



# Cape Clear Bird Observatory

## Annual Report 2018



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REPORT NUMBER 27

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# Contents

Introduction .....	1
Surveying and Monitoring.....	2
<i>Daily Log</i> .....	2
<i>Seawatching</i> .....	2
<i>Bird Ringing</i> .....	2
<i>Moth Trapping</i> .....	3
Wildlife Report 2017 .....	3
Birds .....	3
<i>Bird Ringing</i> .....	10
Mammals .....	12
Butterflies and Moths.....	13
Dragonflies .....	15
Fish.....	15
Other Taxa .....	15
Next Years Plans.....	15
Obituary .....	16

All photographs in this report were taken by Steve Wing

## Introduction

This is the 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Report for BirdWatch Ireland's Cape Clear Bird Observatory for 2018. Founded in 1959, the Bird Observatory is located on Cape Clear Island, situated 8 miles off the coast of West Cork.

Cape Clear is one of the best places to watch seabird migration in Europe, especially during the late summer months. Spring and autumn bring large numbers of song birds moving to and from their breeding grounds, amongst which there are usually one or two strays from North America and Siberia.

The BirdWatch Ireland Bird Observatory on Cape Clear is visited annually by dozens of visiting birdwatchers, ringers and general wildlife enthusiasts. This long tradition of bird and biodiversity recording on the island makes the Bird Observatory a beacon for environmental research, education and monitoring in Ireland.

Sam Bayley decided at the end of the 2017 season that his future lay elsewhere, i.e. at UCC working as a Research Assistant and with his newly announced wife to be! We wish Sam and Paloma very best wishes for a long and happy future together. Sam put in a huge amount of effort into the Observatory during his time here and we thank him for all his hard work!

Steve Wing returned to the Observatory in July 2018 to take on the role of Wildlife Officer after a short spell running Cotters Bar on the island. Steve's partner, Mary, lost her fight against cancer in May (see later) which accounts for the delayed start this season. We are indebted to Mary Cadogan and Dr Geoff Oliver for keeping bird records during the early months of the year and also to Ciaran Cronin for stepping in when required, to help run volunteer weekends.

Much time has been spent formulating plans for next season, some of which will be discussed later in this report. As the 'season' didn't actually start until well into the breeding season, no surveys were carried out to assess seabird colonies or passerine breeding successes – or failures. This late start also affected the amount of ringing carried out.

The following is a brief report to update on the survey and monitoring work undertaken during the season and to document the birds and other wildlife recorded on the island during the year.

# Surveying and Monitoring

## Daily Log

Throughout the second half of the season the daily log was maintained each evening gathering sightings and numbers of species recorded on the island, mainly focusing on birds, mammals, reptiles, Lepidoptera and dragonflies. This was undertaken mainly at the observatory, except in the autumn when it was done at Cotter's Bar to collate information from people staying at various locations. In addition, a 'day sheet' was compiled for each day to detail the highlights of each day as well as document the results of the more formal surveying as presented below. Mary Cadogan and Dr Geoff Olivers sightings were also entered into the Log so we have a record of the effects of the bitterly cold snap in early March. Steve will be re-learning and improving his Moth Identification skills so next years list will hopefully be much improved.

## Seawatching

No seawatching was carried out before July but between July and September, a total of 53.9 hours were carried out. The 'path' out to the Slab had become pretty overgrown through lack of use so much of the early efforts were from Bullig or the Bee Hive. Hopefully, with more use in the early months of next year, it will remain clear and indeed, obvious! Our thanks as always go to the hardy few who venture out there – besides myself – and to name just a few, Dick Coombes, Larry Donnelly, Tony Cully and Eamonn MacLochlainn.

In addition, records of birds seen from the pelagic trips run by Paul Connaughton of Shearwater Tours in Cape Clear waters will be added here when we receive them.

## Bird Ringing

After the much increased efforts of last year, this years totals were much lower. The ringing activities were as follows:

- Cotters/Nordy Wood – After very little work these two sites were set up fairly swiftly in July (Thanks Sam and Paloma!) and were the main ringing sites, as usual.
- East Bog – The CES season had progressed too far for it to be worthwhile starting this year but it is intended that we carry out the full list of visits next year. The land owner has requested a few alterations to the net lanes which will cut down the number of nets but that is the lesser of two evils.
- Old Post Office – This site was not used this year. We will look at it's viability next season.
- Trawleagaigh beach and Focarrig – The beach behind the Obs was set up again for Storm Petrel catching at the start of the season and still very useful for demonstration purposes, but in August the traditional spot of Focarrig, between South Harbour and Blannan, was set up and with the addition of a loud speaker and helpers was a far better location.
- Mary Cadogan's garden – the whoosh net was again installed for catching mainly gulls, corvids and Rock Doves
- Michael Vincent's garden – This site was not used.

