



# I-WeBS News

The Newsletter of the Irish Wetland Bird Survey

Issue 22 August 2018



## Twenty-five years... and counting

**H**ello everyone and welcome back to another season of I-WeBS. What an interesting year it has been since our last newsletter. From snowdrifts to drought, Ireland has seen it all over the past twelve months. Extreme weather patterns were also recorded further afield on the Arctic breeding grounds of many of our wintering waterbirds. In north-east Greenland, for example, the snow melted so late this summer that it resulted in a non-breeding year for several wader species (for more on this, see [bit.ly/2Mht8cF](https://bit.ly/2Mht8cF)). This will undoubtedly affect the number of waterbirds we see here this winter, though to what extent remains to be seen.

With that in mind, we are eager to kick-off the 2018/19 season, not just to get an idea of how our waterbirds are faring after the meteorological mayhem of the past year but also because I-WeBS celebrates its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary this winter... all in the same year as the BirdWatch Ireland 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary!

How exciting that, by the end of the season, we will have built up a dataset that spans a quarter of a century! This long-term dataset has been very important for so many different reasons (read more about this on page 6). And at the centre of it all are you, the counters, who have devoted countless days to going out and collecting the data.

So, we have pulled together some highlights from the survey to show how valuable your input is, not just to us in the I-WeBS Office but to wetland and waterbird conservation at local, national and international level... see pages 4-5 for details.

Whether you are a new counter or a seasoned veteran, we are very grateful for your participation. We hope you enjoy reading this issue of *I-WeBS News* and that you have a great 25<sup>th</sup> season.

Niamh Fitzgerald (I-WeBS National Organiser)

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BirdWatchIreland





Roseate and Common Terns. Brian Burke

## Autumn tern gatherings

Every record counts.

By **Brian Burke** (I-WeBS Office)

**T**his August and September we are seeking your roosting tern flock records for the third year in a row, hoping to build our knowledge of the sites these species rely on between the breeding season and setting off for Africa and beyond in the autumn.

I-WeBS surveys tend to miss these important aggregations as they happen a bit too early in the year, and the best roosts tend to be in the evening after a hard day's fishing by the terns.

Last year, surveyors submitted records from 47 sites in 11 counties around the Irish coast – crucial data that largely went unrecorded until now.

As in 2016, **Sandwich Terns** were recorded at the largest proportion of sites (39 of 47), followed by **Common** and **Arctic Terns** at 15 and 13 sites respectively, and **Roseate Terns** at seven east coast sites.

Repeated counts from the same sites both within and between years hint at a huge amount of turnover of both numbers and species at any given location. In other words, the birds you see there one week probably aren't the birds you will see there the next week!

We know from studies that our coastline hosts terns from all over Ireland, the UK and many other European countries at this time of year.

I can't stress enough how important these counts are – data that until recently went largely uncollected, despite the fact that these post-breeding sites are hugely important to the terns in the run-up to their epic southward migration.

Without these counts on record, these notable tern flocks could have gone largely overlooked in site assessments for development and protection.

We have two years of data and we want to keep going; so, if you see any flocks of terns in August and September, please log them at the link below – the more records the better. Whether it's five terns or 500, it's still valuable information!

➡ To record sightings of post-breeding tern flocks, please go to [www.surveymonkey.com/r/Terns2018](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Terns2018) or email [bburke@birdwatchireland.ie](mailto:bburke@birdwatchireland.ie).

DICK COOMBS



Terns, gulls and godwits on Sandymount Strand.

## Goose and swan news

With help from our colleagues and their respective counter networks we have pulled together a few highlights from dedicated goose and swan surveys that took place in 2017/18....

### Greenland White-fronted Goose numbers up

Counts of Greenland White-fronted Geese on the Wexford North Slob were up this year, with a peak count of 7,646 in January (last year's peak was 7,214 in February), according to the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Greenland White-fronted Goose Study. National figures for the 2017/18 season are currently being compiled.

### Slight decline in Whooper Swan productivity

The annual Whooper Swan ageing census recorded a slight decrease in productivity, with juveniles comprising 18% of flocks recorded (21.5% in 2016/17) and an average brood size of 2.17 (2.22 in 2016/17).

