

# Wings



**BirdWatchIreland**  
*protecting birds and biodiversity*



**Featuring....**  
BirdWatch Ireland history:  
the landmark achievements  
of the 1990s and 2000s



**Also....**  
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Site Guide: The east midland lakes  
Barn Owl deaths on motorways





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**Where Are You, Puffling? A Skellig Adventure** by Gerry Daly & Erika McGann, €13.00, hdbk, 32pp. A puffling goes in search of adventure and her Puffin parents can't find her. They talk to a seal, a Gannet, a rabbit, and they search the cliffs and coves, but they just cannot find their fluffy black chick. Finally, they spot her. The puffling is too small to fly home, so the animals of Skellig come up with something very clever....



**The Great Big Book of Irish Wildlife** by Juanita Browne, €20.00, hdbk, 80pp. Explore nature in your back garden, in the mountains, rivers, forests and sea. Learn about phenomena such as the metamorphosis from tadpole to frog, or a Starling flock in winter. Overflowing with photos and cartoons. Will open children's eyes to the natural world.

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**Optic Wonder** €8.00. A pocket-sized optical instrument with multiple functions: binoculars, monocular, magnifying glass, compass, stereoscopic viewer, signal mirror, observation tray. Perfect for on-the-go science fun.





# Welcome

From **Declan O'Sullivan**



## New BirdWatch Ireland website launched

I am delighted to announce that a lot of hard work over the past few months culminated at the start of May in the launch of our brand-new website. Completely redesigned and offering a host of new features, we hope that you will enjoy using it as much as we have enjoyed creating it for you. The website URL remains [www.birdwatchireland.ie](http://www.birdwatchireland.ie).

Chief among these new features, you will be glad to hear, is a vastly improved and modernised membership portal, which greatly simplifies online membership renewal, as well as a completely overhauled online shop. Every BirdWatch Ireland member can now access his or her own payment history, including membership payments, donations and shop purchases. You can also set up direct debit membership payments online, or else if you like opt in to automatic annual membership renewal by credit/debit card.

BirdWatch Ireland members will now also have free access to our online archive of past issues of *Wings*, *Bird Detectives* and other publications.

When you log in to your account these back issues are 'unlocked,' and you can then view them onscreen or download them in PDF format. We will continue to post printed copies of each new issue to all members as normal. Over the next few months we look forward to adding more online features for our members.

If we currently have an email address for you, you will receive an email from us with all the necessary log-in details. If we do not have your email address, please either give us a call on **(01) 2819878** or email [info@birdwatchireland.ie](mailto:info@birdwatchireland.ie) to request us to activate your account.

I have one final request. **Local and European Parliament elections** will be taking place on the 24<sup>th</sup> of May. We would urge all BirdWatch Ireland members to get out and vote for candidates who support action for the protection of birds, biodiversity and habitats. Please also ask any candidates who canvas for your vote about their commitments to Ireland's natural heritage.

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

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DICK COOMBES



Pictured at the unveiling of new signs at our East Coast Nature Reserve, Newcastle, Co Wicklow, in February (from left): Andrew Lynch (ECNR warden), Declan O'Sullivan (Interim CEO, BirdWatch Ireland) and donors Máiréad and Tony Lynch. BirdWatch Ireland would like to thank Tony and Máiréad for so generously providing the new signage, a great asset to the reserve.



**BirdWatch Ireland**  
protecting birds and biodiversity

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



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Copy deadline for the Autumn 2019 issue of *Wings* is Friday, June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

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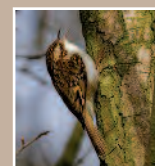
BirdWatch Ireland is the BirdLife International partner in the Republic of Ireland

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Charity number: Registered Charity No CHY5703  
BirdWatch Ireland complies with the Governance Code for the Community, Voluntary and Charitable Sector in Ireland.

COVER PHOTOGRAPH:

**Treecreeper** by Shay Connolly; one of many songbirds to listen for on our dawn chorus walks during May. See the What's On Guide for details.



# Letters

**Email:** nhatch@birdwatchireland.ie

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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.



SHAUN CONNOR

The Pheasant visiting Shaun Connor's garden

## Pheasant visiting Sligo garden

Sir, – We have an interesting observation from our bird feeding station: since January we have had daily visits from a cock Pheasant [see photo, above], who has now become one of our bird family!

This is quite surprising, since we do not live in a Pheasant-friendly area and very seldom see a Pheasant locally, either dead or alive. He is very friendly and stays within touching distance while I am topping up the feeders. Do you have any thoughts on this?

SHAUN CONNOR  
Rosses Point, Co Sligo

Dear Shaun, – I would suspect that this is a captive-reared Pheasant that was released by a gun club for shooting purposes but which managed to escape the guns. Wild-hatched Pheasants tend to be very wary of people, but those raised in captivity often associate humans with food and are less shy about approaching gardens and houses.

Cock Pheasants can also travel reasonable distances in search of a territory or a reliable food source, so this individual might not necessarily have been released locally. – **Niall Hatch**

## The roots of BirdWatch Ireland

Sir, – Two letters in the Spring 2019 issue of *Wings* mentioned meetings of the Irish Ornithological Club in pubs during the 1950s. Going back a further fifty years, the first public lecture of the Irish Society for the Protection of Birds, one of the other precursors to the Irish Wildbird Conservancy, was held in December 1905, the year after the society's formation. The event was held in the Royal Dublin Society's new, state-of-the-art lecture theatre at Leinster House, Dublin, which was later refurbished and changed in 1924 to become the present-day Dáil chamber.

The speaker was Yorkshireman Richard Kearton, a well-known pioneer of bird photography, lantern-slide lecturer and writer of several popular bird books, who also counted RJ Ussher as his friend.

A contemporary account in the *Irish Naturalist* (January, 1906) says the theatre "was packed from floor to ceiling" and "we have never seen a larger audience." Another contemporary source, *A History of the Royal Dublin Society* (Berry, 1915), states, "The theatre seats 700 persons, but on several occasions room has been found for an audience of a thousand." It seems BirdWatch Ireland meetings have a challenging precedent!

STEPHEN HEERY  
Ballinasloe, Co Galway

## The switch to paper envelopes

Sir, – Thank you for changing over to paper envelopes for *Wings*. Every little helps! I hope others will follow suit. I cut up paper envelopes and use them for shopping lists, etc.

SUSAN HARRISON  
Dublin 9

Sir, – To all at BirdWatch Ireland, this member is very glad that you have switched to paper envelopes. I was wondering, "How long, Oh Lord, how long?"

CATHERINE HURLEY  
Enniscorthy, Co Wexford

## The Garden Bird Survey

Sir, – I just want to say that I really enjoyed doing your Garden Bird Survey, which I submitted online. I learned so much about some birds, like the difference between a Song Thrush and a Mistle Thrush, how to identify the male Blue Tit vs the female, etc. I think I spotted a couple of Tree Sparrows but they could have been House Sparrows (I was not using my field glasses at the time).

Then, just when the survey was over and submitted, I had a couple of Greenfinches here – where were they all winter?! They never made my list, nor did the Bullfinch, which is thriving in these parts also but seems to hang around our garden in the spring and summer more!

Thank you, BirdWatch Ireland, for all you do to help the public become more aware of our beautiful feathered friends.

JANET BUTLER  
Dromod, Co Leitrim

## Wagtail drawn to car wing mirrors

Sir, – I have two wagtails that come to my house, and one of them has taken quite a fancy to my car! He or she has it destroyed with droppings. I have folded the wing mirrors in but now it has discovered I have a panoramic roof. Help or tips would be greatly appreciated on how I can get it to stop.

NICOLA MAUGHAN  
Ballybofey, Co Donegal

Dear Nicola, – I'm guessing that the wagtail in question is most likely a he and that he is experiencing a surge of breeding hormones. This makes him very territorial and prone to attack any other male wagtail that dares to enter his territory. He has been seeing his own reflection, first in your wing mirrors and now in your panoramic roof. He thinks it is a rival and goes to attack it. To make things worse, rather than taking the hint and flying away, this rival appears to hold his ground and fight back with equal ferocity.

The droppings are due to the adrenaline-fuelled fight-or-flight response that the wagtail is experiencing: when they find themselves in that situation they automatically "lighten their load" so that they can manoeuvre more quickly.

The only thing that will stop this behaviour is to prevent the bird from seeing his reflection. With wing mirrors, the solution I recommend is to pop an old pair of socks over them, which can then quickly and easily be removed whenever the car is driven.

Blocking the reflection he sees in a panoramic roof will be more difficult, however: putting an old sheet or a protective car cover over the roof will work, though I realise that this is somewhat more hassle than a pair of socks. – **Niall Hatch**



SHAY CONNOLLY

Pied Wagtail (adult male)





Clodagh Ni Dhufhagh enjoying World Wetlands Day at the ECNR, left, and Cressida Lynch demonstrating St Brigid's cross-making. **Photos:** Andrew Lynch

## World Wetlands Day at East Coast Nature Reserve

The great value of wetlands for nature and for people was highlighted on the day. **Andrew Lynch** reports

Spring was in the air on February 3<sup>rd</sup> at our East Coast Nature Reserve in Newcastle, Co Wicklow, when we celebrated both World Wetlands Day and St Brigid's Day, if not exactly on the right date for either!

**World Wetlands Day** is held every year on February 2<sup>nd</sup> to raise international awareness of the crucial role that wetlands play for people and for our planet. This year's theme was climate change.

**St Brigid's Day** is celebrated in Ireland on February 1<sup>st</sup> every year; it is also known as Imbolc, from the old Irish 'belly.'

The East Coast Nature Reserve forms part of the Murrough Special Area of Conservation (SAC), the largest wetlands complex on the east coast of Ireland. As well as being a haven for wildlife, wetlands are a major carbon sink.

ANDREW LYNCH



Wetlands also help to alleviate flooding by soaking up water like a sponge in the wetter months and then releasing it slowly; this also helps to delay the onset of drought during warmer or drier months.

After a stroll around the reserve to mark World Wetlands Day, and looking at the flora and fauna, local volunteer **Cressida Lynch** held a traditional St Brigid's cross-making workshop, using rushes sourced on the site.

St Brigid's Day signifies the beginning of spring, a time of sheep lactating, grass growing and birds migrating. Rushes are woven into a square of four radials to protect against evil and fire.

➔ Our thanks to Con Hogan and Clodagh Ni Dhufhagh from the Wicklow Branch for their great help on the day ■

## Some of our magazine cover styles over the years

BirdWatch Ireland has issued bulletins of various kinds to its members in the fifty years since it was founded in 1968, then as the Irish Wildbird Conservancy (IWC). The organisation communicated by letter until July 1974, when the first issue of its newsletter, *IWC News*, was published. This became a magazine in the 1990s. The magazine was renamed *Wings* in 1996.



**July 1974**  
The first issue of *IWC News* is a simple black-and-white Xeroxed document with typewritten text



**April 1979**  
*IWC News* carries a photo on its cover for the first time, of Tufted Ducks, taken by the legendary Richard Mills



**November 1990**  
*IWC News* carries a full-colour cover for the first time, a painting of Pheasants in a cornfield by Shirley McLoughney



**Summer 1994**  
*IWC News* carries a full-page, full-colour photo on its cover for the first time, of a Barn Owl by Richard Mills



**Summer 1996**  
The magazine is renamed *Wings* as the organisation undergoes rebranding, taking on the new name BirdWatch Ireland



**Spring 2012**  
The magazine adopts its current style, complete with BirdWatch Ireland and BirdLife International logos



# Summer diary

By Dick Coombes



## Anniversary Series

In recognition of BirdWatch Ireland's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, this year's diaries are focusing 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.

■ *Rare, and getting rarer*

## Wood Warbler

### Summer migrant drawn to oakwoods

You are not very likely to simply 'come across' a Wood Warbler. They are not common, and you need to be in the right kind of habitat – oak woodland with a decent ground cover of grasses and fraughans. You would also need to know the song to have any chance of picking one out in the leaf canopy.

A mere handful of Wood Warblers make it to Ireland each May, probably fewer than ten in some years. County Wicklow's wooded valleys hold the lion's share of records – Glendalough, Glenmalure, Lough Dan, Powerscourt and Clara Vale being some of the more regular locations.

Ireland lies at the extreme western edge of the Wood Warbler's summer range – northbound birds in spring seem to stop dead at the Welsh coast. Bizarrely, the highest population densities in Britain are in Wales and west Scotland – so near, and yet so far.



Wood Warbler in song  
Photo: Dick Coombes

For the few stragglers to reach us, fair weather during late April or early May seems to be essential. In years when cold northerlies prevail during this critical period, very few or perhaps none at all make it here. It seems the Irish Sea is just one barrier too many in such conditions.

Unusual amongst warblers, the Wood Warbler has two distinctly different songs. The main one, a wispy, not-very-musical trill, which quickens over its four-second duration before fizzling out, has been likened to a coin spinning on a polished table. Then every so often, the bird will round off with a series of plaintive, descending "pew, pew, pew" notes.

More often than not, when you do find a Wood Warbler, it will be a solitary male, tirelessly singing its heart out all day long, its bright, moss-green, lemon and white tones blending in superbly with the early summer

leaves. Hopping from branch to branch, head thrown back, it will send the whole body into a quiver with each snatch of song. An awareness that this valiant performance will probably be futile and not change his bachelor status makes us feel a certain sympathy for the bird. Occasionally, though, there will be a female within earshot and breeding occurs.

Early records are scant, but the species was always scarce in Ireland. In the mid-1980s, signs that they were increasing – such as in some years twenty or more singing males being recorded across the country – were short-lived.

The latest Bird Atlas shows considerable declines across Britain, and in 2018 none was reported in breeding habitat in Ireland. Environmental changes in their wintering grounds in West Africa may be a factor, but let's hope this charming little songster will continue to be a feature in at least a few of our precious oakwoods into the future ■

■ *Now on the increase but still very vulnerable*

## Little Tern

### It nests on pebble beaches and shelly sandbanks

The annual arrival of terns to our shores is surely just as symbolic a sign of summer as any Swallow. The Little Tern, the smallest and rarest of our five breeding tern species, makes landfall in Ireland at the tail end of April, and by June it is well established at traditional colonies on beaches around our coasts.

For a variety of reasons, the Irish population has had its ups and downs –

**Operation Seafarer (1969-70)**, the first concerted survey to map and quantify all our breeding seabirds, put the all-Ireland population at 315 pairs. Numbers had dropped to 206 pairs when **Seabird 2000** was carried out 30 years later. Today, the population of this attractive little bird is much healthier at some 400 to 500 pairs. But it hasn't been plain sailing.

The problem lies with their choice of nest



Wood Warbler singing in descending flight display  
Photo: Dick Coombes



site. Laying the eggs on bare sand or shingle – a shallow depression sufficing for a nest – they leave themselves open to predators, the elements and, of course, humans. Cryptic colouring on the eggs might serve to confuse some would-be predators, but so well do they imitate the surrounding small stones that an unenlightened walker is unlikely to see them before it is too late. Beaches are busy places these days and every jogger, angler, swimmer and dog-walker wants his or her share of the space. What chance has a clutch of fragile eggs under this amount of pressure?

For the last decade or two, the answer has been to cordon off the nest areas with electric fencing, erect signage to educate the general public and, where possible, have 24-hour wardening in place.

Most of the colonies of any size are located on the east coast, with Kilcoole, Co Wicklow (140-150 pairs), Wexford Harbour (100-200 pairs) and Baltray, at the mouth of the River



Little Tern. Photo: Dick Coombes

Boyne (up to 100 pairs), being the largest.

Wardening, which is coordinated by **BirdWatch Ireland** and the **National Parks and Wildlife Service**, involves more than just keeping an eye on human activity – predators need to be deterred or controlled. Hooded Crows, rodents and foxes are the usual suspects, but other culprits have emerged. Rooks at one site acquired a taste for tern eggs, while a Kestrel, a protected species,

created a dilemma when it took to preying on chicks. One mysterious night raider, responsible for taking dozens of eggs, was eventually found to be a hedgehog.