## Moth Trapping

With no trapping at the Obs this year, the species totals are much lower than last years. Just a few nights trapping were carried out in October and the results are displayed below.

## Wildlife Report 2017

### BIRDS

For reasons explained elsewhere in this report, the recording season didn't get underway until the 2<sup>nd</sup> July. There were records from Mary Cadogan and Geoff Oliver from 1<sup>st</sup> January up until this date and they have been included in species totals, monthly breakdown, etc. It will be difficult to assess the years success or failure because of the late start, i.e no breeding seabird surveys were conducted, the Ringing CES was not done and the spring migration not recorded. However, a total of 141 species were logged, including 2 firsts for Cape, one of which was also a first for Ireland, **Scarlet Tanager** and **Veery**, respectively.



*Photo 1 Veery – Ireland's first!*

As would be expected, January was a quiet month with just a few notable birds. A single **Grey Wagtail** remained for much of the month and was kept company by a sprinkling of **Chiffchaffs**.

There was a good number of **Shoveler** on the Lake, with 4 on 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2 on 12<sup>th</sup>, 5 on 14<sup>th</sup> and back to 2 on 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>. A single **Brent Goose**, a Cape rarity, was recorded in North Harbour on 7<sup>th</sup> and a single **Fieldfare** visited on the 10<sup>th</sup>.

February saw the continuation of **Shoveler** on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> before they left for their breeding grounds and 3 **Teal** joined them briefly on the Lake on 2<sup>nd</sup>. A single **Collared Dove** stayed on the island from 23<sup>rd</sup> until 26<sup>th</sup>, an early date for this species here. Up to 3 **Rooks** and 4 **Redwings** visited for most of the month, perhaps aware of the cold snap that was about to happen.

The first few days of March saw an incredibly cold spell of weather throughout western Europe and Cape wasn't left out. 3 **Common Snipe** were recorded in private gardens on the 1<sup>st</sup> alongside a single **Fieldfare**, 57 **Redwing** and amazingly, 2 **Yellowhammers**! These were the forerunners of what was to follow! The morning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> saw : 42 **Golden Plover**, 6 **Lapwing**, 25 **Fieldfare**, 70 **Redwing** and 2 **Brambling** with one of the **Yellowhammers** remaining until the 4<sup>th</sup>. The poor birds were still arriving and the days totals for the 3<sup>rd</sup> were 100+ **Golden Plover** (many in gardens), 100+ **Lapwing**, 100+ **Fieldfare** and 100+ **Redwing**. Numbers dropped from the 4<sup>th</sup> onwards and we can only speculate the fate of these creatures. A single **Brambling** was still here on 20<sup>th</sup> and an **Iceland Gull** visited briefly on 23<sup>rd</sup>.

April records were particularly sparse with the **Brambling** still here until 2<sup>nd</sup>. A **Little Egret** was seen on 21<sup>st</sup> and a **Glaucous Gull** stayed at the Lake from 26<sup>th</sup> until 28<sup>th</sup> which is a change from their usual quick visits. Arrival – or more accurately, first recorded – dates for a few species were as follows: 2 **Blackcap** on 6<sup>th</sup>, **Swallow** on 8<sup>th</sup>, **Willow Warbler** on 12<sup>th</sup> and **Collared Dove** from 20<sup>th</sup>.

May and June, two of the busiest months for recording, suffered with an almost total lack of coverage except from the names mentioned before plus Ciaran Cronin, covering for my absence over a few weekends. Consequently, the list is short, to say the least. The first **Sedge Warbler** was seen on 1<sup>st</sup> May, **Spotted Flycatcher** on 18<sup>th</sup> and both **Arctic Tern** and **Bonxie** were seen on 27<sup>th</sup> May. The only record of note in June was a very nice **Rosy Starling** on 19<sup>th</sup>.