### Brent Goose breeding largely failed in 2017

The birds of the East Canadian Light-bellied Brent Goose population had almost no juveniles when they arrived on their wintering grounds in 2017/18, with only 0.8% young amongst flocks censused by the Irish Brent Goose Research Group. Those that did breed seemingly fared okay, however, with a mean brood size of 2.05.

### Greylag Goose census

We're trying to get to grips again with our wintering Greylag Goose populations, having recorded 1,378 Icelandic birds in Ireland last November. Censusing Greylags can be difficult given the mobility of some flocks and the presence of large numbers of non-Icelandic (i.e. Irish or UK-born) birds in some areas, but with your help we'll continue to build a picture of this species in Ireland.

➡ Many thanks to those who provided us with data – Graham McElwaine (IWSSG), Alyn Walsh (NPWS), Kendrew Colhoun (IBGRG) – and to our Greylag Goose counter network.

➡ Check out the census dates for this winter on the back page.



## Site Focus Harper's Island Reserve

Borrow Dyke lagoon

saltmarsh

wader scrape

hide

sea wall

causeway

Harper's Island Reserve, Glounthane, Cork Harbour

Jim Wilson

# Harper's Island Wetland Centre

An I-WeBS subsite at the north end of Cork Harbour has been made a nature reserve.

By Tom Gittings (I-WeBS volunteer)

Nestled between Glounthaune estuary and Slatty Water at the north end of Cork Harbour, the I-WeBS subsite of Harper's Island is now a brand-new nature reserve. This is a welcome development as it is one of the prime waterbird areas in Cork Harbour.

The subsite itself holds, on average, around half of the harbour's internationally important wintering **Icelandic Black-tailed Godwit** population. It also holds over 20% of the harbour's **Wigeon, Teal, Little Grebe, Little Egret, Golden Plover, Lapwing, Curlew** and **Redshank** populations.

Until the opening of the Harper's Island Wetland Centre last December, however, viewing these birds was difficult for visiting birdwatchers and I-WeBS counters alike due to the dual carriageway and railway lines that bisect it. The wetland centre is situated on a 26-hectare island, connected to the mainland only by a causeway, which provides the visitor access.

The landscape of Harper's Island has changed a lot in recent years, making it an even better location for the wetland centre. The northern section of the island is low-lying and enclosed by a sea wall. The land behind this sea wall was formerly drained and used for grazing. Over the last ten years, because this land was allowed to flood, a valuable complex of wetland habitats has developed. The Borrow Dyke, which was excavated over the years to build up the sea wall, is now a permanently flooded lagoon. Saltmarsh has developed to the south of the dyke in an area that is flooded when water levels are high. The low-lying fields beyond



the saltmarsh have developed into wet grassland. In 2017, a wader scrape was created in the northern part of the wet grassland to provide extra habitat for waterbirds.

A total of 60 waterbird species has been recorded on Harper's Island, with around 30 regularly occurring species, while 25 species have so far been recorded on the scrape.

The waterbird year at Harper's Island begins in late June, when the first returning migrant waders appear. Large roosts of **Oystercatchers, Curlews, Black-tailed Godwits** and **Redshanks** build up in July and August, while scarcer migrants such as **Ruff, Curlew Sandpiper, Little Stint** and **Spotted Redshank** can show up too.

Waterbird diversity increases during the winter with **Wigeon, Teal** and **Black-tailed Godwit** flocks feeding in the saltmarsh and the wet grassland. **Golden Plovers, Lapwings** and **Dunlins** also occur in good numbers. Large numbers of waterbirds can often be seen at low tide.

Come March, waterbird numbers decrease rapidly but a large spring passage of **Black-**

**tailed Godwits** takes place in April, when peak numbers can exceed 2,000 birds.

May and June are quiet periods, though summering populations of **Black-tailed Godwits** and large gulls are present and **Common Terns** visit from a nearby breeding colony to feed.