Spring tides also take their toll.

Protection schemes at Ireland's Little Tern colonies have been a great success and Kilcoole is one of the best places to observe a colony up close and to see our tern wardens in action ■

## ■ In grave danger

# Corncrake

## A bird of traditional hay meadows

Fifty years ago, almost every farmer in Ireland would at least have had a memory of Corncrakes. Some, even today, might comment that their incessant, rasping “crex crex” call used to keep them awake (they can call 20,000 times in a night). But this minor complaint would be tinged with a sadness that this iconic summer sound is no more.

The decline of the Corncrake in Ireland has been all too well documented. When the first Breeding Bird Atlas (1968-1972) was published, the writing was already on the wall. Although some 80% of 10km squares in the country at that stage held breeding Corncrakes, a decline in eastern counties had been noted since around 1900.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, Corncrakes were described as “extremely common in all parts of Ireland.” They were very common in Britain too. Indeed, a recipe for four Corncrakes roasted on a skewer, which features in Mrs Beeton's famous cookery book, gives some idea of how common they must have been in the mid-1800s.

Corncrake populations have also plummeted across western Europe in recent decades, and reintroduction campaigns for the species have been undertaken in Britain and

the Netherlands.

A national survey of the Irish population in 1978 found 1,500 calling males but, ten years later, numbers had dropped alarmingly to around 920, and the decline did not stop there.

The Corncrake's world was turned on its head with the advent of the mechanised grass cutter. In a slower-paced era, when fields were smaller and meadows harvested by scythe, the nest would often be spared. Modern cutting-machine blades make no such concessions. Even mobile chicks have little chance as fields are cut from the outside in, forcing them to seek refuge in the ever diminishing “island” left in the centre and ultimately to perish as they won't break cover.

There are other pressures too – silage is cut earlier and maybe twice in a season nowadays. Corncrakes are

short-lived (perhaps just 2-3 years), so a bad breeding season, such as when the Shannon Callows flooded, has a catastrophic knock-on impact. Add to that the unknown take through hunting on their African wintering grounds.

Grants to farmers who delay or don't cut fields containing singing Corncrakes have helped, as have efforts to provide early nesting cover by planting nettles (much to the amazement of neighbouring farmers!).

The 2018 Corncrake Conservation Project report from the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht offered a glimmer of hope – 151 calling males were counted in the country, over half of which were on offshore islands. This was the first time numbers had increased since 2014.

Donegal is now the national stronghold, with smaller numbers on the western seaboard of Galway and Mayo ■



Corncrake calling Photo: David MacPherson



# Origins



Pictured at the official opening of the East Coast Nature Reserve in 2009 (front row, from left): Oran O'Sullivan, our then patron President Mary McAleese and Kieran Grace, then BirdWatch Ireland chairman. **Photo:** BirdWatch Ireland



## Moving from Dublin to Wicklow

*Major events in our history during the 1990s and 2000s*

*Wings* is marking BirdWatch Ireland's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a series of articles on its history, accomplishments and future challenges. Here, in the third of the series, former Operations Officer **Oran O'Sullivan** (1992-2017) recalls the main events of the 1990s and 2000s.

**E**ntering Ruttledge House, the then headquarters of BirdWatch Ireland in Monkstown, Co Dublin, in 1992 for a job interview was an unusual experience. Jobs in the natural environment field back then were rare, but there were four fieldwork positions going on a Chough survey, which represented a unique

opportunity to walk the south and south-west coasts from Camsore Point in Wexford to Kerry Head that year, not once but twice, all the time in the company of those magical birds, Choughs. I won a position and joined the team of four.

The **Irish Wildbird Conservancy (IWC)** was a smaller entity back then, with a core staff of four full-time professionals covering

conservation, development and administration. Returning to base after an idyllic summer I was charged with processing the data generated by the team.

Back then, the **Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)** played a mentoring role, along with the **Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF)**, which funded both IWC conservation and development work. The IWC underwent a review that was to embrace every facet of the organisation, both professional and voluntary. This proved very successful, with credit due to all the players, not least the programme's consultant, **Liam Walsh**, who travelled at the behest of the WWF from Scotland to bring the process to fruition.

I was retained in an administrative role, keeping the ship steady, using my previous experience as a retailer in business to some effect, including opening our very popular shop in the drawing room of Ruttledge House in 1992.

In 1993, we celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the IWC and also the launch of **BirdLife International**, previously the **ICBP** (International Council for Bird Preservation). This new worldwide organisation, with an annual spend of £40 million, represented over



At the opening of RTÉ's wildlife sanctuary in Donnybrook, Dublin 4, in 1991, Pat Kenny interviews, from left, Eamon de Buitléar, Mícheál Ó Briain (Director, IWC) and Jenny Haines (IWC Chairperson). **Photo:** RTÉ Stills



1.3 million members. Ireland had two full partners covering the island, with the RSPB representing Northern Ireland and the IWC the Republic of Ireland.

## New bird surveys launched

RSPB Northern Ireland and the IWC worked together closely, as birds do not recognise borders. The **all-Ireland survey of Corncrakes** in 1993 was carried out jointly by the RSPB, the IWC and the Office of Public Works, and it reported a steep decline in their numbers; indeed, the struggle to save the Corncrake continues to this day.

If ever a reminder were needed, the Corncrake was an example of a bird species that needed to be protected while its population was still viable.

The IWC recognised the conservation challenges posed by changing agricultural practices and created a full-time post of Countryside Conservation Officer.

Under the EU Birds and Habitats Directives, the network of protected areas in Ireland was expanded significantly and a set of conservation objectives agreed. Appropriately enough, the then director of the IWC, **Mícheál Ó Briain**, was contracted by the European Commission to implement the Birds and Habitats Directives in both Ireland and the UK, and he left for Brussels. The ratification process faced various delays and court actions, but the directives were finally transposed into Irish law in 1997.

1994 saw the launch of the **Irish Wetland Bird Survey (I-WeBS)**, intended as a permanent monitoring tool for all of our important wetlands and their birds. The funding for the scheme involved a rainbow of partners, from the Irish state to British NGOs, underlining our vital and ongoing principle of working in cooperation with others.

In 1997, plans were advanced for another permanent monitoring project, the **Countryside Bird Survey (CBS)**. This survey continues to deliver invaluable indicators of the health of the birds of the countryside, ensuring that effective conservation plans can be drawn up, based on up-to-date population and distribution datasets.

Other benefits of CBS are the enjoyment that volunteer surveyors and members get from participating in it; some three hundred one-kilometre squares are surveyed twice every summer.

The monetary value of all this effort is not lost on government departments either; and this gives BirdWatch Ireland some bargaining power in its lobbying.



Members of the Cork Branch on a voluntary workday at our Cuskinny Marsh reserve in Cobh, Co Cork, in September 1992 (from left): Jim Wilson, Mark Carmody, Ciaran Cronin, David Cooke, Charlie Davis, Eddie Ronayne and Tom Gittings. **Photo:** BirdWatch Ireland

## Name change

In the mid-1990s, conscious of a fast-moving and changing world, the IWC changed its trading name to the more modern

**BirdWatch Ireland**, giving us better name recognition in media circles and with the public. Importantly for the time, it was also easier to find in the phonebook.

BirdWatch Ireland lost a notable stalwart in 1998, **Clive Hutchinson**, who combined field skills, authorship and administration with his professional accountancy practice in Cork. Clive was a legend in his lifetime and a great driver and advocate for BirdWatch Ireland and for **Cape Clear Bird Observatory**.

Clive was made in the mould of a man who celebrated his 100<sup>th</sup> year in 1999, **Major Robert Rutledge**. Robert (or 'Robin' to his

friends) was a key figure in the founding of our organisation thirty years earlier, cementing the partnership with tireless postal correspondence (in increasingly indecipherable handwriting!). The Major was a pioneer of exploring offshore islands for nesting seabirds and he ringed migrants on the Great Saltee Island, Co Wexford, for several years. He still received interested birders and dispensed wisdom well into his nineties. Major Rutledge passed away in January 2002 at the age of 102. Born in Carlow in September 1899, he had the remarkable distinction of living in three separate centuries.

The **1976 Wildlife Act** was amended in 1999, the first change to it in 23 years, but much remained to be done to afford better protection for our wildlife.

The year 2000 saw an array of millennium-themed events being hosted across the country. BirdWatch Ireland played a major role in the **Seabird 2000 survey** across Britain and Ireland, censusing seabirds that



Clive Hutchinson  
**Photo:**  
Richard Mills

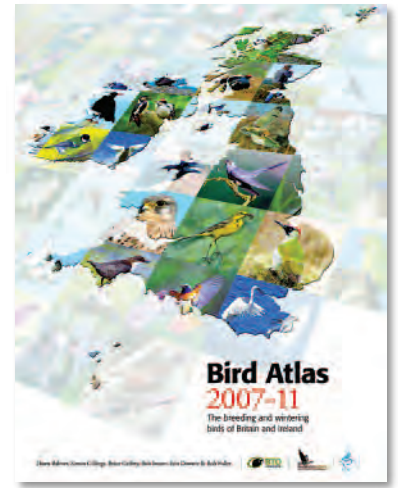


Major Robert Rutledge at home in Doon, Newcastle, Co Wicklow, during the 1990s. **Photo:** Oran O'Sullivan





Pictured at the launch of *Birds of Irish Farmland* in September 1999 (from left): Minister of State for Agriculture, Noel Davern TD, John Murphy (BirdWatch Ireland's Countryside Conservation Officer) and Anita Donaghy (then with RSPB Northern Ireland, now working for BirdWatch Ireland). **Photo:** BirdWatch Ireland



Representing perhaps the greatest fieldwork project in our five decades, the *Bird Atlas 2007-11* was launched in 2013, a joint project of BirdWatch Ireland, the British Trust for Ornithology and the Scottish Ornithologists' Club.

often visited their nests under cover of darkness. The challenges of carrying out fieldwork on remote offshore islands at night was indeed Ruttledge-esque.

### New nature reserves acquired

The EU LIFE Nature fund proved highly beneficial when we were successful in receiving grant-aid from it for a project in **Termoncarragh**, on the Mullet peninsula, Co Mayo. The project centred on improving the habitats for priority species including **Corncrake**, **Barnacle Goose** and, ultimately, **Red-necked Phalaropes** (in a much-welcomed return to our 1950s root project).

And more was to follow... We had been acquiring some reserve lands, as funds allowed, through the 1990s, including acquisitions in **Rogerstown estuary** in north Dublin. An opportunity then arose to purchase a significant slice (ninety hectares in total) of the Wicklow coastal marshes area known as the Murrough, to restore its wetland habitats to benefit priority fen species and wetland birds. Some 75% of the €2.1 million project budget was met by the EU LIFE Nature fund.

So, the **East Coast Nature Reserve** (ECNR) was born. Later on, the addition of bird hides and boardwalk trails added considerably to the visitor experience. These were momentous times. The old HQ, Ruttledge House (named after the Major), was auctioned successfully and the proceeds helped to bridge the financing of the ECNR lands acquisition. The secretariat of the organisation was also moving back to County Wicklow, where we had our first office (in Greystones) all those years ago.

Ruttledge House was an inspired purchase in its day – it was close to Dublin city and the corridors of power – but it was an unwieldy enough building for an NGO – we used to boast (exaggerating only slightly) of one floor per staff member! But with the arrival of the internet, we no longer needed to be so close to Dublin.

We experienced some nomadic times in the late 2000s, seeking suitable premises around north Wicklow for up to twenty staff members,

but we finally settled in **Kilcoole**, where BirdWatch Ireland remains today.

But now the country's boom days were over and the recession was affecting us: funding became much tighter. Our membership proved resilient, but sadly, plans to construct a visitor centre on or near the ECNR had to be shelved.

### Need for visitor centre

We looked longingly at nature reserve visitor centres in Northern Ireland – such as RSPB's Belfast Harbour Reserve and WWT's Castle Espie Reserve on Strangford Lough – very often funded by its Heritage Lottery Fund. In the UK, visitor centres and other buildings serving the community are regularly financed using national lottery funds. Here in the Republic, unless it's for a sports club, there is little chance of securing such funding. Here, lottery funds are channelled to relevant government departments for disbursement: no capital fund exists for NGO-driven nature projects. The closest we get to such funding is via the National Lottery-funded **Heritage Council**, which dispenses its limited budget widely and effectively.

The hunger for a built facility near a prime wetland site is still there, however, and still attainable. An enterprising approach involving local authorities and private developers could see a visitor centre or two showcasing our wonderful wildlife; perhaps one on either side of the capital city, in Fingal and in Wicklow.

If birdwatching were recognised as boosting local business and tourism, then maybe a centre could happen. Currently, greenfield sites in Tinakilly, next to Rathnew, Co Wicklow, not far from the ECNR, are about to be developed for housing. Surely this presents an opportunity to call for a recreational facility to be included in the proposals, centred on Broad Lough and promoting the whole of the Murrough Special Area of Conservation?

We have our spirit of partnership, and the support of our members is also in place, so let's go for it! Can we do it? Well, to borrow a catchphrase from a recent President of the United States, 'Yes, we can!'

➡ **Oran O'Sullivan** worked for BirdWatch Ireland from 1992 until 2017. He is principal of [www.irishgardenbirds.ie](http://www.irishgardenbirds.ie), an internet-based information hub, shop and blog for garden birds ■



## Wildlife Events in Phoenix Park, Dublin

BirdWatch Ireland is delighted to be working with the OPW Phoenix Park Visitor Centre to host seven great wildlife-themed events in 2019. The meeting point for all events is the Phoenix Park Visitor Centre. All events are free to attend and are family-friendly. Book via the Phoenix Park Visitor Centre on (01) 677 0095.

Event	Month	Date	Time
Bat Walk	May	May 6 <sup>th</sup>	9.00pm
Gardening for Birds Walk	June	June 16 <sup>th</sup>	2.00pm
Badgers, Bats & Nocturnal Birds Walk	July	July 10 <sup>th</sup>	9.00pm
Bat Walk	August	August 7 <sup>th</sup>	9.00pm
Bat Walk	August	August 21 <sup>st</sup>	9.00pm
Winter Bird Walk	November	November 16 <sup>th</sup>	11.00am
Santa's Little Helpers Family Craft Event	December	December 8 <sup>th</sup>	11.00am



# Cape Clear



## Cape Clear Bird Observatory 2019

BirdWatch Ireland is holding celebratory events and a series of wildlife weekends on Cape Clear Island, Co Cork, this summer to mark the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our bird observatory there, along with the annual field course in September.

### BirdWatch Ireland Cape Clear Wildlife Weekends

- May 25-26<sup>th</sup>
- June 8-9<sup>th</sup>
- July 27-28<sup>th</sup>
- September 28-29<sup>th</sup>

### Anniversary Celebrations

#### September 2<sup>nd</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup>

- Wildlife art exhibition
- Bird-ringing demonstrations
- Family fun nature hunts
- Guest speakers including David Lindo, The Urban Birder
- Whale-watching with the Irish Whale & Dolphin Group
- Guided wildlife walks of Cape Clear
- Raffle
- Seawatching
- Pelagic boat trips

### BirdWatch Ireland Cape Clear course

#### 'Seabirds to Songbirds'

- September 16-20<sup>th</sup>

Lying eight miles off the west Cork coast, the beautiful island of Cape Clear is home to the only bird observatory in the Republic of Ireland. BirdWatch Ireland's upcoming **Cape Clear Wildlife Weekends** offer a unique opportunity to join the Wildlife Officer, **Steve Wing**, to experience life in **Cape Clear Bird Observatory** for a weekend.

You will join Steve on his daily wildlife survey walks, recording birds, butterflies and all things wild on the island. Cape Clear is famous for its impressive seabird migration and you will help Steve complete a seawatch from one of the island's stunning headlands, looking for Gannets, shearwaters, petrels and a host of other seabirds. As part of our survey and monitoring programme for the island, you will get to observe the practice of bird-ringing as Steve catches and rings a range of bird species, including migratory species that may be passing through. You will also get to take part in the long-standing tradition of adding your wildlife sightings to the daily logbook.