*Photo 2 Wheatear - juvenile*

July saw the return of the Wildlife Officer and coverage increased dramatically. There was a small fall of **Common Whitethroats** on the 1<sup>st</sup> with 16 noted – the highest total for the month. Other migrant records include, 16 **Northern Wheatear** and a single **Moorhen** on 9<sup>th</sup>, 6 **Sand Martin** on 10<sup>th</sup>, 1 **Sandwich Tern** and 2 **Common Swift** arrived on the 11<sup>th</sup>. A single **Blackcap** on the 28<sup>th</sup> was the only report for this species for the whole month, as was the single **Goldcrest** on the following day. Waders made a brief appearance with 3 **Common Sandpipers** on 19<sup>th</sup>, a **Common Redshank** on 20<sup>th</sup> and another **Common Sandpiper** on 28<sup>th</sup>. Parties of **Common Scoter** were seen flying past on 9<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> with 35 the high count. Our breeding **Little Grebes** returned in earnest on the 6<sup>th</sup>, the first chick seen on 19<sup>th</sup> and a high count of 17 on 30<sup>th</sup>. A total of 1400 minutes of seawatching was carried out with the following highlights and high counts for selected species, not in chronological order!

**Great Shearwater** 1 on 23<sup>rd</sup>, 23 on 26<sup>th</sup> and 4 on 30<sup>th</sup>, **Cory's Shearwater** 19 on 30<sup>th</sup>, 12 unidentified 'large' shearwaters also on 30<sup>th</sup>, **Sooty Shearwater** 15 on 12<sup>th</sup> with a high count of 24 on 26<sup>th</sup>. The highest count of **Manx Shearwaters** was 3560 ph on 23<sup>rd</sup> although they were recorded in good numbers on most days. **Storm Petrels** were few and far between, only reported on 4 dates, 19 on 4<sup>th</sup>, 150 on 12<sup>th</sup>, 3 on 25<sup>th</sup> and 10 on 28<sup>th</sup> when a flock of 20 **Arctic Terns** were also seen. The **Gannet** high count was 1750ph on 9<sup>th</sup>. **Bonxies** were also only recorded on 4 dates with 6 being the highest



*Photo 3 Pomarine Skua – taken from a pelagic trip*

count on 12<sup>th</sup> from a pelagic when a **Pomarine Skua**, a single **Wilson's Storm Petrel** and 25 **Black-headed Gulls** were also seen. High counts for the four Auks species were: **Common Guillemot** 450ph on 25<sup>th</sup>, **Razorbill** 150 ph on 26<sup>th</sup>, **Black Guillemot** 25 on 12<sup>th</sup> and **Puffin** 24 on 22<sup>nd</sup>.

August is usually THE month for large shearwaters but not this year! **Wilson's Storm Petrels** were seen on the 6<sup>th</sup> and it wasn't until the middle of the month that saw any improvement. 38 **Great Shearwaters**, 12 **Cory's Shearwaters** and over 100 **Sooty Shearwaters** on the 15<sup>th</sup> being the high counts with a single **Wilson's Storm Petrel** also on this date. The only **Balearic Shearwater** of the year was recorded from Blannan on 17<sup>th</sup>. The **Little Grebes** continued to produce chicks although the high count remained pretty static, around 19, all month. It was a month for the waders, which

isn't said about Cape very often. A **Greenshank** on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>, **Common Redshank** on the 6<sup>th</sup>, **Golden Plover** also on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, and a **Common Sandpiper** on 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> at the Lake with a different individual on the 26<sup>th</sup>. A single **Whimbrel** on 25<sup>th</sup> completed the wader counts.



