September 2012, migration hotspot Falsterbo in southern Sweden logged an astonishing 24,000 Blue Tits passing through before making the sea-crossing to Denmark.

Closer to home, one bird ringed on the Welsh island of Bardsey on October 4th, 2003, was retrapped nineteen days later on Cape Clear Island, Co Cork – a distance of 354 kilometres. This is the only record of a Blue Tit crossing the Irish Sea. Sure, nature abhors a vacuum, but one wonders what this little 10-gramme bundle had in mind when following such a south-westerly trajectory – next stop the Azores!



Billy Biter! A Blue Tit nipping a finger as it is being ringed.
Photo: Dick Coombes



Forster's Tern (adult winter). Photo: Rinus Baak (USFWS)



Pintails (female and male). Photo: Colum Clarke

In December, look for...

Forster's Tern

A tern that turns up in winter

Tern identification can be difficult and is especially frustrating in late summer when moult is in full swing, with juveniles, adults and even first-year birds all mixing together in every conceivable plumage variation. But at least we don't have too many species to deal with – Sandwich and Little Terns are pretty straightforward, being the largest and smallest of our breeding terns. The three marsh terns, Black, White-winged Black and Whiskered, are distinctive enough by their small size and dark markings. But sorting out Common, Arctic and Roseate Terns in a milling flock can be daunting to the unpracticed eye.



Forster's Tern
Photo: Gerry O'Neill

Throw in a rare tern that looks remarkably similar to that last trio and you have your work cut out. Fortunately, however, the one in question, Forster's Tern, has a habit of turning up in winter, when all other self-respecting terns are far to the south, so any tern encountered between November and March is worth a careful look.

Helpfully, too, Forster's Tern has a very distinctive winter plumage – the

black cap of summer disappears, leaving a bald white crown; the nape turns from black to grey, and the really striking feature that sets this species apart is the black highwayman's mask extending behind the eye. Adults also have whiter wings than most terns.

Forster's Terns breed widely throughout the US and Canadian interior on marshes and lakes (where some lay their eggs on floating nests) and they winter along the North American coast – further north than any European tern winters. They were pretty unknown on this side of the Atlantic until a few decades ago. The first Irish record, a bird found in Dublin Bay in November 1982, obligingly plied between the North and South Walls of the port for two and a half months, to the delight of hordes of birders.

Since then, records have become annual and, while some undoubtedly refer to the same bird returning or moving around our coast, new ones continue to turn up. Regular sites for long-stayers include Galway Bay (especially Salthill), Dundalk Bay and Tacumshin and Lady's Island in Wexford.

In January, look for...

Pintail

Worth a journey to see

The Pintail has one of the widest global distributions of any duck, with a massive breeding range stretching right across northern parts of Europe, Asia and North America. It winters to the south of these regions, more or less as far as the equator, into parts of central Africa, much of Asia, the southern states of America and, of course, most of western Europe.

At one stage Pintail was a contender for the commonest duck in the world, but the population has undergone a sharp decline globally. Despite this, it is still, strangely, on the hunter's quarry list throughout much of its range. It is a nifty flyer – one of the fastest ducks – and hence a popular challenge for marksmen. Apparently they also taste nice!

January sees the peak numbers in Ireland, when the nationwide total may reach just under 2,000 birds (down from some 7,000 in the 1970s). Not a huge number, then, when compared with, say, Wigeon, which peaks at over 70,000, and nowhere can Pintail be considered common. In fact, they are very localised, occurring at relatively few sites, and are surprisingly absent from others where the habitat looks perfect – their preference being for the shallow waters of sandy estuaries and flooded callows.

Although numbers are generally less than thirty at most sites, their faithfulness to time-honoured haunts makes seeing them easier. One such reliable site is the North Bull Island, where around 200 winter. But, reflecting declines elsewhere in the world, that figure is seriously down on the 642 recorded there in the winter of 1983/84. Other top sites include Tacumshin Lake, Strangford Lough, Little Brosna Callows and Dundalk Bay.

Interesting recoveries of Irish-ringed Pintails include one in the Azores and another in Ghana. A fledgling ringed on Prince Edward Island, Canada, was shot five years later in Sligo.

The drake Pintail is a handsome bird – females plainer – but both are elegant and readily identifiable, even in silhouette, by the long, thin neck and pointed tail. Worth a journey to see this winter:



Pintail (male)

COLUM CLARKE

Afforestation plans could be bad news for birds

BirdWatch Ireland outlines its concerns at the European Parliament

BirdWatch Ireland's Policy Officer, Oonagh Duggan, was recently invited to give a presentation to members of the European Parliament in Brussels at an event on current European Union proposals on tackling climate change and on using afforestation to offset greenhouse gas emissions.

In her presentation, Oonagh described BirdWatch Ireland's concerns in relation to afforestation, the risks it poses to birds and other biodiversity and its current and likely future impacts on wildlife. She asked for additional safeguards for biodiversity to be enshrined within the proposals for tackling climate change.

BirdWatch Ireland is not against afforestation *per se* but is very concerned by the Government's current, ambitious afforestation plans and where the proposed new plantation forests will be located.

The habitats most under threat from such proposals are those found in so-called 'high nature value' farmland, especially in marginal hill land. These habitats include semi-natural grasslands and, in the uplands, permanent pastures and wet and dry heaths.

BirdWatch Ireland has identified seventeen bird species which are at high risk from afforestation, the risks stemming mainly from habitat loss. Included on our watch-list are



Oonagh Duggan (at table, far right) addressing the European Parliament committee

several Annex I species – internationally important bird species protected under the Birds Directive – including **Hen Harrier** and **Red Grouse**, as well as Red-listed species such as **Curlew**, **Skylark** and **Meadow Pipit**.

Research has shown that when plantations appear on what were previously bird- and biodiversity-rich habitats, they can have a negative impact on birdlife. Species associated with farmland and upland habitats are especially at risk because they can simply no longer live there. Current and future forests need to be planned appropriately, using the appropriate ecological expertise.

On BirdWatch Ireland's behalf, Oonagh also called on MEPs to press for the mandatory inclusion of **peatlands** in the climate change

proposal, as well as for greater ambition when it comes to tackling climate change, something which the current proposal lacks.

Currently, Irish peatlands emit vast quantities of greenhouse gases because of their degraded condition (peat exposed to the air by turf-cutting rots and releases carbon dioxide and methane).

Habitat restoration could help our peatlands return to being living carbon stores and to providing many co-benefits such as retention of floodwater and wetland habitats for birds.

We will continue to work at national and EU level to stop the declines in farmland and upland birds, birds that are highly valued by the public.

Swift spectacle in Clonmel may be best in Ireland

Help Ireland's Swifts by mapping your summer sightings via our new online mapping tool

As another Swift season has drawn to a close, with most Swifts having departed for Africa in September, we are delighted to report a fantastic response to our online **Swift Survey** data request, with hundreds of new Swift sightings and nest-site locations being received this summer. Thank you all so much! Check out the results on our superb new online and interactive map at <http://arcg.is/29uOeJC>.

We will continue to update this map over the winter, and will also be incorporating Swift records from previous years, so if you have any more records to submit, then please keep them coming!

BirdWatch Ireland's Project Officer, Brian Caffrey, said the highlight of the Swift season for him was a visit to meet the Tipperary Branch of BirdWatch Ireland in Clonmel for a **Swift Evening** led by local Swift expert (and general all-round bird expert) Kevin Collins.

"We headed towards South Tipperary General Hospital, where a truly impressive sight was revealed to us – a sky literally filled with screaming Swifts," said Brian.



Swift. Photo: Stefan Berndtsson

"We took a quick count – not an easy job when dealing with Swifts! – and estimated that at least one hundred Swifts were visible in the air over the hospital."

Kevin, who has monitored this Swift colony for many years, pointed out a key building which is the hub of the colony, with an estimated 40 pairs nesting in that building alone. The unusual design of the ventilation gaps in the soffit of the building created ideal niches for Swifts to nest in. This is undoubtedly one of the largest colonies of Swifts in Ireland.

It is a truly wonderful experience, at sites like this, to watch and hear the aerial antics of Swifts overhead on a summer's evening.

➔ Please take a look at the mapping tool, and please continue to send us your Swift sightings at <http://arcg.is/29uOeJC>.

Last year's Hoopoe influx was the biggest ever

An influx of Hoopoes occurred in spring 2015 and included the first ever Hoopoe sightings in Co Laois. Niall Keogh (Irish Rare Bird Committee) and Ricky Whelan (BirdWatch Ireland Laois Branch) report.



Hoopoe: no fewer than eighty-one were found in Ireland last year. Photograph: Dick Coombes

Typically associated with the warmer regions of continental Europe and North Africa, a small number of Hoopoes, usually fewer than ten, is recorded in Ireland in most years during early spring or late autumn, when migrating birds accidentally stray off course.

They are fond of sunny areas with short grass and dry soil or sand where they can forage for invertebrates. This makes golf courses, farm tracks and well-kept lawns likely places to see vagrant Hoopoes in Ireland, and so they are often encountered by members of the public.

In April 2015, a prominent high-pressure system which stretched from southern Europe north to Ireland led to a record-

breaking influx of 'overshooting' Hoopoes – birds travelling too far north on their migration and ending up on our shores.

The vast majority of the Hoopoes turned up along the south coast between Wexford and Kerry, with Cork boasting half of the total sightings. Single-figure counts were recorded in several other counties as far north as Donegal and Down.

BirdWatch Ireland made a request for members of the public to submit records of any Hoopoes seen in 2015. The sightings were collected using the BirdTrack online bird recording system – www.birdtrack.net – and comprised a grand total of 81 Hoopoes. This exceeded the previous record year

count, which was of a minimum of 65 birds in 1965.

While not a county well-known for its rare birds, Laois picked up two records of Hoopoe in the 2015 influx. Bernard Ryan photographed one at his Cullohill garden in late August; it was believed to be the first county record. The photo was posted on the BirdWatch Ireland Laois Branch Facebook page, where it caught the attention of Tony and Daphne Harding. In turn, they presented photos of a Hoopoe seen in their garden in Ballacolla in May 2012; this then became the updated first record for Co Laois. This was a cause for celebration amongst local birders, and also raised the question of how many other interesting records might be waiting to be discovered on someone's camera or computer.

County	No of Birds
Down	1
Louth	1
Wicklow	2
Wexford	9
Waterford	11
Cork	40
Kerry	6
Limerick	3
Clare	3
Galway	3
Mayo	1
Donegal	1
Total	81

Total number of Hoopoes seen per county in 2015.

Rare phalaropes return to breed once more

We are pleased to report that Red-necked Phalaropes returned to breed once again this year at our Annagh Marsh reserve on the Mullet Peninsula, Co Mayo.

After an absence of nearly 30 years, they were discovered breeding again at the reserve last year. Then, this summer, a male and two females returned to the marsh in late May. It was clear that the male was paired and, after a further week, that he was sitting on eggs. By late June the females had left, leaving the male to look after the eggs, which is typical for this species.

"It was really important to make sure the nesting birds were not disturbed," said Dave Suddaby, BirdWatch Ireland's Reserve Manager. "So we were limited to making our observations from the public road. As a result, we cannot say for certain whether or not the breeding attempt was successful this year."

Last year, phalaropes bred at two sites in Co Mayo, though no fledged young were found, while in 2014, phalaropes bred at two sites in Co Mayo and probably at a site in the midlands. Again, no fledged young were seen.



KEN KINSELLA

EU must avoid overfishing

Sustainable sea fisheries are key to supporting our rich marine biodiversity

Since 2009, BirdWatch Ireland has actively campaigned, along with other Irish NGOs and interest groups, for an end to overfishing by Irish and other EU fleets, to ensure fish stocks are fished within safe limits, known as the Maximum Sustainable Yield (or MSY).

Improved, sustainable management of Irish fisheries is vital to ensure the long-term viability of our fish stocks, along with the fishing communities and the wildlife, including seabirds and cetaceans, that depend on fish and a functioning marine ecosystem.

Ireland supports seabird breeding numbers of European importance (e.g., of Northern Gannet, auks, terns) and of global importance (European Storm-petrel, Manx Shearwater), all of which are reliant on healthy seas containing plenty of fish.

However, with more than 60% of EU fish stocks currently below safe biological levels, and nearly half of remaining stocks subject to overfishing,¹ we need EU fisheries ministers to take action and ensure that the Total Allowable Catch limits (TACs) they set for 2017 do not exceed scientific advice.

This December, European Council deliberations on fishing limits are due to take



Gannet. Photo: Rónán McLaughlin

place in the context of the reformed Common Fisheries Policy, which required an end to overfishing by 2015, where possible, and requires it on a progressive and incremental basis by 2020, at the latest, for all stocks.

This December, we ask our new Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Michael Creed TD, for an important commitment – to do his utmost to ensure there are no delays in achieving an end to overfishing.

¹ Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries: Monitoring the performance of the Common Fisheries Policy (STECF-16-05). This report is available free as a pdf at <http://bit.ly/1R9xtnd>.

BirdTrack app for Android devices is here

An app for birdwatchers in Britain and Ireland is now available for download not only on iOS (Apple) devices but on all Android devices, to safely store bird sightings digitally.

The very popular BirdTrack app run by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), and in which BirdWatch Ireland is a partner; allows birdwatchers to store bird sightings in the cloud, like an online diary; it remains accessible and editable at all times.

The data you store provides BTO and BirdWatch Ireland researchers with a most useful resource – information on birds' distribution and numbers in Britain and Ireland.

