

Site Guide



by **C  il  n MacLochlainn**

Lough Corrib in winter at Luimnagh, near Headford, Co Galway. Photograph: C  il  n MacLochlainn

Just where can you go birding in the southern half of Lough Corrib, Co Galway?

Lough Corrib is Ireland's second largest lake, with a renowned trout fishery and a great variety of breeding and wintering waterbirds. How odd, then, that it has so few points of access for viewing it from the shore. These are few and far between and, where they occur,

have little or no parking or walking trails. A few piers for boats is about the only nod to visitors.

The best of the birdlife is found in the lower half, itself an enormous area. It is not possible to cover both sides of the lower half in a day, as you need to cross the River Corrib in Galway city,

which eats into your time. Probably best to settle for one side or the other on the day.

Study the map to find the places you want to visit – some are down narrow b  ithr  ns. Please respect private property and ask permission before venturing onto lands. Happy birding!

Portdarragh –

Wooded headland with rough trails. It is possible to reach the shore and view some of the tree-covered islands. Look for Lapwings and Common Sandpipers on-shore, and for ducks, grebes and terns offshore.

Kilcloggaun –

Wooded area with good views over the lake to islands. Some play host to breeding Curlews, Common and Arctic Terns, Black-headed Gulls and Red-breasted Mergansers, while Common Scoters have bred in the past. Shovelers breed occasionally.

Clooniff – A wooded headland offering views of the Corrib's most extensive reedbeds. Look for ducks, grebes, harriers and warblers. Keep an eye out for possible Osprey, Marsh Harrier and White-tailed Eagle. Listen for possible Bittern 'booming' in the reedswamps, as well as Water Rails, with their pig-like squeals.

Brown Hairstreak and other rare butterflies can be found along the west shore, and wild flowers of interest abound, including orchids and species that like limestone soils.



MAP: C  IL  N MACLOCHLAINN

Annaghdown – A scenic headland with monuments and dense woodlands. View the lake from the pier or from the castle (towerhouse).

Muckrush – A remote headland with reed marshes along the shore as well as between it and Rabbit Island. Great White Egrets have been seen here a few times. Reach it from Cloonboo.

Curraghmore – A large flat bog, good for birds of prey, including Merlin, for large waterbirds including Whooper Swan and Greenland White-fronted Goose, and for Cuckoo, Grasshopper Warbler and other summer migrants. The gate is usually locked and a walk of 2 km is required to reach the lakeshore, where Gadwall occur.

Angliham – Scan the extensive marshes from a height to find harriers and egrets. Hen and Marsh Harriers are seen regularly, White-tailed Eagles occasionally.

Marble Quarries – The best place on the lake for waterbirds, including rafts of Tufted Duck, Pochard, Scaup (rarely), Goldeneye and Coot. See also Wigeon, Teal, Shoveler, Pintail. Along the shore, look for Ruff and for Green and Pectoral Sandpipers, in autumn mainly.

Glenlo Abbey Hotel – There is access from here to the old Galway-Clifden railway line, part of which is now an interesting short walk to the River Corrib, offering a view of the Coolanillaun reedbeds.

Menlo – Mallards, Mute Swans and Black-headed Gulls loaf beside the pier, while Little Grebes and Moorhens call from the reedbeds. Also a good place to see Sedge Warblers and Swallows in summer. Barn Owls nest locally.