Scarce and rare species recorded on the island have included **American Wigeon, Garganey, Goosander, Great White Egret, Spoonbill, American Golden Plover, Little Ringed Plover, Pectoral Sandpiper, Long-billed Dowitcher** and **Little Tern**.

The Harper's Island Wetland Centre was officially opened on December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2017. Visitors

can now use a state-of-the-art hide, which offers good views of the main waterbird habitats on the island. The best times to visit are during spring high tides between August and February when most of the other high-tide roosts in the area are flooded and huge numbers of waterbirds gather. However, good numbers of waterbirds can be seen on most high tides.

The development of the wetland centre has been the result of a very successful collaboration between **Cork County Council, BirdWatch Ireland (Cork Branch), Glounthaune Community Association, Glounthaune Men's Shed** and **Glounthaune Tidy Towns**.

Future plans include the development of further wader scrapes, the creation of a 2.2-kilometre nature trail and the provision of additional bird hides.

➡ Harper's Island Wetland Centre is open to visitors every weekend all year round, with additional weekday openings during the summer. Current opening times are posted on **Facebook** – just key in **harpersislandwetland**. For more information, visit the Cork Branch page [www.birdwatchcork.com/harper%27s.htm](http://www.birdwatchcork.com/harper%27s.htm) or go to [bit.ly/2DGTZUW](http://bit.ly/2DGTZUW).



The bird hide at the wetland centre. Jim Wilson

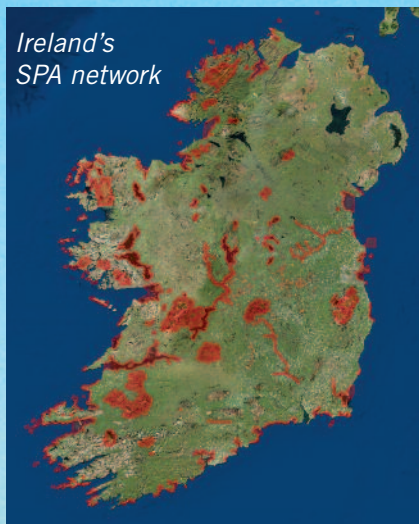


# I-WeBS 25<sup>th</sup> 1994/95

The Irish Wetland Bird Survey (I-WeBS) enters its 25<sup>th</sup> season this autumn. This is no mean feat, so we have pulled together some highlights to show the great efforts that have been put into the survey over the years.

I-WeBS has achieved so much, and it simply would not have been possible without our invaluable counters!

Ireland's  
SPA network



## Special Protection Areas

Arguably the most significant use of I-WeBS data is for the designation of SPAs (Special Protection Areas) under the EU Birds Directive. I-WeBS data have formed the basis for site selection and designation of over 100 SPAs, and 33 of these are also Ramsar sites (designated as internationally important under the 1971 Ramsar Convention on Wetlands).



