

# Wings



**BirdWatchIreland**  
*protecting birds and biodiversity*



50th Anniversary Special



Featuring....  
Garden Bird Survey  
Roots of BirdWatch Ireland  
Site Guide: South Laois



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# Welcome

From **Declan O'Sullivan**



## Happy 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday!

Welcome to a very special issue of *Wings*. BirdWatch Ireland, or the Irish Wildbird Conservancy as it was known at the time, was founded in late 1968, which means that our organisation is now 50 years old!

In that time, thanks to your support, BirdWatch Ireland has grown to become Ireland's largest and most active conservation charity, respected both nationally and internationally for its expertise, its professionalism and its commitment to safeguarding Ireland's wild birds and their habitats, and indeed its entire rich natural heritage.

In celebration of this key milestone, we have planned a host of special features for our commemorative issues of *Wings* magazine, looking at the early days of our organisation and how it has grown and developed over the years, taking stock of the state of conservation in Ireland and looking forward to the future. We begin with this issue, and will continue with each issue of the magazine throughout 2019.

With this in mind, if you have any interesting stories or reminiscences about BirdWatch Ireland over the years, please share them with us – we would love to hear from you and very much look forward to printing a selection of these in this magazine during 2019.

As this is our final issue of *Wings* for the year, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you a very happy upcoming festive season and to encourage you to buy our BirdWatch Ireland calendars and Christmas cards – please see the page opposite for full details of these excellent offers. By sending them to your friends and family you will be helping us to spread the word about the vital work that we do. All sales proceeds go to



Waxwing  
Photo:  
Brian Burke

**This winter, why not take part in our Garden Bird Survey? It is great fun, and the information you send us is vital in helping us to track the fortunes of Ireland's garden birds. Please turn to page 23 for this winter's survey form.**

support our conservation efforts.

In the same vein, this issue of *Wings* comes with our annual BirdWatch Ireland shop catalogue, which contains a fantastic selection of books, optical equipment, bird food, feeders and other gift ideas. You are sure to find the perfect present in there for the nature lovers in your life, and by buying from us you will be giving a vital gift to Ireland's birds too.

**Declan O'Sullivan,  
Interim CEO, BirdWatch Ireland**

### Your email address

The next time you renew your BirdWatch Ireland membership, please let us know your email address. Please be assured that we will never use this for any purpose other than to contact you regarding your membership.

## Contents

	Page
<b>Letters</b> .....	4
<i>Your comments and observations</i>	
<b>News</b> .....	5, 13
<i>News from around the country</i>	
<b>Winter Diary</b> .....	6
<i>Birds to look out for this winter, by Dick Coombes</i>	
<b>The roots of BirdWatch Ireland ...</b>	8
<i>By Richard Naim</i>	
<b>Site Guide</b> .....	16
<i>South County Laois, by Des Finnermore</i>	
<b>Photo Gallery</b> .....	18
<i>Anniversary Special: birds that have featured prominently in BirdWatch Ireland's first 50 years</i>	
<b>The Garden Bird Survey</b> .....	20
<i>By Brian Burke</i>	
<b>International News</b> .....	25
<i>Spix's Macaw now extinct in the wild</i>	
<b>Ballyross Cottage</b> .....	26
<i>A Wicklow wildlife garden, by C��il��n MacLochlainn</i>	
<b>Rare Bird News</b> .....	28
<i>Main finds from last summer, by Stephen McAvoy</i>	
<b>Branching Out</b> .....	30
<i>News from BirdWatch Ireland branches</i>	
<b>Crossword</b> .....	31
<i>Win a great book in our latest competition</i>	
<b>Book Review</b> .....	31
<i>Anthony McGeehan's "To the Ends of the Earth"</i>	
<b>What's On Guide</b> .....	32
<i>All of our public walks and indoor talks this winter</i>	



**BirdWatch Ireland**  
*protecting birds and biodiversity*

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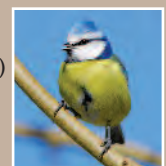
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**COVER PHOTOGRAPH:**

**Blue Tit** by Brian Burke  
(see Garden Bird Survey, page 20)



# Letters

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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.



LEE TILLER

Gannet with fishing line trailing from its bill.

## Gannet injured by discarded fish hook

Sir, – I am currently working on a photographic arts project called ‘Skellig Light,’ featuring the wildlife that resides in and around the Skelligs. In mid-August, I was sailing close to the Little Skellig when a Gannet feeding frenzy betrayed the presence of a pod of Common Dolphins. I busied myself photographing both the dolphins and the seabirds.

Later that evening when I was at my computer I realised that one particular photograph stood out [see photo, above]: I had captured an image of a poor unfortunate Gannet with a monofilament fishing line trailing behind it. I could see that the line emerged from the corner of its bill, so presumably it had swallowed a fishing hook. There was also a bloody gash on its chest, where the hook had perforated its skin or had caused a deep laceration as the bird attempted to untangle itself. I would not expect this poor bird to survive for very long.

As an ex-employee of a wild bird hospital in the UK, I wondered if I could head back out, locate it and perhaps capture it, but when you see 70,000 Gannets perched on the vertical rising cliffs of Little Skellig you quickly realise it is not an option. This poor bird will become just another victim of man’s carelessness and callous disregard for our shared environment. It is another heartbreaking example of how marine pollution is destroying our wildlife and impacting on the natural environment everywhere.

LEE TILLER

Killarney, Co Kerry

## Bird records from Trinity College campus

Sir, – Your interesting article ‘Birding in Belfield’ [Wings, Autumn 2018] reminded me of a similar recording effort on the Trinity campus in the early 1990s, which in 1993 culminated in the publication of a booklet, *Birds of Trinity College Dublin*, the first list of the birds of this campus compiled in Trinity’s 400-year history.

As expected, there are marked contrasts in the number and diversity of birds which frequent the two Dublin campuses. The habitats for birds in Trinity are limited to lawns, trees, shrubbery and buildings, with a notable absence of open water. The campus is, of course, totally surrounded by urban development.

Up to 1993, the Trinity list stood at 58 species (Belfield’s is now 101), with seldom more than 15 species being seen in any one day. Regular species include Sparrowhawk, Herring Gull, Swift, Swallow, Grey Wagtail, Mistle Thrush, Chiffchaff, Long-tailed Tit and Linnets. Scarcer species have included Kestrel, Peregrine, Oystercatcher, Woodcock, Waxwing, Blackcap and Siskin. The rarest species was a Squacco Heron found dying in 1967.

The study was able to show that Mistle Thrush and Magpie had been breeding on the campus since the mid-1800s, and one contributor provided notes on several pairs of Spotted Flycatchers breeding regularly in Trinity in the 1940s. Undoubtedly, further species have been added to the list by staff and students since 1993, though Trinity will never equal the diversity of birds enjoyed by observers in Belfield.

BRIAN MADDEN

Greystones, Co Wicklow

## Decapitated Sparrowhawk

Sir, – I keep bird feeders in my garden throughout the year, which attract various finch and tit species. A Sparrowhawk often makes an attack on these birds. On August 6<sup>th</sup> last I found a dead Sparrowhawk which had been decapitated close to the feeders [see photo, below]. The presence of feathers indicated that it had been killed close to the feeders and then deposited on a tree stump three or four metres away. I know decapitation is indicative of a kill by a bird of prey, but I have never come across a decapitated bird of prey or heard of anyone finding one. Could it have been killed by a rival Sparrowhawk?

JOHN O’CONNOR

Killarney, Co Kerry

Dear John, – This is indeed a very unusual occurrence. I don’t expect that another Sparrowhawk was the culprit in this case, as that would be quite out of character for the species. Many other predators decapitate their prey but there are not too many that would take on a Sparrowhawk. A cat might perhaps have been responsible: cats often leave behind an ‘explosion’ of feathers when they pounce on and kill a bird, and then sometimes decapitate their prey. I have also heard reports of corvids such as Magpies and Hooded Crows doing this to Sparrowhawks when they manage occasionally to catch one. – **Niall Hatch**



JOHN O’CONNOR

Decapitated Sparrowhawk on a tree stump, where it was found.

## A crow that snores?!

Sir, – We have a crow that roosts every night in trees beside our house. The funny thing is, he’s a loud snorer. Have you ever come across this before? Could he perhaps have been ousted from the rookery for snoring?

IAN KENNEDY

Kildalkey, Co Meath

Dear Ian, – You emailed us some recordings of the crow and, indeed, it does sound like it is snoring! However, it is important to note that birds generally breathe much more rapidly than we humans do: small birds take 60 to 100 breaths per minute, while birds as large as crows take 25 to 40 breaths per minute. The snoring sound in the clips you sent is much less rapid than this; indeed, it is more akin to the sound made when a human snores.

Crows are excellent mimics and love to imitate sounds in their surroundings. They also sleep a lot less than we humans do, and actually spend much of the night wide awake in the trees, just waiting for dawn to break.

This gives me an interesting thought. I have heard crows imitate the repetitive sound of a car alarm before, as well as the sound of a ringing phone. We can probably never prove this, but maybe there is a chance that this crow is actually, for its own amusement, mimicking the sound of a human snoring. I don’t know whether you are a snorer yourself, but if you are and you sleep with the window open, perhaps there is a possibility that the crow is mimicking you! – **Niall Hatch**

## Irish Wetland Bird Survey celebrates its 25<sup>th</sup> year

The Irish Wetland Bird Survey (I-WeBS) has achieved much in its 25-year history. **Brian Burke** reports.

This winter, we are celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the **Irish Wetland Bird Survey (I-WeBS)**. Each winter, Ireland plays host to hundreds of thousands of swans, geese, ducks, waders and other waterbirds that breed in Arctic Canada, Greenland, Iceland, Scandinavia and Russia. These areas freeze over in the winter, forcing the birds to fly south to ice-free wetlands in places like Ireland.

Ireland's international importance for waterbirds has long been recognised, and large-scale counts have been organised here since at least the 1940s. The first comprehensive baseline survey for waterbirds was carried out in the 1970s; it was known as **The Wetlands Enquiry** and organised by Clive Hutchinson. This was followed in the 1980s with the **Winter Wetlands Survey**, coordinated by Ralph Sheppard.

In 1994/95 the **Irish Wetland Bird Survey**, commissioned and funded by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), began the task of monitoring our wintering waterbirds on an annual basis for the first time. The survey

would not have been possible were it not for the dedication, over the last 25 years, of almost a thousand volunteers and NPWS rangers nationwide, to ensure that their local wetlands were surveyed and their importance for waterbirds recognised.

The efforts of those surveyors continue to pay dividends. Over one hundred **Special Protection Areas (SPAs)** have been designated to date as a result of I-WeBS data, and the data are often vital in influencing local policy and planning decisions.

The I-WeBS team are busy updating the population estimates of our wintering waterbird species at the moment, to see how they're currently faring. In addition, we are identifying wetland sites that support waterbirds in numbers of national and international importance across the country and highlighting the significant pressures and threats that these sites and their waterbirds face.

Keep an eye out in future issues of *Wings* for an update on this important work – in the 25<sup>th</sup> year of the Irish Wetlands Bird Survey ■



Greenshank. Photo: Richard T Mills



**Over the course of the next few months our I-WeBS team will be giving talks about the history and background of this survey to several BirdWatch Ireland branches around the country. Please**

**see our *What's On Guide* (pages 32-34) for details of dates and locations.**

## The evolution of our logo down through the years

Our logo has changed and moved with the times in the fifty years since the organisation was founded in 1968, then as the Irish Wildbird Conservancy (IWC) but now, in its current incarnation, as BirdWatch Ireland.



### 1968-1995

Our first logo, designed by conservationist and bird artist Sir Peter Scott, includes a Greenland White-fronted Goose to mark the role it played in our foundation



### 1995-1997

Our second logo, created by Michael O'Clery, combines our new name BirdWatch Ireland with our old logo as the Irish Wildbird Conservancy adopts the official trading name of BirdWatch Ireland



### 1997-2010

Our third logo drops the old IWC moniker to avoid any confusion but retains the original goose motif drawn by Sir Peter Scott. In a further departure from tradition it has more than one colour. Again it was created by designer Michael O'Clery



### 2010 to present

Our current logo includes a new, full-colour version of the Greenland White-fronted Goose, designed by wildlife artist Killian Mullarney. It also includes our slogan 'Protecting Birds and Biodiversity'

# Winter diary

By **Dick Coombes**



## Anniversary Series

In recognition of BirdWatch Ireland's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, this diary and next year's diaries will focus on birds whose populations have undergone interesting or dramatic change, for good or ill, over the past 50 years, or have featured prominently in our conservation work. We kick off with Greenland White-fronted Goose, the bird that features in our logo, and a species that was central to the founding of the organisation.

■ *Part of what we are*

## Greenland White-fronted Goose

### Now confined mainly to Wexford slob

Every winter, Ireland plays host to around 9,000 **Greenland White-fronted Geese**, approximately 44% of the world population. The rest winter in Scotland. The numbers taking refuge in Ireland have fluctuated greatly over the years – in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the species was described as widespread and numerous, while in the 1950s there may have been as many as 15,000 wintering here, dispersed over some 70 mainly bogland locations. Sadly, by the late 1970s their numbers had dropped by half.

A hundred years of extensive drainage had led to the loss of much suitable bog habitat, and many traditional sites were deserted. Shooting, too, was taking its toll, and in an effort to stem the decline the White-front was taken off the Irish quarry (shooting) list in 1982.

Alas, after a moderate recovery, they are once again in trouble, this time due to poor productivity: the climate in north-west Greenland, where our birds nest, has become wetter in the last few decades and many birds now fail to breed.

As the goose abandoned traditional bogland sites, it shifted gradually towards intensively managed farmland. The reclaimed sloblands in north Wexford Harbour



**Greenland White-fronted Goose**  
Photo: Dick Coombes

provided a safe haven, and most of Ireland's White-fronts have wintered there since the lands were acquired by the National Parks and Wildlife Service and BirdWatch Ireland.

In 1968, against a backdrop of concerns for the future of Greenland White-fronted Geese, three organisations got together to form the Irish Wildbird Conservancy, now BirdWatch

Ireland (for more on this, see page 8).

Greenland White-fronts, coming from Greenland, start to arrive in Ireland in October, having staged briefly in south-west Iceland to refuel. They remain here until early April. A visit to one of the hides at Wexford Wildfowl Reserve to view these attractive geese is a winter 'must see' ■

■ *Irish numbers have rocketed in last fifty years*

## Blackcap

### Once rare visitor now urban garden regular

Around the time that the Irish Wildbird Conservancy was being founded in 1968, a new and unlikely visitor to suburban gardens was being recorded in Dublin in winter: Up until then, the Blackcap was known as a very local summer visitor; breeding in wooded areas in Wicklow and a few sites in Cavan and Northern Ireland.

The appearance of this grey, black-capped (red-capped in the female) warbler at garden feeders on cold January mornings caused quite a stir. Most people would never have seen one before, for in summer they can be secretive, and though the song is loud and explosive it is usually delivered from a branch just out of view, below the leaf canopy.

Five decades on and the Blackcap is now not only a regular winter visitor to gardens throughout much of the country but it also breeds in every county – a staggering change in status! In last winter's Garden Bird Survey,



**Blackcap (female)**  
Photo: Dick Coombes

almost half of the 800 gardens surveyed held Blackcaps. And while the species has adapted well to the range of provisioned foods on offer (fat, cheese, oatmeal, nuts, meat scraps, etc), it is also very partial to the berries of cotoneaster, pyracantha, ivy and viburnum species.

The cordyline, suburban Ireland's answer to the palm tree, is a real favourite and a mature specimen can conceal four or five Blackcaps busily consuming its crop of white berries.

But without doubt, the simplest lure for a Blackcap is half an apple impaled on a branch – an irresistible feast which will be defended by the bird as though its life depended on it.

The steady rise in both winter and summer populations of Blackcaps has been dramatic. An increase in the practice of providing food for birds in gardens has surely been a factor in the surge in winter numbers, but it is likely that

milder winter weather in recent decades has been the main reason for this shift. On the face of it, it would be easy to assume that our summer Blackcaps simply stayed on here, moving from woodland to take up winter residence in gardens, but the story is not as simple as it looks.

Ringling has shown that the birds frequenting our gardens in winter in fact breed in central Europe, mainly in Germany and Austria. Like a changing of the guard, they arrive here in autumn just as our breeding birds head south to winter around the Mediterranean Basin and



Blackcap (male)  
Photo: Brian Burke

tropical Africa. The **Countryside Bird Survey** has shown that Blackcaps continue to be on the rise – this despite the fact that they are trapped in vast numbers for the pot in the Mediterranean region, most particularly in Cyprus, Malta and parts of Italy ■

## ■ Epic range expansion

# Mediterranean Gull

## A gull now regular in Dublin Bay in winter



Adult in summer plumage. Photo: John Fox

Scan for long enough through a flock of Black-headed Gulls almost anywhere around our shores and you will more than likely pick out one or two Mediterranean Gulls. Birdwatchers who have come on the scene within the last twenty years or so may not be aware that this was not always so. The first Irish record was as recent as September 1956 and, thirty years later, it was still a rare bird in Ireland, with just 29 birds being recorded across the country in 1986. But things began to change in the 1990s; numbers started to increase and today it is possible to see groups of 'Med' Gulls numbering well into double figures at some sites; indeed, flocks of one hundred or more have occurred.