BirdTrack launched its popular app for iOS mobile phone devices in 2013. It has now released an updated version for people using Android devices.

One major change is that sightings can now be added from anywhere in the world through the app. There are also big improvements in data entry and viewing maps.

You will find lots more information about the app at www.birdtrack.net, along with a useful video from the BirdTrack organiser, Nick Moran, to get you started.

This release is the first in a series of updates to the app. Future updates to this version will include the 'local hotspots' feature. Watch this space.



Seabird hotspots mapped to inform planners

Bird sensitivity mapping project now extends to the marine environment and renewable energy devices at sea

Ireland's unique position in the northeast Atlantic makes it ideal for the exploitation of natural wind, wave and tidal resources for generating electricity. In 2014, the Government published its **Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan**, detailing the extent of the marine renewable energy potential off the coasts of Ireland.

Concerns over the many possible environmental implications of harnessing these energies led to BirdWatch Ireland's **Bird Sensitivity Mapping Project**, which, amongst other things, aims to identify which bird species are most sensitive to current offshore

electricity generation devices (wind, wave and tidal). The birds at most risk include shearwaters, petrels, sea ducks, grebes and divers.

The project includes an assessment of several species-specific traits, including flight heights, flight manoeuvrability, nocturnal flight activity, diving depths, drowning risk, disturbance risk and habitat specialisation. These are used to generate the species-specific sensitivity indices.

Bird sensitivity mapping is an indicative mapping tool which will help with strategic decision-making, identifying in advance

potential problems for seabirds so that they can be taken into account during the planning stage of energy developments.

Using available information on marine birds' distribution, movements and their known individual ecological sensitivities to such developments, the mapping tool aims to identify those specific areas of our marine and coastal waters which are most sensitive to these developments.

In doing so, the tool aims to avoid any negative impacts on birds, such as collision, drowning, disturbance and displacement, along with barrier effects.



This work was supported by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) through the Renewable Energy Research and Development Programme. SEAI is partly financed by Ireland's EU Structural Funds Programme co-funded by the Irish Government and the European Union.

Dawn chorus broadcast wins European radio award

BirdWatch Ireland is very proud to have been involved in RTÉ Radio 1's *European Dawn Chorus* broadcast which, back in May, brought the wonders of birds and birdsong to radio listeners across Europe. It aired simultaneously in sixteen countries – a world first in natural history broadcasting.

We are also very proud that, at a ceremony in Berlin in September, the programme was awarded the **Rose d'Or** – Europe's most prestigious broadcasting award – for Radio Event of the Year; a remarkable achievement. RTÉ's **Derek Mooney** and **Dr Richard Collins** and BirdWatch Ireland's **Niall Hatch** were present to accept the award.

The programme gave millions of listeners across Europe the opportunity to enjoy and appreciate wild birds in a brand new way – listening to the dawn chorus live in several parts of Europe – something that is extremely helpful in convincing people that wildlife conservation is important and worthwhile.

We are delighted that the European Dawn Chorus programme showcased BirdWatch Ireland's Cuskinny Marsh Nature Reserve in Co Cork to such a large international audience, and highlighted both our own conservation work and that of so many of our fellow BirdLife International partners.

Congratulations to Derek Mooney and his team at RTÉ, including our own Niall Hatch, who so impresses with his radio skills, to the participating European Broadcasting Union member stations across the continent, and to our fellow BirdLife International partners who joined us for the dawn chorus broadcast and helped make the programme so very special.



Derek Mooney (centre) and Dr Richard Collins (left) of RTÉ Radio 1, and Niall Hatch of BirdWatch Ireland, receiving the Rose d'Or award for Radio Event of the Year 2016 in Berlin in September.

BIRDATHON

FLOCK TO THE CORK BIRDATHON

The inaugural Cork Birdathon will take place across South and East Cork on November 19th 2016.

To celebrate the launch of the South and East Cork Bird Trail and to promote conservation and biodiversity, we are inviting families and teams of between 2 and 5 people to participate in a fun and interactive bird watching event.

For more information and registration details, please see www.corkbirdathon.ie
or contact SECAD on (021) 461 3432.

An ideal gift

Free Book

Discover the magic of birds with 'Ireland's Garden Birds' book – FREE when you take out BirdWatch Ireland Family Membership

Take out one year's Family Membership and receive this superb book; a free Garden Bird Information Pack; *Wings*, our quarterly magazine (only available to members); free participation in BirdWatch Ireland branch events all around the country; and a chance to take part in our popular Garden BirdWatch Survey.

BirdWatch Ireland is the largest and most active conservation organisation in Ireland, with over 14,000 members and supporters, a nationwide network of more than 30 local branches and a growing number of nature reserves around the country. Our primary objective is the conservation of Irish wild birds and their habitats.

Reg. Charity no. 5703

Join now

- by post (see form below)
- by telephone - simply call **01 281 9878**
- online at www.birdwatchireland.ie

To join, simply complete and cut out this Membership Form and send it along with your membership payment to:

BirdWatch Ireland Book Offer,
Unit 20, Block D,
Bullford Business Campus,
Kilcoole, Co. Wicklow, A63 RW83

Yes, I wish to join BirdWatch Ireland. Please send me my gift of a FREE book. I enclose a cheque/postal order (made payable to BirdWatch Ireland) for:

€50 – One year's Family Membership
 €70 – One year's School/Group Membership

Free book only available while stocks last.

Or Please deduct this sum from MasterCard/Visa/Debit Card no.:

Expiry Date: CWV2: (Security code on back of card)

Cardholder's Signature:

Member's Name:

Address:

(Please attach address of cardholder if different from below)

Wild Islands Appeal

Help us safeguard Ireland's islands... as havens for birds and wildlife

Ireland boasts some of the most spectacular and wild islands anywhere in the world. From the rugged islands of the Wild Atlantic Way to the majestic islands of the Ancient East, each and every one of them is to be treasured.

These special islands are a safe haven for a rich variety of bird species and are enjoyed by the many birdwatchers who explore them. From bustling seabird colonies that are home to Puffins and Gannets, to rich coastal grasslands providing refuge to Corncrakes and breeding waders, to our Bird Observatory on Cape Clear Island which, for fifty years, has welcomed birdwatchers and students... these are just some of the breath-taking sights and sounds to be found on islands dotting our shores.

Yet these island habitats are vulnerable, and many of the important bird species found there are under threat. That's why we are urgently asking you to donate to our **Wild Islands Appeal** today.

WITH YOUR HELP WE CAN:

● Maintain Cape Clear Bird Observatory for birds and for people

"At Cape Clear Bird Observatory we have been welcoming birdwatchers and natural history students for over 50 years. However, we need your help to secure the future of the observatory. The building is in urgent need of repair; it needs work on the roof, new windows and a new central heating system. We also want to set up and equip a permanent field station for our bird ringing and monitoring programmes."

- Sam Bayley, Cape Clear Wildlife Officer

● Create a Corncrake stronghold on Tory Island, Co Donegal

"Tory remains one of the last safe havens for Corncrakes in Ireland. With your help we can expand the area of land we manage for Corncrake, creating new cover areas for nesting and feeding."

- Anita Donaghy, Senior Conservation Officer (Corncrakes & Breeding Waders)

● Safeguard seabird colonies on Puffin Island, Co Kerry

"This spectacular BirdWatch Ireland reserve is home to a bustling seabird colony of over 15,000 burrow-nesting seabirds during the summer. However, the recent arrival of American Mink to the island could do immense damage to Puffin, Manx Shearwater and European Storm-petrel numbers. We need your help to carry out an assessment of the predation situation."

- Steve Newton, Senior Conservation Officer (Seabirds)

● Protect sensitive areas of Ireland's Eye

"The important seabird nesting colonies on Ireland's Eye in County Dublin are under constant threat during the summer with disturbance from visitors to the island. With your help we will erect fencing to protect key nesting areas on the island."

- Olivia Crowe, Head of Conservation

ACT NOW....

We need to raise **€40,000** to put in place this vital programme of work. Your gift of €1,000, €250, €100, €50, €25 - or a donation of your choice - will be critical in helping us to safeguard Ireland's islands as safe havens for birds and wildlife.

All of us at BirdWatch Ireland would like to thank you for your support.



Puffin (Ken Kinsella)



Registered Charity No. 5703

BirdWatch Ireland Wild Islands Appeal

Please return this **Donation Slip** to:
BirdWatch Ireland, Unit 20, Block D,
Bullford Business Campus,
Kilcoole, Co Wicklow, A63 RW83

I enclose a cheque or postal order made payable to BirdWatch Ireland Appeal

Please accept my gift of

(please tick) €1,000 €250* €100 €50 €25

Other I would like to donate €

Or I would like to donate by MasterCard/Visa/Debit Card

Card number:

Expiry date: Security code:

Cardholder's signature:

(Please give name and address of cardholder if different from donor)

* BirdWatch Ireland can claim back tax paid on donations of €250 or more by individuals who are taxed on PAYE. That means a donation of €250 or more could be worth up to an extra 72% to us.

Name

Address

E-mail address (for receipt)

Mobile phone

I am a member of BirdWatch Ireland: Yes No

I would like to join BirdWatch Ireland: Yes No

Sign me up for eWings: Yes No

(BirdWatch Ireland's free monthly email newsletter)



Ricky Whelan (right) of BirdWatch Ireland introducing schoolchildren to Brent Geese on the North Bull, Dublin

Young ambassadors for geese

Schoolchildren advised on how to become ambassadors for wild geese

National school students in Dublin are leading the way in helping to protect some of our most iconic bird species. They are taking part in the **Dublin City Urban Birds Project**, run jointly by Dublin City Council and BirdWatch Ireland.

Last winter, BirdWatch Ireland teamed up with Dublin City Council to help protect Dublin's wintering **Brent Geese**. The project developed links with local schools and asked students to become ambassadors for the geese, which spend the winter in Dublin before returning to the Arctic to breed during the summer.

We visited three schools in north County Dublin in December. This set the scene for guided visits to North Bull Island, one of the most important Brent Goose winter feeding areas. This was the start of the students' journey to becoming **Brent Goose Ambassadors**.

Follow-up visits early in the new year allowed the students to view the geese, as well as wintering ducks and waders, feeding and roosting in their favourite habitat.

"The students, on their own initiative, began telling other visitors to Bull Island about the Brent Geese. We were delighted to see that," said BirdWatch Ireland's **Urban Birds Project Officer, Ricky Whelan**. "They also explained how people should be careful not to disturb the birds."

To put it all in context, students were taken on a field trip to find inland feeding grounds of Brent Geese, away from Bull Island. We visited local parks and playing



Watching Brent Geese at an inland site in north Dublin. Inset: Brent Goose. Photo: Shay Connolly

fields and managed to connect with Brents, and lots of other species, within five minutes' walk of all three schools.

The pupils were now fully-fledged Brent Goose Ambassadors. On May 19th, on the invitation of Dublin City Council, they gathered at the city council offices on Wood Quay, Dublin, to meet the **Lord Mayor, Councillor Brendan Carr**. They were thanked by the Lord Mayor; presented with certificates of achievement

for their hard work and adopted as Brent Goose Ambassadors.

Our thanks to **Niamh Ní Cholmáin, Community Biodiversity Facilitator, Dublin City Council**, whose ideas came to life during this project. Thanks also to the staff and pupils of **St Louise's NS, Ballyfermot; St Malachy's Boys NS, Raheny; and St Joseph's NS, Fairview**. They all really embraced the project and made it so enjoyable for all involved.





Greenfinch. Photo: David Dillon

The Garden Bird Survey

In advance of this season's Garden Bird Survey, starting in December, **Oran O'Sullivan** looks at the results from last winter's survey and picks out some interesting trends.



Last winter will be remembered for its wet and mild conditions, but especially for a series of six named storms that occurred in December through to February.

With maximum values of 16°C in mid-December, Malin Head in Donegal had its highest winter temperature since 1955. By contrast, the lowest winter temperatures were recorded during the last week of February, with an air temperature of -5.9°C in Mullingar, Co Westmeath, and grass temperatures of -10.4°C in Oak Park, Carlow.

The highest sustained wind speeds were recorded at Sherkin Island, Co Cork, on December 30th (during Storm Frank) – 55 knots (or 102km/h).

How did these weather conditions influence garden bird populations in the short term? As our respondents noted, **Siskins** made a welcome return to gardens and **Goldfinches** continued to thrive.

Results from last winter

Finches making headlines

Greenfinches seem to be literally returning to good health after years of falling numbers, due at least in part to the pervasive trichomonosis disease. They just made it into

the top 10 this year, in ninth position, occurring in a very respectable 84% of gardens surveyed.

Goldfinches increased their share, reaching eighth position, being found in an all-time high of over 86% of gardens.

Siskins, whose numbers yo-yo back and forth from year to year; dropped back to nineteenth position last winter; they were recorded in over 59% of gardens.

Birds of prey

The stand-out predator of last winter's survey, the **Sparrowhawk**, attended over 40% of gardens, its highest position to date, its ranking no doubt buoyed by the hordes of Goldfinches visiting garden feeders.

Red Kite put in an appearance at 2% of gardens surveyed and just made it into the top 50 birds – remarkable, really, for a bird that was only reintroduced to Ireland in 2007. It has now occurred in nine winters of the Garden Bird Survey.