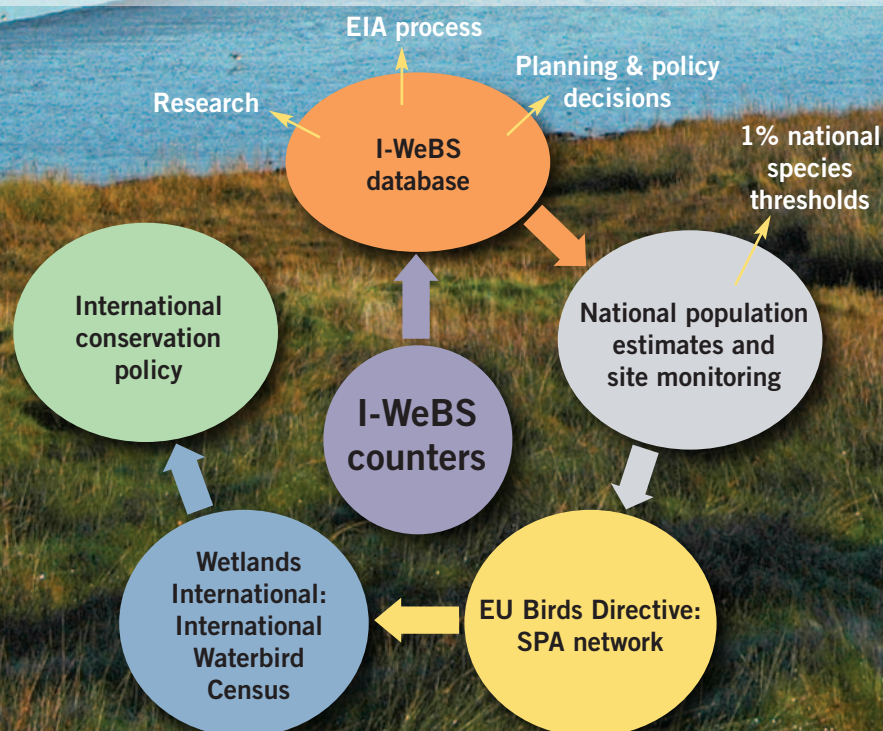
## Publications

An abundance of peer-reviewed publications has been generated using I-WeBS data, from annual reports to detailed texts on the status and distribution of waterbirds in Ireland.

I-WeBS data feed into several other processes, with some very important outputs such as informing policy decisions (for more on this, see page 6).



I-WeBS counters at a training event  
Photo: Dick Coombes





# Anniversary

- 2018/19



**Greylag Geese**  
Photo: Dick Coombes

## I-WeBS in numbers

The many achievements of I-WeBS are down to the enormous effort of a large network of coordinators and counters, the majority of whom are volunteers, who give of their valuable time to count waterbirds in their local area. Over the years,

- 998 counters have taken part
- Almost 53 million birds have been counted
- 4,136 subsites have been covered across 1,419 sites nationally.



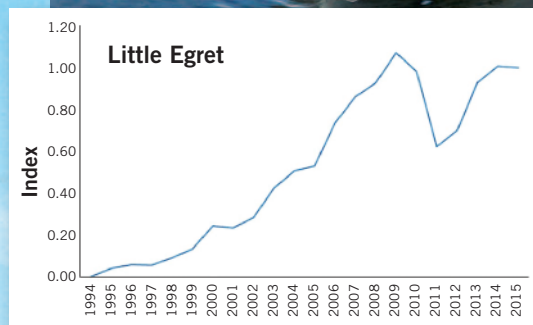
**I-WeBS counters**  
Photo: Dick Coombes

I-WeBS counters have also contributed to many additional surveys over the years, helping wetland and waterbird conservation far beyond the scope of just the core survey:

- **International Waterbird Census (Wetlands International)**  
January count data contributes to international population estimates
- **Icelandic Greylag Goose Census (WWT, I-WeBS)**  
Runs every November (occasionally there is a spring count)
- **Post-breeding Tern Survey (I-WeBS)**  
Runs annually during August and September
- **International Migratory Swan Census (IWSSG, WWT, I-WeBS)**  
Runs every 4/5 years
- **International Golden Plover Census (BTO, I-WeBS)**  
Runs every 5/6 years
- **Coastal Non-Estuarine Waterbird Survey – 'NEWS' (BTO, I-WeBS)**  
Runs approximately every 9 years

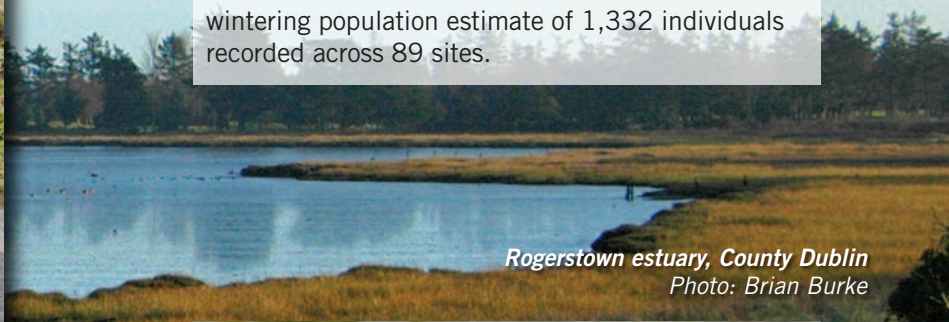


**Little Egret**  
Photo: Dick Coombes



## Rises and falls

We have tracked the decline of several species since the beginning of I-WeBS but have also watched the rise of totally 'new' species to Ireland. For example, **Little Egret** numbers have increased by on average 27% annually during I-WeBS, going from fewer than 20 birds across 10 sites in 1994/95 to the latest wintering population estimate of 1,332 individuals recorded across 89 sites.