Four weekends are being held this year, in May, June, July and September. Places are limited to **seven people per weekend**, so do book soon. The price of the weekend course is €125. To get the most of your weekend experience, you are encouraged to stay in the Bird Observatory (self-catering accommodation with shared dorms) where we can offer a special rate of €22 per night. You can find a full list of alternative accommodation options on the web page [www.capeclearisland.ie/Accommodation](http://www.capeclearisland.ie/Accommodation).

➔ To book a place on any of our Wildlife Weekends call the BirdWatch Ireland office on (01) 2819 878 or email [info@birdwatchireland.ie](mailto:info@birdwatchireland.ie).

➔ To take part in the CCBO Anniversary Celebrations in September, come along between September 2-14<sup>th</sup>. More information from BirdWatch Ireland, as above ■

## Feedback from last year's Cape Clear course

Dick Coombes and Steve Wing will be running the popular 'Seabirds to Songbirds' course again this year from 16<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> of September. Here are some comments from last year's participants:

"I will never forget the experiences and the wonderful people on the course and our five days together; which felt like a month! Dick's knowledge is seemingly limitless, as is Steve's. I will never forget our tea on the high seas while the Gannets soared over us.

"I would recommend this course to anybody as an adventure and a really fun way to learn about and appreciate God's wonderful world. There was a great ambience, thanks to Dick and Steve and to the island itself." – **Ron Barrow**

"I just wanted to let you know the three of us – Pat, Ann and myself – had a terrific week in Cape Clear. We all really enjoyed it and you managed to turn us all into birdwatching enthusiasts. Keep up the good work and hopefully our paths will cross again soon." – **Marie Walsh**

"It was all such a tremendous experience, truly life-enhancing. Heartfelt gratitude once again. Suddenly all of the brown blurs in hedgerows I had always taken for granted were given names and destinations and personalities." – **Sara Baume**

"Just back from Cape Clear. Wonderful five days. As a complete novice I learned loads and was made to feel most welcome. I now know my shearwaters from my Gannets and my Black-headed Gulls from my terns!

"I stayed in the Observatory and it was a great experience. A great holiday on a beautiful island." – **Mary McKay**

"I had a truly memorable week. I learned a huge amount and it was the total absorption in birding from morning to night that was so very enjoyable and rewarding; I really had a great time. Jeremiah passes on his thanks too.

"Thanks again for all your patience with our disparate group and our endless questions! I look forward to meeting you again at some point!" – **Margaret Brennan**

➔ To book a place on this September's 'Seabirds to Songbirds' course, call the BirdWatch Ireland office on (01) 2819 878 or email [info@birdwatchireland.ie](mailto:info@birdwatchireland.ie) ■





# Barn Owls and major roads

**John Lusby** reports on the findings of a major new study on Barn Owl road deaths and ways to prevent them happening.

*Throughout the Barn Owl's extensive range, where there are major roads, there are road fatalities. As one of the most susceptible birds to vehicle collisions, attempts to reduce casualty rates and minimise the effects of roads on Barn Owls have been largely unsuccessful, and remain a significant challenge.*

*Research by BirdWatch Ireland and Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) now provides fascinating new insights on the relationship between Barn Owls and major roads which further our understanding of the mitigation requirements to protect this iconic species. However, it is still a long road ahead.*

Road infrastructure is essential to our everyday lives, but it comes with a cost for biodiversity. One of the most obvious direct effects of roads is the mortality of wildlife. The expansion of road infrastructure and the increases in traffic throughout the world have coincided with a continued increase in the extent of road casualties of wildlife. Vehicle collision is now the main cause of death for a diverse range of wildlife and can contribute to population declines and increase the risk of extinction for vulnerable species.

**Barn Owls** are considered to be one of the species most affected by roads and also one of the most difficult to mitigate for. Mitigation strategies to reduce collisions and impacts on wildlife are now standard in the planning and design of new road developments. In Ireland, recently constructed motorways are fitted with a range of structures to prevent road deaths of mammals, including fencing to restrict animal access to the road, underpasses to allow for safe crossing and an overpass green bridge for bats.

Although the potential impacts of new road developments and the inevitable mortality of Barn Owls are recognised by road authorities and developers, there are no measures in place

**Barn Owl casualty on Tralee bypass, Co Kerry.**  
Photo: Michael O'Clery



to reduce the risk of collision, and this is simply because such evidence-based and evaluated mitigation measures do not exist. This is partly due to the inherent difficulties in designing and implementing road mitigation strategies for birds, but an additional obstacle has been a limited understanding of the response and behaviour of Barn Owls to major roads, and how this influences their risk of collision.

In an attempt to address these knowledge gaps, **BirdWatch Ireland** and **TII**, which shared similar concerns for the potential impacts of roads on Barn Owls, undertook a research programme over the past three years to assess the extent of collisions, and the factors which influence the risk of collision, of Barn Owls on roads in Ireland, to inform conservation requirements. This research was timely given plans for the continued expansion of the motorway network in the south-west, which is a stronghold for Barn Owls.

To advance our understanding of the relationship between Barn Owls and major roads it was necessary to employ innovative methods. However, we first needed to address some of the more basic underlying questions, such as the scale of mortality of Barn Owls on our roads.



Greater White-toothed Shrew trapped in small mammal survey

## Extent of road mortality

A dedicated road casualty survey on a section of the M8 motorway and the Tralee bypass, carried out once per day over two years and once weekly over 2½ years, provided the first evidence of the extent of Barn Owl mortality on major roads in Ireland, with an estimated mortality rate of 50-60 Barn Owls per 100 kilometres per year on these roads.

Although likely to be higher than on most other roads in the country, this scale of mortality is nevertheless comparable or higher than estimates from roads elsewhere in Europe, which is concerning given the relatively



Barn Owl fitted with GPS data logger to assess habitat use and home range. Photo: Michael O'Clery

low population densities of Barn Owls in Ireland.

Several mortality 'hotspots' were identified on the M8 motorway, and assessment of the physical attributes of the road and surrounding landscape revealed that the proportion of grass and herbaceous cover in roadside verges significantly influenced the risk of collision. This indicated that birds were attracted to suitable foraging conditions along the verge, which resulted in increased casualty rates.

Modelling of Barn Owl movements showed that features in the wider landscape also determined the occurrence of mortality and hotspots. In particular, as juveniles avoid higher-altitude areas when dispersing from where they fledged, this can create a funnelling effect that dictates where birds encounter major roads.

This information can be used to predict potential problem areas on new road developments or to identify existing collision hotspots on existing roads.

Although this information on the extent and factors which influence mortality of Barn Owls on Irish roads is essential, it is only a piece of the puzzle. Alongside this information an understanding of the individual behavioural response and interactions of Barn Owls to road networks is necessary to identify the potential for evidence-based mitigation solutions, and such data has been lacking up until now.

For species such as **Kestrel**, it is easy to observe their behaviour as they hover directly above motorway verges, but for Barn Owls which are active during darkness, this is not the case. For the first time, we used specialised GPS dataloggers (under licence from the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the BTO) to gather information on the movements and behaviour of Barn Owls in relation to roads.



The results were both revealing and different to previous assumptions or information on how Barn Owls interacted with major roads in Europe.

## Barn Owl use of roadside verges

As expected, Barn Owls in Ireland had considerably larger home ranges than their UK or continental counterparts, but interestingly, the tagged birds did not avoid major roads. Quite the opposite, in fact. Individual birds spent more time than expected in close proximity to major roads, crossing regularly and actively hunting along the verges. Investigation of small mammal populations showed motorway verges support a similar abundance and greater diversity of small mammal species than the surrounding countryside, which reaffirms their suitability as a foraging resource for Barn Owls. Therefore, as well as the obvious negative effects, major roads can also provide some benefits to Barn Owls (and wider biodiversity) in the form of the provision of suitable habitat.

The importance of major road verges for Barn Owls may be as much to do with the quality of the surrounding habitat as it is to do with the roadside verges, and the large home-range size further indicates poor landscape conditions. This is an important consideration for the development of

mitigation and suggests that enhancement of habitat conditions in the wider landscape would likely reduce the use of roadside verges, and thus encounters with roads, while also delivering benefits which could offset losses to road mortality.

Despite the fact that Barn Owls are killed in relatively high numbers on major roads, their nesting distribution is not affected by the major road network, as was determined by assessing the distribution of breeding pairs in relation to the national road network.

Major road developments do not necessarily cause the displacement of Barn Owl pairs in close proximity to major roads, as has been shown in Great Britain. The main negative effects of major roads on Barn Owl populations therefore appear to be from direct mortality through vehicle collisions and not by other means such as displacement, disturbance, or through a reduction of breeding range or suitable habitat.

We are now armed with the necessary ecological knowledge base to inform mitigation requirements. The next challenge will be to devise practical mitigation solutions to meet



The home range of a male Barn Owl in west Kerry, showing movements in relation to roads and avoidance of upland areas within the home range.

these requirements. To this end we are working with TII, which is using this information to identify suitable mitigation scenarios that can be implemented on future road developments.

➔ This research was commissioned and funded by Transport Infrastructure Ireland. BirdWatch Ireland wishes to acknowledge Egis Lagan for assistance with survey work on the M8 Motorway, NPVS staff and volunteers who participated in survey and monitoring work, and Dublin Zoo, which supports Barn Owl monitoring and conservation work nationally ■

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# News

## I vote nature!

The European elections as well as the local elections take place this May.

**Oonagh Duggan** urges everyone to get out and vote for nature

On May 24<sup>th</sup>, those of us with the right to vote in Ireland will have the opportunity to elect candidates in the European and local elections. These elections are important, and we encourage our members to get out and vote.

Between Brexit and the rise of the far right

it is a troublesome time for Europe, which also doesn't bode well for environmental protection. The European Union is a peace project, but it is also where most of our environmental laws originate.

The EU Birds Directive is one of the best nature laws in the world and it is forty years old this year. We are grateful every day to have this law, as otherwise the system of protection for birds in Ireland might not be as strong.

We will be asking candidates standing in the European elections to answer some questions in relation to protecting the environment, to see how they might fare as future champions for nature in the European Parliament. We will put any



answers we receive on our website before the elections. Please check our website for this information if you would like to know how they score in terms of goals for nature protection. And don't forget to vote! ■

## Climate action that also benefits nature

Restoring bogs and conserving hedgerows help mitigate climate change *and* protect nature. **Oonagh Duggan** reports

Climate change driven by human activities threatens the future of our planet. Extreme weather events such as those witnessed last year – when we had the 'Beast from the East', followed swiftly by drought – gives a flavour of the unstable climate we face in the future, with consequences for people and nature.

BirdWatch Ireland is a member of **Stop Climate Chaos**. We work closely with others in this group on initiatives to press for climate action from the Irish Government that will bring us into line with the Paris Agreement on climate change.

We are also in the midst of an **ecological crisis**, with declines in birds and insect populations widely reported. So, it is really important to protect and restore habitats to help nature and assist in climate action.

BirdWatch Ireland's submission to the **Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action** (JOCCA) report included six

recommendations for climate actions that have biodiversity co-benefits, including restoration of peatlands and conservation of hedgerows. Both of these later featured in the JOCCA report's priority recommendations.

Hedgerows cover 6.4% of the Irish landscape, according to Teagasc, while the EPA reports that hedgerows and non-forest scrub could potentially sequester 0.66-3.3 tonnes of carbon dioxide per hectare per year. This is significant, especially considering also how important hedgerows are for birds, insects

(including pollinators) and as corridors for the movement of wildlife. Hedgerows also help with flood prevention and mitigation, provide shelter for livestock and are even food sources for humans who forage!

We are calling on the government to develop a resourced **National Hedgerow Conservation Strategy** to achieve both climate and biodiversity objectives ■



Photo: Oonagh Duggan



Dolphin Hotel

## Dolphin Hotel Birdwatching Breaks 2019

This year we are celebrating our 10<sup>th</sup> year of birdwatching tours with Anthony McGeehan

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Corncrake



# News

## Save Our Swifts!

BirdWatch Ireland has teamed up with local authority Heritage Officers to save Swifts. **Ricky Whelan** reports

The decline of Swifts in Ireland has been well documented in recent years. With serious threats facing the species, from loss of suitable nest sites to declines in the availability of insect food, Swifts and conservationists are facing a real challenge in the years ahead to improve the odds for these iconic summer visitors.

The good news is that there are many practical steps that we can all take to make a difference, and a new guide entitled *Saving Swifts*, produced by BirdWatch Ireland and local authority Heritage Officers, is now available to help.

The guide, funded by the **Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht** as part of an



initiative to encourage projects under the **National Biodiversity Action Plan**, contains all the information required for individuals, local groups, schools, businesses and government departments to play a role in helping this amazing and threatened species. The information is presented in a colourful and user-friendly format and includes details on Swift ecology, reasons for declines, suggested conservation measures, nestbox plans, case studies and much more.

"It was wonderful to work with BirdWatch Ireland and Heritage Officers across the country on this guide, to help communities look after their Swifts," says **Catherine Casey**, Heritage Officer with Laois County Council. "We are also grateful to the many Swift conservation groups around Ireland who helped with expertise and success stories for the book."

BirdWatch Ireland would like to thank the local authority Heritage Officers who made the production of the guide

possible, as well as everyone who supplied information and photos. Many people generously gave of their time to ensure the *Saving Swifts* guide was delivered to a very high standard. Special thanks are due to **Lynda Huxley** of **Swift Conservation Ireland** for her input. Thanks also goes to **Swift Conservation UK**, the **Northern Ireland Swift Group** and the **Dublin Swift Conservation Group** for their help and input. The *Saving Swifts* guide will go a long way to supporting groups from around the country to help their Swifts at a local level, feeding into the wider Swift conservation effort nationally.

The *Saving Swifts* guidebook will be available free as a pdf download from the BirdWatch Ireland and local authority websites or by emailing [swifts@birdwatchireland.ie](mailto:swifts@birdwatchireland.ie) ■



Photo: Dick Coombes

## More county Swift surveys planned

BirdWatch Ireland is extending its county Swift surveys programme to three more counties. **Ricky Whelan** reports



Birr Tidy Towns Group with Anton Krastev (in orange jacket) of BirdWatch Ireland during the Offaly Swift Survey in 2017. Photo: BirdWatch Ireland

Following the success of the **Offaly, Laois, Tipperary** and **Westmeath County Swift Surveys**, BirdWatch Ireland is delighted to be undertaking three new county surveys in 2019. These will take place in counties **Wicklow, Meath** and **Sligo**.

With funding secured by the Heritage Officers in Wicklow, Meath and Sligo through the National Parks and Wildlife Service's **Biodiversity Action Plan** fund, the **Heritage Council** and **local authority** budgets, survey work will begin in early May and continue right through until the Swifts depart in August.

The surveys aim to locate and map Swift nesting colonies in the towns and villages within each county. The project will also put a major focus on engaging local communities to assist with surveying their locality, with assistance from BirdWatch Ireland branch members and field staff.

The information obtained during the survey period will be summarised in detailed reports, giving each community individual recommendations for protecting their local nesting colonies and enhancing their areas for Swifts.

The legacy of these projects can be seen in the counties previously surveyed, with local authorities, Tidy Towns groups and many others undertaking a myriad of projects, from nestbox projects and repeat surveys to local awareness-raising campaigns and Swift events.

This summer will also see our **West Cork Branch** undertake a Swift survey in the west of the county, with hopes that funding will be found to conduct a full survey in the near future. As part of this effort the branch will host a Swift evening event on May 15<sup>th</sup> in Skibbereen.