MARC RUDDOCK

Ireland's Top 20 Garden Birds in Winter 2015/16

The top 20 most widespread species recorded in the Garden Bird Survey in winter 2015/16

Species	Percentage of gardens*	Rank 2015/16
Robin	99.8	1
Blackbird	99.3	2
Blue Tit	98.1	3
Chaffinch	95.3	4
Great Tit	95.1	5
Coal Tit	92.4	6
Magpie	91.9	7
Goldfinch	86.5	8
Greenfinch	84.0	9
House Sparrow	83.3	10
Dunnock	78.9	11
Wren	77.5	12
Starling	75.3	13
Jackdaw	72.6	14
Woodpigeon	72.1	15
Song Thrush	67.4	16
Rook	64.4	17
Collared Dove	63.0	18
Siskin	59.3	19
Hooded Crow	56.8	20

* Percentage of gardens in which each species was recorded in 2015/16

Relative newcomers

Jay equalled its highest ever position: it was recorded in nearly 9.5% of survey gardens. It has been on a good run in our gardens since 2011, perhaps reflecting its ongoing increase and spread nationally.

Continuing on the rare garden bird front, **Great Spotted Woodpeckers** have now occurred in Garden Bird Survey gardens for six winters in a row, though were still only seen in 0.5% of gardens surveyed.

Siskin trends

No doubt, participants in the Garden Bird Survey will have noticed that **Siskin** is a real "last few weeks of the season" number. Relatively few are seen before Christmas but numbers build up in the last few weeks of the survey. This trend has been consistent over the last six years (see graph, below).

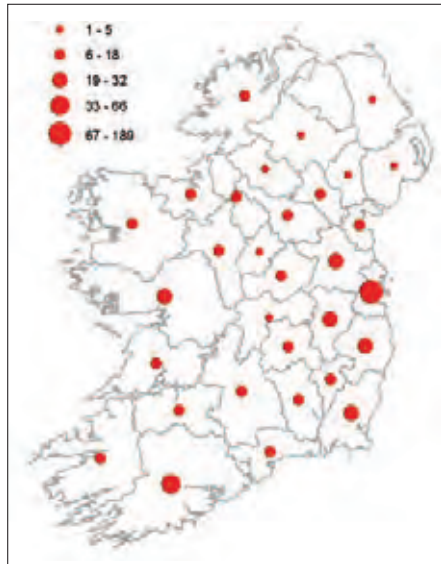
Goldfinches: food for thought

Between November 2015 and February 2016 an amazing 5,183 households across Britain and Ireland took part in the **BTO Goldfinch Feeding Survey**, to help determine what it is about our gardens that Goldfinches are attracted to.

With households seeing an average of eight Goldfinches at a time, the survey highlighted the fact that the population of this colourful bird has been increasing in gardens.

In Ireland, Goldfinch is now reported in 86% of gardens taking part in our Garden Bird Survey, with an average abundance of 6.6 birds per garden – a big jump on its position in the rankings 20 years ago.

The preliminary results of the BTO feeding survey revealed that Goldfinches appear to prefer feeding on the supplementary food that we provide, rather than on the natural foods available in gardens. **Sunflower hearts** were

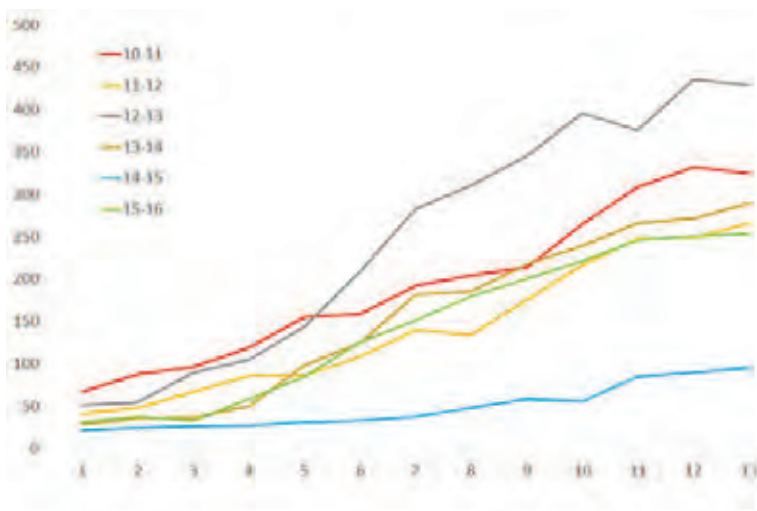


Numbers of gardens per county which took part in the Garden Bird Survey last winter. We would greatly welcome more garden surveyors, especially in the midlands and west.

overwhelmingly the preferred option, with **Nyjer seed** coming second. Where natural foods were taken, seeds of **Teasel** and **thistles** were often the favourites.

As the number of Goldfinches visiting gardens continues to rise, these findings will inform further BTO research into whether their use of bird foods is driving the increase in their populations.

SHAY CONNOLLY



Siskin numbers recorded over the thirteen weeks of the Garden Bird Survey last winter (green), compared with the numbers in the five previous winters. Last winter was about average.

What you said:

On the last Sunday of the survey, I had five Buzzards soaring over the house and two Dippers on a rock in the river at the bottom of the garden – a nice way to end the survey!

No Blackcap again this year: they seem to have curtailed their journey westwards, perhaps another sign of climate change; at least we get good numbers breeding in spring and summer.

Ger Clerkin, Ballinode, Monaghan

It was more interesting than the 2014/15 winter: Fieldfares returned after an absence of five years; the tit family members were back in numbers and there was an explosion in the numbers of Siskins, which continues. As the Siskin numbers increased, Goldfinches decreased.

Anne O'Neill, Ballyhooley, Mallow, Cork

My urban garden near St James' Hospital in Dublin had 20 bird species over the survey period, including a Sparrowhawk, with up to 15 Goldfinches in March.

Elaine Blake Knox, Rialto, Dublin 8

I was delighted and thrilled to see a flock of 40 or more Goldfinches on the 11th of January. I think it was the Sunflower hearts that attracted the big numbers.

Anne O'Meara, Santry, Dublin

I was delighted to welcome back so many Siskins this year, as I had none last year! They were very bossy and hogged the Nyjer seed feeders continually!

Hazel Crawford, Rathfarnham, Dublin 16

Special thanks

We are indebted to Olivia Crowe for data management and analysis and also to our volunteer data inputters – Gráinne Barron, Tim Morgan, Mary Grehan. **Thank you all.**



BirdWatch Ireland

Garden Bird Survey 2016/2017

For office use only

Your name and address

Please use **BLOCK CAPITALS**

Name

Address

Eircode

E-mail address (optional)

Tips on counting your garden birds

- Each week, take note of the highest number of birds of each species that you see in your garden. For example, if five is the highest number of Blue Tits you see, enter '5' on the form overleaf. If you don't see any that week, leave the space blank.
- If you see some birds almost every day, remember that we only want your highest count for a species in a given week.
- Count as accurately as possible. Please do not use plus signs as we do not know whether that means at least one or as many as 500!
- Birds of prey seen hunting in or over your garden should be counted (for example, a hovering Kestrel).
- Feral pigeons and racing pigeons should be counted.
- If you see a bird that is not on the list overleaf, please add it to the end of the form.
- Count birds that come into your garden even if they do not feed on the food you put out for them.
- Please don't count birds that you see outside the garden, such as flocks of swans on nearby fields, or birds flying overhead.
- If you can, hang your feeders on or near a tree or bush so birds can approach safely and retreat quickly into cover.
- Make sure the birds have a regular supply of food. Keep the feeders topped up and also provide water.

Your garden

Is your garden... (tick 'yes' or 'no')

Urban (in a town or city centre)? yes no

Suburban (on outskirts of a town or city)? yes no

Rural (in or beside open country or farmland)? yes no

What size is your garden?

Half the size of a tennis court or smaller yes no

Approximately tennis court-sized yes no

Larger than a tennis court yes no

An acre or larger yes no

Food available for birds in your garden

Are berry bushes present? yes no

Do you provide food? yes no

Do you provide any of the following?

Peanuts in feeders yes no

Seeds in feeders yes no

Nyjer seed yes no

Scraps yes no Fruit yes no

Fat, suet or other bird cake yes no

Have you completed this survey in the past...

Did you send us a survey form before? yes no

Please donate to help the Garden Bird Survey

I enclose a cheque or postal order made payable to BirdWatch Ireland

Please accept my gift of

(please tick) €250* €100 €50 €25 €10

Other I would like to donate €

Or... I would like to donate by MasterCard/Visa/Debit Card

Card number:

Expiry date: Security code:

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(Please give name and address of cardholder if different from donor)

* BirdWatch Ireland can claim back tax paid on donations of €250 or more by individuals who are taxed on PAYE. That means a donation of €250 or more could be worth up to an extra 72% to us.





Garden Bird Survey Recording Form

Week starting

5 **12** **19** **26** **2** **9** **16** **23** **30** **6** **13** **20** **27**
Dec **Dec** **Dec** **Dec** **Jan** **Jan** **Jan** **Jan** **Jan** **Feb** **Feb** **Feb** **Feb**

Sparrowhawk													
Feral Pigeon													
Woodpigeon													
Collared Dove													
Grey Wagtail													
Pied Wagtail													
Wren													
Dunnock													
Robin													
Blackbird													
Fieldfare													
Song Thrush													
Redwing													
Mistle Thrush													
Blackcap													
Goldcrest													
Long-tailed Tit													
Coal Tit													
Blue Tit													
Great Tit													
Magpie													
Jackdaw													
Rook													
Hooded Crow													
Starling													
House Sparrow													
Chaffinch													
Greenfinch													
Goldfinch													
Siskin													
Bullfinch													
Redpoll													
other species													
other species													
other species													
other species													

Please return completed form not later than 31st March 2017 to

Garden BirdWatch, BirdWatch Ireland, Unit 20, Block D, Bullford Business Campus, Kilcoole, Greystones, Co Wicklow



Butterfly fortunes in 2016

Jesmond Harding reports on the butterfly year's highs and lows



Butterflies need resources for survival: in short, habitats that meet their needs. Habitat is the most important factor in butterfly conservation and one that can be controlled. But many

changes in recent decades – in Ireland and elsewhere – have been negative for butterflies. Factors that affect butterfly populations – probably more seriously where habitats are fragmented or in poor condition – include climate change, weather, parasitism, predation levels and overpopulation.

After habitat, the most obvious factor influencing our butterflies is weather: No two years are alike when it comes to our weather, so no two butterfly seasons are the same. Each year throws up some shocks and surprises.



Small Copper. Photo: Jesmond Harding

The spring of 2016 – or March, April and May – was mainly dry and slightly cool. May, however, saw some beautiful weather which brought out the spring butterflies and moths... much to the joy of butterfly lovers (or lepidopterists) who had suffered from shortages earlier in the spring.

Dingy Skipper, Wood White, Cryptic Wood White, Brimstone and the day-flying **Narrow-bordered Bee Hawkmoth** all abounded in their habitats. Indeed, Wood White enjoyed a sizeable second brood in the Burren (in some years a second brood is small or even absent).

The other whites had a mixed year: For example, **Large White** showed an increase but was still recorded only in modest numbers, while **Green-veined White** records were well down on 2015.

There have been only two reports to date this year of **Clouded Yellow**, a stunning

migrant – this is a poor year for the species. The rare Burren speciality, the **Pearl-bordered Fritillary**, was not on the wing until mid-May, the result of cooler conditions earlier in the spring.

Summer – or June, July and August – was fairly mild but often dull, with less sunshine than the spring and wetter than usual in most areas. The surpassing heat of July 19th came out of nowhere but vanished just as quickly.

Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Red Admiral (a migrant) and **Comma** did not perform well, generally speaking. In the case of Comma, a recent colonist whose numbers have been increasing steadily, there were fewer seen than in 2014 or 2015, possibly on account of poor weather: Bucking the trend, large numbers of Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell butterflies were seen in Lullybeg, Co Kildare, where Butterfly Conservation Ireland monitors butterflies and moths in a bogland nature reserve.

The **Painted Lady**, a migrant we look forward to seeing each year; was recorded in good numbers: 132 were reported to Butterfly Conservation Ireland, compared with only 52 last year.

Lower numbers were the norm in 2016 for the three widespread fritillary species, especially for **Silver-washed Fritillary** and **Marsh Fritillary**. The **Dark Green Fritillary** held its own: we received reports of it in especially high numbers in two locations, though lower than in recent years.

The **Small** and **Essex Skippers** showed in lower numbers than normal, too.

The 'browns' include some of our most numerous species and their numbers tend to remain steady. The **Meadow Brown** and **Ringlet** performed to their usual high standards, and **Speckled Wood** performed similarly to previous years. Worryingly, however, the **Wall Brown** remained in a parlous state. It is on the brink of extinction, if not already extinct, in Northern Ireland, while in the Republic it has declined severely in numbers and distribution; it was reported in just six counties: Dublin, Kildare, Galway, Clare, Donegal, Cork.

The reasons for its shocking decline are unknown, adding to our fears for its future.

Ireland has three hairstreak species and, of these, the rarely

Brown Hairstreak in the Burren, Co Clare
Photo: Jesmond Harding



Swallowtail: one was sighted in County Wicklow in June. Photo: Jesmond Harding

encountered **Brown Hairstreak** showed in higher numbers than in recent years, a good sign.

Of the blues, **Holly Blue** showed an increase on 2015. The other two native blues – **Small Blue** and **Common Blue** – were found in reasonable but unspectacular numbers.

The **Small Copper** was recorded in relatively low numbers this year; a frequent feature of this beautiful, gleaming metallic insect.