Marginally larger and chunkier than a Black-headed Gull, the most striking feature that catches the eye in an adult Med is the pure-white wing-tips. On closer scrutiny, other differences will be apparent – a thicker, more drooping, blood-red bill with a black band near the tip and a dark mask or shadow around the eye. In full breeding plumage the head acquires a jet-black hood. Juveniles need a bit more care, but a practiced eye will pick out the heavy bill and dark mask.

The breeding range of the Mediterranean Gull – a misnomer if ever there was one – was formerly not actually around its namesake sea, but rather along the Ukrainian coast of the Black Sea. In the 1950s, the population there stood at some 50,000 breeding pairs. Then, during the 1960s, for reasons not entirely clear, the population exploded dramatically to an estimated 150,000 pairs. Thereafter the species began an epic range expansion, creeping slowly but steadily northwestwards across Europe, colonising Poland, Hungary, Germany and eventually the Low Countries, where they are now well established. The first successful breeding attempt in Ireland occurred in Wexford in 1996, and small numbers continue to breed at a handful of sites in Ireland.

Outside the breeding season (July to March), Meds are easiest to find along the east coast. Dublin Bay is particularly good and Sandycove, on the south side of the bay, regularly holds gatherings of fifty or more. It is an excellent place to observe these attractive gulls at close quarters and maybe to contribute a little to science by reading and reporting any colour



Adult in winter plumage. Photo: Eric Dempsey

rings you see on the birds' legs. Through a network of ringing schemes, reports from observers across Europe are pieced together to trace movements of individuals such as R65 (blue ring), ringed in the nest in northern Germany in June 1998, which was sighted six months later at Nimmo's Pier in Galway, and then in Dublin Bay, France and Sandycove over the next two years. Fascinating stuff! ■

Adult winter Mediterranean Gull. Photo: Dick Coombes



# Origins



Greenland White-fronted Geese  
Photo: Alyn Walsh (NPWS)



## The roots of BirdWatch Ireland

This issue of *Wings* marks the beginning of BirdWatch Ireland's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations. Formerly known as the Irish Wildbird Conservancy, BirdWatch Ireland had its origins in three groups involved in birding, research and conservation in the 1960s, writes **Richard Nairn**, the first director of the organisation.

**F**ifty years ago, a group of Irish birdwatchers representing three different voluntary bodies met in Dublin. The topic under discussion was the future organisation of ornithology and bird conservation in the Republic of Ireland. Feelings were high and loyalties to existing bodies were strong. The three organisations were well established but there was a significant overlap in membership and a serious potential for confusion in the public mind. After full and detailed discussions a consensus was reached: it was decided to dissolve all three existing bodies and merge into a single new national organisation. The **Irish Wildbird Conservancy (IWC)** had hatched.



Bill Finlay: President of the ISPB and chairman of the Irish Wildfowl Committee. Photo courtesy of Liz Finlay

north-west Mayo where the only known breeding of Red-necked Phalaropes in Ireland occurred each year. In 1968 this held between 14-21 adult phalaropes, and ten young birds were reported.

One of the first conservationists in Ireland was a Jesuit priest, **Fr Patrick Kennedy SJ**, who in the 1920s became well known through his broadcasts on the new mass media of radio. He campaigned for the establishment of refuges from shooting, which was intense at this time. By 1931 he had persuaded the government of the day to establish the first bird sanctuary at the North Bull Island in Dublin Bay. He wrote in his classic book *An Irish Sanctuary* (1953) that

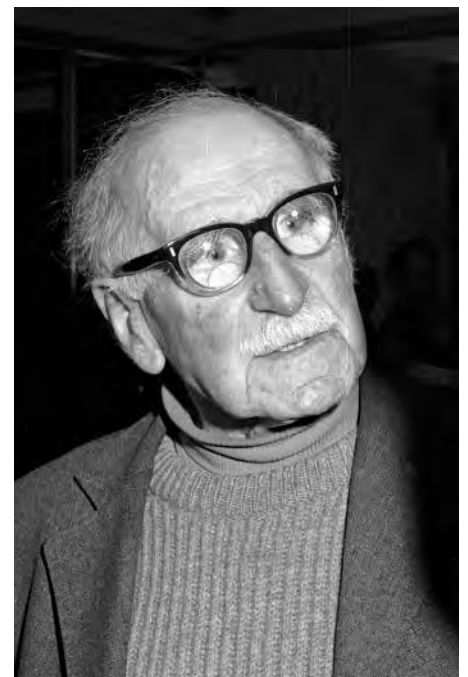


John Temple Lang: Honorary Secretary of ISPB and a council member of IWC. Photo: Richard T Mills

The parents of the new fledgling organisation had evolved over many decades. The oldest was the **Irish Society for the Protection of Birds (ISPB)**, which had been in existence since 1904 and was modelled on the much larger RSPB in Britain. Its founders included such famous naturalists as **Robert Lloyd Praeger, Richard M Barrington, CB Moffat and Douglas Hyde**, who would later become the first president of an independent Irish Free State. By the late 1960s **Bill Finlay** was president of the ISPB and **John Temple Lang** was honorary secretary.

In 1967, the first all-Ireland conference on bird conservation was organised jointly by the ISPB and the RSPB in Northern Ireland. This was to become an annual IWC/RSPB event for many years, following the merger.

The ISPB owned a small marsh in



Major Rutledge: Founder of the *Irish Bird Report* and later President of the IWC. Photo: Richard T Mills



“a bird knows the difference between a man with a gun and a man with a pair of field glasses.”

The **Irish Ornithologists' Club (IOC)** had been formed in 1950 as an offshoot of the ISPB. Founder members were **Alec Mason**, **MJ Rowan** and **Ivan Goodbody**, while **George Humphreys** joined shortly afterwards. The club was intended for “serious ornithologists” and its principal rule was that there were to be no rules and no minutes. Meetings were held in the Brazen Head pub in central Dublin and women were excluded from membership. There were 45 members in 1960, but it was very much a Dublin organisation.

In 1953, the IOC began, under the editorship of **Major Robert 'Robin' Ruttledge**, to publish the annual *Irish Bird Report*, now incorporated in the BirdWatch Ireland journal *Irish Birds*. Egg-collecting was a popular pursuit among some bird enthusiasts at that time and active ornithologists were accordingly quite secretive about the location of rare breeding birds. Nest locations of rare breeding species were carefully guarded in the reports.

## The 1960s awakening

The 1960s saw an enthusiastic growth in ornithology, with a lot of teenage birders in Ireland having gained access to optically improved binoculars and telescopes. Young naturalists such as **Oscar Merne**, **Raymond O'Connor** and **Ken Perry** were befriended and mentored by two of the greatest Irish ornithologists, **Colonel George Scroope** and **Major Robert Ruttledge**. The new recruits found growing opportunities through



Announcing the acquisition of the Wexford Slobs Wildfowl Reserve in 1969, from left: **Oscar Merne**, **Bill Finlay**, **Tim O'Brien** (Department of Lands) and **David Cabot**. Photo: *The Irish Independent*

training in bird-ringing from the **British Trust for Ornithology**, which led to the study of migration at the Wexford Slobs, Malin Head, Great Saltee Island and Cape Clear Island. **Ken Perry** remembers especially one field-trip involving a visit by an IOC group from Dublin to Strangford Lough: “We were hosted by **Paddy** and **Julia Mackie** on Mahee Island and, along with the late **Lance Turtle**, we had an opportunity to handle Teal and Mallard at the Mahee ringing station.” In this way a network of keen ornithological contacts developed throughout the island of Ireland.

The newest of the three organisations was the **Irish Wildfowl Committee (IWC)**, which had been formed in 1965 by a young zoologist, **David Cabot**, with the singular purpose of advancing research and conservation of Ireland's wildfowl (principally the swans, geese and ducks) and the wetlands they frequented. This provided a

new dynamic on the conservation scene which attracted significant attention in the newspapers, radio and the newly launched *Telefís Éireann* (now RTÉ). The journalist **George Burrows** was giving excellent coverage to wildfowl conservation issues in *The Irish Times* at the time.

By 1968 the IWC had a membership of over 1,000. Cabot remembers that the comedian **Spike Milligan** once sent a five-pound note as a contribution to the organisation. Significantly, its membership, and that of its committee, included a few from the shooting fraternity, who had up 'til then been regarded as opponents by ornithologists.

The chairman of the IWC, **Bill Finlay**, provided great balance and, as a senior counsel, was well-respected by civil servants and politicians alike. Finlay was also president of the ISPB and was to become a key player in the conservation movement.

A major threat to wild birds at the ➤



Attending a talk at a joint Irish Wildbird Conservancy/RSPB conference in the Talbot Hotel, Wexford, in the 1980s.



Pictured at the official opening of the visitor centre at the Wexford Wildfowl Reserve in 1970, from left: conservationist Sir Peter Scott, the Minister for Lands, Tom Fitzpatrick TD, and Oscar Merne (reserve warden). Photo courtesy of the National Parks and Wildlife Service



Fergus O'Gorman: a council member of the new Irish Wildbird Conservancy. Photo: BirdWatch Ireland

time was the arterial drainage of wetlands and river systems. In its report for 1968, the IWC estimated that 1,160 Greenland White-fronted Geese, 200 Greylag Geese, 70 swans and up to 28,000 ducks had been "eliminated entirely from eighteen areas by drainage."

David Cabot recalls that the IWC was trying to buy the threatened Rahasane Turlough in County Galway with funds from the **World Wildlife Fund (WWF)** and the **Rupert family**. Unfortunately, it proved too difficult to get agreement of all the commonage holders in the area and Rahasane remains in private ownership to this day.

### Our first national bird reserve

Through contacts with the artist **Peter Scott** in Britain the original IWC managed to organise funding from the WWF for the initial purchase of lands on the Wexford Slobs.



Raymond O'Connor: former director of the British Trust for Ornithology. Photo: Richard T Mills

Scott was later knighted for his contribution to nature conservation. This initiative forced the Department of Lands (through land bonds to the **Fiske family** provided by the Land Commission) to purchase an additional area, and together the government and the IWC became joint owners of the new reserve. This was to become the core of the present Wexford Wildfowl Reserve.

**Fergus O'Gorman**, a biologist working for the Department of Lands at the time and later a member of the first council of the IWC, recalls that the previous owner of the land, **Bill Fiske**, wanted to charge visitors a few shillings each to enter the new reserve, but this idea was rejected, and entry remains free to this day.

Ireland in the 1960s was a very different place to the modern society of today. Just emerging from decades of economic isolation, unemployment and emigration, the driving force was industrialisation. The national television station, RTÉ, was launched and for the first time people could watch wildlife programmes in their own homes. But some of the worst impacts on the natural world were also starting, with Ireland racing to catch up with the rest of post-war Europe.

Although the full effects on birds in Ireland were not yet evident to a wider population, some key conservationists were acutely aware of the threats. **John Temple Lang** knew that Ireland's Peregrine population, like that in other parts of Europe, had crashed due to the prevalence of persistent pesticides such as DDT, which were being used increasingly in Ireland. He began to survey the remaining birds, recording many vacant eyries in the mountains and sea cliffs around Ireland.

The historic meeting that proposed a merger of the three organisations – the ISPB, IOC and IWC – took place in December

1968. The first report of the newly-fledged **Irish Wildbird Conservancy** recorded the activities of its three parent bodies in that year. In its introduction it stated that "the objects of the new body are the same as those of the three older bodies – conservation, research and education in relation to wild birds and their environment and the encouragement of field ornithology in Ireland."

In the first IWC newsletter in 1969 its president, Major Robert Rutledge, listed the considerable threats faced by birds in Ireland. These included "uncontrolled drainage of wetlands, despoliation of bird haunts, excessive shooting pressure, trapping of songbirds, thoughtless destruction of raptors, pollution of rivers, bogs and estuaries by effluents, and the use of harmful pesticides."

Rutledge's stated hope was that, with the



Ken Perry: first Honorary Treasurer of the new Irish Wildbird Conservancy. Photo: Ken Perry



Group of young birders, who were all to become very well known, in St Stephen's Green, Dublin, in May 1984, promoting an upcoming bird race. From left, back row: Paul Archer, Oran O'Sullivan, Jim Fitzharris, Killian Mullarney. Front row: Eric Dempsey, Jim Dowdall, Ronan Hurley, Ciarán Ó Flanagan. **Photo:** Bobbie Reeners

support of ornithologists, wildfowlers, research workers and others, "we may overcome these difficulties and thus pass on preserved an important part of our heritage."

### The first breeding bird atlas

Several exciting initiatives were launched soon after the formation of the new IWC. Fieldwork for the first *Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland* was already underway and IWC members, coordinated by **David Scott**, took an active role.

The Greenland White-fronted Goose, which had been the symbol of the Irish Wildfowl Committee, was adopted as the logo of the new organisation. The design for

the logo was by the aforementioned **Peter Scott**, who was the first to record the difference between the Greenland and European races of this goose. At the time, about half of the world population of Greenland White-fronted Geese spent the winter on farmland in the Wexford Slob as drainage drove them out of the bogs and wetlands elsewhere in the country.



A young bank official, **Oscar Merne**, had been appointed in 1968 by the original IWC to undertake a study of the numbers, movements and feeding preferences of the geese at the North Slob.

In 1969 the IWC announced that it had bought an island which "holds one of Ireland's largest and most important Roseate Tern colonies and a roosting area for wintering geese." This was a small accumulation of sand and marram grass in Wexford Harbour called Tern Island, which held all five species of terns then nesting in Ireland. But it was a short-lived project as the island was washed away in winter storms in the mid-1970s.

One of the original council members of the new IWC was **Gabriel Noonan**, then an official in the Department of Finance. He was very keen that birdwatching should be recognised as a sport and, with **Bill Finlay**, he made a submission to the Minister for



**Gabriel Noonan:** a council member of the new Irish Wildbird Conservancy. **Photo:** Richard T Mills



**Joe Furphy:** a council member of the new IWC and former head of conservation in the Northern Ireland government. **Photo:** Richard T Mills

Education which resulted in a government grant to support IWC outings for young people.

At about the same time as the IWC was being launched, the RSPB commenced operations in Northern Ireland. **Joe Furphy**, a northern representative on the first IWC council, remembers walking along the beach at Millisle, Co Down, with **John Temple Lang** and **Frank Hamilton** (RSPB Regional Officer in Northern Ireland) in the late 1960s, discussing ways in which the two bodies could co-operate. The joint IWC/RSPB conferences, held alternately in the north and the south of Ireland, were to become a significant feature in the ornithological calendar. There were many subsequent conservation campaigns in which the fledgling IWC benefitted from the long experience of the larger UK organisation. ➤

**Frank Hamilton:** first Northern Ireland Regional Officer of the RSPB. **Photo:** Richard T Mills





Éamon de Buitléar filming Tony Whilde for *Amuigh Faoin Spéir* for RTÉ. Photo: Richard T Mills

### The European dimension

During 1970, **European Conservation Year**, a conference was held in Killarney under the title *The Future of Irish Wildlife: a blueprint for development*. This was a first public airing of some of the increasing threats to habitats (due to arterial drainage, for example) and to species (pesticides were a major problem at this time), but it was noticeable that the title suggested wildlife needed development rather than conservation. The proceedings of the conference contained proposals to the government for a "centralised wildlife conservation agency whose primary function is to survey, inventory, study and devise programmes of conservation and management for the wildlife and wildland resources of Ireland."



Clive Hutchinson: Honorary Treasurer of the IWC, founder and first editor of *Irish Birds* and organiser of the Wetlands Enquiry. Photo: Richard T Mills

The emphasis appeared to be on scientific research, survey and experimental management, with minor emphasis on active conservation or changes in land use.

### The Irish Wildbird Conservancy takes off

In 1972, a young accountant from Cork, **Clive Hutchinson**, took on the role of organising countrywide surveys of wildfowl and waders under the heading of the Wetlands Enquiry. The IWC published his findings in a landmark book entitled *Ireland's Wetlands and their Birds* (1979).

Not surprisingly, there was little real commitment to conservation at this time by the government, although **Bill Finlay** had been drawing attention to the need for new wildlife conservation legislation for over a decade. The Wild Bird Protection Act of 1930 was long outdated and its provisions were not being enforced.

**John Temple Lang**, who was a lawyer, based in Dublin, produced a detailed memorandum listing the provisions that should be contained in any new Act, and this was submitted by the ISPB to the government in 1967.

Despite repeated promises it took almost another decade before the first **Wildlife Act** was enacted in 1976. Here, at last, was a legal basis for nature conservation. For the first time some threatened birds and mammals were legally protected and a start was made to the formal establishment of bird sanctuaries and nature reserves.

**The Forest and Wildlife Service** was set up to implement the new Act and this led to the transfer of a number of state forests of high nature value from commercial forestry to wildlife conservation.