**Rogerstown estuary, County Dublin**  
Photo: Brian Burke

**Whooper Swans**  
Photo: Brian Burke



## Other survey work

Some noteworthy additional surveys that I-WeBS collaborates with:

- **The Barnacle Goose Survey (NPWS aerial)**
- **Greenland White-fronted Goose Census (NPWS)**
- **Light-bellied Brent Goose Census (IBGRG)**
- **Whooper Swan Ageing Census (IWSSG)**



# The many uses of I-WeBS data

By Lesley Lewis (I-WeBS Office)

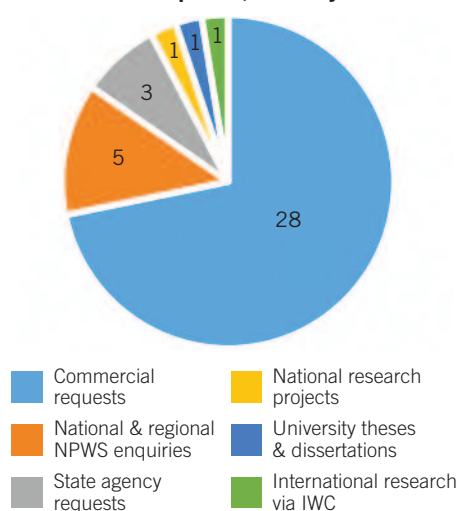
Whether you are a new I-WeBS counter or a seasoned contributor you are inputting to one of the largest long-term monitoring programmes in Ireland. Long-term monitoring – that is, repeated data collection over time – is the foundation for understanding our wetland sites and the waterbird populations that they support.

I-WeBS data have formed the basis for site selection and designation of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) under the EU Birds Directive and for reporting on the long-term trends at these sites. Furthermore, the data have been used to produce national waterbird population estimates and trends, which underpin management decisions at both site and national scales. We are currently working on the update of both waterbird population estimates and trends to be published shortly.

January count data are submitted to the International Waterbird Census (IWC) and hence contribute to waterbird estimates and trends at population or flyway levels.

These are all very important analyses that enable us to know whether our wetlands are healthy via the status of the birds that rely on them, and all thanks to the data collected by you, our volunteer network, and staff of the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

I-WeBS data requests, January-June 2018



There are several other important uses of I-WeBS data, many of which come in through our Data Request Service. While annual site summary data are freely available online, data are available on request at finer scales, such as subsite data or monthly counts. These data are input to site conservation through their role in ecological assessments, for example as part of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) or Appropriate Assessments (AA).

I-WeBS data are also input to site management through enquiries from regional NPWS staff and other agencies, while we also welcome requests from research institutions and individuals.

➔ **Online data.** Online data are available in the form of site summaries at <https://bit.ly/1R9qmMO> and species trends at <https://bit.ly/2IV19dy>.

➔ **Data requests.** Summary data are freely available by submitting an online data request through the BirdWatch Ireland website, <https://bit.ly/1TdpShi>.

## Keeping up the confidence

Small changes to the I-WeBS count forms will help us get more from your count data, writes **Niamh Fitzgerald** (I-WeBS National Organiser).

In an ideal world, every time we were out in the field the sun would shine ... but not too brightly (that dreaded glare!)... and the birds would line up in full view and remain there, disturbance-free, for the duration of our count.

Unfortunately, this happens only nine times out of 10... we wish! So, we must have certain safeguards in place to ensure that we can properly interpret and remain confident in our count data. For instance, if anything prevents a whole site from being covered, vastly reduces visibility or causes major disturbance to the birds, then accuracy should be marked as 'Low.'