A great surprise was a report from Eric Dempsey of a **Swallowtail** in Killoughter, Co Wicklow, on June 21st. The Swallowtail is an extreme rarity here and it may have arrived on favourable winds from the continent. It may have been of the subspecies *gorganus* which has occasionally appeared and even bred in southern England, such as in 2013. Climate change might see this butterfly breeding in Ireland (on wild carrot and fennel) in the future.

Finally, one must consider the circumstances of today's environment in assessing 2016's butterfly fortunes. To any butterfly lover whose memory extends back to the halcyon era before the 1970s, 2016 will probably be seen as a disaster. In my experience, 2016 was average. I hope for better in coming years.

➤ Jesmond Harding is secretary of Butterfly Conservation Ireland. To learn more about Ireland's butterflies and moths and how to help them, see www.butterflyconservation.ie/wordpress.





PHOTO GALLERY



TOM ORMOND – “When I got a present of a digital camera six years ago little did I know the path I would take and the time I would spend at what has now become my passion – nature photography.

For almost a year my camera was permanently in ‘auto’ mode, until lessons from a local camera club on using digital opened up a whole new world. I joined Celbridge Camera Club and I’ve been helped enormously by expert members there.

Nature photography is not the easiest of genres to pursue but it can be most rewarding. Wherever I go I am always on the look-out for birds and animals to photograph.

In a 2015 episode of *Autumnwatch* on BBC 2, Chris Packham reported from a bird hide in Scotland and showed footage of a Sparrowhawk, which he described as his “favourite bird in the world.” I was amazed by the footage and how close the Sparrowhawk came to the hide. I decided to find out where it was and to spend a day or two there. Most of the photos in this gallery were taken from this and other hides in the past year. I also use a small portable hide that birds and animals become used to surprisingly quickly. I take most shots with a Canon 7D camera combined with 70-200 mm and 300 mm lenses.

Photography from a hide is a waiting game, as a Sparrowhawk or Kingfisher may make only one or two appearances in an eight- or ten-hour session... but there are often other birds such as Jays and woodpeckers, along with the odd squirrel, to focus on while waiting.”



Male Sparrowhawk

Hide...and they will come



Red Fox



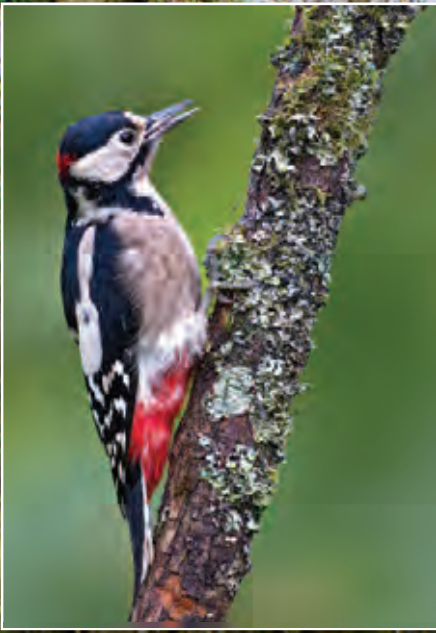
Siskin



Jay



Female Sparrowhawk



Great Spotted Woodpecker



Cuckoo



Kingfisher



Wren



Red Squirrel

The Tralee bypass, scene of Barn Owl road deaths and, inset, one of the victims in 2014.
Photos: Michael O'Clery



Reducing owl deaths on our roads

BirdWatch Ireland and Transport Infrastructure Ireland are trying to identify ways of reducing the number of Barn Owl casualties on our major roads. Raptor Conservation Officer **John Lusby** reports.

The road infrastructure which spreads like arteries across the land has become essential to our everyday lives, but it can pose problems for wildlife. Alongside the increasing traffic and the expansion of the road network, the level of road casualties is on the rise. Mitigating the impact of roads on wildlife is a priority in the planning and maintenance of roads. This means learning about the ways certain species are affected and how we can best address potential problems.

Because of their method of hunting, with their low flight and poor peripheral vision, Barn Owls are particularly susceptible to collisions with vehicles. Unfortunately, wherever the distribution of Barn Owls overlaps with major roads, there are fatal collisions.

The extent of road casualties and the impact they have on Barn Owl populations varies between areas and depends on many factors, including their local densities or, at a finer level, the breeding success, recruitment and survival of Barn Owl populations.

In parts of Europe and North America, road mortality has been implicated in Barn Owl

declines. In Ireland, Barn Owls are routinely reported as casualties of collisions with vehicles – this is the most frequently recorded cause of death in Barn Owls in Ireland.

Although the effect of road mortalities on Irish Barn Owl populations is not fully understood, as a red-listed Bird of Conservation Concern which has suffered extensive population declines over the past forty years, the recent expansion of the road network has potential implications for Barn Owls.

Tralee bypass study

In an effort to develop a better understanding of the extent of Barn Owl mortalities on our roads, BirdWatch Ireland, in collaboration with Kerry County Council and Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), first focused on the Tralee bypass in late 2014. This study was instigated after three Barn Owl casualties were recovered from the 13.5-km route over a short period after the bypass opened. Over the next 16 months, a weekly survey of the route recorded avian and mammalian casualties and revealed a minimum casualty rate of fifty-two Barn Owls per 100 km per year.

Michael O'Clery, a researcher on the study, noted that Barn Owl was the third most numerous bird casualty recorded on the route. "Given the fact that Barn Owls occur in much lower densities than many other species in the area, this shows how vulnerable they are to vehicle collisions."

Despite this casualty rate, breeding densities within 5 km of the route remained stable, with no loss of traditional nesting sites and with two new nests being established. This is largely explained by the fact that the majority of Barn Owls killed on the road were juveniles, which likely encountered the bypass when dispersing

from their natal sites. However, mortality of young birds may affect recruitment to the adult breeding population.

The displacement of breeding Barn Owls within 2.5 km of major roads has been observed in the UK, so it will be very important to monitor the status of nesting pairs in proximity to the Tralee bypass over the coming breeding seasons.

Why owls are vulnerable

To mitigate the impact of roads on wildlife populations, it is vital to understand the factors which influence roadway mortality. For Barn Owls, several studies have shown that risk of collision on major roads may be influenced by the characteristics of the route, including the presence and width of roadside grass verges and the elevation of the route compared with the



Study area around the M8 in County Tipperary.



Barn Owl nest site near Cashel, Co Tipperary

JOHN LUSBY

surrounding landscape. Along the Tralee bypass, however, Barn Owl mortality seems to occur at random with respect to these features, which therefore makes the identification and prioritising of high-risk areas for mitigation much more difficult.

In addition, the main obstacle to implementing measures to reduce or prevent Barn Owl mortalities is the lack of effective, evidence-based and practical mitigation solutions.

Proposed mitigation measures have included the use of natural or artificial screens to deflect the flight path of Barn Owls above the height of traffic, or management of the grass verges to reduce their suitability for foraging Barn Owls.

There are, however, potential health and safety as well as engineering considerations which can conflict with the application of these mitigation measures on major roads, and the effectiveness of these measures have not been adequately evaluated.

It is clear that there is a need for evidence-based mitigation measures which are proven to be effective in reducing Barn Owl mortality on major roads and which are also compatible with relevant environmental, engineering and road design constraints.

Focus on M8 motorway

Acknowledging the need to address the gaps in our knowledge on the relationship between Barn Owls and major roads, a new research initiative through **Transport Infrastructure Ireland** and **BirdWatch Ireland** was launched earlier this year. This study will build on existing knowledge and employ new approaches to assessing how Barn Owls interact with roads, specifically focusing on the M8 motorway in south Tipperary, as well as the Tralee bypass.

Dr Vincent O'Malley, Head of Environmental Policy and Compliance with TII, commented: "TII is supporting this research to enhance our knowledge of Barn Owl behaviour and to ensure that all future road schemes are designed with appropriate mitigation measures to minimise Barn Owl mortalities."

An obvious constraint on studying Barn Owl foraging behaviour is the fact that they are nocturnal, which limits our ability to observe their movements by conventional means. This season, for the first time, lightweight GPS (Global Positioning System) data loggers were used to track movements of Barn Owls. The data loggers were fitted to the back of breeding adults, using a temporary attachment method (under licence from the NPWS and the BTO). These allowed the owls' precise movements to be followed over a period of 7-10 nights and revealed amazing detail on their foraging behaviour:

We always expected that Barn Owls might be attracted to and forage along the verge habitats of major roads, but now we are able to see just how important these edge habitats are for Barn Owls, how they hunt along them, where they perch along the roadside and even



The owl's small mammal prey, including Greater White-toothed Shrew, inset, is being surveyed along the M8 motorway. Photos: John Lusby



where they capture prey before returning to the nest. This is invaluable information to help us understand how birds interact with major roads.

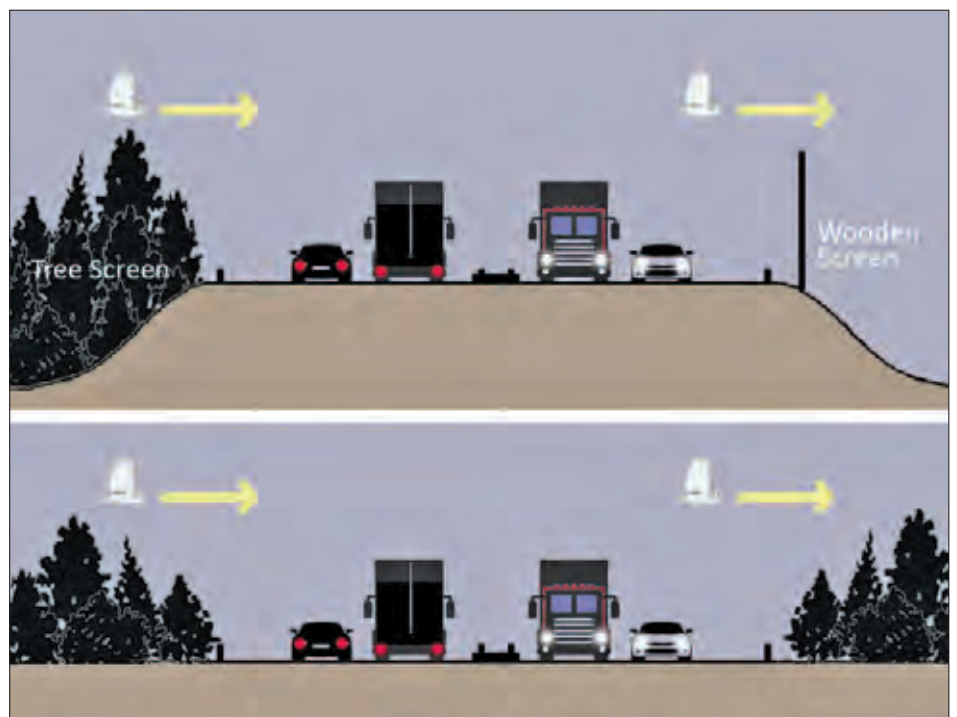
One of the reasons why Barn Owls may be attracted to roadside verges is because of their suitability for their small mammal prey. Live-trapping surveys along the M8 motorway in south Tipperary were carried out this autumn, when small mammal numbers were at their annual peak, to determine how species assemblages and small mammal abundances differ between motorway habitats and the surrounding countryside.

The challenge will be to use this information alongside data on the locations of road mortalities and data on the foraging behaviour and movements of Barn Owls to develop an understanding of the factors which influence risk of collision for Barn Owls; this needs to be properly understood before considerations turn to possibilities for developing mitigation.

➡ Thanks to all who have contributed to this research through reporting sightings and information and assisting with monitoring of nest sites, and to all landowners who have allowed access to their lands. For updates on the project see www.irishraptors.blogspot.ie.

➡ To assist this research, please report any information on dead Barn Owls found on roads to John Lusby at jlusby@birdwatchireland.ie.

➡ Research on Barn Owls and major roads is funded by **Transport Infrastructure Ireland**. Survey work on the M8 motorway is facilitated and assisted by **Egis Lagan Services**.



Possible mitigation measures for reducing Barn Owl road casualties include tree and wooden screens.

Roseate Tern LIFE Project

Roseate Terns on Rockabill, Co Dublin, in summer 2016. **Photograph:** Brian Burke

Daniel Picc, Stephen Newton and Paul Morrison report on a great new partnership

The Roseate Tern LIFE project started in October 2015 and got off to a great start in its first nesting season, with almost 2,000 pairs nesting across Britain and Ireland in 2016. The principal partners in this five-year project are **RSPB, BirdWatch Ireland** and the **North Wales Wildlife Trust**, with work extending across Britain, Ireland and France.

The work includes wardening, nestbox provision, predator management and island biosecurity at the principal colonies – located in Rockabill, Co Dublin; Lady’s Island Lake, Co Wexford; Coquet Island off Amble on the Northumberland coast, northeast England; and in Brittany, France.

Work is also being undertaken in all other Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for Roseate Terns, to improve habitat condition and encourage recolonisation by Roseates, while also protecting their Common and Arctic Terns. These sites include the Forth Islands (Scotland); Anglesey (Ynys Feurig, Cemlyn Bay and Skerries), (Wales); Larne Lough (Northern Ireland); and the Solent, beside the Isle of Wight (England).

We are also conducting a long-term assessment of management options throughout the Roseate Tern’s European range, taking into consideration climate change and other drivers.

We will be looking into demographic processes for each of the main colonies, and testing GPS and boat-tracking methods in preparation for next season. We have also commissioned a survey of wintering Roseates in Ghana, including a re-assessment of the trapping issue.