Swift events will be held in Meath, Wicklow and Sligo in the first half of May to launch the County Swift Survey projects, to invite locals to hear more about the work and to get involved. These events are free, and everyone is welcome. All events will begin with a short indoor introductory talk followed by a short walk to try to observe Swifts that have arrived back from southern Africa in the days previous ■

### Swift events in May 2019

County	Location	Date	Time
Meath	Trim Library, Trim	May 7 <sup>th</sup>	7.00pm
Wicklow	Martello Hotel, Bray	May 9 <sup>th</sup>	7.30pm
Wicklow	Baltinglass Courthouse, Baltinglass	May 10 <sup>th</sup>	7.00pm
Sligo	Sligo Southern Hotel, Sligo town	May 13 <sup>th</sup>	7.30pm
Cork	Parish Hall, Abbeystrewry Church, Bridge Street, Skibbereen	May 15 <sup>th</sup>	7.00pm



# Site Guide

by Aidan G Kelly



## The east midland lakes

Lough Derravaragh shoreline at Coolure, Co Westmeath (Marsh Fritillary butterflies can be seen here in May). **Photograph:** Cólín MacLochlainn

**Aidan G Kelly** describes the best spots for birding at ten east midland lakes. These less-visited lakes attract a surprising variety of scarce or unusual birds, especially in winter:

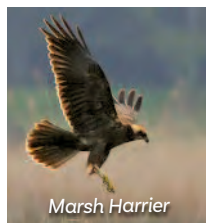
**A** visit to a number of midland lakes can produce a few surprises bird-wise at these under-watched locations. More waterbirds will be present during the winter period, but disturbance from shooters can be a problem until the season ends on February 1<sup>st</sup>.

You could spend time exploring just one or two lakes more thoroughly, but here I present a guide to the better viewing points at each lake, allowing you to maximise coverage and to do a flying visit to up to ten different lakes in a day, if you wish. Please respect private property and ask permission before venturing onto lands.

### Lough Ramor

Good viewing can be had from the **Lakeside Manor Hotel** car park in Virginia. In recent winters a few **Goosanders** have been regular on this lake and seen from this car park. **Goldeneye, Great Crested Grebe** and **Wigeon**

KEN BILLINGTON



Marsh Harrier

can also be present, while **Whooper Swans** and **Mute Swans** can sometimes be scoped in the fields on the opposite shore.

It is also worth turning into **New Street** in

Virginia and following the road to a small car park at the lakeshore, where another vantage point can be checked.

### Lough Sheelin

There are various viewing sites around the lake. From Mountnugent, head to the **Crover House Hotel**. There is a track down to the lakeshore from here, but you might want to let the hotel know what you are doing.

**Tonagh** shore in Co Cavan, but close to the Meath border, provides views of the south-east part of the lake. Scan for **Great Northern Diver**, which is regular here in small

numbers in winter. You should also see **Tufted Duck, Pochard, Goldeneye** and **Great Crested Grebe**.

**Lapwings** are usually present in the small bay just west of it, and a **Common Sandpiper** was a regular here over a few different winters. Keep an eye out for more unusual species: **Ring-necked Duck** and even **Long-tailed Duck** have occurred. Access to the Meath section is more difficult, and land should not be entered without permission.

An excellent vantage point at the south-west end of the lake, in Co Westmeath, is known locally as **Sailor's Garden**. It is found by taking a minor side road just east of Finnea and following it down to the lakeshore. There are often large flocks of **diving ducks** to view from here, sometimes including a few **Scaups**. Rarities have included **Lesser Scaup, Ring-necked Duck, Smew, Slavonian Grebe** and **Black-necked Grebe**. **Kingfisher** is regular too.

Map by Cólín MacLochlainn





## Bracklagh Lough

Continue through Finnea to view this small roadside lake on the left-hand side. Sometimes it has few birds, but occasionally it holds good numbers, especially if there is disturbance at nearby larger lakes. **Gadwall** is a regular here.

## Lough Kinale & Derragh Lough

Kinale is an attractive lake split between three counties: Longford, Cavan and Westmeath. The northern, Cavan end can be viewed from the small minor road L65181, just north of Finnea and south of Bracklagh Lough. Good numbers of **Tufted Ducks** and **Pochards** are usually present. **Gadwall** is regular. Rarities have included **Ring-necked Duck**, **Long-tailed Duck** and **Slavonian** and **Black-necked Grebes**.



BRIAN BURKE

Tufted Duck

On the western side of the lake the road to Abbeylara comes close to the shore near a water treatment plant. There is no access to the shore, but some views over the reeds

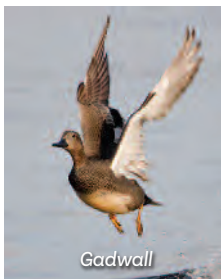
onto the lake are possible. Continuing on to Abbeylara, and turning left onto the R396, a minor road to the left leads to **Derragh Lough**, which usually holds a few **diving ducks**.

## Lough Derravaragh

If coming from the Abbeylara or Castlepollard direction, you could check the northern side of Derravaragh, near Coolure. Otherwise, continuing south from Finnea, through Castlepollard and on towards Crookedwood, you'll pass near the eastern, narrower end of Lough Derravaragh. It is usually fairly quiet for birds here, but always worth a look from the slipway.

Then head to the caravan park site at **Donore**, north of Multyfarnham. Scan for **diving ducks** from here. A **Marsh Harrier** was recently seen over the reeds to the west.

## Glen Lough



GRAHAM CATLEY

Gadwall

Heading through Multyfarnham onto the main N4 towards Sligo, continue through Rathowen and take a left which leads you to Glen Lough on the right-hand side. Glen Lough, which borders both Westmeath and

Longford, is sometimes fairly dry and at other times holds plenty of water. It is good for **dabbling ducks** including **Teal**, **Shoveler**, **Wigeon** and **Mallard** and it often holds good numbers of **Whooper Swans**. **Hen Harrier** is frequent.

## Lough Iron

Lough Iron is a Special Protection Area, with no shooting allowed. Unfortunately, access is difficult as there are no roads near it, so permission should be sought to enter private property. Lough Iron is good for **dabbling ducks**. It usually holds a mobile flock of about 150-200



Map by CÓILÍN MacLOCHLAINN

**Greenland White-fronted Geese**, but these can sometimes be hard to pin down. **Diving ducks** are often present in small numbers.

## Lough Owel

The most convenient place for viewing Lough Owel is the car park viewpoint along the main N4. **Goldeneyes** are usually present, and a recent visit produced a **Goosander** sighting. A **Great Northern Diver** or two might also be present. Scan for **diving ducks** and **grebes**. I saw a **Red-necked Grebe** from here on January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2003 – the only Westmeath record to date, as far as I know.

Lough Owel used to be known for high numbers of **Shovelers**, but these seem to have disappeared and perhaps have found different feeding areas in recent years.

If you pick up some distant flocks of ducks on the far side, it is possible to head to the western shore and perhaps obtain better views of them from there. Another viewpoint is from the sailing club on the eastern shore.

## Lough Ennell

From Lough Owel, continue along the minor roads to the north end of Lough Ennell, thus avoiding going into Mullingar. A good spot to view it from is the north-east shoreline at the rear of **Bloomfield House Hotel**. **Ring-necked Duck** has been recorded from here, among the **Pochards** and **Tufties**. A **Marsh Harrier** was present in early 2018; it was seen over the reeds on the opposite shore, best viewed from this spot.

Another good view can be had from the **Ladestown** area on the western shore. The inlet south of the car park here can often hold good numbers of **diving ducks**, sometimes with a few **Scaups** present and occasionally a **Long-tailed Duck** with them.

To finish your day, you could drive around to Lilliput Jonathan Swift Park at the south-west end of Lough Ennell. More **ducks** and **Great Crested** and **Little Grebes** should be present here in winter. A large **Starling** murmuration forms before dusk and roosts in the nearby reedbeds; it is a spectacular sight ■





Curlew on Scottish moorland nesting grounds



Osprey lifting a big bream from a lake in the Scottish Highlands

# On Scotland's lakes and fells



Adult male Redstart carrying food for young in Scottish wood



Adult male Pied Flycatcher carrying food for young in Scotland

**COLIN RIGNEY** – I have loved everything to do with wildlife, particularly birds, since I was a child, but I only got into photographing birds and other wildlife about seven years ago.

Since then, I have had the privilege of spending time in some great locations, both in Ireland and outside of Ireland, following my passion for wildlife photography. I have met some great people along the way and have learned a lot from many of them.

I am a Canon camera user. My favourite cameras and lenses are my 7DMKII, 1DX, 100-400MKII and 500F4.

*All of the photographs on these two pages were taken by Colin Rigney*







Tawny Owl



White-tailed Eagle  
with fish catch



Adult female Wheatear carrying food for young



A beautifully camouflaged adult female Red Grouse in heather moorland



Common Sandpiper by lakeshore



A stunning Cuckoo about  
to alight on a tree stump





# Birding in Georgia

Lammergeier. **Photograph:** Giorgi Rajebashvili

Georgia is a country with great wide open areas of wilderness and is of great importance for migratory birds of prey. **Darren Ellis** reports on a birdwatching trip there last autumn.



The country of Georgia, nestled in the Caucasus Mountains between the Black and Caspian Seas, is a melting pot of human cultures and traditions. In the past ten years, the importance of

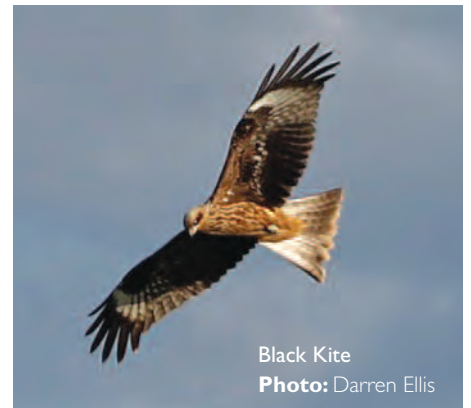
Georgia for bird migration has become better known. Since 2008, the autumnal bird-of-prey migration through a narrow bottleneck between the Caucasus and Black Sea has been recorded annually by the **Batumi Raptor Count**. I travelled there last autumn to witness this amazing spectacle and explore the country.

My flight approached Georgia from the west, crossing the Black Sea and offering astounding views of the Caucasus. The white-capped highest peak, Elbrus (5,642m), and other summits formed a linear border with Russia.

We descended to Batumi, Georgia's third largest city, on the Black Sea. Batumi sits on a migratory flyway for over one million birds of prey. It is located on a lowland plain, some fifteen kilometres wide, between the sea and the Lesser Caucasus. Incredible numbers of migrating birds are funnelled through this narrow plain between sea and mountain as they make their way south.

## Day one: Batumi Bottleneck

Shortly after arriving at the Batumi Bottleneck we visited our first viewing point, one of two used by Batumi Raptor Count to survey migrating raptors. Our viewing point was a shack on a mountain terrace where, like the other observers, we tilted our gaze skywards. The rewards came thick and fast: a **Honey Buzzard**, followed by a **Steppe Buzzard**, followed by a **Steppe Eagle**, then a **Short-toed Eagle** and **Lesser Spotted Eagle**, all observed without moving from the spot: incredible!





A distinctly broad-winged, long-fingered **Imperial Eagle** arrived from the west. **Black Kites** then began to appear from the north in a stream, making up the greatest number of any one species we saw that day in this astounding place.

In the afternoon, as temperatures rose, **Black Kites** and **Steppe Buzzards** began soaring in the thermals. As the birds drifted southwards we listened as project volunteers recorded each one: “**Black Stork** approaching, north-west. **Booted Eagle**, to rear of twelve **Black Kites**. **Sparrowhawk** passing below our elevation to the east....” A total of 9,000 raptors had been recorded the previous day.



Cranes passing over Khanchali Lake. **Photograph:** Darren Ellis



Caucasian Chiffchaff. **Photo:** Hannah Keogh

## Chirokhi River delta

Our next destination was Chirokhi River delta, south of Batumi. It has freshwater pools with muddy banks and then sandflats. On our approach we found **Red-backed Shrike**, **Whinchat** and **Turtle Dove**. In reedbeds, we found **Purple Heron** and **Whitethroat**, and the sandbanks held **Caspian Gull** and **Lapwing**. Wading birds included **Great White** and **Little Egrets**.

Retracing our steps, we saw **Yellow-legged Gull** and **Wood Sandpiper**. On returning to the guesthouse, an incredibly lucky encounter with a **Nightjar** rounded off our first day.

## Day two: Batumi Bottleneck

A slightly reduced frequency and abundance of raptors on the second day at the Batumi Bottleneck were more than compensated for by unexpected sightings of **Osprey**, **White-tailed Eagle** and **Cranes**.

In the evening, back at the guesthouse, the aerial prowess of a **Hobby** seen hunting at close quarters was very entertaining. Our anticipation of what was to follow was building.

## Day three: Maltakva estuary and Kolkheti National Park

The following day saw us move north to the Maltakva River estuary, notable for its long sand-bar and wooded shoreline. A **Kentish Plover** provided the first interest of the day.

Kolkheti National Park is an extensive freshwater marsh behind sand dunes, next to the Black Sea. When we entered, we were taken aback by the military installations, evidence of Georgia's turbulent past. A short drive beyond and we had forgotten them, slack-jawed as we were at the astounding beauty of the area.

A **Marsh Harrier** caught our attention, then a **Steppe Buzzard**. **Yellow Wagtails** scurried about and **Calandra Larks** skulked in the grass. We saw an **Isabelline Wheatear**, probably on migration to its wintering grounds in the Middle East or sub-Saharan Africa. Six **White-winged Black Terns** were watched preening on a purpose-built frame in the river.

That evening, we picked out a solitary **Slender-billed Gull** amongst a screech of **Black-headed Gulls**.

## Day four: Goderdzi Pass

Leaving the coast, we travelled to the Lesser Caucasus, to an altitude of 2,000m, passing through ancient valleys and gorges shaped by glaciation. The journey took us off-road and past ancient settlements.

Reaching the Goderdzi Pass, we entered an alpine biome. Here, conifers were sparse but we found **Krüpers Nuthatch**, **Twite**, **Caucasian Chiffchaff** and the local subspecies of **Redstart**.

We then descended from the mountains to a vast steppe biome. Here, farming was mixed and extensive (as opposed to intensive), with habitats for **Corn Bunting** and **Twite**. The benefits to birdlife of managing the land sparingly were immediately apparent: we noticed **Steppe Buzzards** and a **Lesser Spotted Eagle**. ➤



Wooded valley in Borjomi National Park  
**Photograph:** Darren Ellis



## GEORGIA

### Day five: Borjomi National Park

Entering Borjomi National Park and ascending through mixed woodlands, we came across **Brambling**, **Great Spotted Woodpecker** and **Crossbill** and enjoyed spectacular views of deep valleys and towering peaks.

Above the wooded slopes, there are expanses of seasonally grazed grasslands; here we saw cabins that are occupied by cowherds in summer.

Reaching a ridge at 2,500m, we stopped to assess pockets of broadleaved woodland, iridescent in autumnal gold, red and brown, lining large gullies, which stretched down the mountainside. Snow-capped peaks were visible in the distance. The cry of **Alpine Chough** was heard and six were soon located.

Across the sloping mountainside an amber bird materialised, appearing to have black extensions to its wings. At an estimated 3 km from us, it looked enormous when compared to a cattle shelter it passed. Rounding a ridge and coming into full view, our suspicions were confirmed: it was the



The Javakheti uplands, Georgia. Photo: Darren Ellis

awesome figure of a **Lammergeier!** Sailing along the ridge almost inanimately, it closed in on our position without startling at our presence. Observing the bearded face of this rare vulture as its huge frame passed silently by generated fascination and awe, even amongst the more experienced observers.

We were looking for **Bullfinches** in the woods when the cries of **Alpine Choughs** suddenly grew louder and more frantic. Turning to assess the commotion, we found

a **Golden Eagle** proving too close for their comfort, but it didn't delay long as it was harassed by six angry corvids.



Rock Nuthatch. Photo: Darren Ellis

### Day six: The Vardzia caves

On a morning stroll towards the Vardzia cliffs and caves, located in southern Georgia, the sandy-brown plumage of **Crag Martins** was illuminated by the rising sun. And just where one might expect to find **Blue Rock Thrushes**, there they were, perching on large boulders in the bare rocky terrain leading to the caves. Also inhabiting the semi-arid valley were **Rock Nuthatches**, a beautifully patterned bird.

Having explored the caves and been impressed by their structure and history, we were afforded a further pleasure in spotting a flock of **Rock Buntings**.