The nature films made by **Éamon de Buitléar** and **Gerrit van Gelderen** were



Gerrit van Gelderen: wildlife film-maker and artist. Photo: BirdWatch Ireland

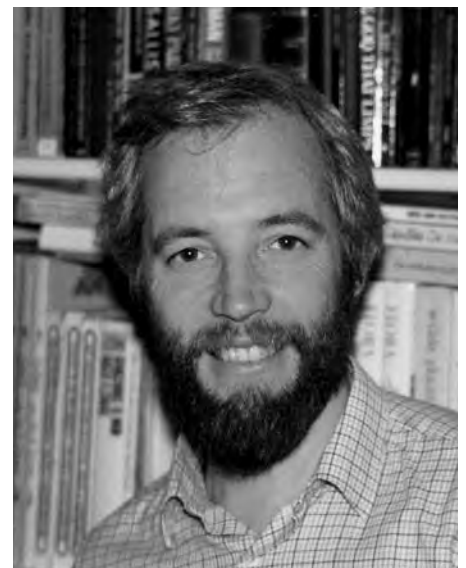
shown regularly on RTÉ television during the 1970s and these helped to establish nature and wildlife as an interest among the general public.

Membership of the IWC – and support for conservation generally – began to increase. By the end of the 1970s, with increasing prosperity in the country, sufficient funds had been raised, mainly from corporate donations, to allow the IWC to employ its first member of staff... myself, **Richard Nairn**.

**Ken Perry**, who was the first Honorary Treasurer of the IWC, says the merger in 1968 involved "an interesting gathering of talent and, looking back now, their combined efforts led to great things."

The organisation that would become **BirdWatch Ireland** was now flying free.

➔ **Richard Nairn is an ecologist and writer who was the first Director of the IWC, from 1980 to 1990. He would like to acknowledge the assistance of a number of the founders in compiling this article: David Cabot, Joe Furphy, Gabriel Noonan, Fergus O'Gorman, Ken Perry and John Temple Lang. A special thanks also to photographer Richard Mills who contributed many photos from his archives ■**



Richard Nairn in 1988. Photo: BirdWatch Ireland

## Rosy year for Roseates

As the Roseate Tern Project marks its thirtieth year, the colony at Rockabill celebrates its highest ever numbers and above-average productivity, as **Stephen Newton** reports.

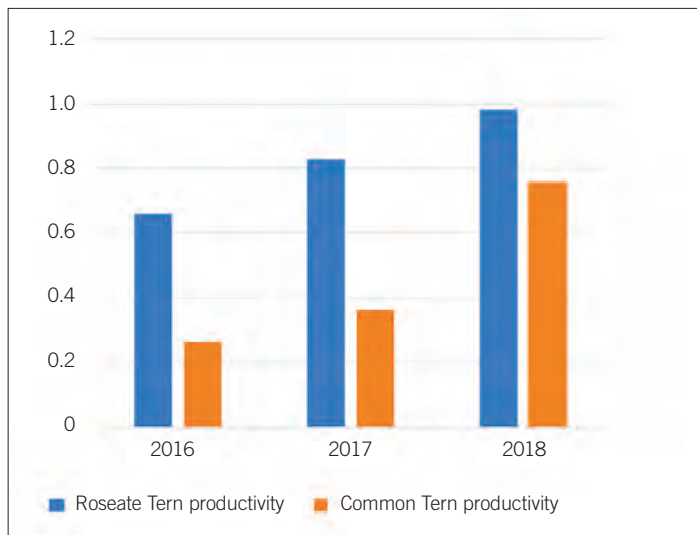
As you will have read earlier in the magazine, BirdWatch Ireland is celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and, coincidentally, the Rockabill team were working away to try to make sure that the 30<sup>th</sup> year of conservation action for Roseate Terns was also one to remember.

In the last issue of *Wings* we reported that Roseate, Common and Arctic Tern numbers were close to, and probably slightly higher than, last year's counts.

Now that the data has been input, tallied and checked, we are pleased to report a slight increase for all species: 1,642 pairs of Roseate Terns, 2,039 pairs of Common Terns and 59 pairs of Arctic Terns.

However, breeding numbers (or the head count) are only one half of the equation: it is the number of young fledged per pair that really counts.

The graph below shows the



Productivity (number of young fledged per breeding pair) of Roseate and Common Terns on Rockabill, Co Dublin, in the last three seasons.



This year's Rockabill team (from left): Luíse Ní Dhonnabháin, Stephen Newton, Heidi Acampora and David Miley. Photo: Mark Robins

trend for the last three years, and the increased productivity is worth celebrating. 2016 and 2017 were very poor years for the terns, but thankfully, the beautiful spell of weather in late June and July this year, coupled with an abundance of sprats and sandeels, made the difference and left us feeling much more upbeat.

Yes, we had a lot of trouble with marauding Great Black-backed Gulls, but in the end each pair of Roseate Terns fledged one young, and the Common Terns were not far behind.

How did the season end for the other two key Roseate Tern colonies in the EU-funded LIFE project? The colony at Lady's Island Lake, Co Wexford, was troubled by a Pine Marten and an American Mink over the season, but it recovered well for 213 pairs to rear 223 young, a productivity of 1.05.

The RSPB's flagship Roseate Tern colony at Coquet Island, Northumberland, had a record 118 pairs and a productivity of 0.92. All in all, a very good year for the north-west European population of Roseates ■



An Roinn  
Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta  
Department of  
Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

EU LIFE Nature project 'LIFE14NAT/UK/000394' is supported by the National Parks and Wildlife Service

Roseate Terns on Rockabill, Co Dublin  
Photo: Brian Burke



# Research

By **Helen Boland & Ricky Whelan**

Watching terns at Dublin Port colony in summer 2018. **Photo:** Helen Boland

## Amazing terns in Dublin Port

Nesting Common and Arctic Tern numbers occur in internationally important numbers in Dublin Port. Dublin Bay Birds Project team members **Helen Boland** and **Ricky Whelan** report.

Every summer, hundreds of small seabirds nest on man-made structures in Dublin Port near the mouth of the River Liffey. They are Common and Arctic Terns and they have been coming to Dublin Port to breed every summer since at least 1949, from wintering grounds in Africa (Common Terns) and possibly from as far away as Antarctica (Arctic Terns).

Most people are probably not aware that these seabirds are industriously incubating eggs and raising chicks on man-made islands in the middle of the port, with enormous cruise ships and commercial vessels passing to and fro all day long.

The **Dublin Bay Birds Project**, funded by **Dublin Port Company** and managed by **BirdWatch Ireland**, has been carrying out a programme of monitoring of this tern colony each summer since 2013. This follows on from research that the late **Oscar Merne** of the National Parks and Wildlife Service had been conducting since 1994 with BirdWatch Ireland's **Stephen Newton**, who remains an integral part of our tern work.

The 2018 season was marked by the highest number of breeding pairs of terns ever recorded in Dublin Port – almost 600 nests were counted during the main census in June. Numbers breeding in the port have certainly increased since 61 pairs of Common Terns and 30 pairs of Arctic Terns were recorded in 1984, during that year's all-Ireland tern survey (Whilde, 1985).\*

Since 1994, the terns have nested mainly on two permanent structures in the Liffey channel that have acted as mooring points for boats, one owned by **Dublin Port Company**, the other by the **Electricity Supply Board (ESB)**. These structures are located along the river relatively close to the well-known – and hard to miss – Poolbeg chimneys. In fact, such are the numbers of terns using the ESB-owned structure that it has been included as part of the **South Dublin Bay and Tolka Estuary Special Protection Area (SPA)**, designated under the EU Birds Directive. This structure has undergone impressive and significant upgrading works in recent years, with all improvements made with the terns in mind, including predation prevention measures, and all coordinated and financed by the **ESB**.

In addition to the two permanent mooring structures used by the terns, and in response to the increasing numbers nesting on them, two additional structures, in this case pontoons, have been introduced to the port area, organised and financed by **Dublin Port Company**. One was floated in the Tolka estuary in 2013; the other is located in the Liffey channel about 150 metres from the Great South Wall.

Not only are there four structures now available to the terns for nesting on, but they have been specially modified to accommodate them. The surface of each structure is flat but has a layer of gravel or shingle – the terns' preferred nesting substrate. Barriers have been installed around the perimeter of each platform to prevent chicks from falling into the water, and three of the four platforms are subdivided into compartments. This allows the Dublin Bay Birds Project team to gather data in each compartment without chicks moving too far from their nest site while their parents are in the air due to the brief intrusion.

In addition, chick shelters have been installed on all structures so the chicks have some protection from harsh weather, when needed.

### So how are the terns doing?

The purpose of the monitoring is to assess the breeding success of the terns each year. The terns occur in internationally important numbers, and regular monitoring is the best way to detect any changes or issues that may affect them. We visit each structure by boat and carry out a nest census, counting the numbers of nests and eggs (our nest census activities are carried out under license from the National Parks and Wildlife Service). This lets us know not only how many breeding

\* **Whilde A, 1985.** The 1984 All-Ireland Tern Survey. *Irish Birds* 3: 1-32.

Terns nesting on mooring structure with special compartments to facilitate monitoring and minimise disturbance. **Photo:** Helen Boland

pairs of terns there are, but also how many chicks could potentially fledge by the end of the season.

On subsequent visits we assess any mortality of chicks, whether natural or due to predation, to help determine productivity. Unfortunately, though lots of clutches are laid, it doesn't mean all chicks fledge successfully. Once we have alighted on a structure we exercise great care because the eggs are simply laid on the thin shingle layer, in small scrapes (see photo).

## Post-breeding gatherings

After the breeding season, the terns put on another truly remarkable display, this time including not just Common and Arctic Terns from Dublin Port but also Roseate and Sandwich Terns from other colonies on the east coast and further afield. Enormous numbers congregate at dusk in south Dublin Bay to roost at night. They are gathering in post-breeding flocks in advance of their migration to the African wintering grounds.

The Dublin Bay Birds Project has been carrying out autumn dusk surveys of this phenomenon each year since 2013, once again continuing the notable work carried out by Oscar Merne. In autumn 2016, a huge count of 17,440 terns was recorded on Sandymount Strand. In August 2018, a slightly less impressive – yet still extraordinary relative to other places – count of 6,700 terns was made.

We also carry out a programme of fitting inscribed metal rings to the legs of tern chicks, again under license from the National Parks and Wildlife Service, another thing that Oscar Merne had initiated in Dublin Port.



Tern nest with three eggs at Dublin Port colony in summer 2018. Photo: Ricky Whelan

## Do look for our colour rings

In 2015, we added another element to the project, fitting Common and Arctic Terns with **colour rings** so that their movements could be tracked. We fit colour rings to chicks at the nest but also to fully-grown birds during the pre-migration congregations. The programme of ringing has revealed some interesting results, with reported observations of our colour-ringed terns in Namibia and Gambia in Africa in winter and in Spain, Wales and Scotland on passage or during subsequent breeding seasons.

Due to the dynamic nature of the port, the constant threat and realisation of avian and mammalian predation, and the relatively recent deployment of the two additional nesting pontoons, continued monitoring of the Dublin Port tern colonies is needed to see how our 'sea swallows' fare over the

coming years in Ireland's capital city.

We are thankful to **Dublin Port Company** for their continued support to enable this to happen. We think Oscar would approve of how we have continued the work he initiated.

➔ Our thanks to the ESB, in particular to Mark Byrne, for facilitating access. We are grateful to Jimmy Murray for providing a boat and pilot for our use. Thanks also to David Tierney of the National Parks and Wildlife Service for support during the 2018 season. And thanks to Tara Adcock, Niamh Fitzgerald, Brian Burke and Richard Nairn for assistance. Special thanks to Stephen Newton for his ringing and general expertise. ■



# Cape Clear bird course an eye-opener for many

Every September, BirdWatch Ireland holds a relaxed and entertaining field course at its Cape Clear Bird Observatory on beautiful Cape Clear Island off Baltimore, west Cork. It opens participants eyes to wild nature in ways they don't expect.

The "Songbirds to Seabirds" five-day course held annually at Cape Clear Bird Observatory, on Cape Clear Island in west Cork, in September was once again well attended. BirdWatch Ireland's course presenter **Dick Coombes** introduced an enthusiastic group of participants to the island's birds, the art of seawatching, bird identification and the history and ongoing work of the observatory.

**Steve Wing**, our Cape Clear Wildlife Officer, demonstrated how the daily log of bird sightings is kept and he gave everyone a chance to see birds in close-up during his bird-ringing sessions.

While there were not too many migrants about on the island during this year's course, everyone got to see the impressive movements of Gannets and Manx Shearwaters passing the island's headlands and some managed to pick out the odd Sooty Shearwater and Great Skua, scarce enough at the best of times. One participant wrote: "The course on Cape Clear was truly life-enhancing. Suddenly all of the brown blurs in hedgerows I'd always taken for granted were given names and destinations and personalities."

➔ If you would like to attend next year's course, please see our website ■



Course participants outside the Observatory. Photo: Dick Coombes

# Site Guide

by Des Finnamore

## South County Laois

View of River Erkina wetlands from Woodenbridge. Photo: C oil n MacLochlainn

**Des Finnamore** describes the best birding sites in south County Laois.

South Laois would not normally be noted as a key birding destination, but during periods of flooding, from November to March, the landscape is transformed. Large areas along the River Nore and its tributaries become very attractive to many wetland species. Ducks, swans and waders abound and, within these flocks, vagrants and rarities can occur.

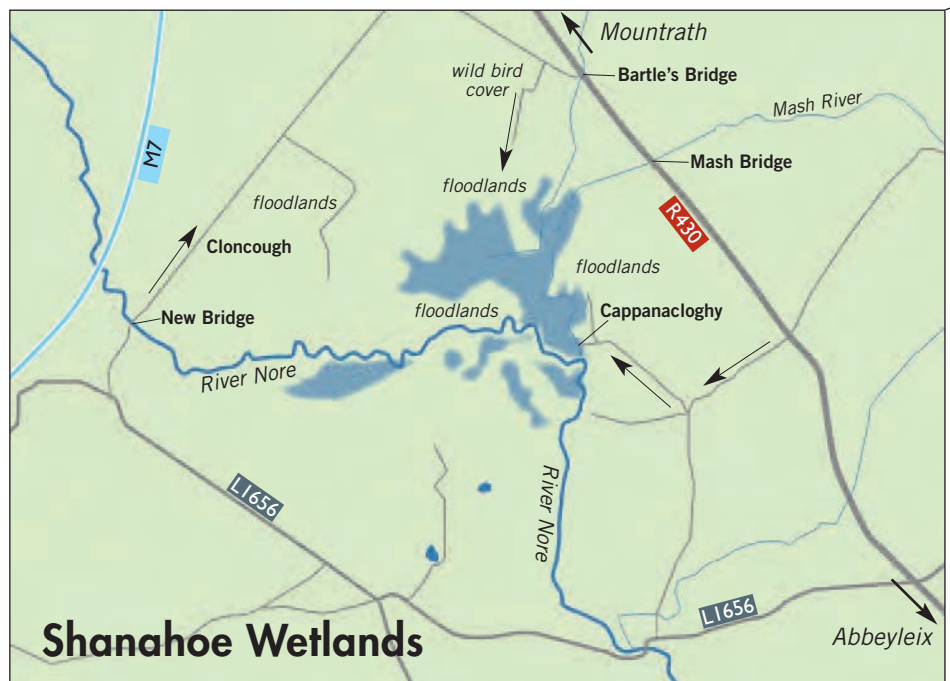
When flooding is severe the waters run deep, making underwater vegetation inaccessible to many waterbirds, forcing them to move to the flood edges. This can be good news for birders, though, as fields adjacent to public roads can become flooded and a lot of species can be viewed at close range.

Since taking up birding just over five years ago, visits to locations on my home patch around Ballacolla have become a delight, as one is never sure what will turn up next – and there have been many surprises!

Most of the land is privately owned but access to the floodwaters can be achieved using a myriad of farm tracks in public use, along with viewing points from some of the roads.

### Woodenbridge

This bridge in the middle of the River Erkina floodplain is of interest all year round. During the summer, look for **Kingfisher**, **Sedge Warbler**, **Reed Bunting**, **Water Rail** and **Skylark**. A large



MAP: C OIL N MacLOCHLAINN

inland **Cormorant** roost is located in trees upriver from the bridge.

In winter, a large area floods and, where islands form, you can see **Curlew**, **Lapwing**, **Golden Plover**, **Ruff** and **Dunlin**. Flocks of ducks, particularly **Wigeon**, **Teal**, **Shoveler** and **Pintail**, feed in the fields, while raptors such as

**Buzzard**, **Kestrel**, **Sparrowhawk**, **Merlin** and **Peregrine** are all regulars.

Woodenbridge gives one a first taste of what south Laois has to offer. A flock of up to 140 wintering **Whooper Swans** gathers on first arrival but breaks up into smaller groups as the floodwaters rise. **Otters** are resident. It is also possible to encounter **Long-eared Owls** or **Barn Owls** at dusk.

### Boston Bridge

This site near Woodenbridge is reached via a cul-de-sac beside the M8. It lies at the western end of a floodplain known as the Curragh. It is on slightly raised ground, which gives good views over the floodplain; you will see species here similar to those at Woodenbridge in winter.

On drier ground, look for **Wheatears** in spring and autumn and **Stonechats** in winter, along with **Tree Sparrows** and **Yellowhammers** in the farmyard.

**Grey Herons** are resident; a small heronry is located in pines near the track. The above-

Six Green Sandpipers at Waterloo Bridge, Abbeyleix, on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2016; the record is eight. Photo: Des Finnamore  
Inset: Green Sandpiper in close-up. Photo: Paul Lynch







Great White Egret, left, and Little Egrets at Shanahoe on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017. Photo: Des Finnamore

mentioned **Cormorant** roost can be seen from here. Nearby, at Grantstown Lough, **Common Sandpipers** can be seen on the lily pads in July and August. This popular walking amenity of deciduous woodland and lakeshore offers views of a wide range of species, including **Moorhen**, **Water Rail**, **Swallows** and **martins**.