Poor accuracy doesn't reflect badly on the quality of a count or a counter's abilities but

it gives us an insight into an unusual shift in numbers. Similarly, if individual species counts are low in quality and don't appear to represent the numbers that were present at the site, then we ask you to flag it so we get a clearer picture of what's going on.

We've all had days where the Redshanks disappeared into the saltmarsh or we were halfway through a Golden Plover flock when a Peregrine flushed them in several directions! In such cases, let us know when you think counts are inaccurate by picking 'Low' from the drop-down menu beside the species name when submitting data online. For core count forms, the ways to indicate low quality are shown in Table 2 below.

Please also let us know if gulls, terns or raptors are absent by putting a simple tick in

the relevant box. While counting gulls is optional, we do strongly encourage it, as they are largely under-recorded! You can read some interesting facts and handy ID tips for gulls on the following page.

Another huge factor in keeping up the confidence in our count data is frequency of coverage – counts in four or more survey months give us the best level of data on which to analyse trends and population estimates. As different species' numbers peak in different months, several months must be covered. If you're limited in the amount of counts you can do, please prioritise January first and foremost, then ideally November, December and February. Now that we have the formalities out of the way, get out there and enjoy the 25<sup>th</sup> season!

**Table 1.** Example of 'Coverage' section of the core count I-WeBS forms.

### COVERAGE

Count Accuracy	OK or LOW	OK or LOW
If 'LOW,' which of the following affected your count? Please ✓ appropriate box.		
All area not covered	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poor visibility	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
High levels of disturbance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Table 2.** Ways to indicate low-quality counts on core count forms.

Teal	T.	[240]	Underestimate	Count is known to be a gross underestimate
Knot	KN	560	Inaccurate	Used when, for example, there was not time to count a large flock
Common Scoter	CX	NC	Not counted	Species present but unable to count



Mixed flock of gulls. Brian Burke

# Gulls galore, but are you counting them?

By Brian Burke (I-WeBS Office)

**G**ulls are a group of birds that strikes fear into the hearts of many. This isn't to reference much of the silly-season hysteria we hear about urban gulls but rather the prospect of trying to count them!

In general, gulls are the most active species at any given I-WeBS site, coming and going between subsites and switching between roosting and feeding or just flying around.

On top of that, if you're not confident in your identification skills, the various different species can appear quite similar, and that's without getting into the issue of juvenile plumages. With that in mind, we can completely understand why some people take the option of not counting gulls when doing I-WeBS... but we'd like you to reconsider!

For some people, it's the nightmare of counting gulls that are constantly coming and going, over and back, near and far, that puts them off counting them altogether. If this is the case, get a count at the start of your visit and put that down. If you're doing a coordinated count with others, get them to do the same. And don't worry about it from there.

If you're reluctant to count gulls

due to identification worries, then size is a good place to start. Our regular wintering gulls can be split into three large and three medium-sized species (*see tables, below*). If your gulls are close to Jackdaw-sized, then you've got a medium-sized gull and you've already narrowed down what species you are likely to be looking at.

All three of our medium-sized gulls have a light-grey back and wings. Two of these three species have red legs and a red bill – **Black-headed Gull** and **Mediterranean Gull**. In contrast, **Common Gull** has a yellow bill and yellow(ish) legs.

If you're trying to ID a large gull, then the same principles apply. Both **Great** and **Lesser Black-backed Gulls**, not surprisingly, have black backs – so if your large gull has a pale-grey back it's a **Herring Gull**!

Differentiating between Great and Lesser Black-backs is a lot easier than it sounds – 'Lessers' have yellow legs, while Great Black-backs have pinkish legs.

There is potential for confusion between the medium-sized Common Gull and the slightly larger Herring Gull but, apart from the size difference, Herring

Gulls have pinkish legs and a red spot on their bill.

Unlike most species we're used to counting for I-WeBS, juvenile gulls take two to four years to attain adult plumage and can show a lot of variations on brown-and-white mottled plumage until then. Again, narrow it down to whether they're a large or medium-sized gull and from there you can get a good indication of what they are, based on the other gulls present.