*Photo 4 Sooty Shearwater*

September certainly stepped up to the plate with a decent selection of migrants although the seabird tallies were disappointing low again. The month started well with a **Wood Warbler** in Brids Garden and a **Pied Flycatcher** in the Nordy Wood and a **Northern Wheatear** seen on a wall along the Low Road showed all the characters of the Greenland race, all on the 1<sup>st</sup>. The last **Sedge Warbler** of the year was seen on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. A second **Pied Flycatcher** was found on 4<sup>th</sup> and a **Long-eared Owl** was also seen on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and the 13<sup>th</sup>. A spectacular **Kingfisher**, a regular autumn visitor to Cape, graced the North Harbour from the 6<sup>th</sup> until the 13<sup>th</sup>, giving some beautiful views. A single **Whimbrel** was seen perched and heard calling in Coosa Dougla and a **Common Sandpiper** was also present at the Lake on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. A count of 12 **Willow Warblers** and 500+ **Starlings** on the 9<sup>th</sup> were the high counts for these species. The 9<sup>th</sup> also saw a little increase in seabird counts with 10 **Great Shearwaters** and 30 **Sooty Shearwaters**. A **Gadwall** was flushed from Central Bog on the 10<sup>th</sup>, an unusal visitor to Cape. Single **Merlins** were recorded on 7<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>, with a juvenile/female type **Common Rosefinch** also recorded on 18<sup>th</sup>. **Turnstones** are vastly under recorded on Cape but one did find it's way into the log on 21<sup>st</sup> and the following day, a **Green Sandpiper** was seen at the Lake. **Bonxies** were recorded throughout the month but in small numbers and **Arctic Skuas** were 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2 on 27<sup>th</sup> and a single on the 30<sup>th</sup>. **Rooks** were encountered along the Low Road towards the end of the month with 3 on 23<sup>rd</sup>, with a **Common Buzzard** on this date, 4 on 26<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>. A small fall on the 24<sup>th</sup> saw the months high counts of **Barn Swallow** (60), **House Martin** (40), an amazing count of 10 **Common Buzzards**, an adult **Mediterranean Gull** feeding near Bird Island and a single **Firecrest**. The 25<sup>th</sup> was a Gull and Tern day! 2 **Mediterranean Gulls**, 46 **Black-headed Gulls**, 3 **Sandwich Terns**, 2 more **Common Buzzards** and a long staying **Turtle Dove** (until the 29<sup>th</sup>) were all noted. A **Tree Pipit** was seen and heard over Ballyieragh on 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>, as were single **Yellow-browed Warblers** and an **Icterine Warbler** at the top of the Secret Valley. 8 **Spotted Flycatchers**, a **Lesser Whitethroat**, 2 **Hen Harriers**, 3 **Coal Tits** and yet

3 more **Common Buzzards** were all seen on the 26<sup>th</sup> only. On the 27<sup>th</sup> alone, single **Red-throated** and **Great Northern Divers** were seen as well as 69 **Black-headed Gulls**, 1 **Mediterranean Gull**, 3 **Grey Phalaropes**, 2 **Lesser Whitethroats**, 1 **Common Redstart** and 6 **Spotted Flycatchers** plus a single **Pied Flycatcher**. 2 **Yellow-browed Warblers** and 4 **Spotted Flycatchers** were the best for the 28<sup>th</sup>. The 29<sup>th</sup> had a nice cross selection of species with: 1 **Mediterranean Gull**, 27 **Black-headed Gulls**, a **Wryneck** near the Post Office, a single **Carrion Crow** at the crossroads, 1000+ **Meadow Pipits**, 50 **Rock Pipits**, 1 **Garden Warbler**, 100+ **Chiffchaffs**, 2 **Yellow-browed Warblers** and 30 **Coal Tits**. A Good day! The 30<sup>th</sup> was a little quieter with only a single **Reed Warbler** and the **Carrion Crow** of note.

October, well. October 2018 will live long in Irish birders memories! It started off fairly quietly with 2 **Teal** on the Lake, a **Sand Martin** over and a long staying (until the 12<sup>th</sup>) **Turtle Dove** on the 1<sup>st</sup>, a **Tree Pipit** and a **Crossbill** seen on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, a **Red-throated Diver**, **Long-eared Owl**, 42 **Pied Wagtails**, 2 **Reed Warblers** and 2 **Northern Wheatears** on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. 4 **Bonxies**, 1 **Pomarine Skua** and 3 **Arctic Skuas** were the best at sea on the 5<sup>th</sup> but on land there were also 1 **Whinchat**, a peak of 70 **Goldcrests** and 3 **Spotted Flycatchers**. 20 **Common Scoter** passed on the 6<sup>th</sup>, while on or over the land were 3 **Hen Harriers**, a months high of 18 **Common Snipe**, 2 **Turnstone**, 8 **Barn**