## Shanahoe wetlands

This is an extensive area in the Nore floodplain, stretching from Mash Bridge on the R430 to Cloncough beside the M7. When in full flood, viewing can be good from either of these points, but you may need to use farm tracks to get closer.

At Bartle's Bridge a track heads westwards, passing a field of wild bird cover which in winter is great for **Tree Sparrow**, **Yellowhammer**, **Linnet**, **Greenfinch** and **Reed Bunting**. This takes you to a field gate with good views across the floodplain, where the meadows are grazed by herds of cattle from spring to autumn.

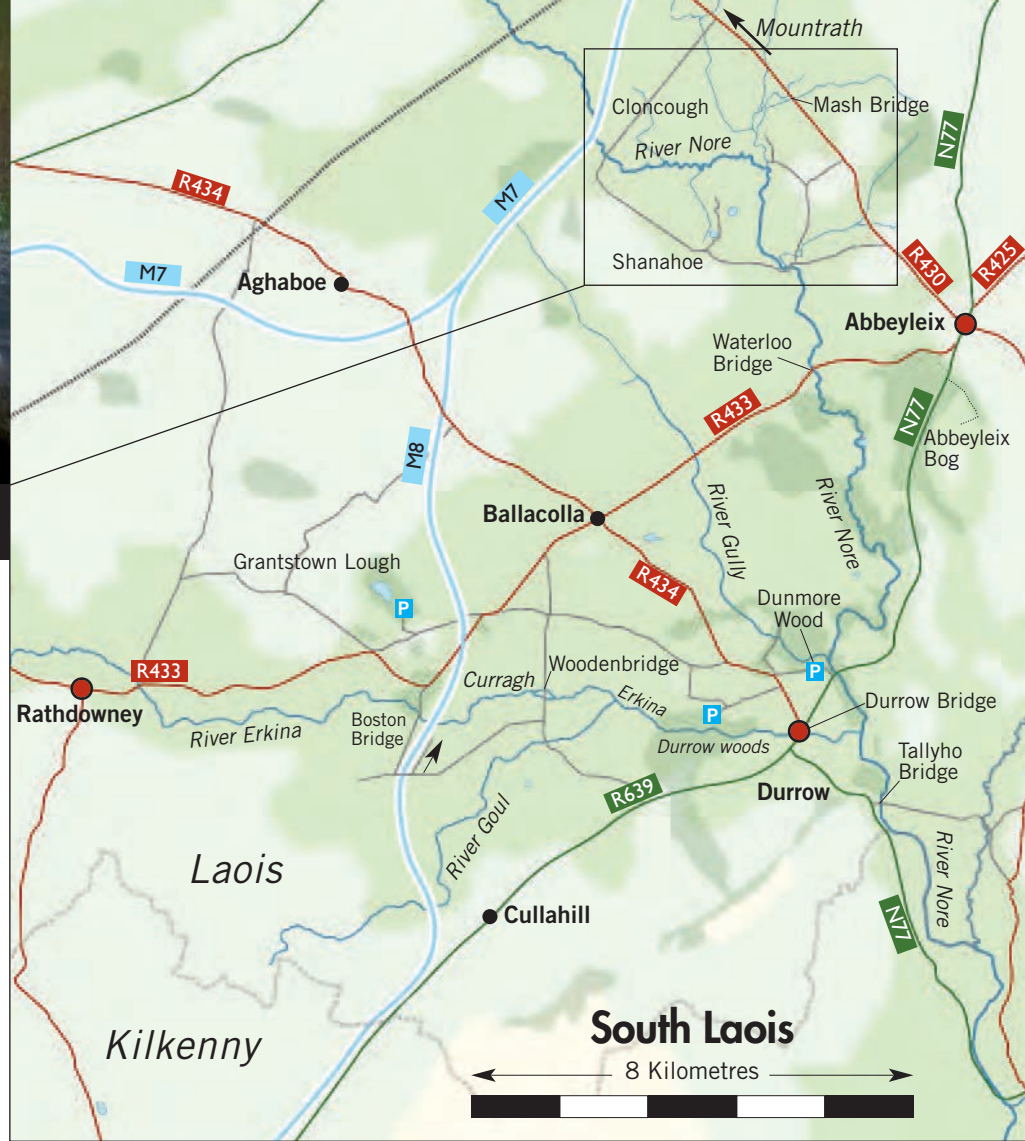
Go back towards Abbeyleix on the R430 and take the first right for Shanahoe. At an old water pump along this road, take a farm track to the right between some houses. This takes you to an old stone bridge with a farm gate over a small river (Mash), with the main floodwaters starting in front of you. Access can be possible here, depending on water levels, but parking is scarce. The fields are divided by drains, so be careful of water depth. It is possible to walk via the hedge along the river when safe.

During my visits over the years I have logged almost 100 species here. Many are similar to other local sites, but usually numbers are larger, particularly of **Pintail** this year:

Less common inland species such as **Black-tailed Godwit**, **Gadwall**, **Ruff** and **Little Egret** are regulars, with a count of 27 of the latter together on one occasion.

Birds such as **Great Crested Grebe**, **Redshank**, **Pink-footed Goose**, **Goldeneye**, **Whimbrel**, **Greenshank** and, my highlight, a **Great White Egret** (December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017), have been noted here.

In winter, large flocks of **Redwings** and **Fieldfares** are present, with **Irish Hare** and



MAP: CÓILÍN MacLOCHLAINN

**Stoat** all year. Please note that local gun clubs are active during the season.

## Waterloo Bridge

You will find Waterloo Bridge on the Nore, just outside Abbeyleix, on the R433 to Ballacolla. The river floods regularly beside Abbeyleix Demesne. When it floods, wintering **Green Sandpipers** are pushed into view, and up to eight have been seen together from the road.

**Green Sandpipers** occur throughout south Laois in winter, usually singly, but a gathering of eight is remarkable as, nationally, the bird has always been regarded as more of an autumn passage migrant than a winter visitor.

## Tallyho Bridge

This bridge over the River Nore south of Durrow, on the road to Attanagh, is a good spot to park and observe the birdlife in a flooded field just over the low wall. **Whooper Swan**, **Snipe**, **Little Egret** and **Green Sandpiper** are amongst the regulars. In summer, **Daubenton's Bats** can be seen hunting for insects over the river surface at dusk.

## Dunmore Wood

There is a popular walking trail through the woods here and along by the river. **Dipper**, **Kingfisher**, **Grey Wagtail** and **Jay** are resident. **Red Squirrels** are active, collecting nuts in

autumn, but this year's highlight was the discovery of **Purple Hairstreak** butterflies in oaks along the river walk in late summer.

## Abbeyleix Bog

This is an excellent site for all-year-round walks using the resurfaced old railway track, a boardwalk and bog bridge. There are lots of **warblers** in spring, butterflies such as **Marsh Fritillary**, **Large Heath**, **Green Hairstreak**, **Silver-washed Fritillary** and **Brimstone** in summer; and **fungi** in autumn.

You can see **Crossbills** feeding in the pines, **Common Lizards** sunning themselves, or catch a glimpse of a **Pine Marten**. A highlight has been a **Woodcock** roding at dusk over the peaceful woodland. Listen for the calls of **Ravens** and **Buzzards** overhead and delight at being in such a magical place ■



**Pintail**  
Photo: John Fox



Greenland White-fronted Geese  
Photo: BirdWatch Ireland Archives

# 50 years of bird conservation

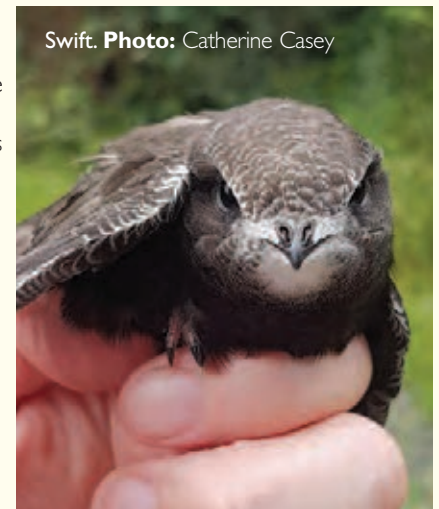
As we celebrate our fiftieth anniversary, we take this opportunity to showcase some of the birds that have helped to shape BirdWatch Ireland and its work for nature down through the years.

## Greenland White-fronted Goose ↑

The Greenland White-fronted Goose, pictured above, has been the featured bird in our logo from the very beginning. In winter, Ireland supports a significant proportion of the global population of this goose. Most of those that come here winter on **Wexford Wildfowl Reserve**, which BirdWatch Ireland co-owns with the National Parks and Wildlife Service. It was one of our earliest acquisitions •

## Swift →

Swifts spend most of their life on the wing and migrate here from Africa to nest under the eaves of our houses, churches and schools, the only time they touch ground. Sadly, their population is in decline. BirdWatch Ireland has been working to engage communities in conserving these site-faithful birds through our **Swift surveys**, which is raising awareness and helping to preserve Swift nest sites •



Swift. Photo: Catherine Casey



Little Tern. Photo: Andrew Kelly

## Red-necked Phalarope ↓

One of the groups that merged to form the Irish Wildbird Conservancy in 1968 had acquired a small marsh in north-west Mayo where Ireland's only known colony of Red-necked Phalaropes bred. It then held some 21 adults. Though the phalaropes later abandoned the site it remained in our ownership and, in recent years, a few phalaropes have returned to breed, in response to our targeted management for them •

## Little Tern and Roseate Tern ↑

BirdWatch Ireland has been protecting nesting Little Terns at their colony at **Kilcoole, Co Wicklow**, for all of 33 years now. Numbers have grown from around 20 pairs to the present level of 140 pairs, and satellite colonies are beginning to form elsewhere in the region.

We also protect the largest colony of Roseate Terns in Europe, on the lighthouse island of **Rockabill, Co Dublin**. We first became involved in tern conservation and management on 'the Rock' almost thirty years ago, in 1989. In that time, we have seen the Roseate Tern population grow from 180 pairs to 1,642 pairs (for more on this, see page 13) •



Red-necked Phalarope  
Photo: Gregory Smith



**Barn Owl**  
**Photo:** Mike Brown

### Barn Owl ↑

Barn Owl numbers declined as nesting sites in old buildings were lost and rodent prey numbers were reduced by modern farming methods. It has staged a recovery in the south-west, linked to the spread of Bank Vole. BirdWatch Ireland is assisting in its recovery by providing owl nest-boxes and advice, researching the effects of rat poisons on them and tracking their nesting and foraging behaviour •



**Curlew**  
**Photo:** Colum Clarke

### Curlew ↑

Ireland's breeding Curlew population has declined catastrophically in recent years as its grassland and bog nesting habitats have been lost through farm improvements or forestry. BirdWatch Ireland is working hard to restore its breeding habitat in key areas such as the islands and shores of Lough Corrib and cross-border areas including Lough Melvin •



**Whooper Swans**  
**Photo:** Andrew Kelly

WINGS WINTER 2018

### Chough →

The Red-billed Chough is a charismatic crow, with Ireland being its north-western European stronghold. BirdWatch Ireland organised two complete national censuses, in 1992 and 2002-2003; the latter recorded 838 pairs of this spectacular aerial acrobat. The surveys entailed walking the entire coastline and islands from Wexford westwards to Kerry and northwards to Malin Head in Donegal •



**Chough**  
**Photo:** Andrew Malcolm

### Corncrake →

Once a familiar sound throughout rural Ireland, the "crek-crek" call of the Corncrake is now confined in Ireland to Donegal and west Connacht. During the 1990s and 2000s BirdWatch Ireland worked to preserve its numbers, which have somewhat stabilised in recent years. A migratory species, it is often secretive, but glimpses may be caught on remote islands such as Tory, Co Donegal, which supports over a dozen pairs. Numbers have been increasing in recent years, thanks in part to our work with local landowners to offer suitable habitat for the species •



**Corncrake**  
**Photo:** Eric Dempsey

### Hen Harrier →

Sometimes called the 'sky-dancer' for its acrobatic courtship display, the Hen Harrier is one of Ireland's rarest birds of prey. Sadly, its numbers are in decline as its nesting habitats are being lost or degraded, primarily through land-use changes such as afforestation and the improvement of marginal hill land.

Hen Harriers occur widely in coastal and lowland areas in winter; but their nesting is confined to uplands and bogs, where they are increasingly vulnerable. BirdWatch Ireland has carried out repeated censuses of Hen Harriers on behalf of the National Parks and Wildlife Service. It is working hard to protect this most precious of Ireland's species •



**Hen Harrier**  
**Photo:** Mike Brown

### ← Whooper Swan

Whooper Swans represent a powerful but elegant wildness in Ireland's winter landscape. They fly from the northerly cold of Iceland, where they breed, to winter on Ireland's lakes and pastures. Every five years an international swan census is carried out, coordinated in Ireland by BirdWatch Ireland in the **Irish Wetland Bird Survey (I-WeBS)**. The most recent results from 2015 have shown that Ireland supports 35% of the international flyway population of this species •



Kindly supported by



Chaffinch. Photo: Andrew Kelly

# Garden Bird Survey results

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



As we celebrate BirdWatch Ireland's 50<sup>th</sup> year, it is also a big year for the **Irish Garden Bird Survey**. The survey began in winter 1989/90, initially focusing on birds using feeders before changing to

the current format in 1994/95, with a broader focus on all birds using the garden.

This coming winter is the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the survey's beginnings. Given the big birthday year that is in it, please help us to make it a landmark year for the Irish Garden Bird Survey by getting your family, relations, friends and work colleagues to participate. I have no doubt they will enjoy taking part and getting to grips with what is going on in their gardens!

Last winter was punctuated by the infamous

'Beast from the East.' December and January were a bit wetter, duller and warmer than normal. February then was cold, sunny and dry for the most part, until a high-pressure system over Scandinavia pushed polar air across to Ireland. In short, it was cold and very, very snowy for a few days.

Amongst all the meteorological mayhem it was heart-warming to see how many people were eagerly seeking advice on how to get their garden birds through the worst of the weather. Our advice during particularly cold conditions, first and foremost, is to provide clean, unfrozen water. Also, a diversity of food sources in your garden will ensure no bird gets left out when it comes to feeding.

Without further ado, let's see how our garden birds fared in the 2017/18 Irish Garden Bird Survey...

## The top ten

There was no change at the top of the table - **Robin, Blackbird** and **Blue Tit** made up the Top 3, as they have done for over 20 years. Robins were recorded in every single one of the 806 gardens that we analysed!

**Chaffinch** came in 4<sup>th</sup> - again no change - followed by **Maggie** and **Great Tit** in a reversal of their 2016/17 rankings.

**Coal Tit** featured at 7<sup>th</sup>, while **Goldfinch** jumped from 11<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup>. It will not surprise anyone to see that **House Sparrow** and **Wren** made up the final two of the top 10.

**Starling, Dunnock** and **Song Thrush** deserve honourable mentions too, having made an appearance in over 80% of gardens.

BRIAN BURKE

Coal Tit



## Your comments

“Our birds are fat! They love horse food and chicken feed. I have seen Redwings, Fieldfares, Robins, Blackbirds, sparrows, Blue Tits and Chaffinches. Better than TV!”  
**Tracey Elizabeth Pullein** (via Facebook)

“There was only a small number of Goldfinches coming for the sunflower hearts and these were being harassed by a female Blackcap that was like a Spitfire on the attack. The male Blackcap was much less wicked.”

**Anne O'Meara, Santry, Dublin 9**

“Record number of species for our garden this year - 29 in total. Only one Greenfinch, but the Great and Coal Tit numbers seemed to be fine. Pied Wagtail and Wren were a lot more visible this year, and Goldcrests were in the garden during a number of weeks. We wonder how they and other insectivorous species coped with the cold weather and the big snowfall in the last week of the survey.”

**Nuala and Tom Lynch, Ennis, Clare**

“This was the first year with no Greenfinches. I used to have seven or eight at the feeders, then last year it was just one or two, but this winter I never saw any - very sad.”

**Lynn O'Keeffe-Lascar, Kinvara, Galway**

## 'Beast from the East'

Ninety-one species were recorded in gardens last winter, the joint highest for any year of the survey. Species such as **Meadow Pipit**, **Reed Bunting** and **Yellowhammer** all made their way into a much higher number of gardens than usual on account of the snow, as did several species of **gulls**.

Imagine the surprise, though, of the surveyors who saw birds like **Snipe** (in 51 gardens), **Lapwing** (12), **Golden Plover** (4) and **Woodcock** (3) in their gardens on a snowy February morning! These wader species tend to feed in wet grassland in the wider countryside, but the snowy conditions forced them to seek shelter and food in gardens. A truly bizarre sight, but one that illustrates the pressure that this kind of weather puts on our wildlife.

COLIN RIGNEY



Long-tailed Tit

## Thrushes flock to gardens

As well as those more unusual species, other birds that occasionally visit gardens were present in much higher numbers during those few days of snow than in any of the preceding weeks. Both of our migratory thrush species, **Redwing** and **Fieldfare**, were recorded in five times as many gardens as in any other week of the survey. **Mistle Thrushes** were in twice as many gardens that week and **Song Thrushes** in 50% more. **Blackbird** numbers increased during the snow, too. Since these species feed on the ground, they came to gardens to take advantage of patches of grass under trees and hedgerows where there might not be any snow, as well as the food and water you put out for them.