Later in the day, we scaled a nearby peak in an attempt to locate a calling **Chukar**. The Chukar went unseen, but our reward for climbing the hill was finding a **Black Redstart** and also the local subspecies of **Redstart**. On our return to the valley floor, we observed the impressive silhouette of a **Griffon Vulture** overhead.



Scenic valley in Vardzia. Note the caves on the pale rockface to the left. Photo: Darren Ellis





Bluethroat. Photo: Hannah Keogh

## Day seven: Vardzia lakes

Surrounded by tall, dense reedbeds, the small lakes at Vardzia are inhabited by a large population of **Moustached Warblers**. Being unperturbed by our presence, we could watch these charismatic warblers jostling busily at the base of the reeds.

Our attention was then drawn to a **Red-throated Flycatcher** amongst the reeds' flowerheads. As we were watching this bird, through a gap in the reeds we caught sight of an elegant **Purple Heron**, vigilantly observing its surroundings.

## Day eight: Javakheti National Park

The Javakheti region lies south of Vardzia, next to the border with Turkey. Here, above 2,000m, there are vast plains interspersed with farming mountain villages and it is not uncommon to see teams of workers picking potatoes by hand.

When we arrived at Javakheti National Park we found a **Long-legged Buzzard** standing sentry just inside the entrance. The park is dominated by a large lake with views

to the surrounding hills, at the furthest reaches of which can be seen a Turkish border post.

Waterbird congregations were massed on the lake: it was time to identify some species! Outstanding amongst them were **Dalmatian Pelicans** with trowel-like bills. Inspection of the lake fringes revealed a vibrant **Purple Swamphen**, a vision in the ultraviolet spectrum; once seen, never forgotten!

Further along the fringing reeds a curious **Bluethroat** presented itself before retreating to the protective stands. A **Penduline Tit** darted purposefully here and there, making observation of it difficult. **Armenian Gulls** paddled about, observing our position, and for an instant we shared the company of a **Bittern**, which dissolved back into the reeds like an optical illusion.

A twenty-strong flock of **Linnets** alighted on a boundary fence, chattering away carelessly and rounding off this scintillating excursion.

A short distance away lay Khanchali Lake, a uniformly shallow body of water the likes of which, in western Europe, would most likely be drained. Here, it provides a valuable oasis for many wetland bird species, with ideal conditions for **White Stork**, **Great White Egret**, **Grey Heron** and **Little Egret**, all observed fishing in close proximity.

This is one of the best places in Georgia to see **Ruddy Shelducks**...and they did not disappoint! Accompanying them were large numbers of **Teals** and **Shovelers**. Waders included **Lapwing**, **Greenshank** and **Ruff** and the pyramid was completed by a **Marsh Harrier**, topping off the food chain in unique style.

## And finally...

The warm welcome and hospitality of the Georgian people made the time spent in Georgia relaxing and interesting. As a nation



Purple Heron. Photo: Darren Ellis

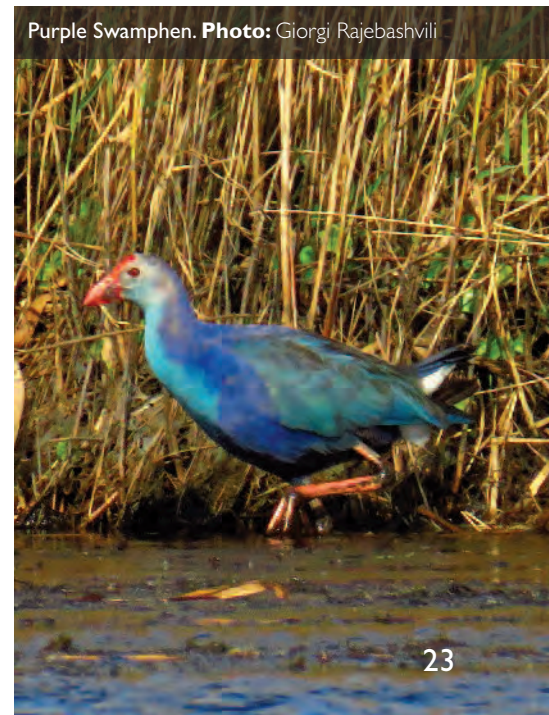
with increasing links to the west, its people enjoy sharing their long history and vibrant culture with visitors. As the saying goes in Georgia – სტუმარი არის ღვთისაგან სანიუქარი – a guest is a gift from God!

➤ Darren Ellis is Public Relations & Fundraising Support Officer with BirdWatch Ireland.

➤ For more information on bird conservation in Georgia, please contact our BirdLife International partner, Society for Nature Conservation in Georgia (Sabuko), at [www.sabuko.org](http://www.sabuko.org) ■



Long-legged Buzzard. Photo: Darren Ellis



Purple Swamphen. Photo: Giorgi Rajebashvili



# Research

By **Helen Boland**



Oystercatchers wintering in Dublin Bay. **Photo:** Helen Boland

## Dublin's international wader connections

Colour-ringing is proving to be a useful tool for conservation. Using Oystercatchers in Dublin Bay as an example, Dublin Bay Birds Project Manager **Helen Boland** explains how it helps reveal birds' local movements as well as their migrations.

**W**hen it comes to **Oystercatchers**, Ireland could rightly be twinned with both Iceland and Scotland, such are the migratory links. Since 2013, we have fitted 380 **Oystercatchers**, 99 **Bar-tailed Godwits**, 45 **Redshanks** and three **Curlews** with individually inscribed colour rings (along with more than a thousand waders fitted with metal rings only) as part of the **Dublin Bay Birds Project**. Of the Oystercatchers alone, we have received almost 3,500 observations, or 'resightings,' from birdwatchers who have seen the marked birds, read the inscribed rings and submitted the information to us.

What we have learned, among other things, is that many of the Oystercatchers you see in winter in Dublin Bay migrate to Iceland

and Scotland each year to breed in the summertime.

Not only are Oystercatchers faithful to their wintering grounds (we see the same birds returning to Dublin Bay every winter) but they are also returning to the *exact same* breeding sites in Iceland and Scotland each spring too.

One example is Oystercatcher 'XT' which has been observed by the same person in the same location every spring since 2015. The ring reader, **Gudmundur Orn Benediktsson**, has already let us know that XT returned to its breeding area in the far north-east of Iceland on March 10<sup>th</sup> this year; the earliest arrival date so far for this bird.

Other examples are Oystercatchers XN and ZN, who we look forward to hearing news



Oystercatcher 'XT', ringed by Dublin Bay Birds Project in Dublin, November 2014, seen here on breeding territory in NE Iceland, where it has been observed breeding each year since 2015. **Photo:** Gudmundur Orn Benediktsson

about from Tíre in the Inner Hebrides each year. In spring and summer of 2017, 2018 and now already again in 2019, **John Bowler** – who is based on the island – sends us updates of where these two are and how they are doing while spending their summers over there, after we and others have seen them in Dublin Bay during the winters in between.

These international connections could help us to understand what is driving some of the population declines that waders have been experiencing. In addition to the natural toll that the exertions of migration takes, they are then faced with human disturbance on their wintering grounds, and predation risks on their breeding grounds, and the threat of climate change in both. Colour-ringing is a

useful and long-term way of gathering information about what is happening at both ends of their migratory routes.

Enormous thanks to everyone who has submitted resightings to us.

➔ **AUTHOR:** Helen Boland, Dublin Bay Birds Project Manager, [hboland@birdwatchireland.ie](mailto:hboland@birdwatchireland.ie)

➔ **BLOG:** <http://dublinbaybirds.blogspot.com>

➔ **RINGING:** All catching and colour-ringing is carried out under licences from the British Trust for Ornithology and the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

➔ **FUNDING:** the Dublin Bay Birds Project is funded by Dublin Port Company ■

Oystercatcher fitted with colour rings as part of the Dublin Bay Birds Project. **Photo:** Helen Boland





## Warbler spreads slowly after dramatic arrival

The Reed Warbler established itself as a breeding species in eastern coastal counties in the 1980s, but it is only slowly expanding its range in Ireland. **Mark Foley** reports



Reed Warbler ringed on the River Blackwater  
Photo: Andrew Malcolm

The **Eurasian Reed Warbler** (to give it its full name) breeds across most of Europe in summer and spends the winter in sub-Saharan Africa. In Ireland, however, it is at the very edge of its range and, not surprisingly, is a relatively scarce breeding bird. Due to its small breeding population here, it is currently of conservation concern and amber-listed.

Reed Warblers can be found in areas of reeds ranging in size from extensive beds to surprisingly small stands. They are primarily insectivorous and utilise both reed and scrub habitats when feeding.

Reed Warblers can be difficult to observe, spending a lot of time skulking out of sight, and often a male singing from within a reedbed is the only sign of their presence. The song is a slow 'jit...jit...jit' complete with various whistles and some mimicry, similar to, but not as intense as, the closely related **Sedge Warbler**.

Reed Warblers attach their nests to the stems of reeds and lay a clutch of usually 3-5 eggs. When the young hatch they have spots on their tongue, which are thought to encourage the parents to feed them.

Once the young have fledged and become mobile, they quickly become independent. Oddly enough, eye-colour is one of several features used to age Reed Warblers. Recently-fledged birds have charcoal-grey irides, while the adult iris

is olive-brown to reddish-brown in colour.

The adults leave as soon as autumn migration beckons, but the young continue to feed for another few weeks before departing on their own journey south... with nothing to guide them but their inherited instincts!

The first Irish breeding occurrence for Reed Warbler was a one-off event recorded in Down in 1935, but they did not truly establish until the 1980s. The first Atlas of Breeding Birds (1968-72) recorded no breeding Reed Warblers at all. However, by the second Atlas survey (1988-91) they were being recorded in mostly coastal parts of Cork, Wexford, Wicklow and Down, as well as around Lough Neagh. The most recent Atlas (2008-11) showed further range expansion, in line with an overall range expansion in Wales, northern England and Scotland.

Ornithologists **Pat Smiddy** and **Barry O'Mahony** found that, in 1996, our largest breeding population was in reedbeds in the River Blackwater estuary, in Youghal, Co Cork. However, a search for breeding Reed Warblers upriver and along a major tributary, the River Bride, produced no records at all at that time. Today, however, there are numerous locations along both the Blackwater and the Bride where Reed Warblers can be heard in full song, in suitable nesting habitat, during the breeding season, and are probably breeding.

Last year, I and others began ringing Reed Warblers at a site on the River Blackwater in Co Waterford, upriver from Youghal. The very first Reed Warbler we caught was *already* wearing a ring: it bore the inscription CEMPA LISBOA, indicating it had been ringed in Portugal. We learned it had been ringed at Herdade dos Fominhos in the far south of Portugal during the autumn of 2017, when it was heading south on migration. It then presumably carried on to its winter quarters in Africa before returning to Ireland the following spring. On its return, we were fortunate enough to recapture it at our ringing site on the River Blackwater:

This record is significant as it identifies one point on the migration path followed by our Reed Warblers to Africa, on a blank slate in our knowledge of the species' migration route.

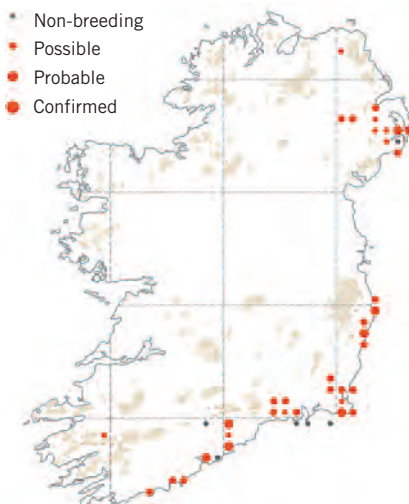
We ringed a further 32 Reed Warblers – 16 adults and 16 juveniles – along the Blackwater last year, with the timing of the captures implying

that all adults had left by mid-to-late August and all juveniles by mid-September. Overall, 2018 was a very successful year for ringing Reed Warblers across Ireland, with good numbers also being ringed around Lough Neagh and with others being ringed in Kildare (at Pollardstown Fen, outside Newbridge) and in Kilkenny (in Newrath, close to the new suspension bridge spanning the River Suir on the Waterford bypass).

The above-mentioned researcher, Pat Smiddy, noted that Reed Warbler was the first new migrant passerine to have become established in Ireland in over 200 years. That is certainly remarkable, though **Bearded Reedling** followed not long after, and **Cetti's Warbler**, among others, is predicted to settle here shortly, in line with its rapid range expansion in Britain.

It is clear from surveying and ongoing ringing that the Reed Warbler population is continuing to expand in Ireland. Waterways with suitable reedbed habitat, such as the rivers Slaney, Suir and Blackwater, may channel this expansion further inland. With much as-yet-uncolonised suitable habitat along rivers and lakes across many parts of Ireland, it may be just a matter of time before the Reed Warbler becomes a relatively common breeding bird ■

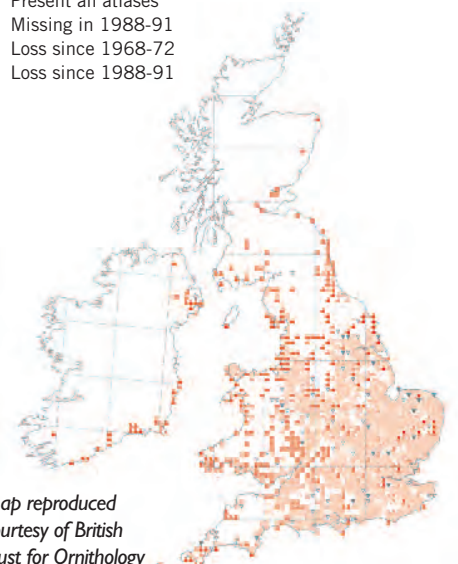
### Reed Warbler breeding distribution



Map reproduced from the Bird Atlas 2007-11, courtesy of the British Trust for Ornithology

### Reed Warbler range expansion

- ▲ Gain since 1988-91
- △ Gain since 1968-72
- Present all atlases
- Missing in 1988-91
- ▽ Loss since 1968-72
- ▼ Loss since 1988-91



Map reproduced courtesy of British Trust for Ornithology



# Rare bird news

By **Stephen McAvoy**



DECEMBER 2018 TO FEBRUARY 2019



Spotted Sandpiper, Dungarvan, Co Waterford, on February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019. **Photograph:** Andrew Malcolm



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

## Highlights

- Spotted Sandpipers in Wexford & Waterford
- Influx of Ring-necked Ducks
- Returning Black Scoter
- Returning Pacific Diver

It was an unremarkable winter; weather-wise, remaining relatively mild and dry throughout, with similar weather conditions over most of western Europe. This was reflected in the lack of any noticeable influxes of traditional winter visitors. Just two **Smews** were reported, for example, both redheads, at Portmore Lough, Co Antrim and North Slob, Co. Wexford respectively. At the latter site, **Bewick's Swan** numbers peaked at eight, with another two seen at nearby Tacumshin; the Irish wintering population of this charismatic species is now barely reaching double figures. There was also

just a handful of reports of **Waxwings**, including two in Dundalk, Co Louth, and two in Glasnevin, Co Dublin, in late December and early January. A single **Hawfinch** was noted at the traditional site of Curraghchase Woods, Co Limerick.

The milder weather was helpful, however, for wintering warblers, with **Yellow-browed Warblers** noted in counties Dublin, Waterford and Limerick, while a **Lesser Whitethroat** favoured a private garden in Omagh, Co. Tyrone, from mid-January onwards. Some plumage features and call types indicated this individual may have belonged to one of the eastern subspecies. A **Cetti's Warbler** was found at Cahore, Co

Wexford, on December 29<sup>th</sup>, being reported intermittently throughout January and February. Up to two **Firecrests** were noted near Shankill, Co Dublin, in early December: A **Turtle Dove** at Ballyallia, Co Clare, on December 3<sup>rd</sup> was likely a late migrant rather than a wintering bird. A **Richard's Pipit** was found at Tacumshin, Co Wexford, on February 23<sup>rd</sup>. Intriguingly, one had been reported in the same area in November 2018 – had this bird wintered somewhere locally before being discovered in February?