*Photo 5 Cattle Egret over the Bill*

**Swallows**, the months high count, 16 **Grey Wagtails** (High Count =HC from here on!), 1 **Common Redstart**, 8 **Northern Wheatears** (HC), 17 **Blackcap**, 17 **Rook** (HC), 14 **Raven** (HC), 1 **Siberian Chiffchaff** and 8 **Coal Tit** (HC) on several days. The 2 **Teal** were at the Lake again with 1 **Common Gull** and a **Whooper Swan** (that stayed until 25<sup>th</sup>) on the 7<sup>th</sup>, 10 **Turnstone** and a **Mediterranean Gull** were on Bird Island, a single **Collared Dove** on the Lighthouse Road, another **Long-eared Owl** in Cotters Garden, a juvenile/female **Common Rosefinch** by the Escalonia Garden and a **Reed Warbler** in Cotters Garden. A brief seawatch on the 8<sup>th</sup> produced 7 **Bonxies** and 11 **Puffins** but there was little else of note that day and the 9<sup>th</sup> saw 17 (HC) **Sooty Shearwaters** and 22 **Bonxies** at sea. 1 **Cattle Egret**, a long staying **Lesser Whitethroat** (until the 19<sup>th</sup>), 1 **Common Redstart** and 2 **Black Redstarts** were found near the New College on the 10<sup>th</sup> and they were joined by 1 more **Common Redstart** on the 14<sup>th</sup> and up to 9 **Black Redstarts** on the 11<sup>th</sup>. The first **Redwing** of the autumn was also reported on the 11<sup>th</sup>, as were 1 **Great Shearwater**, 21 **Blackcaps**

(HC), **Common Rosefinch** (until the 12<sup>th</sup>), 3 **Reed Warblers** (until the 14<sup>th</sup>), 75 **Chiffchaffs** and 3 **Siberian Chiffchaffs**, with one staying until the 13<sup>th</sup>. The bird of the day, though, was a cracking male **Western Subalpine Warbler**, initially in Mary Macs garden before being relocated in brambles on the other side of the lake, where it remained until the 15<sup>th</sup>. An extremely tame **White-rumped Sandpiper** was found beside the Lake, by the same person and in exactly the same spot as last years bird, on the 13<sup>th</sup> and this bird stayed until the 19<sup>th</sup>. A fall of 200+ **Chiffchaffs**(HC) and 60 **Magpies** (HC). A massive flock of 60 **Choughs** along with 25 **Common Buzzards**, 1 **Carrion Crow** in the Bogs and 4 **Mediterranean Gulls** offshore completed a grand day on the 15<sup>th</sup> but more was to come!



*Photo 6 White-rumped Sandpiper*

The 16<sup>th</sup> saw most folk getting great views of the **White-rumped Sandpiper** at the Lake when news broke of a **Scarlet Tanager** being found at the top of the Lighthouse Road before it relocated to a hedge, way behind the Post Office. One wonders just how many birds are missed in areas like this? Thankfully the bird relocated again the following morning to the Priests Garden and it remained between there and the Waist until last seen on the 21<sup>st</sup>. While looking for the Tanager on the 17<sup>th</sup>, a **Swainsons Thrush** was seen on the beach in South Harbour, feeding on insects on the seaweed before it flew into the Priests Garden and disappeared for a few hours. The full story of what happened is included later in this report but also on the 17<sup>th</sup>, Cape's and Ireland's first **Veery** was found, making this a 4 Yank Day! The Swainsons had gone the following day but the Veery remained for a second day.



*Photo 7 Swainson's Thrush*



*Photo 8 Scarlet Tanager*

The 21<sup>st</sup> saw a new **Cattle Egret** around the Lake area but highly mobile and 2 **Richards Pipits** were seen in fields near the Castle. The Egret stayed until 25<sup>th</sup> and the Pipits stayed another day. A single **Hawfinch** was seen flying over the Lighthouse Road on 25<sup>th</sup>.

The recording effort almost ceased in the month of November as the workload shifted towards getting up to date with all the necessary paperwork! However, there were single **Hen Harriers** on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>, over the Waist and the Fish Farm respectively. There were also single **Sparrowhawks** on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>, with 2 on the 6<sup>th</sup>. Keeping in theme with raptors, a single **Buzzard** was hunting around the Fish farm area on the 5<sup>th</sup>. Single **Yellow-browed Warblers** were recorded near Ciaran Danny Mikes, on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, presumably the same bird.

## Bird Ringing

The table below shows the species totals for the year.