## Finches fare well

Almost 7% of gardens were lucky enough to have a **Brambling** visit last winter. Bramblings are a finch species that breeds in Scandinavia and Siberia but small numbers spend the winter in Ireland, often joining **Chaffinch** flocks. In some winters they have been recorded in as few as 0.2% of gardens, but last year was the third best winter for them since the survey began. As you would expect, numbers were highest during the snow, when they appeared in 43 gardens compared to a maximum of seven gardens in other weeks.

For other members of the finch family, numbers were largely consistent across the winter, with **Chaffinch** in 93% of gardens, followed by **Goldfinch** (87%) and **Greenfinch** (70%). **Bullfinches** was at their highest level in 20 years (51% of gardens), while **Linnets** were at their second-highest level (11%). When it came to our two smallest finch species, just under half of gardens had **Siskins** and over a third had **Redpolls**.

## Tit family trends

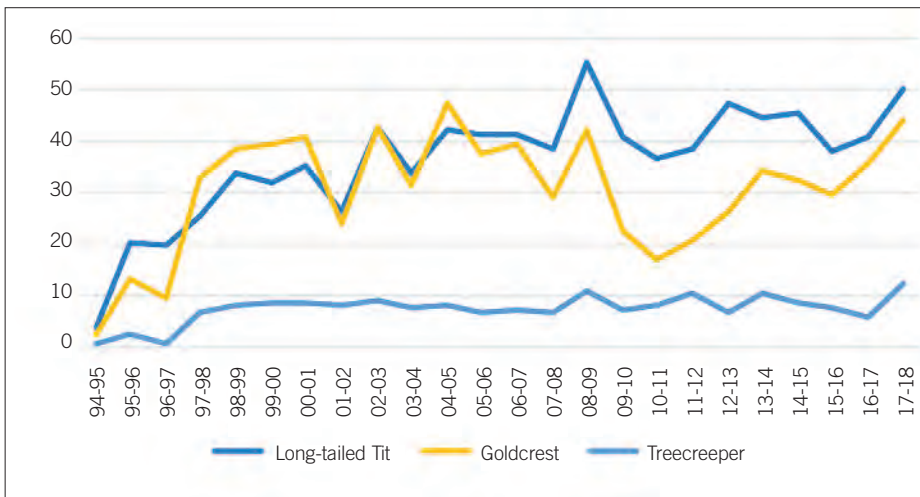
Our tit species were ever-present throughout the winter, so there was no noticeable increase during the snow. Almost every garden had **Blue Tit** (99%), **Great Tit** (92%) and our native

## Ireland's Top 40 Garden Birds in Winter 2017/18

The rankings from last winter compared with the rankings from the three previous winters.

Species	Percentage of gardens*	Rank 2017/18	Difference in rank between 16/17 & 17/18	Rank 2016/17	Rank 2015/16	Rank 2014/15
Robin	100.0	1	no change	1	1	1
Blackbird	99.1	2	no change	2	2	2
Blue Tit	98.8	3	no change	3	3	3
Chaffinch	93.2	4	no change	4	4	5
Magpie	92.6	5	↑ up 1	6	7	4
Great Tit	92.4	6	↓ down 1	5	5	6
Coal Tit	87.1	7	no change	7	6	8
Goldfinch	87.0	8	↑ up 3	11	8	9
House Sparrow	85.2	9	↓ down 1	8	10	7
Wren	83.9	10	↓ down 1	9	12	10
Starling	82.3	11		12	13	11
Dunnock	81.6	12	↓ down 2	10	11	12
Song Thrush	81.0	13	↑ up 3	16	16	15
Woodpigeon	71.7	14	↓ down 1	13	15	14
Greenfinch	70.2	15	no change	15	9	13
Jackdaw	68.5	16	↓ down 2	14	14	16
Rook	65.1	17	↑ up 1	18	17	17
Collared Dove	63.4	18	↓ down 1	17	18	18
Hooded Crow	58.3	19	no change	19	20	20
Pied Wagtail	55.0	20	no change	20	21	19
Bullfinch	51.4	21	no change	21	26	22
Long-tailed Tit	50.2	22	no change	22	25	21
Blackcap	49.3	23	no change	23	22	23
Siskin	46.7	24	↑ up 2	26	19	29
Goldcrest	44.0	25	↓ down 1	24	27	26
Redwing	44.0	26	↑ up 4	30	32	30
Lesser Redpoll	34.6	27	↑ up 1	28	23	25
Mistle Thrush	34.0	28	↓ down 1	27	29	27
Sparrowhawk	31.1	29	↓ down 4	25	24	24
Feral Pigeon	27.8	30	↓ down 1	29	28	28
Fieldfare	23.9	31	↑ up 1	32	36	33
Pheasant	15.4	32	↑ up 2	34	31	31
Grey Wagtail	15.3	33	↓ down 2	31	30	32
Treecreeper	12.5	34	↑ up 6	40	39	36
Linnet	11.3	35	↑ up 2	37	35	34
Buzzard	10.8	36	↓ down 3	33	37	37
Herring Gull	10.5	37	↓ down 1	36	34	35
Jay	9.3	38	↓ down 3	35	33	40
Snipe	7.6	39	↑ up 13	52	56	48
Brambling	6.8	40	↑ up 14	54	44	55

\* Percentage of gardens in which each species was recorded in 2017/18



Occurrence (the percentage of gardens) of three different species over the years of the Garden Bird Survey from 1994 to present. These species often flock together and their fortunes are closely linked. All three were recorded in a high number of gardens last winter.

Irish subspecies of **Coal Tit** (87%).

**Long-tailed Tits** (a species not closely related to the other tits) in winter form roving flocks that often include **Goldcrests** and **Treecreepers**. All three species were recorded in particularly high numbers last winter. **Long-tailed Tits** were at their most prevalent in nine years (over 50% of gardens), while **Goldcrests** were at their highest in 13 years (44%) and **Treecreepers** at their highest ever levels (13%). Their numbers did not differ much during the snow, so their abundance must have been a result of a particularly good breeding season in 2017. Unfortunately, being small-bodied and largely insectivorous species, the cold spell is likely to have impacted their numbers in advance of the 2018 breeding season. Similarly, species like **Stonechat** and **Wren**, and maybe even **Robin** and **Dunnock**, will have been hit hard by the snow in certain locations, though may have managed to compensate to some extent with a good breeding season.

## Best of the rest

**Jays** were seen in over 9% of gardens, continuing a recent run of very good years.

**Kestrel** numbers dropped slightly from 6.1% to 5.3% of gardens, their lowest figure since the current format of the survey was adopted – a reflection of their continued national decline.

**Great Spotted Woodpeckers** were seen in 14 gardens last winter, compared to just four in 2016/17, and are likely to appear in even more gardens this coming winter on the back of a seemingly good breeding season.

## Conclusion

So there you have it – winter 2017/18 proved to be a very interesting one for many species and it really illustrated the importance of gardens to much of our wildlife during the harshest weather conditions. By planting or maintaining your trees and hedges, and by putting out food and water, you are giving those birds a helping hand when they need it the most.

Of course, last year's results do make us wonder what this winter will bring for our garden birds – so please make sure to take part and help us find out!

Over a thousand people took part in the survey last winter, with 806 gardens sending in

data for more than nine weeks – the crucial cut-off point for our data analysis to ensure that the results are as robust as possible. So if you miss a couple of weeks don't worry about it or give up, but do try and make it to the 10-week mark.

Last winter had the highest survey participation in five years, so a sincere thanks to all of the individuals, couples and families who contributed to this important bit of citizen science. The survey works best when we have a wide variety of garden sizes and locations on which to draw, so please do encourage your friends and family from all around the country to take part this year.

## Special thanks

Our sincere thanks to our **Dublin** and **Wicklow Branch** members who so generously gave of their time to help enter data from paper survey forms – we could not have done it without you!

Special thanks also to our new Garden Bird Survey sponsors, the **Ballymaloe Group** ■

## Your comments

“The 2017/18 survey period showed the highest number of species here for any year to date. The Great Black-backed Gull was a first. Blackcaps, Redwings, Goldcrests, Jackdaws, Starlings and Herring Gulls were up. Grey Wagtail and Linnet were absent, while Greenfinch, Siskin and Redpoll numbers were low.”

**Bob Aldwell, Blackrock, Dublin**

“Doing the garden bird survey each year encourages us to keep a close eye on the birds coming into our garden and I am sure that if it were not for the enjoyable challenge, we would miss a lot. It also encourages us to put out more variety of foods for the birds.”

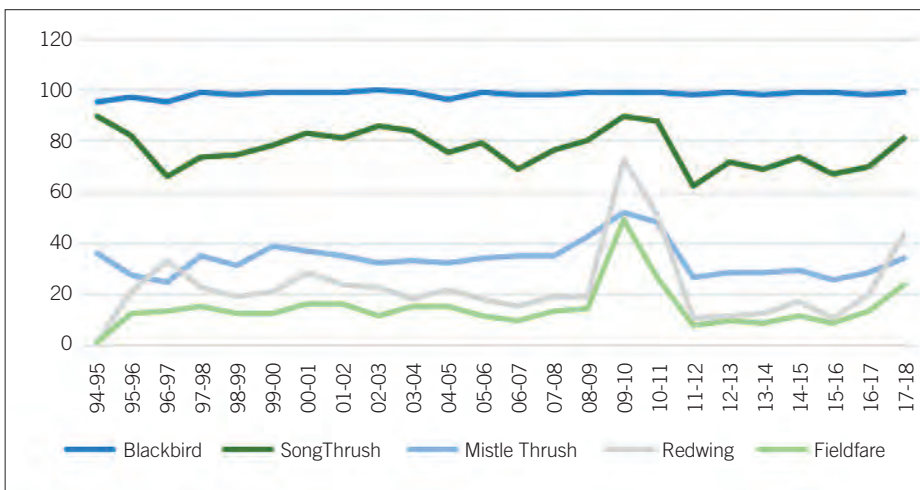
**Paul Cutler, Ballon, Carlow**

“The week of the 26<sup>th</sup> of February was the week we had snow and Storm Emma – so lots of birds arrived to pick under the hedges. Most surprising was a Snipe, which visited twice.”

**Margaret B Murphy, Ballincollig, Cork**

“... Then came the very cold weather and Linnets appeared out of nowhere. A Meadow Pipit made an appearance and as the snow under the apple trees began to thaw, Redwings moved in and turned over leaves in search of food.”

**Anne O'Neill, Mallow, Cork**



Occurrence (the percentage of gardens) of five thrush species over the years of the Garden Bird Survey from 1994 to present. Note the higher occurrence of thrush species in gardens in particularly cold winters.



BirdWatchIreland

# Garden Bird Survey 2017/2018

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## 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

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(please tick) €250\*  €100  €50  €25  €10

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\* 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:

**3    10    17    24    31    7    14    21    28    4    11    18    25**  
**Dec   Dec   Dec   Dec   Dec   Jan   Jan   Jan   Jan   Feb   Feb   Feb   Feb**

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

Please return completed form not later than 31st March 2019 to

Garden Bird Survey, BirdWatch Ireland, Unit 20, Block D, Bullford Business Campus, Kilcoole, Greystones, Co Wicklow A63 RW83





## Spix's Macaw heads list of eight bird extinctions this decade

Eight bird species, including two species of macaw, look set to have their extinctions in the wild confirmed following a robust new assessment of critically endangered species. The findings reveal a worrying new trend: for the first time, mainland extinctions are outpacing island extinctions.

In the 2011 animated film *Rio*, Blu, a captive-raised **Spix's Macaw** arrives in Brazil to mate with the last-known wild member of his species, a female named Jewel. But according to BirdLife International researchers, Blu was already eleven years too late – Jewel, the last of her kind, likely perished in or around 2000.

Spix's Macaw is one of eight species primed to have their extinctions either confirmed, or deemed highly likely, following a new study by BirdLife International. The eight-year study analysed fifty-one critically endangered species, quantifying the intensity of threats, the timing and reliability of records, and the timing and quantity of search efforts for the species.

Five of the eight confirmed or suspected extinctions took place on the South American continent, four of them in Brazil, reflecting the devastating effects of the high rate of deforestation in this part of the world.

"Ninety per cent of bird extinctions in recent centuries have been of species on islands," says Stuart Butchart, BirdLife's chief scientist. "However, our results confirm that there is a growing wave of extinctions sweeping across the continents, driven mainly by habitat loss and habitat degradation from unsustainable agriculture and logging."

Of the eight species, it was recommended that three species should be re-classified as extinct; the **Cryptic Treehunter** and **Alagoas Foliage-gleaner**, two ovenbirds from north-east Brazil, and **Po'o-uli**, formerly of Hawaii, which has not been seen in the wild since 2004 (the same year the last captive individual died). The data also suggest another four species are

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Spix's Macaw....

critically endangered and possibly extinct: **New Caledonian Lorikeet** (last sighted in 1987), **Javan Lapwing** (last sighted in 1994), **Pernambuco Pygmy-owl** (last sighted in 2001) and **Glaucous Macaw** (last sighted in 1998).

Hope still persists for the Spix's, however, despite the Brazilian endemic apparently being wiped out in the wild as a result of deforestation and other factors such as the creation of a dam and trapping for wild trade. An estimated population of between 60-80 persists in captivity.

A lone sighting in 2016 sparked hope the species may persist in the wild, but it is now suspected to be an escapee from captivity. If so, it is highly unlikely this Blu ever found his Jewel, sadly. – **Alex Dale** ■

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# Ballyross Cottage

Ballyross Cottage, Glencree, Co Wicklow. Inset: David Walsh and son Stephen. Photos: Cóilín MacLochlainn

The rural garden of David Walsh and family is a honeypot for wildlife from the surrounding woodlands in Glencree, Co Wickow. **Cóilín MacLochlainn** reports.

As I approach the entrance to Ballyross Cottage in Glencree valley a **Red Squirrel** scurries across the road – a good sign. I drive slowly down the steep, serpentine lane, my foot leaning heavily on the brakes, and marvel at the towering **oaks**, the **Rowan** trees laden with bright red berries and the glades full of tall grasses and bracken on either side. This is not a garden, I think. It is an actual nature reserve.

David Walsh and his son Stephen appear and welcome me to their home and garden. The beautifully kept house looks out onto an ornamental rock garden and some lawns at different levels. Surrounding it all are trees of great age and meadows run wild... all part of the property. A polytunnel, glasshouse and potting sheds suggest the family has more than a passing interest in horticulture.

There are bird feeders of every description everywhere. David brings me to see his main bird feeding station, an apple tree with some thirteen different feeders. Tits and finches are coming and going in a continuous stream.

The garden is rich in natural food sources as well: **Hawthorns** and **Rowan** trees in berry, **Sweet Chestnut** trees heavy with mast and **Pedunculate Oaks** with acorns; also weedy patches and grass lawns, good foraging habitat for **thrushes**. On top of all this there are many **apple** trees, weighed down with ripening fruit.

I hear a **Treecreeper's** sibilant, repetitive call. A charm of **Goldfinches**, and equally charming **Siskins**, call from the tree-tops. A **Jay** screeches in the background; a **Raven** croaks.

David is the owner of **Breffni Petfoods**, a busy petfood store in Windy Arbour, near

Dundrum in Dublin, probably known to many of our south Dublin readers. By experimenting with various foods and dispensers in his garden over the years he has become an expert on catering for wild garden birds and he dispenses advice liberally.

David, who grew up in Mount Merrion, Dublin, moved to Ballyross with his wife Anne thirty-four years ago and they have three grown-up children: Brian, Shane and the youngest, Stephen, who lives with them. When they bought the property, the land was all pasture grazed by sheep and cattle, and some hayfields, and of course the many mature trees. In the intervening years David



has transformed it into the sanctuary it is today. The land is no longer grazed by livestock... only by **deer, hares** and **rabbits**.

## Giving wildlife some space

David has allowed native trees and shrubs to regenerate freely from the seedbank in the soil. This has resulted in a profusion of **birch, willow, thorns, gorse** and **bracken**. Some **Rhododendron ponticum** has appeared, a highly invasive species he is determined to remove.

He has removed the bracken in places to maintain areas of open grassland where **Japanese Sika Deer** can feed, and where they can be observed and photographed within sight of the house. Wooden sheds and summerhouses around the grounds offer extra viewing points.

The Walshes have got to know a wide range of Sika Deer vocalisations, not just the sharp warning bark of a retreating Sika, familiar to hillwalkers, but also various calls associated with the rut, which begins in September each year.

Other wild animals visit regularly, too; **Red Foxes**, of course; and David points to **Badger** snuffles in the grass and notes that a large sett is located in woodland a little further downhill, near the Glencree River.

Female Great Spotted Woodpecker in the garden



DAVID WALSH



Apple tree with a variety of bird feeders, a surprising thirteen in total. **Photo:** Cólín MacLochlainn

Directly across from Ballyross, on the other side of the river, we can see **Oak Glen**, the deciduous woodland planted by the environmental group **Crann** in 1990 in cooperation with **Coillte**. Twenty-eight years later it is an attractive young woodland of **oak, birch and alder** trees, though the bark on many trees has been heavily gnawed by deer that broke through the fence.