There was an influx of **Ring-necked Ducks**, with at least 32 reported from eleven counties. Particularly high counts came from Cork and Monaghan, where there were flocks

Black Brant (right), Marino Institute of Education, Dublin, February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019. **Photo:** John Fox







Snow Goose (and Whooper Swans), west of the White Hole, Tacumshin Lake, Co Wexford, February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019. Photo: Victor Caschera



Received too late for inclusion in a previous issue: Fea's-type Petrel, at sea off Baltimore, Co Cork, August 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018. Photo: John Coveney

of eight at Garranes Lough and Lough Morne, respectively. A total of six birds was also noted in Donegal, with smaller numbers in other counties. Although it seems likely that this influx was linked to the autumn's storms, there was no corresponding increase in reports of other wintering wildfowl of North American origin. Just one **Green-winged Teal** was reported, from Saltmills, Co Wexford, while two **American Wigeons** were noted, both single drakes at Lough Beg, Co Derry, and Lough Atedaun, Co Clare. Given recent winters it was surprising that there were no **Lesser Scaup** reported over the three winter months. The **Surf Scoter** flock moving extensively along the Meath and Dublin coastlines peaked at three birds in December. Further, single **Surf Scoters** were found in Clare, Donegal and Galway.

Wintering **Cattle Egrets** were logged from ten counties, with a peak count of seven in Wexford. The reports may have involved a number of wide-ranging birds, making it difficult to give an exact figure of wintering

numbers. Their larger relative, **Great White Egret**, was noted from four counties, all involving single birds. The long-staying **Spoonbill** remained at Cromane, Co Kerry, as well as the wide-ranging bird in south Wexford. There were further reports from Tramore, Co. Waterford, and Castle Espie at Strangford Lough, Co Down. Southern counties dominated reports of **Glossy Ibis**, with a flock of up to 13 birds at White's Marsh near Clonakilty, Co Cork.

County Wexford dominated the rare wader news, with a **Spotted Sandpiper** discovered at Ferrybank on the edge of Wexford town on December 9<sup>th</sup>. Remaining on site until early spring, it showed very well and highlighted that any wintering Common Sandpiper-type bird deserves close scrutiny. In the same county, an **Avocet** took up residence at Tacumshin from January 3<sup>rd</sup> onwards. In County Sligo, a **Lesser Yellowlegs** was a good find at Drumcliffe estuary on December 24<sup>th</sup>. Rare gulls included a sub-adult **American Herring Gull** at Cahermore, Co

Cork, from January 13<sup>th</sup> onwards, with another (probable) **American Herring Gull** reported from Bray Harbour, Co Wicklow, in February. An adult **Bonaparte's Gull** reported from Hook Head, Co Wexford, on December 28<sup>th</sup> and Kilmore Quay, Co Wexford, on February 20<sup>th</sup> could have been the adult seen for several days in Dunmore East, Co Waterford, the previous October. Another **Bonaparte's Gull**, this one a second calendar year bird, was noted feeding with **Black-headed Gulls** off Furbo, Co Galway, on January 8<sup>th</sup>. Also in Galway Bay, the **Forster's Tern** returned to its wintering site for another year, being noted at Kinvara in January and Claddagh beach in February.

Finally... seawatching requires high levels of commitment at the best of times, and certainly even more so if carried out during the winter months. With so little coverage, there is a very high chance of finding something unusual. This is certainly true for the ten **Manx Shearwaters** logged at the start of January off Kerrykeel, Co. Donegal, when the species should be off the coast of Brazil! ■

Yellow-browed Warbler, Dungarvan, Co Waterford, February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2019. Photo: Andrew Malcolm



## Spring Alive



In **Spring Alive**, run by BirdWatch Ireland and BirdLife International partners across Europe, Central Asia and Africa, participants are asked to log their first sightings of Swift, Swallow, Cuckoo, and also this year, Sand Martin (pictured). To take part, visit the website [www.springalive.net](http://www.springalive.net), where you can also learn about migration; download factsheets and plans for teachers; upload photos, drawings and stories to our **Spring Blog**; take part in fun competitions; enjoy our online bird migration games; send postcards to your friends and, most exciting of all, track the progress of the birds on our interactive animated map.



DICK COOMBS



Official sponsors of Spring Alive





**BirdWatchIreland**  
protecting birds and biodiversity

# Summary of Accounts 2018

## FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

The details given below are a summary of accounts for BirdWatch Ireland and BWI Retail and Services Limited in 2018. A full set of accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2018 is available from BirdWatch Ireland on request.

	2018 €	2017 €
<b>Income</b>		
Membership subscriptions	222,888	206,831
Donations & bequests	264,004	39,315
Grants	104,195	107,443
Development & events	4,154	77
Other income	68,585	70,390
Advertising income	7,380	9,622
Conservation projects	1,387,562	1,316,100
Investment income	10	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,058,778</b>	<b>1,749,803</b>

	2018 €	2017 €
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Conservation project costs	(1,643,399)	(1,279,579)
Administration expenses	(255,675)	(448,341)
<b>Total</b>	<b>(1,899,074)</b>	<b>(1,727,920)</b>

<b>Net surplus for year</b>	<b>159,704</b>	<b>21,883</b>
Total funds brought forward	1,797,502	1,775,619
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>	<b>1,957,206</b>	<b>1,797,502</b>
Revaluation reserve	120,000	0
	<b>2,077,206</b>	<b>1,797,502</b>

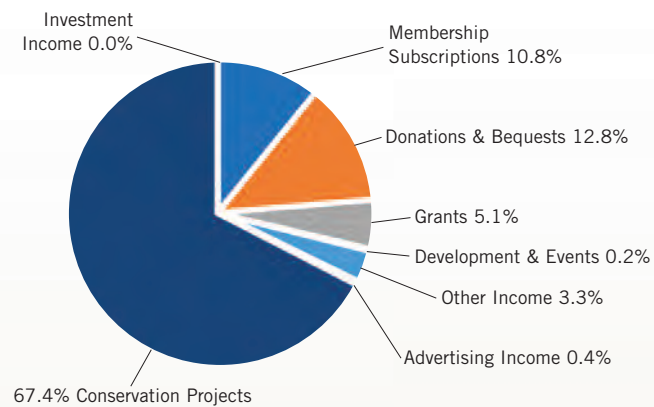
<b>Represented by:</b>		
Non-current assets	2,963,914	2,699,372
Net current assets/(liabilities)	20,471	841
Other creditors	(907,179)	(902,711)
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,077,206</b>	<b>1,797,502</b>

### BWI Retail and Services Limited

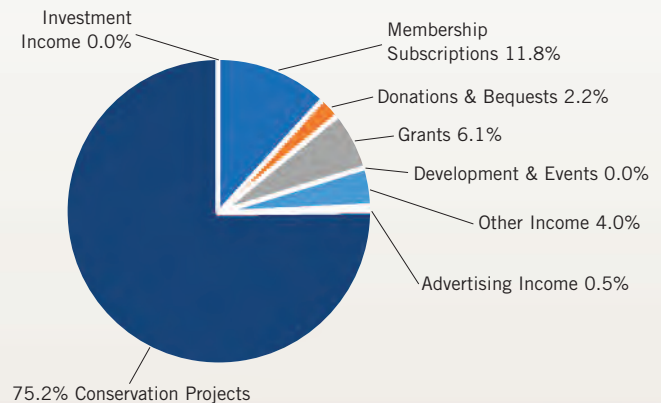
Turnover	132,419	105,170
Cost of sales	(77,577)	(62,425)
Gross profit	54,842	42,745
Administrative expenses	(54,320)	(41,308)
Interest payable	(192)	(131)
<b>Profit before taxation</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>1,306</b>
Tax on profit	(156)	0
<b>Profit after taxation</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>1,306</b>
Total funds brought forward	1,016	(290)
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>	<b>1,190</b>	<b>1,016</b>

<b>Represented by:</b>		
Fixed assets	936	1,132
Net current assets/(liabilities)	254	(116)
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,190</b>	<b>1,016</b>

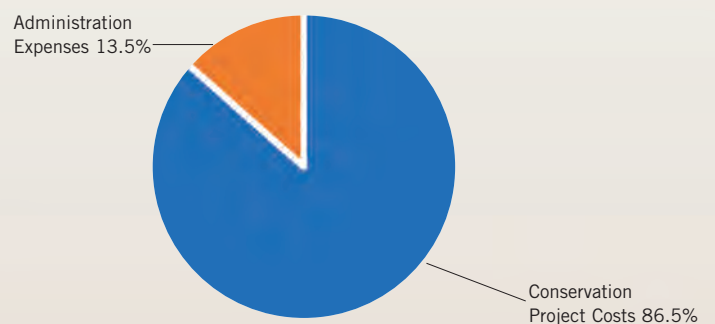
### INCOME 2018



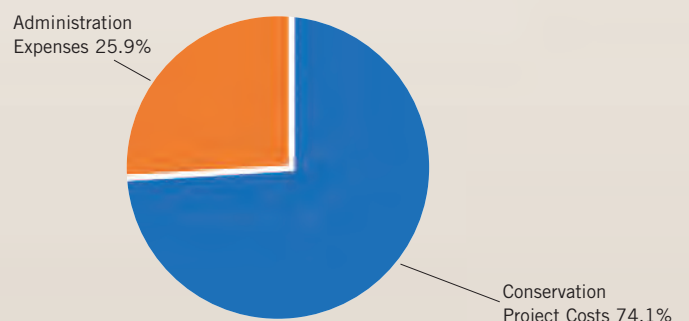
### INCOME 2017



### EXPENDITURE 2018



### EXPENDITURE 2017





## Irish Wildbird Conservancy Annual General Meeting 2019

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting ("AGM") of the Irish Wildbird Conservancy (the "Company") will be held at 2.00pm sharp on Saturday, 15<sup>th</sup> June, 2019, in Castletroy Park Hotel, Dublin Road, Limerick, V94 YOAN.

In accordance with Articles 15 and 16 of the Company's Articles of Association, Jim Dowdall, Stephen Wilson and John Lynch fall to retire as Directors of the Company at this AGM.

The Board wishes to nominate Conor O'Keeffe of County Cork as a Director of the Company. The number of nominations for the Board is less than the number of vacancies on the Board.

In accordance with Article 7(c) of the Company's Articles of Association, any Member entitled to attend and vote at the AGM is entitled to appoint a proxy. That proxy need not be a Member. The procedure for Voting by Proxy is laid out in Article 13 of the Company's Articles of Association. Proxy votes in respect of the 2019 AGM must be received at the registered office of the Company by 2.00pm on Thursday, 13<sup>th</sup> June 2019.

A copy of the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Company, including the Form of Proxy for the AGM, is available online at <https://birdwatchireland.ie/AboutUs/Governance>.

The agenda is as follows:

- 1 To consider the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2018.
- 2 To review the Annual Report of the Board for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2018.
- 3 To consider the financial statements of the Company for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2018 together with the reports of the directors and the statutory auditor thereon.
- 4 To authorise the Board to fix the remuneration of the statutory auditor.
- 5 To elect new Directors.
- 6 To receive reports from the Branches.
- 7 To transact any other business as may be transacted at an annual general meeting.

By order of the Board.

Gerry Lyons  
Chairperson  
BirdWatch Ireland  
Unit 20, Block D  
Bullford Business Campus  
Kilcoole  
Co Wicklow

15<sup>th</sup> April 2019

### Minutes/Audited Accounts

Please note that Minutes of the 2018 AGM and the audited financial statements of the Company for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2018 are available to members on request. Please email [info@birdwatchireland.ie](mailto:info@birdwatchireland.ie).

A summary of the Company's financial statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2018 is presented in this issue of *Wings*.

## News in brief

### Call for breeding records of rare birds



The Irish Rare Breeding Bird Panel is once again appealing for records of breeding species that are still quite rare or uncommon. Over ninety species are on the panel's 'wish list' for breeding records, which includes **rare breeding species** (e.g., Great Spotted Woodpecker; Reed Warbler; Mediterranean Gull), **scarce breeders** (e.g., Little Tern, Redshank, Crossbill), **non-native species** (e.g., Mandarin Duck, Greylag Goose, Red-legged Partridge) and **potential colonists** (e.g., Cattle Egret, Lesser Whitethroat, Yellow Wagtail). To submit a record, or to see the main species of interest, simply visit the panel's website at [irrbpp.org](http://irrbpp.org) or email [secretary.irbbp@gmail.com](mailto:secretary.irbbp@gmail.com).

### Irish Birds, Number 41: out now



The new issue of *Irish Birds*, BirdWatch Ireland's annual scientific journal, is out now. In addition to a paper revealing shocking declines in Ireland's wintering waterbird populations, this issue also contains papers on the remnant Ring Ouzel population in Co Kerry, the results of last year's Barnacle Goose census, the diet of Barn Owls, the biometrics of Skylarks at airfield grasslands and an account of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Purple Martin records from Ireland and Britain, amongst a host of other topics. Also included are the latest Irish Rare Bird Report and Irish Ringing Report. It is available from the BirdWatch Ireland shop ([www.birdwatchireland.ie](http://www.birdwatchireland.ie)) for €20.00, plus P&P.

### Volunteer for the Baltray Little Tern Project

The Louth Branch is running a **Little Tern Conservation Project** at the mouth of the River Boyne (north side), at Baltray, Co Louth, from May to August. The branch would welcome volunteers at any time, to help with wardening, fence construction, informing the public or just visiting. If interested, please contact **Breffni Martin** on **087 914 5363** or at [bmartin@regintel.com](mailto:bmartin@regintel.com). See also [www.louthnaturetrust.org](http://www.louthnaturetrust.org) and [www.birdslouth.blogspot.com](http://www.birdslouth.blogspot.com).

### New squirrels and marten citizen survey

ITA MARTIN



Researchers in NUI Galway have teamed up with Vincent Wildlife Trust, Ulster Wildlife and the National Biodiversity Data Centre in seeking to determine the latest distribution of Red and Grey Squirrels and the Pine Marten in Ireland. The **All-Ireland Squirrel and Pine Marten Survey** is a follow-up to the very successful survey in 2007 which first identified a possible link between a

recovering Pine Marten population and a decline in Grey Squirrel numbers in midland counties. Members of the public are invited to take part and record their sightings of the three mammals during 2019. Records from the Republic of Ireland should be submitted to [bit.ly/21Sc8Bs](http://bit.ly/21Sc8Bs). Records from Northern Ireland should be submitted to [bit.ly/21XLffft](http://bit.ly/21XLffft). Check out the survey page at [bit.ly/2VgAUSj](http://bit.ly/2VgAUSj). See also the Facebook page [facebook.com/squirrelsurvey](https://facebook.com/squirrelsurvey).

### Bloom ticket offer

The annual **Bloom Garden Festival** takes place as usual in the Phoenix Park, Dublin, over the June bank holiday weekend. Created by Bord Bia, the event will run from Thursday, May 30<sup>th</sup>, to Monday, June 3<sup>rd</sup> (9.00am to 6.00pm daily). The organisers are pleased to offer all BirdWatch Ireland members a special Bloom ticket offer. Book **online only** before the event and use the promotional code **BIRD19** to get a €2 discount off ticket prices to Bloom. This offer cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer. Log on to [www.bloominthepark.com](http://www.bloominthepark.com) for more details on food, features, show gardens, free seminars and entertainment ■



# News

## Project Lapwing

BirdWatch Ireland invites everyone to take part in an important citizen science survey this year. **Ricky Whelan** reports

BirdWatch Ireland is looking for your help to collect breeding Lapwing records from around the country for **Breeding Lapwing Survey 2019**. If you know of Lapwings nesting in your area or

on your farm, we want to know about them.

The survey is being funded by the **Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine**.

The Lapwing, in common with many other ground-nesting species, has

undergone severe declines in breeding numbers: the most recent Bird Atlas reported a 53% decrease in its breeding range in Ireland over the last forty years. Numbers at previous strongholds, such as the Shannon Callows, have declined by more than 80% in recent decades. As a result of these serious and ongoing declines, the Lapwing is now red-listed on the **Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland** list and is a conservation priority in the government's **Prioritised Action Framework 2014-2020**.