Species Name	New Rings	Subsequent Captures	Grand Total
Storm Petrel	146	4	150
Shag	4		4
Great Black-backed Gull	2	1	3
Herring Gull	6		6
Lesser Black-backed Gull	214	22	236
Arctic Tern	27		27
Rock Dove	2		2
Magpie	1		1
Jackdaw	2		2
Coal Tit	7		7
Blue Tit	40	30	70
Great Tit	39	13	52
Willow Warbler	20	1	21
Chiffchaff	71	9	80
Chiffchaff (Siberian - tristis)	1		1
Yellow-browed Warbler	3	2	5
Sedge Warbler	2		2
Reed Warbler	1	1	2
Blackcap	29	1	30
Lesser Whitethroat	1		1
Whitethroat	3		3
Goldcrest	16	4	20
Wren	44	18	62
Blackbird	16	9	25
Song Thrush	6	1	7
Spotted Flycatcher	1		1
Robin	49	21	70

Stonechat	1		1
House Sparrow	2	1	3
Duncock	23	17	40
Grey Wagtail	2		2
Pied/White Wagtail	3	1	4
Rock Pipit	2		2
Chaffinch	40	2	42
Greenfinch	2		2
Goldfinch	10		10
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>838</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>996</b>

### Recoveries

Aside from the Lesser-Black Backed Gull recoveries which are included in a separate section, there were 4 birds ringed on Cape that were controlled elsewhere and 4 ringed elsewhere that were controlled on Cape!

LJ64226	Blackbird 3M Ringed CCBO 13 Nov 2016 Found freshly dead Austr Liknesvei, Norway 13 Apr 2018
X469326	Sedge Warbler 3J Ringed CCBO 05 Jul 2017 Controlled Loire-Atlantique, France 02 Aug 2017
X469869	Siskin 4M Ringed CCBO 26 Oct 2017 Controlled Coleraine, Co Derry 20 Feb 2018.
2578117	Storm Petrel 4 Ringed CCBO 05 Aug 2017 Controlled Porthgwarra, Cornwall 15 Jul 2018
2578404	Storm Petrel 4 Ringed CCBO 13 Aug 2017 Controlled Bardsey Island, Gwynedd 05 Jul 2018
15205949	Blackcap 2M Ringed Limburg, Belgium 16 Sep 2017 Controlled CCBO 30 Oct 2017
N06708	Storm Petrel 6 Ringed Faro, Portugal 26 Jun 2017 Controlled CCBO 23 Jul 2017
2722979	Storm Petrel 4 Ringed Skokholm, Pembrokeshire 14 Jul 2018 Controlled CCBO 27 Jul 2018
2740371	Storm Petrel 4 Ringed Skokholm, Pembrokeshire 25 Jul 2018 Controlled CCBO 27 Jul 2018

## MAMMALS

In all, a total of 14 species were recorded. The records set out below are from shore based watches – we are awaiting the counts from the Whale and Dolphin boats.

- **Minke Whale** – up to five seen regularly from May to the end of October
- **Fin Whale** – one on October 6<sup>th</sup> and 4 on 31<sup>st</sup> October were the only land based sightings
- **Common Dolphin** – A large pod of 400+ on the 12<sup>th</sup> July were the highest daily count all year but they were recorded regularly throughout. 100+ were seen on 27<sup>th</sup> September and 150+ were seen on 7<sup>th</sup> October.



*Photo 9* Common Dolphin

- **Bottle-nosed Dolphin** – A very poor year for this species, with only two records. 6 were seen on 16<sup>th</sup> August and 5 more on the 12<sup>th</sup> September
- **Risso's Dolphin** – just two records of three on 26<sup>th</sup> August and one on 1<sup>st</sup> September
- **Killer Whale** – Just one single record on 4<sup>th</sup> August
- **Harbour Porpoise** – regular in the bay throughout the year.
- **Grey Seal** – seen throughout the year but never higher than single figures other than from boats.
- **Bats** – Although seen by home owners almost on a daily basis, the records throughout the year are sporadic, with none specifically identified.
- **Otter** – Singles were seen in July and August, none in September and 2 were seen regularly in South Harbour in mid October.

Other species recorded were **Wood Mouse**, **Brown Rat**, **Rabbit** and **Pygmy Shrew**.

## BUTTERFLIES AND MOTHS

18 species of butterfly were recorded this year.