Though these six gull species have been recorded all around the country over the 25 years of I-WeBS, there are some likely patterns of distribution that may help narrow things down further. For example, Mediterranean Gulls are rarely recorded outside of a few coastal sites in south Dublin, Wexford, Waterford and Cork.

Great Black-backed Gulls are largely coastal and are present in Ireland throughout the winter, while Lessers are largely migratory and spend the winter around the Mediterranean, so in mid-winter they're predominantly found in southern counties, though they're more numerous and widespread up to October and again after February.

Maybe you just find gulls boring? Well there's always the

chance of finding something more unusual amongst your local flocks. **Glaucous** and **Iceland Gulls** traditionally winter in North America, Greenland and Iceland but turn up in Ireland every year, as do **Ring-billed Gulls**, which are a North American species.

You may also think that the gulls on your patch are local birds, but in winter birds colour-ringed in the UK, Norway, Germany, Poland and elsewhere are frequently recorded here – your local flock is probably much more international than you think.

It's extremely difficult to get an accurate estimate of our nationwide gull population given that some birds occur in terrestrial habitats and others are at sea, *etc*, so we know that any wintering gull figures we publish represent a population minimum. However, our current coverage of gulls during counts can be improved.

Bearing that in mind, please make it your I-WeBS new year's resolution to include gulls in your counts this winter. It's not as tricky as you might think, and it gives us really valuable information on their populations and the importance of our wetland habitats.

**Tables 1 & 2.** Cheat sheet for gull ID to use in conjunction with your bird guide. Remember, these descriptions apply only to adult gulls.

Medium-sized gulls

Black-headed Gull	Mediterranean Gull	Common Gull
Light-grey back	Light-grey back	Light-grey back
Red legs and bill	Dark red legs and bill	Yellow(ish) legs and bill
Solid black wing-tips	Pure white wing-tips	White 'mirrors' on black wing-tips
Black eyes	Black eyes	Black eyes

Large gulls

Herring Gull	Lesser Black-backed Gull	Great Black-backed Gull
Light-grey back	Slate-grey (dark) back	Jet-black back
Yellow bill with red spot	Yellow bill with red spot	Yellow bill with red spot
White 'mirrors' on black wing-tips	White 'mirrors' on black wing-tips	White 'mirrors' on black wing-tips
Yellow eyes, pink legs	Yellow eyes and legs	Yellow eyes, pink legs



## Count Dates 2018/19

East Coast & Inland Counties			South & West Coast Counties		
	Weekend	High Tide (Sunday) Dublin*		Weekend	High Tide (Sunday) Cork**
Sep	8 <sup>th</sup> -9 <sup>th</sup>	12:04		15 <sup>th</sup> -16 <sup>th</sup>	11:00
Oct	6 <sup>th</sup> -7 <sup>th</sup>	11:00		13 <sup>th</sup> -14 <sup>th</sup>	09:41
Nov	10 <sup>th</sup> -11 <sup>th</sup>	13:38		17 <sup>th</sup> -18 <sup>th</sup>	14:04
Dec	8 <sup>th</sup> -9 <sup>th</sup>	12:41		15 <sup>th</sup> -16 <sup>th</sup>	11:55
Jan	5 <sup>th</sup> -6 <sup>th</sup>	11:48		12 <sup>th</sup> -13 <sup>th</sup>	10:11
Feb	9 <sup>th</sup> -10 <sup>th</sup>	14:52		16 <sup>th</sup> -17 <sup>th</sup>	15:54
Mar	9 <sup>th</sup> -10 <sup>th</sup>	13:46		16 <sup>th</sup> -17 <sup>th</sup>	14:32

\*Based on high-tide time predicted for the North Wall, Dublin

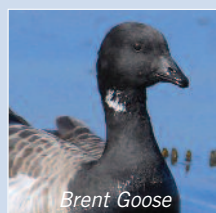
\*\*Based on high-tide time predicted for Cork Harbour

Here are the recommended dates for the 2018/19 I-WeBS count season. These dates are chosen based on tidal conditions around Ireland's coastline to allow coastal sites to be counted on a rising or high tide, and to help maximise synchronisation of counts across the country, be they inland or coastal. As always, we try to select dates that suit as many tidal states as possible so that co-ordination of counts can be achieved. If any dates are unsuitable for whatever reason, please select the next most appropriate date and try to co-ordinate with any nearby sites, where relevant. Please refer to your *Counter Manual* for how best to cover your site.