It was a record year for Roseates on Rockabill, with 1,556 pairs, continuing the upward trend there. Elsewhere, 209 pairs bred on Lady’s Island Lake. The only viable UK colony – the RSPB-managed Coquet Island – supported 104 pairs, while in France there was an increase from 32 pairs to 50 pairs. Overall, for the whole of northwest Europe, there was an increase of 9% on 2015 numbers.

Daniel Picc, RSPB Roseate Tern LIFE Project Manager



LIFE14NAT/UK/000394

This LIFE project is supported by the National Parks and Wildlife Service and Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council



CÓILÍN MACLOCHLAINN

Roseate Tern colonies in Europe (red) and where we hope to restore them (blue). In France, Roseates breed in mixed tern colonies in Brittany (the main one is Île aux Dames, Morlaix Bay). **Note:** Roseate Terns are found right across the globe, though everywhere in small numbers. Colonies in Ireland support most of the European population.



BIRDWATCH IRELAND

Roseate Terns doing well in Ireland

When BirdWatch Ireland began its Roseate Tern conservation work back in 1989, Ireland had just 200 pairs. What a long way we have come!

Rockabill

The additional funds from the EU LIFE project are enabling us to increase the number of nest boxes on Rockabill and replace broken ones, and to create new tern terraces on the island so that more birds can nest.

About half of the pairs nest in boxes, with the rest out in the open. Over the years, we have found that the box-nesting pairs lay larger clutches and raise more chicks than the birds exposed to the elements.

Breeding results

Although the numbers nesting on Rockabill were at a record high (at 1,556 pairs), the number of young raised per pair – at an average of 0.66 – was down on last year.

Given that the mean clutch size (number of eggs) was 1.68, it appears that each pair lost one egg or chick.

Identifying the reasons why is not easy, but could include large gulls feeding on eggs; heavy downpours at hatching time; and a shortage of fish prey (though our observations at Rockabill showed that the parents were bringing fish to their chicks at about the normal rate).

Lady's Island Lake

The Lady's Island Lake colony is managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Roseate Tern numbers there were slightly down on 2015 but, at 209 pairs, this remains the second largest colony in Europe.

Breeding results

The mean clutch size was 1.43, with productivity at 1.08 young per pair – much better than at Rockabill (at 0.66). One reason why they may have had a better year is that virtually all of the pairs nested in boxes.

Dalkey Island

The third Irish colony involved in this EU LIFE project is Dalkey Island in south Dublin. It held 97 pairs of Arctic Terns this year; plus eight pairs of Common Terns, and happily, after an absence last year; a single pair of Roseate Terns (which made a breeding attempt).

During the summer, the South Dublin Branch ran its annual tern watch from the mainland at Coliemore Harbour, opposite the islands (about 300 m offshore). Hundreds of people came along to see the terns.

Breeding results

The Dalkey colony had very poor breeding success this year (like many tern colonies in the north Irish Sea). Mysteriously, most of the chicks disappeared in late June.

We will work to improve the site for all terns next year. Actions may include a rat eradication programme on Dalkey Island and adjacent Lamb Island, where most of the terns nest; the two are connected at low tide.

Stephen Newton, BirdWatch Ireland Senior Conservation Officer (Seabirds)



Roseate Tern incubating eggs on Rockabill, summer 2016. **Photograph:** Brian Burke

Coquet reaches 100!

Coquet Island, situated off the Northumberland coast, is the only regular UK breeding colony of Roseate Terns. Following an exchange visit to Rockabill in 2000, terracing and nest boxes were introduced to Coquet the following season. The impact was immediate and the trend of falling numbers halted. Subsequent years saw a steady increase from 34 nesting pairs to triple figures in 2015 and 2016.

Adjustments to the management of Coquet have been introduced, including minimising disturbance; providing better habitat for terns; adding shingle to the terraces; and putting in place round-the-clock safeguards against egg thieves.

The Roseate Tern LIFE programme added extra support for these efforts, enabling the purchase of a purpose-built

hide for RSPB staff to conduct night watches during the incubation period.

Also funded was a live video stream to the internet, giving visual access to the bird spectacle without disturbance – thousands of people enjoyed the antics of the terns and Puffins on the terraces. Do check it out next year at www.rspb.org.uk/coquetlive.

Breeding results

With bad weather in late spring, many of the Common and Arctic Tern nests on Coquet failed, as eggs chilled in the rain. Better weather in late summer gave them a second chance and birds re-laid everywhere, even on the paths. The Roseate Tern numbers held, with 104 nesting pairs producing 91 fledglings – a reasonable productivity index of 0.88.

Paul Morrison, RSPB Reserve Manager



Part of the tern colony on Lamb Island, Dalkey, where a pair of Roseates made a breeding attempt this year. **Photo:** A Butler

View from the Farm Gate

A series exploring opportunities to balance farming and the environment in Ireland

For the past two years (or eight issues of *Wings*), **Alex Copland** has been travelling around Ireland and looking at farms where wildlife conservation forms part of the day-to-day activities. In this final instalment of the series, he looks back at the journey, recalls some of the stories he heard and casts an eye to the future of farming and wildlife in the wider countryside.

Irish farmers with foresight and vision

There is no doubt that the “Farm Gate” series in *Wings* has been something of a revelation for me. Despite writing articles for the magazine for over fifteen years, I have never had a response like the one this series has generated. Every article that appeared resulted in emails from readers complimenting the piece (rare enough in my experience) and, perhaps more encouragingly, messages from farmers keen to share their experiences or seeking advice or more information on the places featured. To everyone who responded, a huge “Thank you,” and please do keep your responses coming – all are read and all are appreciated.

Of course, the series in itself has been a pleasure to put together. I’ve been able to take you to some amazing places – from Cork to Donegal, from Clare and Connemara to Wexford, and around the midlands to Offaly and Roscommon (twice).

Some of the settings have been truly spectacular, such as the farm of Peter Walsh and Marie Louise Heffernan in the mountains of Connemara (I may have already declared a long-term interest in the uplands), but some of you may have been more enlivened by Boyd Bryce’s farm on the shores of Lough Swilly, Pdraig Corcoran’s on the shores of Lough Ree, Tommy Earley’s on the shores of Lough Allen or Will Warham’s on the banks of the Slaney. Others again may have taken more inspiration from the farms set in more “ordinary” landscapes, such as Donal Sheehan’s farm in Cork, Joe Deering’s in Offaly, or Mark Wilson Pierce’s in Clare.

Although we could debate favourites, whatever the setting, all the farms featured were undoubtedly special due to one thing: the farmers whose vision and enthusiasm had created them. None of the

farms featured were farmed in an “ordinary” way – no ‘farming by numbers’ or ‘box-ticking’ here. Rather, all the farmers were doing things differently to the mainstream.

Perhaps it is best to think of these farmers as environmental entrepreneurs with the foresight to come up with new or different ideas and the courage to break the mould and actually give it a go.

The other feature common to all the farmers was their willingness to share their experiences and also the enthusiasm they had for passing on their knowledge to anyone who would listen. To all of them, I would like to pass on my heartfelt thanks, not just for what they are doing as advocates for the environment, but also for their hospitality and help: again it is hugely appreciated.

So, what have we learned from this journey? Almost all the farms featured participate in some type of **agri-environment scheme**, such as REPS, AEOS or GLAS, that has paid for some environmental actions. However, and without exception, all the farms have undertaken works and actions to protect and enhance the environment at their own expense. This is a reflection not just of the



Barn Owl
Photo:
Noel Marry



Boyd Bryce

Will Warham

Donal Sheehan

Pdraig Corcoran



View from Creghill Farm in Letterfrack, Co Galway, farmed by Peter Walsh and Marie Louise Heffernan. **Photograph: Alex Copland**

“These farmers are environmental entrepreneurs with the foresight to come up with new or different ideas and the courage to break the mould”

positive enthusiasm and commitment the farmers have, but of the lack of supports available to farmers (and other land managers) seeking to protect wildlife.

Agri-environment schemes (however good they might be) are only one tool and must be seen as part of a larger toolbox to protect our countryside. Additional schemes and supports are urgently required, particularly for one-off capital projects (such as putting in ponds or building bird hides) or that are tailored to local issues and problems (such as targeting “conservation” grazing for specific habitats).

BirdWatch Ireland continues to actively engage with a range of stakeholders to ensure that such schemes and measures are a priority for support and funding.

In addition to direct conservation actions, there is a general feeling amongst the farmers that the delivery of an improved environment, be it in the shape of beautiful landscapes or more wildlife, needs to be better rewarded. Labelling produce to attract higher prices may be one solution, but, to do this, a wider appreciation and understanding of the “public goods” that farming provides (i.e. goods that are not

rewarded on commodity markets like beef, milk or grain), and the value of them, needs to be realised. Of course, any such labelling needs to be based on the actual delivery of these public goods – consumers need to see the evidence that the environmental benefits for which they are paying a premium are actually being delivered.

Of course, it is not just up to farmers to deliver an improved countryside for birds, biodiversity and the environment generally. As consumers, it is our decisions on what and where we buy our food that shape agri-food policies at national and (for Ireland) EU level.

If we consume less (for a start, by eliminating food waste), or consume better (buying locally or seasonally), it places less pressure on resources to produce that food which, ultimately, leads to less pressure on the land, thereby leaving more space for nature.

This – leaving more space for nature – is a harder issue to resolve, requiring a wider buy-in at political level as well as support from consumers; nevertheless this is a key requirement for a sustainable agri-food sector.

It is worth noting that this debate is very active. With EU institutions and organisations (including BirdLife partners such as BirdWatch Ireland) looking at the future of agriculture beyond 2020, now is the time for voices in the debate to be heard. Food for thought, I hope?

► **If you are farming with an eye for wildlife and would like to share your experiences, we'd love to hear from you. Please contact Alex Copland at acopland@birdwatchireland.ie.**



Joe Deering

Tommy Earley

Peter Walsh

Marie Louise Heffernan

Mark Wilson Pierce



Featuring water

Small pond fed by rainwater from a roof gutter. **Photograph:** Lynn O’Keeffe-Lascar

Lynn O’Keeffe-Lascar continues her series on gardening for wildlife. In this instalment she explores the possibilities for providing water features in gardens big and small, and how to install them.

NUTAN PHOTOGRAPHY



In this and subsequent issues I’m going to give you advice to help you create a beautiful ornamental garden that will provide food and shelter for birds and other wild creatures, with only some nettles and brambles! By making some simple changes or

plant choices you can easily, and in any space, grow food and habitat for wildlife.

The water feature

The water feature is back in fashion. For a while there it was all decking and paving, with a bamboo in the corner; but now ponds, fountains and streams are all in vogue.

Last May, the Chelsea Flower Show – the gardening equivalent of the Paris fashion shows – was literally overflowing with water... into rivulets, streams, bowls and sculpted urns. These are great for wildlife, including birds, so in this issue we’ll take a look at the role of water in the garden – especially how it allows birds to drink and wash and provides some food.

In the first of two articles on the subject, I’ll cover what kind of water feature would suit your garden, and the basics of

installation. Then, in the second, I’ll cover the planting-up of the water and the margins.

Will adding a pond to your garden help wildlife?

Well, take a look around your area. If you have a stream, lake or swampy field nearby, then the answer is, ‘Not really.’

You could always put in a cute bird bath as a garden feature, but the birds will probably bathe in a roadside puddle anyway!

If you’re surrounded by tilled farmland, good grazing, woodland or a concrete jungle – places where surface water is rare – then your garden would benefit from having water.

The second question is, how much water?

As much or as little as you like! You can stay really small – even a plastic plant-pot bottom with a few round, mossy stones in it, kept wet, will provide perfect drinking for butterflies, bees and other flying insects. They like to land on a stone and drink from damp moss. Check it once a week to see if it is drying out or getting dirty, and top up accordingly.

A **bird bath** is a lovely addition to any garden. They come in an array of styles and provide entertainment: watch the birds splash and wash. Bathing birds never relax; their eyes are always peeled for trouble as they need to be able to fly away at a moment’s notice.

When choosing a bird bath, make sure it’s very shallow. If you have a deep one (I mean,

over 5cm deep) and you find birds don’t use it, then place some rounded stones in the bottom.

Sloping sides allow birds to bathe at any depth and get out safely. A bird bath requires weekly slopping out and refilling.

Ponds

Of course, what we’re mainly interested in here is a pond. This is a deeper source of water; a habitat in and of itself, as well as a water source for drinking.

Ponds play host to water insects such as pond skaters, water boatmen and the larvae of dragonflies and midges, and they provide a habitat for amphibians such as frogs and



Emperor Dragonfly
Photo: Michael O’Donnell

newts. There are plants, algae and insects that live exclusively in water; as well as bigger species like fish, depending on pond size.

If you have a small, courtyard-type garden then a **large planter** or **half-barrel** would fit in nicely. All you need to do is block up the hole in the planter or line the half-barrel with pond-liner and you're ready. It's a good idea to add bricks or stones to create a shallow end so anything that falls in can get back out.

Preformed liners can be bought in some garden centres and online: a quick Google search found liners available in Ireland from €40 for a wee 80-litre pond, up to €330 for a 1,000-litre one.

They come in various shapes and sizes, but you need to dig your hole perfectly to fit the form and make sure it's level. If you have beautiful soil that is easy to dig, or the lend of a mini-digger, then this is for you! Alternatively, it can go above ground in a raised bed.

If you want a **natural-looking pond**, a large pond or an unusually-shaped pond, then the easiest way to create one is to use **pond liner**, costing around €10/m². This impermeable plastic won't degrade or crack in sunshine and is thick enough not to puncture easily. It also allows you to create tapered edges of gravel or sand, or mossy stones, or even 'swampy' edges where the plastic is buried under soil and planted up with bog plants.