A few moth trapping sessions were undertaken late in the season and the trend showed it to be a very poor year for migrant moths. The list is shown below, in alphabetical order rather than systematic:

Aethes cnicana	1	Hummingbird Hawk-moth	21
Angle Shades	82	Ingrailed Clay	14
Batia lambdella	1	July Highflyer	8
Beautiful Carpet	4	Knot Grass	11
Beautiful Golden Y	1	Large Wainscot	2
Bee Moth	4	Large Yellow Underwing	16
Black Rustic	3	Lead Belle	1
Blastobasis adustella	22	Light Arches	22
Blue-bordered Carpet	3	Light Brown Apple Moth	1
Bramble Shoot Moth	9	Lime-speck Pug	1
Bright-line Brown-eye	97	Lozotaenia forsterana	1
Brimstone Moth	1	Map-winged Swift	5
Broom Moth	9	Marbled Minor agg.	11
Brown Silver-line	7	Marbled White Spot	7
Buff Arches	38	Middle-barred Minor	3
Buff Ermine	79	Monochroa cytisella	1
Buff-tip	14	Monopis crocicapitella	1
Burnished Brass	19	Mother of Pearl	2
Calybites phasianipennella	1	Mottled Beauty	5
Campion	4	Mullein Wave	2
Catoptria pinella	2	Muslin Footman	6
Celypha lacunana	14	Muslin Moth	16
Chevron	2	Narrow-winged Pug	2
Cinnabar	21	Northern Rustic	1
Clay	2	Palpita vitrealis	3
Cloaked Minor	1	Peach Blossom	4
Clouded Border	10	Pearly Underwing	2
Common Emerald	5	Pebble Prominent	2
Common Rustic agg.	20	Peppered Moth	3
Common Wave	3	Pinion-streaked Snout	4
Common White Wave	8	Pod Lover	10
Coxcomb Prominent	3	Poplar Hawk-moth	6
Crambus pascuella	1	Purple Bar	1
Crambus perlella	1	Purple Clay	4
Crescent Dart	16	Pyla fusca	1
Cydia ulicetana	1	Pyrausta despicata	3

Dark Arches	163	Red-line Quaker	2
Dark Spectacle	19	Riband Wave	18
Dark Sword-grass	16	Rose Tortrix	1
Dark-barred Twin-spot Carpet	1	Round-winged Muslin	3
Delicate	1	Ruby Tiger	1
Diamond-back Moth	43	Rush Veneer	12
Dot Moth	21	Rustic	17
Dotted Clay	13	Rusty-dot Pearl	2
Double Square-spot	36	Scalloped Hazel	2
Dusky Brocade	19	Scarce Bordered Straw	1
Early Thorn	2	Scarce Footman	1
Elachista atricomella	6	Silver Y	192
Elephant Hawk-moth	6	Six-spot Burnet	883
Emperor Moth	1	Small Angle Shades	16
Eucosma campoliliana	21	Small Fan-footed Wave	1
Eucosma cana	4	Small Magpie	5
Eudonia angustea	2	Small Square-spot	11
Eudonia mercurella	20	Small Wainscot	2
Flame	113	Smoky Wainscot	12
Flame Shoulder	232	Snout	5
Fox Moth	2	Spectacle	11
Fox Moth caterpillar	101	Spruce Carpet	2
Foxglove Pug	2	Straw Dot	7
Garden Carpet	2	Striped Wainscot	1
Garden Grass-veneer	5	Swallow-tailed Moth	6
Garden Rose Tortrix	1	Sweet Gale Moth	1
Garden Tiger	27	True Lover's Knot	145
Ghost Moth	1	Turnip Moth	20
Gold Swift	2	Udea prunalis 63.034 1390	3
Grass Emerald	14	Uncertain	9
Grey	5	V-Pug	2
Grey Pine Carpet	6	Vapourer	1
Grey Pug	3	White Ermine	25
Heart & Dart	91	White Plume	2
Helcystogramma rufescens	2	White-shouldered House Moth	2
Honeysuckle Moth	2	White-speck	3
		Wormwood Pug	1

## DRAGONFLIES

Six species of dragonfly were recorded in a poor year for them.

## FISH

The three species of fish recorded this year were as follows:

**Basking Shark** – After last years spectacular numbers, not a single record from shore this year. Many may have been missed before recording started in July though.

A single **Shark** was seen in Cape Clear waters on 12<sup>th</sup> September.

A single **Oceanic Sunfish** was seen in Cape Clear waters on 8<sup>th</sup> July.