We are appealing for your records of breeding Lapwings this spring and summer to help us build a more accurate picture of breeding Lapwing distribution and numbers. We also hope to learn more about the types of farmland habitats that Lapwings nest in.

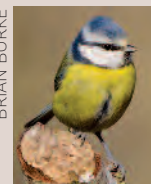
To take part, and to start submitting records, follow the link to the National Biodiversity Data Centre survey portal at [bit.ly/2XOKA41](http://bit.ly/2XOKA41).

➔ Our thanks to the **Department of Agriculture** for its support. Our thanks also to the **National Biodiversity Data Centre** for hosting the online survey portal for the Lapwing project on its website ■

## Call for Garden Bird Survey counts

Please send your Garden Bird Survey counts to us soon, writes **Brian Burke**

BRIAN BURKE



Hundreds of you have already sent us your counts from the most recent **Irish Garden Bird Survey**. But if you haven't sent yours in yet, please do so as soon as possible.

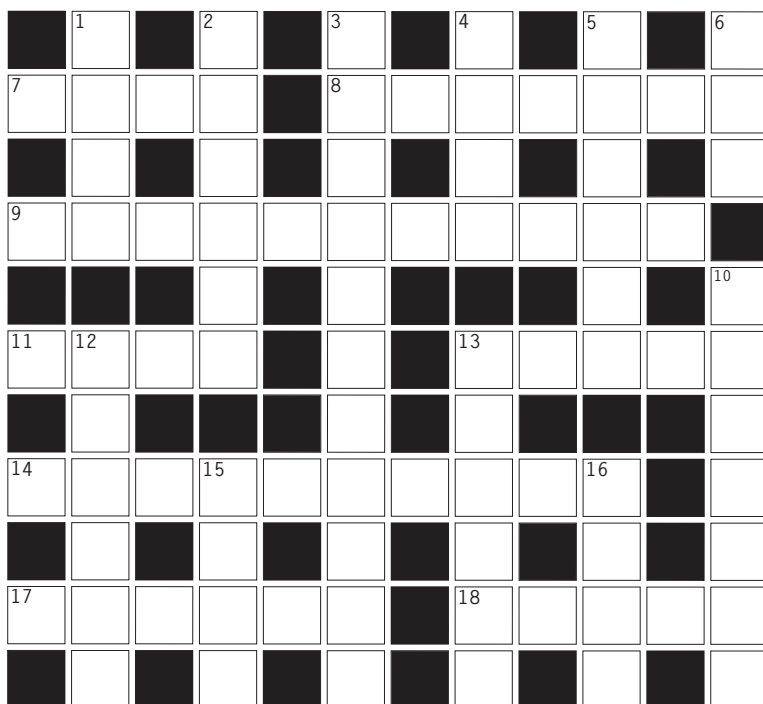
It is important that we keep monitoring the status of our garden bird species every winter, and we can only do that with your help! You can send your survey forms to us by post, by email to [gardenbirds@birdwatchireland.ie](mailto:gardenbirds@birdwatchireland.ie), or through our website, [www.birdwatchireland.ie](http://www.birdwatchireland.ie).

➔ We'd like to extend a special thanks to the **Ballymaloe Group** for sponsoring the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this survey and helping us build on its success ■



## Crossword No 63

Complete this crossword correctly and you are in with a chance to win a copy of *A Life in the Trees*, by Declan Murphy, a book valued at €20.00. Send your entry to BirdWatch Ireland Crossword Competition, Unit 20, Block D, Bullford Business Campus, Kilcoole, Co Wicklow, to arrive not later than Friday, June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2019. The winner of Crossword No 62 was Margaret O'Herlihy of Blackrock Road, Cork, who won a copy of *A Life in the Trees* by Declan Murphy.



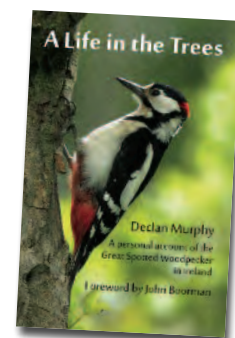
### Clues

#### Across

- 7 The king of all birds, despite very small size (4).  
 8 Large flightless bird native to African continent (7).  
 9 Set of flight feathers on the inner half of wing (11).  
 11 Popular internet site dealing in secondhand goods (4).  
 13 American actor Ed, star of *Lou Grant* (5).  
 14 Our smallest breeding hirundine, typically nests in sand-cliffs and riverbanks (4,6).  
 17 Small tube-nosed seabird such as Storm (6).  
 18 If this be the food of love, play on (5).

#### Down

- 1 Large perennial plant with trunk and branches (4).  
 2 Charlie Brown's pet beagle (6).  
 3 Large aquiline bird of prey reintroduced to Ireland (6,5).  
 4 Heavenly body other than the planets or moons (4).  
 5 Dove by another name (6).  
 6 Definite article (3).  
 10 Rare visitor belonging to woodpecker family, feeds mainly on ants (7).  
 12 Large semi-aquatic rodent, builds own lodge (6).  
 13 Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness (6).  
 15 Forgetful fish friend of fictional Nemo (4).  
 16 Where a bird lays and incubates its eggs (4).



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 62

**Across:** 1. Pipit. 3. Pears. 6. Extinct. 7. Ova. 8. Worms. 10. Lunar. 12. Au. 13. Po. 14. Great. 17. Shrew. 18. Air. 19. Bermuda. 20. Layer. 21. Shank.

**Down:** 1. Pied Wagtail. 2. Tunas. 3. Petal. 4. Acorn. 5. Sparrowhawk. 9. Our. 11. Ape. 15. Early. 16. Tiber. 17. Sorts.



# Branching out

Kilkenny Branch stalwart Pat Durkin leading the walk in Newpark Fen in February. Photo: Richard Dwyer (Kilkenny Branch)

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

## Great day out at Newpark Fen Mary Durkin (Kilkenny Branch)

Over fifty people attended an event held by the Kilkenny Branch at Newpark Fen, Co Kilkenny, on February 2<sup>nd</sup> to celebrate **International Wetlands Day**.

Newpark Fen is located approximately two kilometres north-east of Kilkenny city. It is an award-winning wildlife sanctuary that is maintained by the Parks Department of **Kilkenny County Council** and is a major amenity for local residents and the city.

The reserve covers an area of 9.7 hectares (23.7 acres) and includes open water and fen marsh habitats, which hold a rich variety of wild bird, mammals plant and insect species.

**Pat Durkin** of Kilkenny Branch led the outing, describing the most interesting aspects of the fen and its wildlife. He explained that the fen marsh acts as a carbon sink for the environment and, as such, plays a valuable role in helping combat climate change.

Amongst the many attendees were some staff and councillors from **Kilkenny County Council**, members of **Kilkenny Archaeological Society**, **An Taisce**, **Keep Kilkenny Beautiful** and, of course, **BirdWatch Ireland**.

The event was supported by the Heritage Department of **Kilkenny Co Council**, which also supported the branch's indoor talk on March 19<sup>th</sup>, delivered by **Zoe Devlin**, a well-known botanist and author.

It is the intention of all those interested in the preservation of Newpark Fen to ensure that it remains a place of conservation and to push for its continued management and improvement.



Some of the attendees at the Newpark Fen walk. Photo: Richard Dwyer

## West Cork Swift Survey Nicholas Mitchell (West Cork Branch)

As reported elsewhere in this issue, visiting **Swift** numbers have been in steep decline over the last thirty years and are a conservation concern. A major factor is that Swifts are only protected in Ireland during the breeding season, from May to August. This means that at all other times of the year their nesting sites (typically located on private houses and other buildings) can be removed through alteration to roofs, etc.

During 2019, the West Cork Branch intends to help to address this issue by implementing a nesting Swift survey in west Cork. The survey will help us to find out where Swifts are nesting and to identify the best places for installing Swift nest boxes.

In a follow-up to the talk given to the West Cork Branch by BirdWatch Ireland's **Brian Caffrey** last December, the branch is launching its Swift project with a workshop on Wednesday, May 15<sup>th</sup>, in Skibbereen (see the What's On Guide, p32, for details). Anyone who wants to find out more about this exciting project, or wants to get involved, should put this event in their diary and come along.

Throughout the summer the branch will visit towns in west Cork on weekday evenings for a series of '**Swift Pint**' events. The purpose of these events is to meet with local people, explain what the Swift project is all about, look for Swifts and encourage interest and local participation in the project, and finish with a chat, maybe over a pint. The West Cork Branch will publicise the dates through community groups, its website, mailing list and Facebook page.

If you want to get involved, are a member of a local community group such as Tidy Towns, or know anyone else who would be interested, then please contact **Paul Hadland** at [swiftproject@birdwatchirelandwestcork.ie](mailto:swiftproject@birdwatchirelandwestcork.ie).



Newpark Fen. Photo: Richard Dwyer



# What's on guide

## EVENTS AND TALKS – MAY TO AUGUST 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.

**Note 1:** Outdoor events listed here may change if bad weather is forecasted.





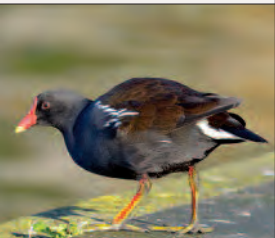
**Note 2:** Many of our branches have websites or Facebook pages which provide information on local events and talks – please find further details in the listings below. Any queries, please email us at [info@birdwatchireland.ie](mailto:info@birdwatchireland.ie).

**Note 3:** Dawn and dusk chorus events taking place on our Dawn Chorus Day (Sunday, May 12<sup>th</sup>), or on days either side of it, are highlighted in **green**.





Branch	May	June	July	August
<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 5<sup>th</sup></b> Outing to Carne Beach, Co Wexford. Meet at Carne Harbour car park at 10am. <b>Sat 11<sup>th</sup></b> Dusk chorus walk at Clogrennane Woods, Ballinabranagh, south-west of Carlow town. Meet at forest entrance at 7pm.	<b>Sun 9<sup>th</sup></b> Outing to Slievecoiltia, John F Kennedy Arboretum (south of New Ross, Co Wexford), to see Skylarks, Whitethroats, etc. Meet in car park on Slievecoiltia at 9.30am.	<b>Sun 14<sup>th</sup></b> Outing to Raven Wood, Co Wexford, for a butterfly (and other wildlife) walk. Meet at the Raven car park at 10am. <b>Sat 20<sup>th</sup></b> Outing to look for Swifts in Leighlinbridge. Meet on the bridge at 7pm	 Swift (Graham Catley)
<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> Michael McKiernan, 086 885 4989	<b>Sun 12<sup>th</sup></b> Two Dawn Chorus Day walks: (1) Belturbet. Meet in Turbet Island car park at 4.30am. (2) Castle Lake forest, Bailieborough. Meet in Castle Lake car park at 4.30am. Bring flask and snack for after the walk.	<b>June</b> Cavan Branch AGM. The branch will notify Cavan members of arrangements by email.	 Garden Warbler (Tom Shevlin)	
<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>Fri 10<sup>th</sup></b> Dusk chorus walk along the Bog Road, Kilkishen. Meet at GAA pitch, Kilkishen, at 7pm. Leaders: Elizabeth Brady, Nuala & Tom Lynch. Dawn Chorus Day outing to Burren National Park to find Cuckoo, Blackcap, Whitethroat, Yellowhammer. Meet at the Grotto, Corofin, at 5am. Leaders: Finbar MacGabhann, Nuala & Tom Lynch	<b>Sat 15<sup>th</sup></b> Joint outing with Limerick Branch to Loop Head to see seabirds. An enjoyable walk along the cliffs. Meet at the car park beside Loop Head Lighthouse at 11am. Leaders: Clodagh Glasgow and John N Murphy.	 Razorbill (Tom Ormond)	<b>Sat 24<sup>th</sup></b> Seawatching outing to the Bridges of Ross. Meet at the Bridges of Ross car park at 9am.
<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'Keefe, <a href="mailto:calabkilworth@gmail.com">calabkilworth@gmail.com</a>	<b>Sat 11<sup>th</sup></b> Dusk chorus walk in Ballybrack Woods, Douglas (Mangala), Cork. Meet at Douglas Community Centre at 8pm	<b>Sun 16<sup>th</sup></b> Coastal headland walk at Knockadoon Head. Meet at Knockadoon pier at 10am.		<b>Sat 17<sup>th</sup></b> Pelagic trip with Shearwater Wildlife Tours for seabirds and cetaceans from Baltimore. Prior booking with the branch before August essential. BirdWatch Ireland members only.
<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 12<sup>th</sup></b> Dawn Chorus Day walk in Castlefreke Woods. Meet in the car park at 4.30am. Refreshments afterwards. Leader: David Rees. <b>Wed 15<sup>th</sup></b> Workshop to launch West Cork Swift Project (open to everyone). Meet at Abbeystrewry Church Hall, Bridge St, Skibbereen, 7pm. More details from Paul at <a href="mailto:swiftproject@birdwatchirelandwestcork.ie">swiftproject@birdwatchirelandwestcork.ie</a> . <b>Sun 19<sup>th</sup></b> Full-day visit to Cape Clear to see spring migrants. Take 11am ferry from Baltimore, meet at Cape Clear Bird Observatory at 11.45am. Return on 5pm ferry.	<b>June to August</b> 'Swift Pint' events. We will visit towns in West Cork on weekday evenings to meet with the local people and explain what the West Cork Swift Project is all about. We will look for Swifts and encourage local participation, and finish with a chat (maybe over a pint). Dates will be announced via community groups and our branch website, mailing list and Facebook page. For more details and to register interest, please contact Paul Hadland at <a href="mailto:swiftproject@birdwatchirelandwestcork.ie">swiftproject@birdwatchirelandwestcork.ie</a> .	 Swifts (Jörg Sanz)	<b>Sat 24<sup>th</sup></b> Family event at Rosscarbery (for National Heritage Week). Meet at Celtic Ross Hotel, Rosscarbery, at 3pm. Find out more about birds that use the estuary on migration and during the winter. Leader: Nicholas Mitchell.
<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 18<sup>th</sup></b> Outing to Ards Forest Park. Meet at the entrance gates at 9.30am. <b>Sat 25<sup>th</sup></b> Bat evening with Barry Walls at Inch Lake. Details will be emailed to members during the preceding week.	<b>Sat 22<sup>nd</sup></b> Joint meeting with An Taisce at Sheskinmore Nature Reserve. Meet at Tramore Beach caravan site at 11am.	<b>Sat 13<sup>th</sup></b> Coastal walk at Carrickfin: a joint meeting with An Taisce. Meet at the car park between the airport building and the beach at 11am.	<b>Sat 17<sup>th</sup></b> Outing to Inch Lake. Meet at the Tready car park at 10am. (Directions: coming from Letterkenny turn left at Burt Church and continue for 2 km.)