Tufted Duck

Brian Burke



Brent Goose

- **Light-bellied Brent Goose Census:** dates to be confirmed
- **Icelandic Greylag Goose Census:** November 17-18<sup>th</sup>
- We're eager to build a better picture of our **wintering Greylag Goose populations**. In addition to counts during the above census dates, we would welcome additional records at any stage during the winter. It's impossible to differentiate between feral and Icelandic Greylag Geese in the field unless you know your site only has one or the other, but counts in September will give a good indication as to how many feral Greylags are in an area. Please submit supplementary counts of wintering Greylag Geese at this link: [www.surveymonkey.com/r/IrishGreylagCensus](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/IrishGreylagCensus).

## Workshops, come hail, rain or snow!

Despite the weather trying its best to interfere, we succeeded in running all of our 2017/18 EPA-funded workshops. Many thanks to all who came along and especially to any new participants.

We enjoyed all of the workshops and hope to run more in spring 2019, so keep an eye on our webpage, [bit.ly/2fGwtNv](http://bit.ly/2fGwtNv), for details closer to the time.



We would like to apologise to anyone who was inconvenienced by the change in date for the Athlone workshop; it was due to circumstances beyond our control.

## Avian flu: report any possible cases

To date, only three cases of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) have been found in the Republic of Ireland in 2018. The highly pathogenic strain H5N6 was confirmed in three birds of prey – one **Buzzard** (in Tipperary) and two **White-tailed Sea Eagles** (in Tipperary and Clare). Since March, there have been no cases of avian influenza in wild birds. Luckily, no reports of the virus being found in poultry have arisen during the recent avian flu epidemics (2016-2018).

However, two **Greylag Geese** did test positive for HPAI H5N6 in Northern Ireland (Co Armagh) this June. This particular strain was first found on December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2017, in the Netherlands and has since spread to other countries.

Further afield, H5 strains of avian flu have been confirmed in the United Kingdom, Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, Denmark and Bulgaria.

Despite there being few reports of avian flu in Ireland, poultry owners are still being encouraged to be vigilant and to implement biosecurity measures. Members of the public are also encouraged to report waterbirds that appear sick or are found dead. If you come across such birds this winter, please avoid contact and report them to the nearest **Regional Veterinary Office** immediately.

➔ The Department of Agriculture's **Avian Influenza Helpline Number** is 076 106 4403 and the after-hours number is 1850 200 456.

## Post-breeding tern survey 2018

## Looking for your tern records!

We are looking for your records of post-breeding tern flocks again this year, from August and September.



Sandwich Terns

Shay Connolly

Records can be sent to: [www.surveymonkey.com/r/Terns2018](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Terns2018) or email [bburke@birdwatchireland.ie](mailto:bburke@birdwatchireland.ie). For more on this, see page 2.

## The I-WeBS Office

**Lesley Lewis, Niamh Fitzgerald and Brian Burke**

For queries about site coverage, counter co-ordination and general I-WeBS queries, please contact Niamh and Brian at [iwebs@birdwatchireland.ie](mailto:iwebs@birdwatchireland.ie). You can also visit our website ([bit.ly/2fGwtNv](http://bit.ly/2fGwtNv)) for other resources.

For queries about I-WeBS data, please contact Lesley at [ljlewis@birdwatchireland.ie](mailto:ljlewis@birdwatchireland.ie).

The Irish Wetland Bird Survey (I-WeBS) is the monitoring scheme for non-breeding waterbirds in the Republic of Ireland, which aims to be the primary tool for monitoring their populations and the wetland habitats on which they depend. The data generated are used to assess the sizes of non-breeding waterbird populations, identify trends in their numbers and distribution, and assess the importance of individual sites for them. I-WeBS is a joint project of BirdWatch Ireland and the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.



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



**BirdWatch Ireland**