



Photograph: RÓNÁN McLAUGHLIN

Reserves

County Cork: Cuskinny Marsh Nature Reserve

Jim Wilson and **Dave Suddaby** describe the attractions of the reserve outside Cobh, Co Cork

BirdWatch Ireland's Cuskinny Marsh Nature Reserve, near Cobh, Co Cork, was established in 1990 through a long-term lease agreement with the owners, the Bird and Ronan families.

At around 12 hectares, and lying along the lower reaches of the Ballyleary Stream on Great Island in Cork Harbour, the reserve comprises an array of habitats that include shoreline, lagoon, stream, bog, grassland and woodland. It supports a great variety of wildlife and plays an important role within the local community, and for schools and groups, as an amenity to explore and learn from.

Exploring the reserve

At any time of year, listen for the high-pitched whistle or watch for the azure-blue flash of a **Kingfisher** along the reed edges; or the high-pitched trill of **Treecreepers** as they scurry up the tree trunks in the woodland.

The reserve has hosted the national **spring dawn chorus** broadcast by *The Mooney Show* on RTE Radio 1 for many years now. The chorus includes the lilting song of **Willow Warblers** within the woodland and the scratchy song of **Sedge Warblers** in the reedbed.

Towards the end of summer the autumn migration begins: this can be witnessed as **Swallows** gather to roost in the reedbed in advance of their departure south.

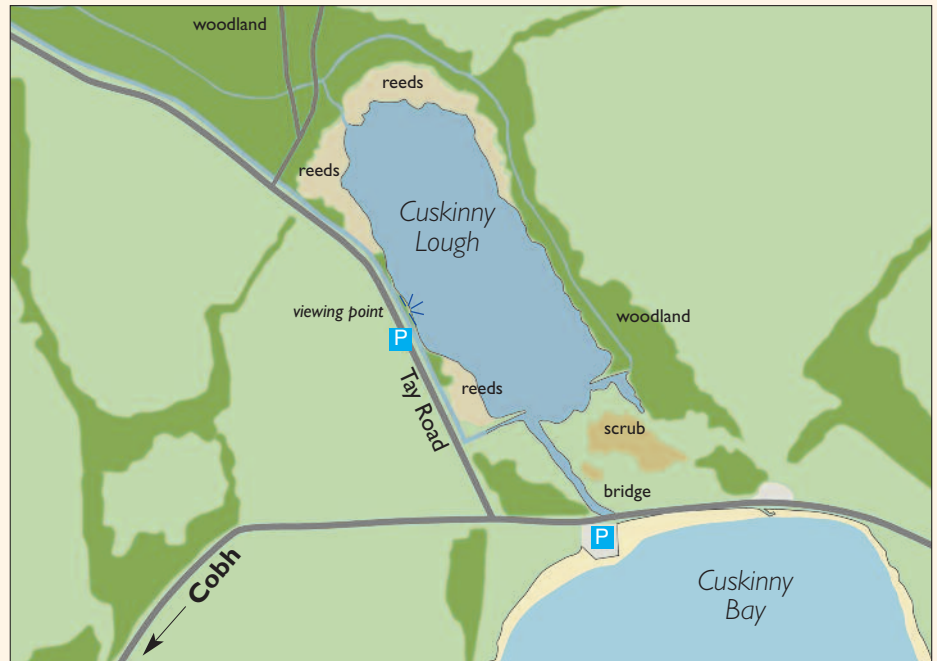
As winter approaches, small numbers of wintering ducks start to arrive, mainly **Mallard** and **Teal**, but careful scanning of the flocks can reveal **Gadwall** or sometimes North American birds such as **Ring-necked Duck**.

The winter months are well-known for the gathering of gulls which, again with careful scanning, can reveal the odd rarity or at least a scarcity.

Work we are doing at Cuskinny Marsh

The ongoing management and development of the reserve has been led by a dedicated group of **Cork Branch** members. Supporters also play an important role. Your support is vital in helping us to:

- Protect the reserve's habitats and wildlife
- Enhance the site's wildlife appeal
- Promote the reserve as a place to learn about birds and other wildlife
- Enhance the visitor information



- Provide a safe environment to learn in and explore
- Encourage amateurs and experts alike to undertake environmental studies.

Visitor information: How to find us

By car or bike

The reserve is on a minor road (L2989) off the R624, which runs from the E30 Cork-Waterford road just east of Little Island, through Fota Island to the town of Cobh. Follow the L2989 to the crossroads at Old Church Cemetery, then follow the Cuskinny signpost to the left and stay on this road until you reach the reserve after a couple of kilometres. There is a car park at the south end of the reserve.

By public transport

There is a regular rail service from Cork city to Cobh, and the reserve is a 3.8km walk east from the centre of Cobh.

Entry

Visitors are asked to respect the habitats and wildlife by keeping to the roads. All of the reserve is private property. Wildlife should be viewed only from the road that borders the west and south sides of the reserve. No

bird hides are present. To reduce potential disturbance, we urge visitors to keep their dogs on a leash.

Don't miss.....

- **Dawn or dusk choruses**, especially during May, with birdsong filling the air
- **Kingfisher** flying around the lagoon or bay or perched on the reedbed edge, waiting patiently
- **Willow Warblers** singing from the woodland in summer
- **Little Grebes** (pictured) trilling away from the reed edge
- **Water Rails** calling at dusk at any time of year
- **Gulls**, especially in winter; they come from all over Cork Harbour to wash in the freshwater lake, preen and roost in the lagoon
- **Bat-watching** on a summer's evening to see Ireland's largest bat, the **Leisler's Bat**, and the water-loving **Daubenton's Bat**
- **Emperor dragonflies** patrolling the water's edge in summer
- **Orange-tip butterflies** in April and May



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We hope you enjoy your visit!