It's a good idea to have at least one area of the pond 90cm deep so that the water remains cool in sunny weather:

KEES HERDER



Ornamental garden pond with shallow side with marginal plants, allowing creatures to enter and exit safely.

Larger ponds will just have to rise and fall in level depending on rainfall. This is where a tapered or sloping gravelly edge works well, keeping any plastic well hidden. Again, levels are vital, so fill your pond before finishing off edges and trimming plastic.

Ponds are best sited where there is some summer shade, and preferably where it can be viewed from the house. A pond can be a great addition to a garden, adding light and reflections, as well as the entertaining antics of wildlife. Be aware that they can pose a hazard to small children, so fence off or grille over, if necessary.

Further information

- **Lynn O'Keeffe-Lascar** is an outreach horticulturist based in Co Galway who is involved in school and community gardening, teaching adults and transition-year students and helping Tidy Towns groups. She also works in Portumna Castle Gardens. She can be contacted at lynnsirishgardens@gmail.com or you can send her a tweet at [@OkeeffeLynn](https://twitter.com/OkeeffeLynn).

- See the **Garden Bird Year** blog by BirdWatch Ireland's Oran O'Sullivan at <http://gardenbirdyear.blogspot.ie>.

LYNN O'KEEFFE-LASCAR



Raised garden pond. Vertical sides pose a risk for small creatures – provide a large rock, protruding over the side of the raised pond, so wildlife can enter and exit safely.

Water sources

You'll need a water source, and preferably not chlorinated tapwater. I have a pond that fills from a gutter from a small roof. A rainwater butt would be handy for top-ups to small ponds.



Common Frog
Photo: Andrew Kelly

Raven habitat in Wicklow uplands and, inset, Raven in flight showing distinctive wedge-shaped tail. Photos: Dick Coombes

Raven

Dick Coombes and **Mícheál Casey** discuss the Raven and its ongoing spread and increase in Ireland and Great Britain

The throaty croak of a Raven echoing off a cliff face or through stark winter woodland is one of the most evocative sounds in the Irish countryside. Once heard, it is not difficult to see how this mighty black crow gained such a place in myth and legend across many cultures, revered and reviled in equal measure as spiritual godlike symbol and omen of impending doom.

Our superstitious ancestors regarded Ravens as harbingers of death and destruction, not least because of their taste for carrion. They will peck an animal carcass clean – dead sheep and stillborn lambs these days, but historically they feasted on the bodies (flesh and eyes) of slain soldiers on the battlefield.

This may have led to the curious Welsh belief that sight would be restored to a blind person showing kindness to a Raven.

In Irish legend, the mortally wounded Cúchulainn famously tied himself to a tall stone, still clutching his sword, so he could proudly die standing. For three days after the great warrior died his enemies were unwilling to approach, until, that is, the mythical “Morrigan” (phantom queen) took the form of a Raven and landed on his shoulder, betraying that he was dead and no longer a threat.

While most of the stories and myths surrounding the Raven have sinister connotations – e.g., they were believed to be the souls of the damned (in Germany) or the ghosts of murdered people (in Sweden) – some cultures held the bird in the highest esteem. To the Haida Native Americans, the Raven was their creator god. Whatever way the species’ symbolism has been interpreted over millennia – as good or evil – all were powerful.

Rich and varied lifestyle

The Raven is the largest member of the crow family and, indeed, the largest passerine (perching bird) in the world. It has a vast global range which takes in most of the northern hemisphere, even into the high arctic as far as 80° north.

Ravens are found in all kinds of habitat types, including the extremes of deserts and high altitude. They occur around the Dead Sea, 1,200ft (360m) below sea level, and have been recorded at an astonishing 21,000ft (6,350m) on Mount Everest. At least eight subspecies are recognised across the species’ range.

In Ireland, we tend to associate Ravens with wild places – mountain moors, lonely corrie



rockfaces, islands, coastal cliffs – but more and more these days they are becoming a regular sight in gentler, more pastoral countryside, and sometimes even close to human habitation.

Just as their choice of habitat is rich and varied, so too is their diet – carrion mainly, but they will take live animals including rodents, lizards, frogs, birds (and their eggs) as well as berries, fruit, cereal grains and scavenged human refuse.

Breeding

Ravens are among our earliest breeding birds, along with Grey Herons, Dippers and Crossbills, and often can be incubating eggs by the end of February, when a dusting of snow may still be on the mountains. Whether by design or not, the timing of having hungry chicks in the nest coincides with the availability of placentas lying in the fields during the lambing season.

The nest, a bulky structure of twigs lined with animal fur or wool, is generally positioned on a remote ledge of a cliff or pinnacle, typically in



SCAZON

“The Raven and the First Men,” a wooden sculpture by Bill Reid in the University of British Columbia, Canada, representing a Haida Native American belief that the Raven was the god of creation.

Factfile

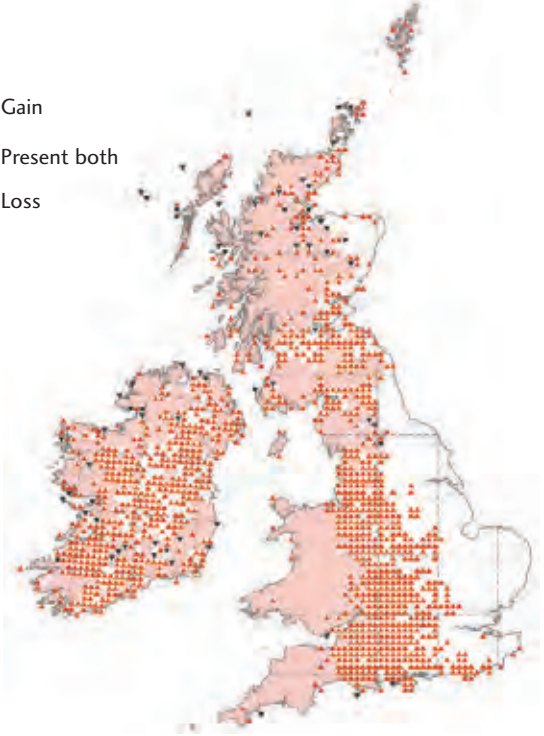
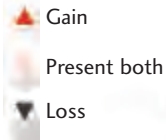
Common name: Raven

Scientific name: *Corvus corax*

Irish name: Fiach Dubh

Local names: Corbie Crow (Scotland), Marburan (Cornwall), Ralph, Brion

Lifespan: Captive birds in the Tower of London have lived for over 40 years. In the wild, average lifespan is 13 years. The oldest wild bird on record was 23.



Raven breeding distribution change between the breeding Atlas periods of 1988-1992 and 2008-2011. Note its return to Irish and English lowlands. **Source:** *Bird Atlas 2007-11*, courtesy of BTO.



Raven in Scots Pine. **Photo:** Dick Coombes

mountainous regions, but also by the sea. In the lowlands, ruined buildings, quarries and mature trees provide alternative sites. Three to seven eggs are laid.

Ravens tend to be faithful to established sites over time and they command large territories – a study in Connemara showed that, in suitable breeding habitat, nests were typically 3 km apart.

February is a good time to witness their aerial antics, a series of tumbles through the sky on half-folded wings, usually ending with a roll – the bird momentarily flying upside-down.

Intelligence

The Raven's powers of reasoning, learning and communication have been well studied, and some researchers have concluded that the bird's mental abilities are at least comparable to (if not better than) the great apes.'

Bernd Heinrich conducted many experiments to test their problem-solving capabilities: one bird took just 30 seconds to figure out how to hoist a food item suspended on a string.

In a field trial, a bird shown a pile of food in the forest flew to a roost of Ravens some distance away, only to return the next day with the flock – news of the food horde had been communicated to the others.

Primarily opportunistic carrion-eaters, dependent on other birds or mammals to make the kill, Ravens need to adapt to rapidly-changing circumstances – a new food source could appear anywhere and will not be available for long. An active brain which can develop communication skills and good memory is a key part of this iconic bird's success.

Population trend

Ravens were considered to be plentiful in Ireland in the nineteenth century, but persecution by gamekeepers and sheep farmers brought the population to a very low level: in 1900, none bred in at least seven counties, including Dublin and Wexford.

Recovery began early in the twentieth century. An estimate of 3,500 pairs breeding in Ireland, published in 2000 in *The State of the*

Nations' Birds, is probably on the high side. Our Countryside Bird Survey results show a decline since 1998, but the latest Bird Atlas (2007-2011) clearly indicates that a major, longer-term range expansion (and therefore increased abundance) has occurred since the 1970s.

Since the 1968-72 Bird Atlas, the Raven's breeding range in Ireland has increased by 95%. Today, the species occurs in 86% of 10-km squares, the midlands and northeast being the latest regions to be colonised.

Sligo project

Sligo Branch members **Mícheál Casey** and **David McNicholas** have been ringing Raven chicks in their nests under permit for several years in Co Sligo, often in challenging terrain, and have built up a good inventory of nest sites (including alternative nest sites, as many pairs switch sites within their territory from year to year).

The study has shown that Sligo's Ravens are doing quite well productivity-wise, having recovered rapidly from a very low ebb when poisoning was legal and widely practiced in Ireland. Last spring, several broods of five chicks were recorded and ringed.

They note that many Raven sites in Co Sligo were first brought to their attention by hillwalkers and farmers, many



Raven chicks in cliff nest in Sligo. **Photo:** David McNicholas

of whom are fond of their local 'guardians of the hills.'

They welcome any reports of Raven nests in Co Sligo – please write to the Sligo Branch at

birdwatchsligo@gmail.com.

Similar Raven monitoring projects in Mayo, Connemara and Wicklow are using colour rings, so please report any sightings of these to

<http://www.ring.ac>.

Mícheál and David would

like to acknowledge the assistance of the **Sligo-Leitrim Mountain Rescue Team** whose volunteers help them gain access to Raven eyries on cliffs and crags. They would also like to thank the **landowners and quarry owners** who give them access to their properties for monitoring Raven nests. Without their co-operation this work would not be possible.



Branching out

Members of the Monaghan Branch pictured during the Bioblitz event in Rossmore Park, Monaghan, held as part of Heritage Week in August. Photo: Joe Shannon

To include news from your branch in *Branching Out*, please email **Niall Hatch** at nhatch@birdwatchireland.ie



Lapwing at Rogerstown Estuary, Dublin. Photograph: Paul Lynch

Rogerstown Estuary Lapwing study Paul Lynch (Fingal Branch)

The Fingal Branch has been carrying out a breeding survey of Lapwing at Rogerstown Estuary in Dublin for the last two years. After an absence of about 30 years, a pair of Lapwings bred there in 2008 and their breeding numbers have been growing ever since.

The Lapwings use several wet fields beside the estuary, with varying levels of vegetation, which in some cases makes surveying very difficult. They like to nest in an open area where they have good views of any approaching predators, and they rely on the camouflage of the eggs and chicks to keep them hidden. After hatching, the chicks feed near pools and use the vegetation for cover.

In 2015, there were 13 confirmed nests, with a minimum of 20 chicks hatched; at least 12 of these fledged. Casualties resulted from bad weather; trampling by livestock and predation from crows and possibly from Kestrel, Buzzard and even Short-eared Owls.

2016 saw the number of nests increase to at least sixteen – quite a remarkable number. We noted that 21 chicks hatched; five fledged chicks were observed in mid-July, though others may have moved on by then. Unusually, all birds had left by August, possibly to nearby Swords Estuary.

Fingal elects new chairman Fingal Branch

The Fingal Branch congratulates **Paul Lynch** on his election as the incoming chairman of the branch. The branch also wishes to sincerely thank **Paul Denny**, outgoing branch chairman, for his years of service. Paul Denny will continue his invaluable work on the back benches as a committee member.

Fingal members visit Shenick Island Jim English (Fingal Branch)

Shenick Island is the oldest BirdWatch Ireland reserve in the Fingal area, dating back to 1987, when a management agreement was signed between the owner, the late Jim McDonough, and BirdWatch Ireland. The island, which is now owned by Fran McDonough, lies about one kilometre off the Skerries coast in north Co Dublin and is just over six hectares in area. It can be accessed at low spring tides for about an hour. However, as it is still in private ownership, permission must be obtained before crossing over to it, and care must also be taken not to get cut off by the incoming tide.

One of the best and safest ways of seeing the island and its wildlife is to join the annual Shenick walk, organised by the Fingal Branch (almost) every year, when tides allow. This year, on July 24th, seventy people took part in an enjoyable early-morning walk to the island. The weather was misty early on but it cleared to allow good views of the surrounding islands, including Rockabill, the largest Roseate Tern colony in Europe. The Cormorant colony on St Patrick's Island could easily be seen with the naked eye.

On Shenick itself, we had good views of Fulmars (small numbers breed there), Oystercatchers, Ringed Plovers and – watched diving offshore – Common and Sandwich Terns.

A Grey Heron was fishing in rockpools on the eastern side of the island and, of course, Great Black-backed and Herring Gulls were there in numbers too. Herring Gulls breed there every year. A couple of seals showed also. However, the sighting of the morning was a family of Eider ducks which swam close to the north of the island. They have been breeding on St Patrick's for the last number of years.

An incoming tide was our signal to leave and to head back to the mainland for breakfast.