Branch	May	June	July	August
<b>Dublin Fingal</b> <a href="http://www.bwifingal.ie">www.bwifingal.ie</a> , <a href="#">Twitter</a> <a href="mailto:bwifingal@gmail.com">bwifingal@gmail.com</a> All talks are held in Blue Bar Lounge, Skerries Harbour, 8pm • Frank Prendergast (sec), 087 131 9884, <a href="mailto:frank.prendergast@dit.ie">frank.prendergast@dit.ie</a> • Paul Lynch (chair), 087 631 9209, <a href="mailto:paullynch@gmail.com">paullynch@gmail.com</a>	<b>Sun 5<sup>th</sup></b> Dawn chorus walk in Turvey Nature Park, Donabate, led by Brendan Black. Meet in the car park at 7am. <b>Tues 7<sup>th</sup></b> Dusk chorus walk in Ardgillan Demesne, Balbriggan, led by Jim English. Meet in upper car park at 7.30pm.	<b>Ger McCann Bird Hide</b> <i>located on the BirdWatch Ireland Reserve at the north side of inner Rogerstown estuary</i>  <b>Open access all year</b>	<b>Sat 6<sup>th</sup></b> Shenick Island walk, led by Jim English. Meet at the Brook Stream, South Strand, Skerries, at 7.30am.	 Cormorant (Shay Connolly)
<b>Dublin South</b> <a href="http://www.southdublinbirds.com">www.southdublinbirds.com</a> All talks in Graduate Bar, Rochestown Ave, 8pm • Mary Daly (sec) <a href="mailto:secretary@southdublinbirds.com">secretary@southdublinbirds.com</a> • Eleanor Keane, 087 644 6029 Coach bookings taken at meetings or email the branch secretary Morning walks approx two hours	<b>Tues 7<sup>th</sup></b> Seabird and cetacean surveys offshore, by Niall Keogh. Graduate Bar, 8pm. <b>Sun 12<sup>th</sup></b> Dawn Chorus Day walk on Killiney Hill. Meet in car park at 4am. <b>Sun 19<sup>th</sup></b> Visit to Pollardstown Fen. Meet at 9am for car-pooling at dog park outside Newbridge on R413. See map on branch website.	<b>Sun 9<sup>th</sup></b> Watch the Sand Martins at Shanganagh cliffs. Meet at Shankill Dart station car park at 9am.	<b>July</b> Ternwatch at Coliemore Harbour each Tuesday evening (2, 9, 16, 23 and 30 July) with branch volunteers, from 6.30pm to 8pm each evening.	<b>Mon 26<sup>th</sup></b> Visit to tern roost on Sandymount Strand to watch thousands of terns gathering. If coming from Dún Laoghaire, cross over railway line at Merrion Gates and proceed along Strand Road to first car park on right, where we will meet at 7.30pm.
<b>Dublin Tolka</b> <a href="http://www.dublinbirding.com">www.dublinbirding.com</a> Email <a href="mailto:dublinbirding@gmail.com">dublinbirding@gmail.com</a> • Dermot McCabe 086 418 0241 <a href="mailto:dermot.mccabe@gmail.com">dermot.mccabe@gmail.com</a> All talks in Botanic Gardens Auditorium, Glasnevin, on Wednesdays at 8pm (car park opens at 7.30pm)	<b>Wed 15<sup>th</sup></b> Birds of the Botanic Gardens, by Dermot McCabe (Tolka Branch). Botanic Gardens Auditorium, 7.45pm (car park open 7.30pm). <b>Sat 18<sup>th</sup></b> Car outing to Wicklow woodlands. Meet at Botanic Gardens at 9am or at Upper Lake car park in Glendalough, 10am. Call Dermot if you need a lift.	<b>Wed 19<sup>th</sup></b> Evening walk in Phoenix Park. Meet at Interpretive Centre car park, Knockmaroon Gate, 7.45pm. <b>Sat 22<sup>nd</sup></b> Seabird outing to Howth. Meet at Botanic Gardens at 9.30am or at King Sitric Restaurant, Howth pier, at 10am.	<b>Sat 13<sup>th</sup></b> Car outing – see website for details. Destination depending on White-tailed Eagle reports later from the Shannon lakes.	 White-tailed Eagle
<b>Galway</b> <a href="http://www.birdwatchgalway.org">www.birdwatchgalway.org</a> <a href="mailto:csheaslip@gmail.com">csheaslip@gmail.com</a> • Colin Heaslip (chair) <a href="mailto:csheaslip@gmail.com">csheaslip@gmail.com</a> • Bláithín Kennedy (sec) <a href="mailto:blaithin.kennedy@gmail.com">blaithin.kennedy@gmail.com</a> Contact Colin to receive newsletter	<b>Sat 4<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.	 Ring-billed Gull (Enda Flynn)		
<b>Kildare</b> <a href="http://www.birdwatchkildare.com">www.birdwatchkildare.com</a> <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 <a href="mailto:tom.mccormack07@gmail.com">tom.mccormack07@gmail.com</a> • Philip Dix, <a href="mailto:Phil.Dix@mu.ie">Phil.Dix@mu.ie</a> • Neil Bourke (sec) <a href="mailto:njb59@hotmail.com">njb59@hotmail.com</a>	<b>Sun 5<sup>th</sup></b> Joint outing with Laois Branch to Slieve Blooms to look for grouse and harriers. Meet at 10.30am in the Cut car park near Clonaslee (see our Facebook page). <b>Thurs 9<sup>th</sup></b> Fun Quiz. Townhouse Hotel, Naas, 8pm. <b>Sun 12<sup>th</sup></b> Dawn Chorus Day walk at Maynooth University. Meet in front of John Paul II Library (South Campus, beside Kilcock Rd) at 5am. <b>Wed 15<sup>th</sup></b> Dusk chorus walk at Castletown House, Celbridge. Meet in courtyard for talk at 6.45pm and walk at 7.30pm.	<b>Sat 22<sup>nd</sup></b> Talk and walk in Wicklow: <i>The Red Kite Project</i> , by Marc Ruddock (Golden Eagle Trust). Details later.	<b>Thurs 11<sup>th</sup></b> <i>Three men in a gluepot: exploring the Australian Mallee</i> , by Phil Dix (Maynooth University). Townhouse Hotel, Naas, 8pm. <b>Sat 13<sup>th</sup></b> Outing to East Coast Nature Reserve, Co Wicklow. Meet at Newcastle Railway Station at 10am.	<b>Sat 17<sup>th</sup></b> Children's birdwatching event (for Heritage Week) at Newbridge Linear Park, starting at 10.30am. This event is free and open to the public (as are all BirdWatch Ireland events, unless otherwise stated).
<b>Kilkenny</b> Email <a href="mailto:birdwatchkilkenny@gmail.com">birdwatchkilkenny@gmail.com</a> to be included on emailing list • Pat and Mary Durkin 086 150 7392 or 086 040 3204 <a href="mailto:patandmarydurkin@gmail.com">patandmarydurkin@gmail.com</a> For other events listen to KCLR or Radio Kilkenny or see local papers	<b>Sun 12<sup>th</sup></b> Dawn Chorus Day walk in Jenkinstown Wood. Meet in the car park at 4.30am. All are welcome. <b>Thurs 23<sup>rd</sup></b> Dusk chorus walk in Kilkenny Castle grounds to mark 50 years of Kilkenny Castle and 50 years of BirdWatch Ireland. Meet at gate at 7pm.			 Blackbird (Dick Coombes)
<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, <a href="mailto:birdwatchlaois@gmail.com">birdwatchlaois@gmail.com</a>	<b>Sun 5<sup>th</sup></b> Joint visit with Kildare Branch to the Slieve Blooms. Meet in the car park at the Cut (Clonaslee side) at 10am. <b>Tues 28<sup>th</sup></b> Dusk chorus walk at Roundwood House, Mountrath. Meet at the hotel at 7.30pm.	<b>June</b> The Laois Branch will be holding an outdoor event during June. Notice via our Facebook page and email.		
<b>Limerick</b> Emailing list: <a href="mailto:birdwatchireland@limerickbranch@gmail.com">birdwatchireland@limerickbranch@gmail.com</a> Find us on Facebook • Maura Turner (sec), 087 792 7972 • Sean Hartigan (Events & Education Officer), 087 916 8613 • Clodagh Glasgow (chair) All talks in 3B05, Limerick Institute of Technology, Moylish, 7.45pm	<b>Sun 12<sup>th</sup></b> Dawn Chorus Day walk in Curraghchase Forest Park. Sean Doyle will help with birdsong identification. Meet at the barrier at 4.45am sharp.	<b>Sat 15<sup>th</sup></b> Joint visit with Clare Branch to Loop Head to see nesting seabirds. An enjoyable walk along sea cliffs. Meet in car park beside Loop Head Lighthouse at 11am. Leaders: Clodagh Glasgow and John N Murphy.	<b>Sat 13<sup>th</sup></b> Nature walk along path between River Blackwater and canal to River Shannon at UL. Meet in car park past Burlington Fitness (at back entrance to UL on Clare side) at 10am. Leader: Pete Beaumont.	 Moorhen (Siobhán McNamara)



Branch	May	June	July	August
<b>Mayo</b> www.birdwatchmayo.org birdwatchmayo@yahoo.com Follow us on <b>Twitter</b> Find us on <b>Facebook</b> Text updates: 087 643 2340 • Ruth-Ann Leak (sec), 087 643 2340 • Helen Lawson, 086 409 4622	<b>Sun 19<sup>th</sup> May</b> Help survey the birds of land and water at Enniscoe, near Crossmolina, with Mayo Branch members and Inland Fisheries Ireland staff and volunteers. For details, please contact Ruth on 087 643 2340 or email birdwatchmayo@yahoo.com.		 Grey Wagtail (Richard T Mills)	
<b>Meath</b> Find us on <b>Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn</b> birdwatchirelandmeath@gmail.com • Paul Gallagher 086 086 9760 • Terence Cassidy cassidy_terence@yahoo.co.uk	<b>Tues 7<sup>th</sup></b> BirdWatch Ireland launches Meath Swift Survey in Trim Library at 7.00pm. Find out how you can get involved. This talk will be followed by a walk to Trim town centre to observe Swifts. All welcome. <b>Sun 12<sup>th</sup></b> Dawn Chorus Day walk. Venue and time to be decided.		 Swifts (Jorg Sanz)	
<b>Monaghan</b> joeshannon54@gmail.com • Joe Shannon 086 918 5593, joeshannon54@gmail.com Updates to those on webtxt list	<b>Sun 12<sup>th</sup></b> Dawn Chorus Day walk at Rossmore Park, Monaghan. Meet at 5am.	 Chaffinch (Michael Finn)		
<b>Offaly</b> rwhelan@birdwatchireland.ie • Ricky Whelan (BirdWatch Ireland) 085 783 2545 • Amanda Pedlow (Heritage Office) (057) 934 6839 heritage@offalycoco.ie	<b>Wed 22<sup>nd</sup></b> Evening walk in Birr to look for Dippers, led by Alex Copland. Meet at the Camcor Park adjacent to the weir at 6pm. For further details, contact the Heritage Office, Offaly County Council on (057) 934 6839, or email heritage@offalycoco.ie.		<b>Wed 3<sup>rd</sup></b> Evening walk in Birr to look at Swifts, led by Ricky Whelan. Meet outside Dooly's Hotel at 8pm. For further details, contact the Heritage Office, Offaly County Council on (057) 934 6839, or email heritage@offalycoco.ie.	 Dipper (Valerie O'Sullivan)
<b>Roscommon</b> www.rosbirdwatch.blogspot.com p70435@yahoo.ie • Pádraig Rocke, 087 907 8849 p70435@yahoo.ie Contact Pádraig for event details	<b>Sun 12<sup>th</sup></b> Dawn Chorus Day walk led by Laura Gallagher. Meet at 5am at Kiltewan Community Centre (off N63 between Roscommon and Longford; take L1806 south from Ballintemple on N63 for about 3 km).	<b>Sat 8<sup>th</sup></b> Dawn chorus walk in Dunamon. Meet at 5am. Contact Pádraig for details.	 Whitethroat (John Fox)	
<b>Sligo</b> Find us on <b>Twitter and Facebook</b> (BirdWatch Sligo) Contact us for text updates on events and bird sightings • Martin Brennan (sec) 085 141 6313 mpbcabinetmaker@gmail.com • Michael Bell (chair), 085 175 1000	<b>Sun 12<sup>th</sup></b> Dawn Chorus Day walk led by Trevor Hunter. Meet at the Devil's Chimney, Glencar, at 5am. <b>Mon 13<sup>th</sup></b> Swift evening. A talk and walk with BirdWatch Ireland guide. Meet at Sligo Southern Hotel, Strandhill Rd, Sligo, at 7.30pm.	<b>Sun 2<sup>nd</sup> June</b> Outing to Tory to look for Puffins, listen for Corncrakes. Meet in Cartron, 7am, to travel to Magheroarty for 10am ferry, returning 5pm. Weather-dependent (will change date, if necessary). <b>Mon 24<sup>th</sup> June</b> 'Blooming Marvellous!' wild flowers, by Zöe Devlin. Radisson Blu Hotel, Sligo, 8pm. <b>Sun 30<sup>th</sup> June</b> Guided tour of Mount Allen Organic Eco-tourism Farm in Roscommon, with Tommy Earley. Meet at Cartron car park at 11am or Silver Falls apartments, Ballisodare Bay, at 11.15am for car-pooling.		 Puffin (Tom Ormond)
<b>Tipperary</b> www.tippbirds.weebly.com • Áine Lynch (sec), 087 936 9372 • Kevin Collins, 087 237 3090 kevincollins062@gmail.com • Jane Coman, (067) 31741 janecomman@eircom.net	<b>Sun 5<sup>th</sup></b> Dusk chorus walk at Lough Doire Bhile, outside Littleton, Thurles, at 8pm. <b>Mon 13<sup>th</sup></b> Butterflies of Ireland, by Tomás Murray (NBDC). Cabragh Wetlands, Thurles, 7.30pm. <b>Sun 19<sup>th</sup></b> Wildlife trip to Burren, led by Tom Gallagher. Collecting in Clonmel, Cashel, Thurles, Nenagh. Contact secretary for booking.	<b>Tues 25<sup>th</sup></b> Swift talk and walk (weather permitting). Meet at South Tipperary General Hospital, Clonmel, at 8pm.	 Peacock (Rónán McLaughlin)	<b>Mon 5<sup>th</sup></b> Visit our stand at the North Tipperary Agricultural Show. <b>Heritage Week, 17-25 August</b> Nature morning at Cabragh Wetlands during the week. Details later; see branch website and local papers.
<b>Westmeath</b> Find us on <b>Facebook</b> birdwatchwestmeath@gmail.com All indoor events in Bloomfield Hotel, outside Mullingar, at 8pm • Richella Duggan richella.duggan@googlemail.com	<b>Thurs 9<sup>th</sup></b> Westmeath Branch AGM. Bloomfield Hotel, Mullingar, 8pm. A short AGM meeting followed by a general meeting to plan summer projects. New members welcome.	<b>June to August</b> Westmeath Branch takes a summer break. Please check our Facebook page for any updates on summer projects or email <a href="mailto:birdwatchwestmeath@gmail.com">birdwatchwestmeath@gmail.com</a> for further information.		 Tufted Duck (M. Carmody)
<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) josephlennon@icloud.com • Clodagh Duffy (sec, events) birdwatchwicklow@gmail.com	<b>Thurs 9<sup>th</sup></b> Wicklow Swift Survey talk by Ricky Whelan. Martello Hotel, Strand Road, Bray, 7.30pm. <b>Fri 10<sup>th</sup></b> Wicklow Swift Survey talk by Ricky Whelan. Baltinglass Courthouse, Baltinglass, 7.30pm <b>Sun 12<sup>th</sup></b> Dawn Chorus Day walk, East Coast Nature Reserve. Meet at main entrance, Sea Road, Newcastle, 5am. <b>Tues 14<sup>th</sup></b> Can we save the Turtle Dove? A talk by Darren Ellis on creating suitable habitat for this threatened dove. Glenview Hotel, Glen of the Downs, 8pm.	<b>Sat 22<sup>nd</sup></b> Annual visit to the Little Tern colony on Kilcoole beach. Meet in Kilcoole train station car park at 10am.	<b>Tues 9<sup>th</sup></b> Ternwatch with BirdWatch Ireland guides from viewing area at Coliemore Harbour, Dalkey, Co Dublin, from 6.30pm. This event will be in conjunction with the South Dublin Branch.	 Ternwatch 2018 (Joe Hobbs)

**OTHER BRANCHES:** **Kerry (West), Corca Dhuibhne** Jill Crosher, 085 856 3356, [jillcrosher@gmail.com](mailto:jillcrosher@gmail.com)  
**Leitrim** Kealin Ireland, 086 388 1535, [kealinireland@eircom.net](mailto:kealinireland@eircom.net) **Louth** Breffni Martin, 087 914 5363



# 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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Website: [www.chg.gov.ie](http://www.chg.gov.ie)  
E-mail: [nature.conservation@chg.gov.ie](mailto:nature.conservation@chg.gov.ie)



Roseate Tern (Photo: Ita Martin)



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