Immediately to the west of Ballyross Cottage is a stand of ancient oak trees. Indeed, most of the land in this area is heavily wooded, much of it with native tree species.

As if to highlight this, a **Buzzard** appears suddenly, circling overhead. David was delighted at the Buzzard's arrival in Glencree some years ago and is proud to report that a pair has been nesting in a tall conifer within view of his house.

Just as exciting was the recent arrival of **Great Spotted Woodpeckers**. David found parents with young visiting his garden, the first breeding record for the Glencree valley; he notified BirdWatch Ireland's woodpecker expert Dick Coombes, who confirmed this.

David had heard one drumming near the house, so it is possible that they nested on the property itself; the nest-hole can be hard to find.

Another wild animal they love seeing in the garden is the native **Red Squirrel**, and they are planting **Hazel** trees to make it even more appetising for them. Reds had become quite scarce here after the introduced **Grey Squirrel** arrived from the north midlands, but

with **Pine Martens** now evidently reducing Grey Squirrel numbers nationally the Reds are resurging, including in Glencree. The Walshes have watched them collecting lichen to add to their dreys. They see the odd **Pine Marten**, too.

On sunny summer days the garden fills with **honeybees, hoverflies and dragonflies**. Some of David's

neighbours keep beehives, stocked with native honeybees, the hardiest of them all. A variety of **butterflies** visits their flowering plants, including Ireland's largest native butterfly, the **Silver-washed Fritillary**.

The Walshes are working on ornamental aspects of the garden as well. The main



A visiting Jay  
**Photo:** David Walsh



Ballyross Cottage provided the first breeding record for Great Spotted Woodpecker in Glencree. Here, an adult male visits with a juvenile (the bird with a red crown). **Photo:** David Walsh

horticulturist in the family is Stephen, who attended the Teagasc College of Amenity Horticulture in the Botanic Gardens and won their Young Horticulturist of the Year award in 2014. He is helping David to make their garden even more special.

David is adding constantly to his sightings species list for the garden. The Glencree River and the streams running down to it mean they regularly see **Grey Herons** and **Grey Wagtails**. **Kestrels** and **Sparrowhawks** are frequently sighted, and **Pheasants** too. In autumn, **Swallows** and **martins** congregate in the area, feasting on the insects above the woodland canopy and laying down fat in preparation for their long journey to Africa.

There is never a dull moment at Ballyross Cottage, winter or summer: It is a credit to David and to his family who firmly believe in setting an example for gardeners everywhere, to do everything they can to save Ireland's native wildlife for future generations ■

View through sitting room window. Note the frosted butterfly sticker on the glass to prevent bird strikes



Red Squirrel feeding on sunflower hearts in the garden



# Rare bird news

By **Stephen McAvoy**



**JUNE TO AUGUST 2018**



Green Sandpiper, Rogerstown estuary, Co Dublin, August 25<sup>th</sup>, 2018. **Photograph:** Paul Lynch



**Record your sightings on BirdTrack at [www.birdtrack.net](http://www.birdtrack.net)**

## Highlights

- White-billed Diver in County Donegal
- Pacific Golden Plover in County Wicklow
- Barolo Shearwaters in County Clare
- Influx of Rose-coloured Starlings

The summer months can feel like a quiet time in terms of bird migration, and they were especially so this year with the exceptional heatwave throughout June and July. However, by mid to late June, bird migration is typically well underway, as the first summer migrants such as Cuckoo begin to depart and the first Arctic breeding waders pass through. July, especially, can be good for wader passage and there is always the chance of something rare being found. In recent years, two firsts for Ireland, Greater Sand Plover and Lesser Sand

Plover, were found in late July.

The highlight amongst migrant waders this summer was a stunning summer-plumaged **Pacific Golden Plover** at Three Castles, Poulaphouca Reservoir; Co Wicklow, from July 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup>. Associating with a group of **European Golden Plovers**, it showed very well during its stay.

The only other wader of note was a long-staying **White-rumped Sandpiper** at the

Lower Rosses, Co Sligo, from August 7<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup>, at least.

With reports of a poor breeding season for waders in the Arctic, especially for Sanderling in Greenland, it was perhaps no surprise that scarcer waders such as Wood Sandpiper and Curlew Sandpiper, as well as Little Stint, were reported in smaller numbers than usual. There were just nine records of **Wood Sandpiper**, three **Curlew Sandpipers** and just a single



Arctic Skua at sea off Baltimore, Co Cork, August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018. **Photo:** Paul Lynch



**Pacific Golden Plover**, Three Castles, Poulaphouca Reservoir, County Wicklow, July 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018. **Photo:** Brian McCloskey



**Great White Pelicans**, Tacumshin Lake, Co Wexford, August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018. **Photo:** Victor Caschera

**Little Stint.** Four **Pectoral Sandpipers** were also a poor return for August. **Green Sandpipers** were reported from seven counties during July and August, with as many as three being seen at each of Rogerstown (Dublin), the Gearagh and Duniskey (both in Cork).

From mid-July onwards, seawatching from coastal watchpoints can be very rewarding, particularly if the weather conditions push birds closer inshore. Southerly winds in late July brought the first **Great** and **Cory's Shearwaters**, with 89 and 20 respectively logged passing Galley Head, Co Cork. The same system also produced records of **Fea's-type petrels** from Ballycotton, Co Cork, on July 26<sup>th</sup>, and Carnsore Point, Co Wexford, on July 30<sup>th</sup>, as well as a **Barolo Shearwater** at the Bridges of Ross, Co Clare, a day later. With largely settled conditions throughout August, these remained the peak counts for the summer, though there were additional records of **Barolo Shearwaters** from the Bridges of Ross on August 23<sup>rd</sup> and a **Fea's-type petrel** from a pelagic trip off Baltimore, Co Cork, on August 26<sup>th</sup>. Pelagics also brought the only records of **Wilson's Storm-petrels** this season, with a peak count of 59 off Baltimore in late July. Peak counts of scarcer seabirds included three **Balearic Shearwaters**, seen off Bloody Foreland, Co Donegal, and six **Long-tailed Skuas** passing Bray Head, Co Kerry.

Notable passerine migrants included a

**Greenish Warbler** on Great Saltee, Co Wexford, on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, as well as a **Short-toed Lark** on Cape Clear, Co Cork, on June 2-3<sup>rd</sup>. Amazingly, a second **Short-toed Lark** was found on Cape Clear just over two months later.

In mid-May, there were reports of large numbers of **Rose-coloured Starlings** migrating west from many countries in the Balkans, with the influx reaching Italy a short time later and finally reaching north-western European countries. The first reports from Ireland came from south Co Wexford in late May, and there were several records in early June. Intriguingly, after June 7<sup>th</sup>, all reports came from the west coast, particularly County Kerry. At least four were reported, including two in Tralee. There were further sightings of two in Sheskinmore, Co Donegal, one at Ballyconneely, Co Galway, and at least three in County Cork. There were no reports in July, though singles were found in August on Achill Island, Co Mayo, and in Dungloe, Co Donegal.

A report of two **Great White Pelicans** in flight over Lady's Island Lake, Co Wexford, sent pulses racing. As a long-distance migrant this species could conceivably occur as a vagrant in Ireland. The birds were soon relocated at nearby Tacumshin, Co Wexford, where it was established that they were escapees from a collection. However, with the recent acceptance of the first Dalmatian Pelican for Britain (in 2016), reports of any

pelican species are well worth following up.

Over-summering **Great White Egrets** were noted in four Irish counties and, with the steady increase in sightings, it is probably only a matter of time before the first Irish breeding record occurs (the species first bred in Britain in 2012, in Somerset).

Further wetland species of note included the **Ruddy Shelduck** found in May at North Bull Island, Co Dublin, which remained there until mid-June. Lough Beg, Co Derry, hosted a drake **American Wigeon** on June 18<sup>th</sup> and again on August 25<sup>th</sup>. A **Ring-necked Duck** was an interesting summer find at Quoile Pondage, Co Down, on August 4<sup>th</sup>, while a female **Surf Scoter** was noted off Inny Strand, Co Kerry, on August 30<sup>th</sup>.

On August 10<sup>th</sup>, news broke that a summer-plumaged **White-billed Diver** had been showing well in Culdaff Bay, Co Donegal, earlier in the month. Although present for over a week, it was not relocated.

The second ever **Bonaparte's Gull** for County Sligo was found at Aughris on August 30<sup>th</sup>.

Rare terns included summer-plumaged **White-winged Black Terns** at Tacumshin on July 21<sup>st</sup> and at Inch Lake on August 10<sup>th</sup>. The **Forster's Tern** which had taken up its usual annual summer residence in south Wexford in May remained there throughout June and early July, before relocating to Soldier's Point, Co Louth, from August 7<sup>th</sup> onwards ■



**Greenish Warbler**, Great Saltee Is, land Co Wexford, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018. **Photo:** Andrew McMillan

**Birdwatching paradise for a week?**  
Go to an island without getting into a boat?  
**Durseyschoolhouse.ie**

# Branching out

Enjoying a Heritage Week event organised by West Cork Branch at Rosscarbery estuary on Sunday, August 25<sup>th</sup>. **Photo:** Richard T Mills

To include news from your branch in *Branching Out*, please email **Niall Hatch** at [nhatch@birdwatchireland.ie](mailto:nhatch@birdwatchireland.ie)

## Heritage Week event in Rosscarbery Nicholas Mitchell (West Cork Branch)

The sun shone at Rosscarbery and some fifty people, including a dozen children, came along to an event organised by the West Cork Branch on Saturday, August 25<sup>th</sup>, as part of Heritage Week. The wading birds weren't quite as close as in previous years but, with half a dozen telescopes on hand, and branch members to help, everyone got good views of some of the visiting birds, including **Black-tailed Godwit**, **Curlew**, **Redshank**, **Greenshank** and **Dunlin**.

Adults and children alike got to play Bird Bingo and tick off the bird species they could see in the estuary against an ID sheet. With the unusual absence of **Mute Swan** and **Lapwing** from the estuary, no one got a full house, but every child went home with a bird badge. Hopefully, they also went home having learned a little bit more about the birds that use the west Cork estuaries and how important these habitats are.

There were a couple of highlights: One of our young birdwatchers, Tadhg, spotted a **Buzzard** wheeling overhead. This was joined by a second one, and everyone enjoyed excellent views of this majestic and recent avian "blow-in" to west Cork.

Later on, two **Water Rails** made an appearance. This species spends most of its time hidden amongst reeds, only making brief and scarce forays onto open mud, so it was a delight to see two of them, although they did not make it easy for everyone to spot them!

To join the West Cork Branch, please visit the branch website [www.birdwatchirelandwestcork.ie](http://www.birdwatchirelandwestcork.ie), find us on Facebook or contact me, Nicholas, on [secretary@birdwatchirelandwestcork.ie](mailto:secretary@birdwatchirelandwestcork.ie) or 087 121 5256.



One of the Water Rails spotted in Rosscarbery. **Photo:** Nicholas Mitchell

## Eagle seen on Bannow Bay outing Paul Cutler (Carlow Branch)

On Sunday, September 16<sup>th</sup>, members of the Carlow Branch gathered at Bannow Bay, on the south coast of Wexford. They were enjoying good views of a large number of waders feeding on the mudflats when, suddenly, around the corner flew a large bird with a huge wingspan. It was recognised, with excitement, as a **White-tailed Eagle**. The bird settled in a nearby field for several minutes, where the branch members

were able to get great views of it. Allan Mee, coordinator of the White-tailed Eagle Reintroduction Project, later confirmed that the bird was a second calendar year female that had fledged from a nest on Lough Derg, Co Clare, last year.



**Photo:** Stephen Bolger

Some branch members watching the eagle, pictured right. **Photo:** Paul Cutler

## Branch promotes Swift conservation Richella Duggan (Westmeath Branch)

Following the Westmeath Swift Survey this summer, the Westmeath Branch sponsored Swift nest box projects in three schools: **St Oliver Plunkett's** in Moate, **St Joseph's** in Rochfortbridge and **St Etchen's** in Kinnegad.

The Westmeath Swift Survey was carried out with the support of the Heritage Office of **Westmeath County Council**. Between May and August, branch members provided support to BirdWatch Ireland surveyor **Anton Krastev** to survey all towns and villages, working together with various Tidy Towns groups across the county.

Triple Swift nest boxes (supplied by Genesis Nest Boxes) and lure systems were presented to representatives from Moate and Rochfortbridge Tidy Towns Committees, and to the principal of St Etchen's National School in Kinnegad, in order to provide additional nesting sites for Swifts and to raise awareness of Swifts and the efforts needed to conserve them. The Westmeath Branch plans to continue working with these groups to monitor and protect Swifts and to provide additional nest sites in the coming years. The nestboxes and lure systems were funded by donations from members of the branch at monthly meetings during the year. Further Swift nestbox projects are planned for early 2019 ■



St Etchen's school principal Matt Melvin, left, and Gabrielle and Ruby Kelly from Kinnegad, accept a Swift nest box from Anton Krastev (BirdWatch Ireland surveyor) and Eileen Moreton and Richella Duggan of Westmeath Branch.

WESTMEATH BRANCH

# Crossword No 61

Complete this crossword correctly and you are in with a chance to win a copy of *To the Ends of the Earth*, by Anthony McGeehan, a book valued at €29.99. Send your entry to BirdWatch Ireland Crossword Competition, Unit 20, Block D, Bullford Business Campus, Kilcoole, Co Wicklow, to arrive not later than Friday, December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2018. The winner of Crossword No 60 was Marie Daly from Youghal, Co Cork, who won a copy of *A Life in the Trees*, by Declan Murphy.



## Clues

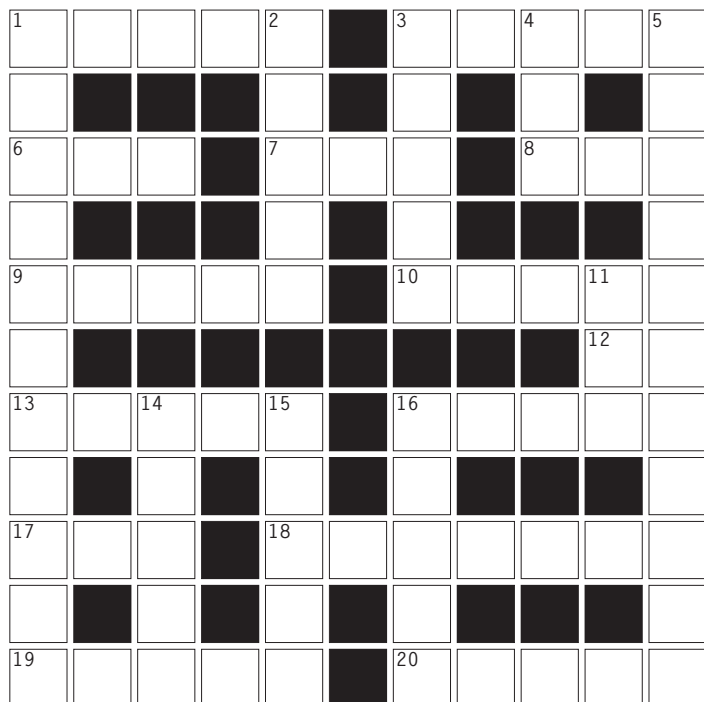
### Across

- 1 Sandwich and Arctic (5).
- 3 Rare migrant partial to cornfields (5).
- 6 Large flightless bird of Australia (3).
- 7 Small deer or fish eggs (3).
- 8 A young Pine Marten, outfit, or set of tools (3).
- 9 To crawl like an insect or move up a tree like I Down (5).
- 10 Land of Mount Everest, borders China (5).
- 12 That is, in short (2).
- 13 Great White, but not a shark (5).
- 16 South American country occupying long, narrow strip of land (5).
- 17 Tavern, colloquially (3).
- 18 Grasshopper or Melodious (7).
- 19 Relating to the kidneys (5).
- 20 Hopped, sprung or jumped (5).

### Down

- 1 Small, woodpecker-like bird of Irish woodlands (11).
- 2 A narrow band for fastening, holding or carrying things (5).
- 3 Fertile female bee or royal (5).
- 4 Puffin is one (3).
- 5 Pure-white, long-legged waterbird, spreading rapidly in Ireland (6,5).
- 11 To be unwell, feel pain (3).
- 14 Bird most commonly featured on Christmas cards (5).
- 15 Soft cloth for wiping or drying things, including yourself (5).
- 16 Marine polyp that secretes calcareous skeleton, forming reefs (5).

CROSSWORD compiled by CÓILÍN MacLOCHLAINN



Please provide your name and address when posting the completed crossword to us. You may use the boxes below or provide your details separately.

Name

E-mail address

(optional)

Address

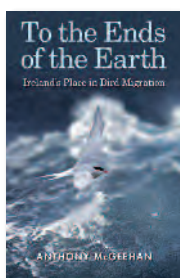

Mobile phone

(optional)

### Answers to Crossword No 60

**Across:** 1. Crane. 3. Sting. 6. Rooster. 7. L.O.L. 8. Booby. 10. Broke. 12. U.N. 13. In. 14. Noddy. 17. Swede. 18. Ice. 19. Redwing. 20. Gulls. 21. Eyrie.

**Down:** 1. Corn Bunting. 2. Entry. 3. Shrub. 4. Igloo. 5. Golden Eagle. 9. o.n.o. 11. Kid. 15. Dwell. 16. Yams. 17. Sedge.