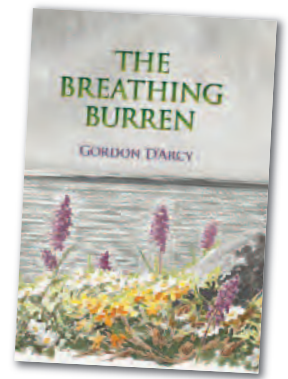
JIM ENGLISH



Fingal Branch members on a rare visit to Shenick Island, Skerries, in July.

Crossword No 53

Complete this crossword correctly and you are in with a chance to win a copy of *The Breathing Burren*, by Gordon D'Arcy, published by the Collins Press, Cork, a book valued at €24.99. Send your entry to BirdWatch Ireland Crossword Competition, Unit 20, Block D, Bullford Business Campus, Kilcoole, Co Wicklow, to arrive not later than Friday 10th December 2016. The winner of Crossword No 52 was Brendan Ingoldsby from Balbriggan, Co Dublin. Brendan won a copy of *Doorstep Wilderness: A Wilder Side of Dublin*, by Paul Hughes.



1				2		3		4		5
6								7		
8	9					10				11
12										13
14		15		16		17				
18				19						
20						21				

Clues

Across

- General name for type of bird that feeds in shallow water or on mudflat (5).
- Sound used to replace censored word on television broadcast (5).
- Unlawful or prohibited (7).
- To mimic, also large primate (3).
- Large and powerful bird of noble mien (5).
- To provide or bequeath a fund to, for example, a college (5).
- Motorbike race on Isle of Man (1,1).
- Washington State, in short, or Western Australia (2).
- Very large, long-legged type of bird that stalks fish in shallow water (5).
- Flashy or ostentatious jewellery (5).
- Belonging to oneself (3).
- West Indian island which boasts an endemic dove (7).
- If a songbird went on Twitter, what would it do? (5).
- Flat piece of medal awarded in, for example, sporting competition (5).

Down

- Common migrant warbler named for colour of throat (11).
- Reconnaissance, in military slang (5).
- To go in water for a wash, or to swim for pleasure (5).
- An antelope of the African plains (5).
- A small, long-tailed, black-and-white bird of farmyard and roadsides (4,7).
- Consumed (3).
- To possess or have (3).
- Wash out a Serin in clean water (5).
- Type of 14 across, such as Black-crowned (5).
- A greenish, deep-bodied freshwater fish popular with anglers (5).

CROSSWORD compiled by COLIN MACLOHLAINN

SWAROVSKI OPTIK	 EL 'FieldPro' 8x32 £1475 10x32 £1495 8.5x42 £1800 10x42 £1820 CL Pocket 8x25 £505 10x25 £549 SLC 8x42 £1205 10x42 £1260 8x56 £1475 10x56 £1520 ATX/STX 65mm 25-60x £2205 85mm 25-60x £2675 95mm 30-70x £2945 PLUS FREE ACE STAY-ON-CASE WORTH OVER £100 	 Ultravid HD+ 8x32 £1279 10x32 £1289 7x42 £1389 8x42 £1439 10x42 £1489 8x50 £1479 10x50 £1539 12x50 £1639 NEW Noctivid 8x42 £2025 10x42 £2080 Televid Televid 87 Angled/Straight & 25-50x £2199 Televid 65 Angled/Straight & 25-50x £1799 	Leica
ZEISS	 NEW Victory SF 8x42 £2089 10x42 £2125 Conquest HD 8x32 £589 10x32 £599 8x42 £699 10x42 £729 Terra ED 8x25 £229 10x25 £249 Gavia Conquest Gavia 85 inc. 30-60x £1595 	 TSN-883/884 BUNDLE -TSN-883/884 scope body -TSE-14WD 25-60xW eyepiece -C-881 Stay-on-Case £1999 BD XD 8x32 £309 8x42 £449 10x42 £479 NEW GENESIS 22 8x22 £595 10x22 £615 	Kovax
Canon	 Image Stabilised 8x25 £265 10x30 III £409 12x36 III £619 15x50 £889 18x50 £1049 10x42 L £1299	 Lite Compact & Ultralite 8x28 Lite £169 10x28 Lite £189 8x32 Ultralite £169 Lite 8x32 Lite £179 8x42 Lite £199 10x42 Lite £209 10x50 Lite £229 MultiView Variable-angle Spotting Scope 80mm 20-60x £339 EyeShields Available from £11.50...	AVIAN

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What's on guide

EVENTS AND TALKS – NOVEMBER 2016 TO FEBRUARY 2017

Except where it is indicated, all events are free and open to all age groups, all members, and to non-members and beginners and experts alike. Children under fourteen years of age must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Warm waterproof clothing and footwear is recommended for all outdoor events.




Note 1: Many of our branches have websites or Facebook pages which provide information on local events and talks – please find further details in the listings below. Any queries, please email info@birdwatchireland.ie.

Note 2: Outdoor events listed here may change if bad weather is forecasted.



Branch	November	December	January	February
Carlow To be included on emailing list, write to: powera2@tcd.ie Find us on Facebook (Wild Carlow) • Andrew Power (sec), 087 745 8436, powera2@tcd.ie • Paul Cutler (chair), 086 896 8794, pcutler10@hotmail.com	 Sun 20th River Barrow walk. Meet in St Mullin's at 9am.	Sat 10th Outing to Wexford Wildfowl Reserve. Meet in reserve car park at 11am.	Sun 15th Outing to Oak Park Forest Park. Meet in car park at 9.30am.	 Greenland White-fronted Geese
Cavan www.cavanbranch.blogspot.ie  Find us on Facebook To be included on emailing list, write to: cavanbirdwatching@gmail.com See also <i>The Anglo Celt (Cavan News)</i> • Ashley Wynne (sec), 087 773 5487 cavanbirdwatching@gmail.com • PJ Byrne (chair), 086 261 4220	November Dundalk Bay outing. Date dependent on tides. Check blog or Facebook for date later. We will meet in front of the Spirit Store, George's Quay, Dundalk, at 11am.	Sun 11th Shannon Callows outing. Meet in SuperValu car park, Main Street, Banagher, Co Offaly, at 11am.	Sun 8th I-WeBS bird count. Meet in Drumlane Abbey car park, Milltown, at 10am, if you want to take part in it.	Sun 5th Outing to shores of Lough Sheelin. Meet at Crover House Hotel, Mountnugent, at 10am.
Clare www.clarebirdwatching.com • Tom Lynch, (065) 682 2145 (H) tnaclynch@gmail.com • Austin Cooney, (065) 682 4804 No dogs on outings, please	Sat 26th Joint outing with Limerick Branch to Curraghchase Forest Park to look for Brambling, Jay, Hawfinch, etc. Meet in the forest park car park at 9.30am.	Sat 10th Outing to Ballyallia Lake near Ennis to see Wigeon, Teal, Gadwall, Tufted Duck, etc. Meet opposite Lake Stores, Ballyallia, at 11am.	Sat 21st Outing to Seafield, Quilty, to see waders on the beach. Great site for Purple Sandpipers. Meet at the pier in Seafield at 11am.	Sat 18th A visit to Clonderlaw Bay to see Redshank, Greenshank, Black-tailed Godwit, Curlew, etc. Meet at Labasheeda Church at 11am.
Cork www.birdwatchcork.com  Find us on Facebook Emailing list: info@birdwatchcork.com Text or email sign-up: 087 2734 975 • Paul Moore, 087 690 8108 paulwmoore01@gmail.com • Conor O'Keefe, calabkilworth@gmail.com • Donal Sheehan, dcsheehan@eircom.net	Tues 1st <i>Whales and whale-watching in Cork</i> , by Pádraig Whooley (IWDG). SMA Hall, Wilton, 8pm. Sun 13th Outing to the new hide at Harpers Island, led by Paul Moore. Meet in Glounthane Railway Station at 2.30pm.	Tues 6th <i>From Cape Horn to the Galapagos: the birds of the Pacific</i> , by Jim Wilson. SMA Hall, Wilton, 8pm.	Sun 1st New Year's Day outing to Douglas Estuary with Tony Nagle. Meet in car park adjacent to Harty's Quay apts, Rochestown Rd, 2pm. Tues 17th <i>Barn Owls in Munster</i> , by John Lusby (Raptor Conservation Officer). SMA Hall, Wilton, 8pm.	 Barn Owl (Richard Mills)
West Cork  www.birdwatchirelandwestcork.ie Find us on Facebook To be put on emailing list, write to: mailinglist@birdwatchirelandwestcork.ie • Paul Connaughton (chair), 086 199 3613, chairman@birdwatchirelandwestcork.ie • Nicholas Mitchell (sec), 023 882 1640 or 087 121 5256 secretary@birdwatchirelandwestcork.ie	Sun 20th Come birdwatching with us at Croagh Bay. Meet at 12.30pm at Lowertown South church on R592, four kilometres west of Schull, for car pooling. Leader: Paul Hadland.	Sun 4th Outing to The Gearagh, on River Lee, to see wintering birds. Meet at northside car park on Inchigeelagh Road (R584) at 11am. Leader: John Lynch. Wed 28th Christmas outing. Meet at Celtic Ross Hotel car park at 11am. Leader: Paul Connaughton.	Sun 29th Inaugural West Cork Bird Race. Starts Scally's car park, Clonakilty, 8.30am. Finishes O'Donovan's Hotel, Clonakilty, 5.30pm. Teams of four, no entry fee. Register by email to Nicholas Mitchell. Details on website.	Sun 12th Outing to Bantry Bay for gulls and divers. Meet opposite West Lodge Hotel, Bantry (on N71) at 11am. Leader: Noel Linehan.
Donegal To be included on emailing list, write to: ethnadiver@hotmail.com • Liz Sheppard (074) 914 7129 rsheppard@eircom.net • Ethna Diver ethnadiver@hotmail.com	Sat 12th Outing to Inch Lough. Meet in car park by embankment, 10am. Reached by turning left at Burt Church (coming from Letterkenny) and proceeding straight on for about one mile.	 Donegal Bay (John Menard)	Sat 14th Outing to Donegal Bay. Meet at the far end of the quay, Donegal town, at 10am.	Sat 4th Outing to Lough Swilly. Meet at Ramelton Quay at 10am.