## OTHER TAXA

**Leatherback Turtle** – A single record of one on 14<sup>th</sup> August from Blannan

**Common Lizard** – Seen throughout the summer.

**Portuguese Man-o-war** – As with the Basking Sharks, after last years record numbers, this year saw only one record on 18<sup>th</sup> October

## NEXT YEARS PLANS.....

2019 is the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Observatory and there are embryonic plans, at this stage, to celebrate the event in style! We are hoping to organise an event similar to the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, with guest speakers, presentations, guided walks, sea-watching, pelagics, ringing demonstrations and much more. The timing has yet to be decided but it is likely to be in the July/August period. More details will be posted in the Wings magazine and on social media when we have any decisions made.

We are planning a new series of events, which will allow participants experience the activities of the Bird Observatory, such as ringing, seawatching and the daily biodiversity monitoring on the island.

BirdWatch Ireland will be running the very successful September course, led as ever by Dick Coombes. These courses have become extremely popular and for good reason. Dick organises the week superbly well and covers every aspect of bird identification, migration and so much more, with the emphasis being on 'fun'. It's a great week and it should be on everyone's 'to do' list.

As mention in the Ringing section, the CES will take place again in East Bog, albeit on a slightly smaller scale. The CES scheme, is a set programme of bird ringing visits to a particular site, once in each of 12 ten day periods between May and August, starting at dawn and finishing at midday, using the same nets in the same place for each visit. It's a lot of effort but great fun! There are a couple of new temporary ringing sites that are planned, to maximise effort in the Islands 'new' wooded areas; two near the Fish Farm and the Sycamores below the Mass Track.

### MARY SQUIRE nee GADE

1933 – 2018



Mary came to Cape in June 1998 to join her partner, Steve, at the Bird Observatory where Steve was Warden. Her late arrival on Cape was to facilitate a pre-booked ringing holiday on her island, Lundy, that had been arranged the year before. Sadly, Steve had to forego that trip to start work at the Observatory in the March.

Her main concern upon landing on Cape was ‘What will I do for a job?’ She need not have worried as there was a list of offers for her to consider – on top of her role helping Steve. Mary chose to help Mary O’Driscoll as a general assistant or Molly Mops as they called each other. This work included cooking, cleaning, ironing, serving and just about anything else you could think of. After her day of Molly Mopping, Mary would return to the Observatory, carrying the clean washing she had carried up, dirty, in the morning, both our own and Observatory sheets, pillow cases, etc. This would all be done without a word of complaint and a smile on her face. As well as all of that, Mary kept the Observatory in a state of cleanliness – she/we could never be accused of being tidy, but it was clean!

Mary always had a great love of the open air and would take every opportunity to go for a walk with Steve and Benson the dog, the Bogs and Wheatear Fields being her favourite sites. She had a keen eye and would often spot birds before anyone else in the group, although she didn't always have the confidence to 'call it'. Her father gave her the love of nature, that Mary passed on to her three children and, indeed, to Steve in their early days together on Lundy, way back in the late 1970's and early 80's.

Lundy and Cape Clear are both very 'social' islands and both frequented by a regular group of birders. Over the years, all of these became firm friends and some of Mary's happiest memories involved evenings in the Lundy Tavern or any of Cape's bars with a collection of birders, a wall of Cinzano (Lundy), Guinness or red wine (Cape) and a great deal of banter. Although Mary could be a little shy at first, she would hold her own in any company, including the Queen Mother, with whom she had afternoon tea on Lundy! She would never be directly rude at anyone but could, and did, quietly cut you dead, if deserved – often without the 'victim' even being aware!

In more recent years, Mary and Steve took over the running of Cotters Bar, with Mary doing virtually all of the cooking. Unbeknown to many, Mary was now in her early eighties and yet still worked her fingers until they were raw, literally on occasions (Thai nights!) and on those nights, she would still be out in the bar afterwork, with the 'naughty girls' contingent, enjoying life to the full. She had a wicked sense of humour that could go above some peoples heads but was enjoyed by most!

When Mary was diagnosed with her cancer, her first reactions were sadness for her children and the fact that she would be losing them. All through those dark days, the long trips up to Cork for chemotherapy, the sick journeys back to Cape, the meeting with the young doctor who told us the chemo hadn't worked and there was nothing more they could do, all through the trip back to Devon to say final goodbyes to all her friends and family and all through the final few hours when Mary knew the end was near, she never once caved in nor felt self-pity. Someone at Mary's funeral said to me that Mary had died with dignity.

Mary did everything with dignity.

Cape Clear Bird Observatory, the Islanders, the Birders and I will miss you, Mary Beth.