## To the Ends of the Earth: Ireland's Place in Bird Migration

By Anthony McGeehan  
The Collins Press (2018),  
241 pp, hardback, €29.99

For many, bird migration is what makes birdwatching so fascinating. That many birds can travel thousands of

miles in a few days is surprising enough, but birds departing from their normal course, by accident or design, provide exciting birding possibilities. This October, a North American thrush called a Veery, which winters in South America, was found on Cape Clear, Co Cork, the first ever seen in Ireland. Birders flocked to the island to catch a glimpse of this major rarity and to wonder: how did it get here? Would it ever make it back to the States?

Anthony McGeehan looks under the bonnet to find out what has been learned so far about birds' powers of navigation. Author of books including *Birds Through Irish Eyes* and *Birds of the Homeplace*, he is no stranger to interpreting bird behaviour and capturing the character of a bird in a few well-chosen words, but unpacking the mysteries of bird migration is a task few would envy him. He does

not disappoint. He was "magnetised" by the topic early on and his findings have been as revelatory to him as they will be to the reader.

He looks at how migration arose, first as food-driven nomadism, then as ingrained annual behaviour, but always evolving and adapting.

Much received opinion is turned on its head. Migrating birds do not arrive exhausted, like a marathon runner falling over a finishing line; they store the right amount of body fat to see their journey through. Many can cross both the Sahara and Mediterranean in a single flight.

We learn that juvenile birds, far from following their parents, will often find their own way using instinct, or genetic memory, and often travel more widely, in an unconscious strategy of scouting out new lands for their species.

Birds have an innate homing instinct, but finding out how it works has taken a very long time. Could they be taking cues from the sun's position, or the fixed point of the North Star in a rotating night sky? Or be calibrating their position from the Earth's magnetic field? Could songbirds heading out to sea really entrust their personal survival to geomagnetic and celestial cues? Apparently yes, to all of the above. Another amazing discovery was that birds can 'see' polarised light and orientate by the 'light' of the

Earth's magnetic field.

Instinct plays a big part in navigation, but birds are also capable of correcting their errors if, for example, they are blown off course. They may even back-track to reorientate themselves. (Does this explain, I wonder, why we sometimes see Swallows flying *back* to Ireland in September?)

Modern tracking devices have revolutionised our knowledge of migratory routes: we now know, for example, that 'our' wintering Purple Sandpipers breed in Arctic Canada and take different routes there and back to avail of seasonally varying winds. Other species can vary where they winter in response to food availability changes.

Birds can even read the weather. Those that fly at altitudes up to 1,000m can detect the air pressure and depart in high-pressure conditions, knowing that the weather aloft will be fine, even if the weather is wet and windy at ground level.

There is much, much more to this book as McGeehan explores different facets of migration and delves into his store of personal memories, always with his trademark humour and wit.

Illustrated throughout with gorgeous photos, and with maps and graphics by Michael O'Clery, this is a captivating read by one of Ireland's foremost authorities on birds. — **Cóilín**

**MacLochlainn**

# What's on guide

## EVENTS AND TALKS – NOVEMBER 2018 TO FEBRUARY 2019

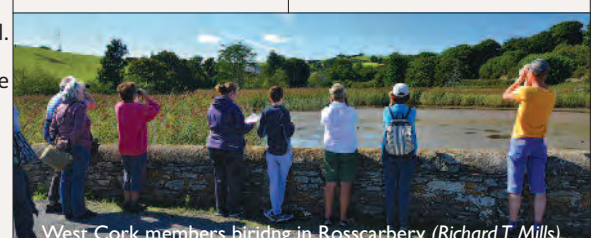
Except where it is indicated, all events are free and open to all age groups, beginners and experts alike. Children under fourteen years of age must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Warm waterproof clothing and footwear is recommended for all outdoor events. Any queries, please email us at [info@birdwatchireland.ie](mailto:info@birdwatchireland.ie).

**Note 1:** Outdoor events listed here may change if there is a forecast of bad weather.

**Note 2:** 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.





Branch	November	December	January	February
<b>Carlow</b> To be included on emailing list, write to <a href="mailto:birdwatchcarlow@gmail.com">birdwatchcarlow@gmail.com</a> <b>Find us on Facebook</b> (Wild Carlow) All talks in Tinryland Parish Hall, 8pm. • Andrew Power (sec), 087 745 8436, <a href="mailto:birdwatchcarlow@gmail.com">birdwatchcarlow@gmail.com</a> • Paul Cutler (chair), 086 896 8794 <a href="mailto:pcutler10@hotmail.com">pcutler10@hotmail.com</a>	<b>Sun 4<sup>th</sup></b> Outing to Cahore Marsh, Co Wexford. Meet in Ballinoulart car park at south end at 10am. <b>Fri 16<sup>th</sup></b> <i>The Merlins and Ravens of Connemara National Park</i> , by Dermot Breen (NPWS). Tinryland Parish Hall, 8pm.	<b>Fri 14<sup>th</sup></b> <i>Badger study: their distribution in Co Wicklow</i> , by Aoiheann Gaughran. Tinryland Parish Hall, 8pm. <b>Sat 29<sup>th</sup></b> Outing to Wexford Wildfowl Reserve. Meet in the car park at 1pm.	<b>Sun 19<sup>th</sup></b> Outing to Dún Laoghaire and Sandycove, Co Dublin. Meet at the base of the East Pier at 10.30am.	<b>Fri 15<sup>th</sup></b> First screening of Rockabill documentary showcasing Roseate Tern Conservation Project. Tinryland Parish Hall, 8pm. <b>Sun 17<sup>th</sup></b> Nature walk along River Barrow towpath. Meet at Royal Oak Stores, Bagenalstown, at 10am.
<b>Cavan</b> <a href="http://www.cavanbranch.blogspot.ie">www.cavanbranch.blogspot.ie</a> To be included on emailing list, write to: <a href="mailto:cavanbirdwatching@gmail.com">cavanbirdwatching@gmail.com</a> <b>Find us on Facebook</b> (Cavan Birdwatching) • Ashley Wynne (sec), 087 773 5487 <a href="mailto:cavanbirdwatching@gmail.com">cavanbirdwatching@gmail.com</a>	<b>November</b> Dundalk Bay outing. The date will be tide-dependent, it will be decided later. Watch Facebook and blog for details.	<b>December</b> Check branch blog or Facebook page later to see if talk is taking place.	<b>Sun 12<sup>th</sup></b> I-WeBS wetland bird count at Lough Oughter. Meet at Drumlane Abbey, Milltown, at 10am.	<b>Sun 10<sup>th</sup></b> Outing to Lough Sheelin. Meet at Crover House Hotel at 10am.
<b>Clare</b> <a href="http://www.clarebirdwatching.com">www.clarebirdwatching.com</a> • Tom Lynch, (065) 682 2145 (H) <a href="mailto:tnaclynch@gmail.com">tnaclynch@gmail.com</a> • Austin Cooney, (065) 682 4804 No dogs on outings, please	<b>Sat 24<sup>th</sup></b> Joint outing with Limerick Branch to Curraghchase Forest Park to look for Hawfinch, Jay, Buzzard, Red Squirrel, etc. Meet in car park about 1km inside barrier at 9.30am.	<b>Sat 15<sup>th</sup></b> Outing to Ballyallia Lake, Ennis, to look for wildfowl, waders, woodland and farmland birds. Meet at birdboard opposite Lake Stores at 11am. Leaders: Nuala and Tom Lynch.	<b>Sat 26<sup>th</sup></b> A visit to Seafield, Quilty and Lough Donnell to look for waders, divers, gulls, geese. Meet at the pier, Seafield, at 11am. Leaders: Austin Cooney and John Murphy	<b>Sat 23<sup>rd</sup></b> Outing to Clonderlaw Bay to look for waders and sea ducks. Meet opposite the church in Labasheeda at 11am. Leaders: Nuala and Tom Lynch.
<b>Cork</b> <a href="http://www.birdwatchcork.com">www.birdwatchcork.com</a> <b>Find us on Facebook</b> Emailing list: <a href="mailto:info@birdwatchcork.com">info@birdwatchcork.com</a> Text or email sign-up: 087 2734 975 • Paul Moore, 087 690 8108 <a href="mailto:paulwmoore01@gmail.com">paulwmoore01@gmail.com</a> • Conor O'Keeffe, <a href="mailto:calabkilworth@gmail.com">calabkilworth@gmail.com</a>	<b>Sun 25<sup>th</sup></b> Joint outing with Tipperary Branch to Harper's Island Wetland Centre, Glounthane, Cork, starting at 2pm and continuing while light allows.	<b>Tues 11<sup>th</sup></b> <i>From Cape Verde to Marrakesh: a wildlife journey</i> , by Jim Wilson. SMA Hall, Wilton, 8pm. <b>Sun 30<sup>th</sup></b> A Christmas stroll by Douglas estuary with Tony Nagle. Meet at Harty's Quay car park, Rochestown Road, at 2pm.	<b>Sun 20<sup>th</sup></b> Outing to Dungarvan Bay to see waders, led by John Power. Leave Cork at 9am. Morning session: 10.30am-1pm. Evening session: 1.30-4pm. All welcome to attend one or both sessions.	
<b>West Cork</b> <b>Find us on Facebook</b> <a href="http://www.birdwatchirelandwestcork.ie">www.birdwatchirelandwestcork.ie</a> To be put on emailing list, write to: <a href="mailto:mailinglist@birdwatchirelandwestcork.ie">mailinglist@birdwatchirelandwestcork.ie</a> • Nicholas Mitchell (sec), 023 882 1640 or 087 121 5256 <a href="mailto:secretary@birdwatchirelandwestcork.ie">secretary@birdwatchirelandwestcork.ie</a> • Paul Connaughton, 086 199 3613 • Emily Fitzgerald, <a href="mailto:emilyfitzg@gmail.com">emilyfitzg@gmail.com</a>	<b>Sun 4<sup>th</sup></b> Outing to Rosscarbery estuary. Meet at Celtic Ross Hotel, Rosscarbery, at 10.30am for car-share to Owenahincha and walk back to Rosscarbery. Half-day with full-day option. Leader: David Rees. <b>Wed 28<sup>th</sup></b> <i>Birds of Extremadura, Spain</i> , by Paul Hadland and Anne Dale. The Warren Suite, Celtic Ross Hotel, Rosscarbery, 7.30pm.	<b>Wed 5<sup>th</sup></b> <i>West Cork Swift Conservation Project</i> , by Brian Caffrey (BirdWatch Ireland). The Warren Suite, Celtic Ross Hotel, Rosscarbery, 7.30pm. <b>Sun 9<sup>th</sup></b> Day-trip to Tralee Bay and Castlegregory, Co Kerry, with car-shares from agreed points in west Cork. Contact David Rees for information and booking details. Leaders: David Rees, Nicholas Mitchell. <b>Fri 28<sup>th</sup></b> Christmas walk in Garrettstown and Ballinspittle Woods. Meet in Templetrine Church car park at 12.00 noon for stroll and possible visit to Garrettstown Marsh after. Leader: Nicholas Mitchell.	<b>Sun 27<sup>th</sup></b> West Cork Bird Race. Starts in Scally's SuperValu car park, Clonakilty, 8.30am. Finishes at O'Donovan's Hotel, Clonakilty, 6pm. Contact Nicholas to register your team (€5pp, includes finger food in O'Donovan's after the race).	<b>Sun 24<sup>th</sup></b> Visit to Bantry Bay to see gulls and divers. Meet opposite West Lodge Hotel, Bantry (on N71 south of outlet) at 11am. Full-day outing. Leader Paul Connaughton.
<b>Donegal</b> To be included on emailing list, write to: <a href="mailto:tonyg@sky.com">tonyg@sky.com</a> • Chris Ingram (sec), 086 370 0243 <a href="mailto:chrisingram43@hotmail.com">chrisingram43@hotmail.com</a> • Tony Gallagher (chair), 087 383 2935, <a href="mailto:tonyg@sky.com">tonyg@sky.com</a>	<b>Sat 10<sup>th</sup></b> Outing to Inch Levels. Meet at the Tready car park at 10am. (Directions: Coming from Letterkenny, turn left at Burt Church and continue for 2 km).	<b>Sat 8<sup>th</sup></b> Outing to Carrickfin. Meet at the Blue Flag beach car park beyond the airport buildings at 10am.	<b>Sat 19<sup>th</sup></b> Outing to Dunfanaghy. Meet at the quay at 10am.	<b>Sat 23<sup>rd</sup></b> Outing to Inch Lake. Meet at Tready car park, 10am. (Directions: coming from Letterkenny, turn left at Burt Church and continue for 2 km).



West Cork members birding in Rosscarbery (Richard T Mills)