Branch	November	December	January	February
Dublin Fingal www.bwifingal.ie , @bwifingal • Paul Lynch (chair), 087 631 9209 james.english046@gmail.com • Frank Prendergast (sec), 087 131 9884, frank.prendergast@dit.ie • James English, 087 234 5198 james.english046@gmail.com All indoor talks in Skerries Rugby Club at 8.30pm.	Tues 1st <i>The life and times of Rockabil's Roseates</i> , by Dr Steve Newton (BirdWatch Ireland). Skerries Rugby Club, 8.30pm. Sat 5th I-WeBS bird count, Rogerstown Estuary. If you would like to join our counters, meet in Plant World Garden Centre car park, Blake's Cross, N1, at 1pm. Sat 12th Outing to Wexford Slobs. Check branch website for details later.	Sat 3rd I-WeBS bird count, Rogerstown Estuary. If you would like to join our counters, meet in Plant World Garden Centre car park, Blake's Cross, N1, at 11.30am.	Fri 27th Great Annual Table Quiz. Support BirdWatch Ireland conservation projects in Fingal. Skerries Rugby Club, 8.30pm. Sat 14th I-WeBS bird count, Rogerstown Estuary. If you would like to join our counters, meet in Plant World Garden Centre car park, Blake's Cross, N1, at 11am.	Tues 7th <i>My local patch</i> , by Joe Curtis. Skerries Rugby Club, 8.30pm. Sat 11th I-WeBS count, Rogerstown Estuary. Meet in Plant World Garden Centre car park, Blake's Cross, N1, at 10am. Sat 25th Field outing to be arranged (in conjunction with another branch). Details later.
Dublin South www.southdublinbirds.com All talks in Fitzpatrick's Castle Hotel, Killiney, 8pm (free parking), on first Tuesday of each month from September to May. • Eleanor Keane, 087 644 6029, elekeane@gmail.com For bookings, email Eleanor or bookings@southdublinbirds.com	Tues 1st <i>A pencil, a brush and a bird on the brain</i> , by Wexford bird artist Dave Daly. Fitzpatrick's Castle Hotel, 8pm. Sun 6th Coach trip to Wexford. Bus leaves Dún Laoghaire ferry terminal at 8.30am. Booking necessary.	Tues 6th <i>Recent conservation efforts for vultures in the Balkans</i> , by Dr Ben Keatinge. Fitzpatrick's Castle Hotel, 8pm. Sun 11th Rogerstown Estuary field outing. Meet in Turvey car park at 10.30am.	Tues 3rd <i>Going Wild in South Dublin: A whistle-stop tour of its wildlife and factors that affect it</i> , by Éanna Ní Lamhna. Fitzpatrick's Castle Hotel, 8pm. Sun 8th Booterstown Marsh. Get close to our winter waders. Meet at Booterstown Dart Station, 10.30am.	Tues 7th <i>Branch birding in Bavaria: a report on the 2016 trip</i> , by Niall Hatch. Fitzpatrick's Castle Hotel, 8pm. Sun 12th Visit to Bull Island to see waders and ducks. Meet on North Bull Causeway at 10.30am.
Dublin Tolka www.dublinbirding.ie • Dermot McCabe 086 418 0241 dermot.mccabe@gmail.com All talks in Botanic Gardens Auditorium, Glasnevin, at 8pm (car park opens at 7.30pm) Bookings (when necessary) online at www.dublinbirding.ie or by email to dublinbirding@gmail.com	Thurs 17th <i>Dublin's Mediterranean Gulls</i> , by Sean Kingston (South Dublin Branch). Botanic Gardens Auditorium, 8pm (doors open 7.30pm). Sat 19th Car outing to Cabragh Wetlands, Co Tipperary. Meet at Botanic Gardens, 8am. Call Dermot if you need a lift.	Sat 17th Walk on Bull Island Causeway. Meet at 10.30am.	Thurs 19th <i>Birds of the Botanic Gardens</i> , by Niall Hatch (BirdWatch Ireland). Botanic Gardens Auditorium, 8pm (doors open 7.30pm). Sat 21st Outing to West Pier, Dún Laoghaire. Meet at Botanic Gardens, 9.30am, or West Pier, 10am. Call Dermot if you need a lift.	Thurs 16th <i>The Peregrine Falcon in Leinster</i> , by Ann Fitzpatrick, Conservation Ranger, NPWS. Botanic Gardens, 8pm (doors open 7.30pm). Sat 18th Car outing to Dundalk. Meet at Botanic Gardens, 8.30am. Call Dermot if you need a lift.
Galway www.birdwatchgalway.org neiljsharkey@gmail.com • Marianne ten Cate 087 237 8051 mariannetencate@gmail.com Short outing on first Sat of month (Sept-May) at Nimmo's Pier. • To receive branch e-newsletter, contact Neil Sharkey (above).	Sat 5th Outing at Nimmo's Pier, Galway, with Tom Cuffe. Meet at base of pier at 10.30am. Would suit both beginners and more experienced birdwatchers.	Sat 3rd Outing at Nimmo's Pier, Galway, with Tom Cuffe. Meet at base of pier at 10.30am. Would suit both beginners and more experienced birdwatchers.	Sat 7th Outing at Nimmo's Pier, Galway, with Tom Cuffe. Meet at base of pier at 10.30am. Would suit both beginners and more experienced birdwatchers.	Sat 4th Outing at Nimmo's Pier, Galway, with Tom Cuffe. Meet at base of pier at 10.30am. Would suit both beginners and more experienced birdwatchers.
Kildare www.birdwatchkildare.com birdwatchkildare@gmail.com All talks are held in Townhouse Hotel, Naas, Co Kildare, at 8pm • Paddy Sheridan (sec) 087 687 2939 paddy.sheridan0607@gmail.com • Tom McCormack (chair) 086 254 7424 tom.mccormack07@gmail.com .	Thurs 10th <i>The art of bird Identification: A forty-year perspective on birding and field guides</i> , by Killian Mullarney. Townhouse Hotel, 8pm. Sat 12th Outing to Cahore Marshes, Co Wexford. Meet in the car park in B&Q, Naas, at 7.45am for car pooling.	Thurs 8th <i>Inishbofin and its birds: an oasis for migrants and a remnant of rural Ireland, with birds of yesteryear</i> , by Anthony McGeehan. Townhouse Hotel, 8pm. Sat 10th Outing to Avoca, Co Wicklow, to see the Red Kites. Meet in the church car park, Avoca, at 10am.	Thurs 12th <i>The Merlin in Ireland: an elusive falcon</i> , by John Lusby (BirdWatch Ireland). Townhouse Hotel, 8pm. Sat 14th Outing to the Shannon Callows. Meet in the car park at Crank House, Banagher, at 10am.	Thurs 9th Quiz Night organised by Tom McCormack and Paddy Sheridan. We will split up into teams of four for this fun and entertaining way to identify feathers, used nests, birdsong, etc. Townhouse Hotel, 8pm. Sat 11th Outing to Bull Island, Dublin. Meet on the causeway at 9am.
Kilkenny Email birdwatchkilkenny@gmail.com to be included on emailing list. • Pat and Mary Durkin 05677 62130 patandmarydurkin@gmail.com • Ken Kinsella, 086 403 9523	Sat 12th Outing to Wexford Wildfowl Reserve (note change of date). Meet at Kilkenny Castle gates at 9.30am to car-pool, or in the car park at the reserve at 11am.	 Kingfisher (Tom Ormond)	Wed 18th <i>Kingfishers</i> , by Dominic Reddin (Mountmellick Camera Club). Heritage Council offices, Church Lane, Kilkenny, 8pm.	Wed 15th <i>Birds observed</i> , by Richard Dwyer, and a second talk, Birds of South Africa , by Ken Kinsella. Heritage Council offices, Church Lane, Kilkenny, 8pm.
Laois Email birdwatchlaois@gmail.com to be included on emailing list. Indoor talks on last Tues of month, Parish Centre, Portlaoise, at 8pm • Des Finnamore (sec), 086 229 1637, birdwatchlaois@gmail.com • Billy Burke (chair), 087 645 7535	Sat 12th <i>The secret lives of Ravens and other crows</i> , by Ricky Whelan (BirdWatch Ireland), Portlaoise Library, 2.30pm, followed by short walk to town park to watch Rooks going to roost. Tues 29th <i>All About raptors</i> , by John Lusby (Birdwatch Ireland). Parish Centre, Portlaoise, 8pm.	Sun 4th We will go on a walk. Details later on Facebook and by email.	Tues 31st <i>Birding on Loop Head, Co Clare</i> , by John N Murphy (birder and photographer). Parish Centre, Portlaoise, 8pm.	Sun 5th We will go on a walk. Details later on Facebook and by email.

Branch	November	December	January	February
Limerick To be put on emailing list, write to: birdwatchirelandlimerickbranch@gmail.com • Maura Turner, 087 792 7972 • Clodagh Glasgow, 087 635 5691 All taks in Shannon Rowing Club, Sarsfield Bridge, Limerick, at 8pm. No dogs on outings, please.	Wed 16th <i>The life of the ant: learn from its wise ways</i> , by Dr John Breen. Shannon Rowing Club, 8pm. Sat 26th Joint outing with Clare Branch to Curraghchase Forest Park to look for Brambling, Hawfinch, Jay, etc. Meet in the car park, 9.30am. Leaders: Gearóid Jackson, Tom Lynch.	Wed 7th <i>A voyage to the Ross Sea, Antarctica</i> , by Gerry Butler. Shannon Rowing Club, 8pm. Tues 27th Christmas visit to Westfields and other sites to see wintering swans, ducks and waders. Meet at Westfields, Limerick, 10am. Leader: Tom Tarpey.	Sat 14th Outing to Ross Castle, Killarney, to see waterbirds, Chiffchaffs, etc. Meet in car park, 10.30am (we may hire bus in Limerick: check Facebook later). Leader: Davey Farrar. Sat 28th Outing to Shannon Estuary Meet in car park at Tarbert Bridewell tourist office, 2pm. Leader: Geoff Hunt.	Wed 15th <i>Foraging in the countryside</i> , by Theresa Storey. Shannon Rowing Club, 8pm. Sun 19th River Shannon walk in Limerick to see gulls, waders, etc. Meet at St Michael's Rowing Club, O'Callaghan Strand, 9.30am. Leaders: Clodagh Glasgow, Maura Turner.
Louth www.birdslouth.blogspot.com bmartin@regintel.com • Breffni Martin (042) 937 6973, 087 914 5363, bmartin@regintel.com	Mon 7th <i>The crow family</i> , by Breffni Martin. The Spirit Store, George's Quay, Dundalk, 8pm.	Mon 5th <i>The Black Guillemots of Bangor, Co Down</i> , by Dr Julian Greenwood. The Spirit Store, George's Quay, Dundalk, 8pm.	January or February <i>A natural history of Ireland's native and not so native fauna</i> . Speaker and date to be confirmed. See branch blog later.	January or February <i>A natural history of Ireland's native and not so native fauna</i> . Speaker and date to be confirmed. See branch blog later.
Mayo www.birdwatchmayo.org  Find us on Twitter birdwatchmayo@yahoo.com Text updates: 087 643 2340 • Ruth-Ann Leak, 087 643 2340 • Mick Hogan, 087 410 7277			 <p>Bartra Island, Killala Bay</p>	Sat 4th Joint outing with Sligo Branch to Killala Bay to see wintering waterbirds. Meet in the car park overlooking the harbour (at Wild Atlantic Way marker) at 12 noon. This event is weather-dependent: check website or contact us before you set off.
Roscommon www.rosbirdwatch.blogspot.com p70435@yahoo.ie • Pádraig Roche, 087 907 8849 p70435@yahoo.ie	November An outing is planned. Contact Pádraig for details.	December An outing is planned. Contact Pádraig for details.	January An indoor talk may be arranged. See local press for details or contact Pádraig.	
Sligo Find us on Facebook and Twitter (BirdWatch Sligo) Contact us for text updates on events and bird sightings • Michael Bell, 085 175 1000, nature.learn1@gmail.com • Sandie McCanny (sec) 086 804 6468, sandiemccanny@gmail.com . Any additional outings will be posted on Facebook.	 Sat 12th I-WeBS bird count, Drumcliff. Meet at Cartron, Sligo, at 10am.  Sun 13th Sligo Branch stand at Sligo IT Science Week exhibition. Fri 18th <i>The science of bird-ringing</i> , by Micheál Casey. Room A005, Sligo IT, 8pm. Sun 27th Outing to Lissadell and Raughly to see Barnacle Geese. Meet in Cartron car park, 12 noon (car pooling). Leader: Martin Enright.	Mon 5th <i>Adventures in birding across Europe</i> , by Sligo birdwatchers. Sligo Park Hotel. 8pm. Will include Christmas fare. Sun 11th I-WeBS bird count, Ballisodare Bay. Meet at Silver Falls apts (Ballisodare) at 10.30am.	Sat 14th I-WeBS bird count, Ballisodare Bay. Meet at Silver Falls apts (Ballisodare) at 1pm. Sun 15th I-WeBS bird count, Drumcliff and Sligo Harbour. Meet at Cartron at 1pm. Thurs 26th <i>A Summer in Arctic Alaska</i> , by Barry O'Donoghue. Sligo Park Hotel, 8pm. Late Jan or Feb: Outing to Inch, Co, Donegal. Details later.	Late Jan or Feb: Outing to Inch, Co, Donegal. Details later. Sat 4th Joint outing with Mayo Branch to Killala Bay. Meet at Cartron, 11am, or Silver Falls apts, Ballisodare, 11.15am. This event is weather-dependent: check Mayo Branch website if weather poor. Sun 12th I-WeBS bird count, Drumcliff and Sligo Harbour. Meet at Cartron, 1pm.
Tipperary www.tippbirds.weebly.com • Kevin Collins, 087 237 3090 kevincollins062@gmail.com • Jane Coman, (067) 31741 janecomman@eircom.net	Mon 7th <i>Gardening with wildlife in mind</i> , by Ricky Whelan (BirdWatch Ireland). Cabragh Wetlands Centre, Thurles, 8pm.	 <p>Hedgehog in garden</p>	Tues 24th <i>Bird (and other wildlife) photography</i> , by Eamon Brennan. Cabragh Wetlands Centre, Thurles, 8pm.	Thurs 12th Outing (may be bus trip) to Dungarvan, Co Waterford. See website for details.
Westmeath  Find us on Facebook birdwatchwestmeath@gmail.com Indoor talks on 2 nd Thursday of every month, Bloomfield Hotel, near Mullingar, at 8pm • Tom O'Callaghan ocallaghan.tom@gmail.com • Richella Duggan richella.duggan@googlemail.com	Thurs 10th Guest speaker David Fallon, ecologist with Bórd na Móna. Bloomfield House Hotel, 8pm. November Outing to Bull Island, Dublin. Details later. See Facebook or email branch for more information.	Thurs 8th Christmas Meeting, Bloomfield House Hotel, 8pm. Refreshments and discussion of branch business. All welcome. Sat 10th Outing to Glen Lough SPA, on Longford-Westmeath border. See Facebook or email branch for details.	Thurs 12th <i>Photographs and sounds of birds of Australia</i> , by Dave McKay. Bloomfield House Hotel, 8pm. January Outing to be confirmed. Details later.	Thurs 9th Indoor meeting with guest speaker (to be confirmed). Bloomfield House Hotel, 8pm. Sat 11th Outing to Ashton Callows and Lusmagh Hide, Co Offaly. See Facebook or email branch for details.

OTHER BRANCHES: **Corca Dhuibhne (West Kerry)** Jill Crosher, 086 982 2104, jillcrosher@gmail.com **Kerry** Frank King, 066 718 0129 **Leitrim** Kealin Ireland, 086 388 1535, kealinireland@eircom.net **Meath** Paul Gallagher 086 086 9760, birdwatchirelandmeath@gmail.com **Monaghan** Joe Shannon, 086 918 5593, joeshannon54@gmail.com **Waterford** Paul Walsh, 086 170 1599, www.waterfordbirds.com **Wicklow** birdwatchwicklow@gmail.com, [Facebook.com/birdwatchwicklow](https://www.facebook.com/birdwatchwicklow)

Where there's a Will...

Those of us who love wildlife and the countryside would like to be sure it will be there for the enjoyment of others long into the future. When ensuring that your will provides for the family and friends you care for, you can also show that you have considered the natural world that will be left for them.



BirdWatch Ireland (Reg Chy No 5703) has been making a difference to the future of our birds and countryside for over forty years now. Our conservation work has already been helped greatly by the people who have chosen to leave a gift to BirdWatch Ireland in their will – people who have wanted to give something back to the world from which they gained so much pleasure.

For more details, please contact:
Niall Hatch (01) 2819878,
nhatch@birdwatchireland.ie
or
Oran O'Sullivan (01) 2819878,
oosullivan@birdwatchireland.ie
or log on to
www.birdwatchireland.ie



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Further details and forms are available from
Oran O'Sullivan at
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Natura BGA ED

opticon



8x42, 10x42



8x32

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