Branch	November	December	January	February
<b>Dublin Fingal</b> www.bwifingal.ie, <a href="#">Twitter</a> <a href="mailto:bwifingal@gmail.com">bwifingal@gmail.com</a> All talks are held in Blue Bar Lounge, Skerries Harbour. • Frank Prendergast (sec), 087 131 9884, frank.prendergast@dit.ie • Paul Lynch (chair), 087 631 9209, paullynch@gmail.com • James English, 087 234 5198	<b>Thurs 8<sup>th</sup></b> Talk by Ricky Whelan (BirdWatch Ireland). Blue Bar Lounge, Skerries Harbour, 8pm. <b>Sat 10<sup>th</sup></b> I-WeBS Bird Count at Rogerstown. Meet at Plant Market car park, Blake's Cross, 11am. <b>Sat 17<sup>th</sup></b> Visit to Kilcoole and East Coast Nature Reserve, Co Wicklow. Meet in Kilcoole train station car park, 10.30am. <b>Thurs 22<sup>nd</sup></b> <i>Conservation in action</i> , by Richard Nairn. Blue Bar Lounge, Skerries Harbour, 8pm.	<b>Sat 8<sup>th</sup></b> I-WeBS Bird Count at Rogerstown. Meet at Plant Market car park, Blake's Cross, 10.30am.	<b>Sat 5<sup>th</sup></b> I-WeBS Bird Count at Rogerstown. Meet at Plant Market car park, Blake's Cross, 10.00am. <b>Fri 25<sup>th</sup></b> Great Annual Quiz. Skerries Rugby Club, 8.30pm.	<b>Thurs 7<sup>th</sup></b> <i>25 Years of the Irish Wetland Bird Survey</i> , by Niamh Fitzgerald. Blue Bar, Skerries Harbour, 8pm. <b>Sat 9<sup>th</sup></b> I-WeBS Bird Count at Rogerstown. Meet at Plant Market car park, Blake's Cross, 11.30am. <b>Sat 23<sup>rd</sup></b> Branch trip to Dundalk Bay. Meet at Dundalk Port, 10.15am.
<b>Dublin South</b> www.southdublinbirds.com All talks in Killiney Room, Graduate Bar, Rochestown Ave, 8pm. • Mary Daly (sec) secretary@southdublinbirds.com • Eleanor Keane, 087 644 6029 <a href="mailto:bookings@southdublinbirds.com">bookings@southdublinbirds.com</a> Morning walks are of approximately two hours' duration	<b>Tues 6<sup>th</sup></b> <i>The Secret Lives of Crows</i> , by Ricky Whelan (BirdWatch Ireland). Graduate Bar, Rochestown Ave, 8pm. <b>Sun 11<sup>th</sup></b> Coach trip to Galway. Leaving Dún Laoghaire ferry terminal at 8.30am sharp.	<b>Tues 4<sup>th</sup></b> <i>Point Pelee: Canada's migration hotspot</i> , by Dick Coombes. Graduate Bar, 8pm. <b>Sun 9<sup>th</sup></b> Outing to North Bull Island. Meet on the Causeway at 10.30am.	<b>Tues 8<sup>th</sup></b> <i>Birds of Japan</i> , by Niall Hatch (BirdWatch Ireland). Graduate Bar, Rochestown Ave, 8pm. <b>Sun 13<sup>th</sup></b> Outing to Cabinteely Park. Meet at Cabinteely House car park at 10.30am.	<b>Tues 5<sup>th</sup></b> <i>What DNA tells us about Irish birds</i> , by Des Higgins. Graduate Bar, Rochestown Ave, 8pm. <b>Sun 10<sup>th</sup></b> Outing to Booterstown Marsh. Meet at Booterstown Dart Station at 10.30am.
<b>Dublin Tolka</b> www.dublinbirding.ie Email <a href="mailto:dublinbirding@gmail.com">dublinbirding@gmail.com</a> • Dermot McCabe 086 418 0241 dermot.mccabe@gmail.com All talks in Botanic Gardens Auditorium, Glasnevin, at 8pm (car park opens at 7.30pm)	<b>Wed 21<sup>st</sup></b> <i>The changing fortunes of Ireland's birds through the Bird Atlas years (1968-2011)</i> , by Brian Caffrey (BirdWatch Ireland). Botanic Gardens Auditorium, 7.45pm. <b>Sat 24<sup>th</sup></b> Car outing to Dundalk Bay and Louth coast. Meet at Botanic Gardens, 8.30am, or Dundalk Port, 10.15am. Call Dermot if you need a lift.		<b>Wed 16<sup>th</sup></b> <i>Sparrow Secrets</i> , by Seán Kingston (BirdWatch Ireland). A report on a survey of House Sparrows in Tipperary. Botanic Gardens Auditorium, 7.45pm (car park open 7.30pm). <b>Sat 19<sup>th</sup></b> Outing to West Pier, Dún Laoghaire. Meet at Botanic Gardens at 9.30am or West Pier, 10am. Call Dermot if you need a lift.	<b>Wed 20<sup>th</sup></b> <i>25 Years of the Irish Wetland Bird Survey</i> , by Brian Burke and Niamh Fitzgerald (BirdWatch Ireland). Botanic Gardens Auditorium, 7.45pm (car park open 7.30pm). <b>Sat 23<sup>rd</sup></b> Outing to Gyles Quay and Louth coast. Meet at Botanic Gardens at 8.30am or Dundalk Pier, 10.15am. Call Dermot if you need a lift.
<b>Galway</b> www.birdwatchgalway.org <a href="mailto:csheaslip@gmail.com">csheaslip@gmail.com</a> • Colin Heaslip (chair) csheaslip@gmail.com • Bláithín Kennedy (sec) blaithin.kennedy@gmail.com Contact Colin to receive Galway Branch newsletter regularly.	<b>Sat 3<sup>rd</sup></b> Outing at Nimmo's Pier, Galway, with Tom Cuffe. Meet at base of pier, 10.30am. Would suit both beginners and more experienced birdwatchers. <b>Wed 14<sup>th</sup></b> <i>My experiences of Galway birdlife</i> , by Tom Cuffe. Connacht Hotel, Galway, 7pm.	<b>Sat 1<sup>st</sup></b> Outing at Nimmo's Pier. Meet at base of pier at 10.30am. <b>Wed 5<sup>th</sup></b> <i>Living a dream: working with wildlife filmmakers in Ireland</i> , by Eoin Warner. Connacht Hotel, Galway, 7pm.	<b>Sat 5<sup>th</sup></b> Outing at Nimmo's Pier, Galway. Meet at base of pier at 10.30am. Would suit both beginners and more experienced birdwatchers.	<b>Sat 2<sup>nd</sup></b> Outing at Nimmo's Pier, Galway. Meet at base of pier at 10.30am. Would suit both beginners and more experienced birdwatchers.
<b>Kildare</b> www.birdwatchkildare.com <a href="mailto:birdwatchkildare@gmail.com">birdwatchkildare@gmail.com</a> Find us on Facebook and on Twitter (@bwikildare) All talks are held in Townhouse Hotel, Naas, Co Kildare, at 8pm • Tom McCormack (chair) 086 254 7424 tom.mccormack07@gmail.com • Neil Bourke (sec), njb59@hotmail.com • Philip Dix, Phil.Dix@mu.ie	<b>Thurs 8<sup>th</sup></b> <i>The Pine Marten in Ireland</i> , by Kate McAney (or Ruth Hanniffy) (Vincent Wildlife Trust). Townhouse Hotel, Naas, 8pm. <b>Sat 10<sup>th</sup></b> Annual bus trip to Carlingford Lough. Meet at B&Q car park, Naas, at 9am.	<b>Thurs 13<sup>th</sup></b> <i>25 Years of the Irish Wetland Bird Survey</i> , by Brian Burke and Niamh Fitzgerald (BirdWatch Ireland). Townhouse Hotel, Naas, 8pm. <b>Sat 15<sup>th</sup></b> Outing to Bull Island to see waders, ducks and geese. Meet on the Causeway, Bull Island, at 10.30am.	<b>Thurs 10<sup>th</sup></b> <i>Peregrine Falcons</i> , by Jen Lynch. Townhouse Hotel, Naas, 8pm. <b>Sat 12<sup>th</sup></b> Car outing to Mullingar lakes. Meet at Mullingar Park Hotel at 10.30am (take first Mullingar exit off M4).	<b>Wed 13<sup>th</sup></b> <i>Whittled Away: Ireland's Vanishing Nature</i> , by author Pádraig Fogarty (Irish Wildlife Trust). Townhouse Hotel, Naas, 8pm. (Note change of day from Thurs to Wednes.) <b>Sat 16<sup>th</sup></b> Outing to St Catherine's Park, Leixlip. Meet at Leixlip Fire Station, 10.30am.
<b>Kilkenny</b> Email <a href="mailto:birdwatchkilkenny@gmail.com">birdwatchkilkenny@gmail.com</a> to be included on emailing list. • Pat and Mary Durkin 05677 62130 or 086 040 3204 patandmarydurkin@gmail.com	<b>Sat 17<sup>th</sup></b> Outing to Cabragh Wetlands, Thurles. Meet at Kilkenny Castle gates for car-pooling, 10am, or at Cabragh Centre, 11.15am.		 Barn Owl (Noel Marry)	<b>Sat 23<sup>rd</sup></b> Outing to Kilcoole and Avoca to look for wading birds and Red Kites. Meet at Kilkenny Castle gates at 10am for car-pooling. Bring wellies, rain gear and lunch.
<b>Laois</b> Email <a href="mailto:birdwatchlaois@gmail.com">birdwatchlaois@gmail.com</a> to be included on emailing list. Indoor talks on last Tues of month, Parish Centre, Portlaoise, at 8pm • Des Finnermore (sec), 086 229 1637, birdwatchlaois@gmail.com • John Maher (chair), 086 601 3483	<b>Tues Oct 30<sup>th</sup></b> <i>Birding in New Zealand</i> , by Dick Coombes (BirdWatch Ireland). Parish Centre, Portlaoise, 8pm. <b>Sun 11<sup>th</sup></b> Irish Wetland Bird Survey count on Erkina floodplain. Meet at Woodenbridge, 9.30am. <b>Tues 27<sup>th</sup></b> <i>The Garden Bird Survey</i> , by Brian Burke (Birdwatch Ireland). Parish Centre, Portlaoise, 8pm.	<b>Sun 2<sup>nd</sup></b> Visit to wild bird cover farm field and interesting wetland area in Co Laois. Meet in the square, Abbeyleix, at 9am.	<b>Tues 29<sup>th</sup></b> <i>Wildlife highlights of 2018</i> , by Richard Duff and Hugh Shepherd. Parish Centre, Portlaoise, 8pm.	 Tree Sparrow (Philip Clancy)
<b>Leitrim</b> • Kealin Ireland (sec) 086 388 1535 kealinireland@eircom.net		Please contact the Leitrim Branch Secretary, Kealin Ireland, for details of any upcoming events.		

Branch	November	December	January	February
<b>Limerick</b> Emailing list: <a href="mailto:birdwatchirelandlimerickbranch@gmail.com">birdwatchirelandlimerickbranch@gmail.com</a> Find us on <b>Facebook</b> ● Maura Turner (sec), 087 792 7972 ● Liz Fahy (events), 087 638 4219 All talks in Limerick Institute of Technology, Moylish, 7.45pm.	<b>Sat 24<sup>th</sup></b> Joint outing with Clare Branch to Curraghchase Forest Park. Meet in car park, 9.30am. <b>Wed 28<sup>th</sup></b> <i>A Necklace of Wrens</i> , by Jim McNamara, organic farming expert. Room 3B05, Limerick IT, 7.45pm.	<b>Sat 8<sup>th</sup></b> Visit our Christmas stall in Limerick Milk Market from 8am onwards. <b>Thurs 27<sup>th</sup></b> Outing to sites in Limerick. Meet at Westfields wetlands, 10am. <b>December:</b> Check Facebook later.	<b>Sun 20<sup>th</sup></b> Outing to Tarbert Pier, Glin, Loughill and Robertstown to see wintering waterfowl. Meet at Tarbert Pier (near terminal) at 1pm. Leader: Geoff Hunt.	<b>February:</b> Talk and outing to be arranged. Details later.
<b>Louth</b> <a href="http://www.birdslouth.blogspot.com">www.birdslouth.blogspot.com</a> <a href="mailto:bmartin@regintel.com">bmartin@regintel.com</a> ● Breffni Martin (042) 937 6973, 087 914 5363, <a href="mailto:bmartin@regintel.com">bmartin@regintel.com</a>	<b>Mon 5<sup>th</sup></b> <i>The Dublin Bay Birds Project</i> , by Helen Boland (BirdWatch Ireland). The Spirit Store, Dundalk, 8pm.	<b>Mon 3<sup>rd</sup></b> <i>The story and science of bird migration</i> , by author and bird guide Anthony McGeehan. The Spirit Store, Dundalk, 8pm.	<b>Mon 7<sup>th</sup></b> <i>25 years of the Irish Wetland Bird Survey</i> , by Niamh Fitzgerald (BirdWatch Ireland). The Spirit Store, Dundalk, 8pm.	
<b>Mayo</b> <a href="http://www.birdwatchmayo.org">www.birdwatchmayo.org</a> Follow us on <b>Twitter</b> Find us on <b>Facebook</b> <a href="mailto:birdwatchmayo@yahoo.com">birdwatchmayo@yahoo.com</a> Text updates: 087 643 2340 ● Ruth-Ann Leak (sec), 087 643 2340 ● Helen Lawson, 086 409 4622		<b>Sat 29<sup>th</sup></b> Joint outing with Sligo Branch to Killala Bay to view wintering waterbirds. Meet in car park overlooking bay (at Wild Atlantic Way sign) at 1pm. Dress for the weather. Bring binoculars if you have them.		 Chough (Andrew Malcolm)
<b>Meath</b> Find us on <b>Facebook</b> , <b>Twitter</b> and <b>LinkedIn</b> <a href="mailto:birdwatchirelandmeath@gmail.com">birdwatchirelandmeath@gmail.com</a> ● Paul Gallagher 086 086 9760 ● Terence Cassidy, <a href="mailto:cassidy_terence@yahoo.co.uk">cassidy_terence@yahoo.co.uk</a>	<b>November</b> A talk (for Children's Science Week), by Terence Cassidy (Meath Branch). Trim Library, 7pm.	 Swifts (Jorg Sanz)	<b>Tues 22<sup>nd</sup></b> <i>25 Years of the Irish Wetland Bird Survey</i> , by Niamh Fitzgerald (BirdWatch Ireland). Navan Education Centre, 8pm.	
<b>Roscommon</b> <a href="http://www.rosbirdwatch.blogspot.com">www.rosbirdwatch.blogspot.com</a> <a href="mailto:p70435@yahoo.ie">p70435@yahoo.ie</a> ● Pádraig Roche, 087 907 8849, <a href="mailto:p70435@yahoo.ie">p70435@yahoo.ie</a>	 Lanesborough (John McLuckie)	<b>Thurs 6<sup>th</sup></b> <i>The Garden Bird Survey</i> , by Brian Burke (BirdWatch Ireland). Hannon's Hotel, Roscommon, at 8pm.	<b>Sun 6<sup>th</sup></b> Nature walk in Ballyleague, Lanesborough. Meet in the car park, 2pm. <b>Thurs 31<sup>st</sup></b> <i>25 Years of the Irish Wetland Bird Survey</i> , by Brian Burke (BirdWatch Ireland). Hannon's Hotel, Roscommon, 8pm.	
<b>Sligo</b> Find us on <b>Twitter</b> and <b>Facebook</b> (BirdWatch Sligo) Contact us for text updates on events and bird sightings ● Martin Brennan (sec) 085 141 6313, <a href="mailto:mpbcabinetmaker@gmail.com">mpbcabinetmaker@gmail.com</a> ● Michael Bell, 085 175 1000, <a href="mailto:nature.learn1@gmail.com">nature.learn1@gmail.com</a>	<b>Sun 11<sup>th</sup></b> Sligo Branch stall at Science Fair, Sligo IT. Stop by for a chat. <b>Fri 16<sup>th</sup></b> <i>Flies: little things that help run the world</i> , by John Carey. Science Week lecture, Room A0005, Sligo IT, 8pm. <b>Sun 18<sup>th</sup></b> I-WeBS bird count. Details later.	<b>Wed 5<sup>th</sup></b> Christmas gathering: three talks. Sligo Park Hotel, 8pm. <b>Sun 9<sup>th</sup></b> North Sligo lakes tour. Meet in Cartron car park, 11am. <b>Sun 16<sup>th</sup></b> I-WeBS bird count. Details later. <b>Sat 29<sup>th</sup></b> Joint outing with Mayo Branch to Killala. Meet in Cartron car park, Sligo, 11.30am, or Silver Falls, Ballisodare, 11.45am.	<b>Sun 13<sup>th</sup></b> I-WeBS bird count. Details later. <b>Fri 18<sup>th</sup></b> <i>Photographing wild birds: tips and thoughts</i> , by John Fox. Radisson Blu Hotel, Rosses Point Road, Sligo, 8pm. <b>Sun 17<sup>th</sup></b> I-WeBS bird count. Details later.	<b>Fri 15<sup>th</sup></b> <i>To the Ends of the Earth: Ireland's place in bird migration</i> , by author Anthony McGeehan. Radisson Blu Hotel, Rosses Point Road, Sligo, 8pm.
<b>Tipperary</b> <a href="http://www.tippbirds.weebly.com">www.tippbirds.weebly.com</a> ● Áine Lynch (sec), 087 936 9372 ● Kevin Collins, 087 237 3090 <a href="mailto:kevincollins062@gmail.com">kevincollins062@gmail.com</a> ● Jane Coman, (067) 31741 <a href="mailto:janecomman@eircom.net">janecomman@eircom.net</a>	<b>Sat 24<sup>th</sup></b> Joint outing with Cork Branch to Harper's Island, Glounthane, Cork, starting at 2pm and continuing while light allows. More details on website later.		 Kingfisher (Andrew Kelly)	Email us or check our website later on for details of event being planned for February.
<b>Westmeath</b> Find us on <b>Facebook</b> <a href="mailto:birdwatchwestmeath@gmail.com">birdwatchwestmeath@gmail.com</a> All indoor events in Bloomfield Hotel, outside Mullingar, at 8pm ● Tom O'Callaghan <a href="mailto:ocallaghan.tom@gmail.com">ocallaghan.tom@gmail.com</a> ● Richella Duggan <a href="mailto:richella.duggan@googlemail.com">richella.duggan@googlemail.com</a>	<b>Thurs 8<sup>th</sup></b> <i>Farming for Corncrakes</i> , by Feargal Ó Cuinneagáin. Bloomfield Hotel, 8pm.	<b>Thurs 13<sup>th</sup></b> Christmas get-together. Bloomfield Hotel, Mullingar, 8pm. Tea, coffee, mince pies.  <b>Email us or check Facebook page for information on any outings that may be held.</b>	<b>Thurs 10<sup>th</sup></b> <i>25 Years of the Irish Wetland Bird Survey</i> , by Brian Burke (BirdWatch Ireland). Bloomfield Hotel, Mullingar, 8pm.	<b>Thurs 14<sup>th</sup></b> Bird Song Identification Workshop, with branch members. Bloomfield Hotel, Mullingar, 8pm.
<b>Wicklow</b> Find us on <b>Facebook</b> Emailing list: <a href="mailto:birdwatchwicklow@gmail.com">birdwatchwicklow@gmail.com</a> All talks in Glenview Hotel, Glen of the Downs, Delgany ● Joe Lennon (chair) <a href="mailto:josephlennon@me.com">josephlennon@me.com</a> ● Clodagh Duffy (sec, events) <a href="mailto:birdwatchwicklow@gmail.com">birdwatchwicklow@gmail.com</a>	<b>Tues 13<sup>th</sup></b> <i>The birds and other wildlife of Cape Clear</i> , by Steve Wing (Cape Clear Wildlife Officer). Glenview Hotel, 8pm. <b>Sat 24<sup>th</sup></b> Garden Bird Workshop at the ECNR. Meet at the main entrance on Sea Road, Newcastle, at 10am.	<b>Tues 11<sup>th</sup></b> <i>The birds of 'Twelve Days of Christmas.'</i> <i>An exploration of birds linked to the song, with some poetic licence.</i> Glenview Hotel, 8pm. <b>Sat 15<sup>th</sup></b> Birdwatching outing, Greystones Harbour, suitable for children. Meet at the marina, 10am.	<b>Tues 8<sup>th</sup></b> <i>Wicklow's wonderful wetlands</i> , by Faith Wilson. Glenview Hotel, 8pm. Outing to ECNR. Meet at railway crossing at end of Sea Road, Newcastle, at 10am.	<b>Sat 9<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup></b> Wicklow County Bird Race. Get in touch if you wish to take part. <b>Tues 12<sup>th</sup></b> <i>25 years of the Irish Wetland Bird Survey</i> , by Niamh Fitzgerald (BirdWatch Ireland). Glenview Hotel, 8pm. <b>Sat 23<sup>rd</sup></b> A trip to North Bull. Meet on Causeway, 10am.

**OTHER BRANCHES: Kerry (West), Corca Dhuibhne** Jill Crosher, 085 856 3356, [jillcrosher@gmail.com](mailto:jillcrosher@gmail.com)

**Monaghan** Joe Shannon, 086 918 5593, [joeshannon54@gmail.com](mailto:joeshannon54@gmail.com)

# National Parks and Wildlife Service

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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  
Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta  
Department of  
Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

*Seirbhís Páirceanna Náisiúnta agus Fiadhúlra*  
National Parks and Wildlife Service

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E-mail: [nature.conservation@chg.gov.ie](mailto:nature.conservation@chg.gov.ie)

Roseate Tern (Photo: Ita Martin)

# FRONTIER ED X SUPERIOR VISION.



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