



BirdWatch Ireland
birdwatchireland.ie
protecting birds and biodiversity

Annual Report 2019



Welcome

From the **Chairperson**



Chairperson's Report

Our 50th anniversary year began with wonderful words of encouragement and endorsement from our patron, **Uachtarán Micheál D Ó hUiginn**. Our year-long celebrations included reflections on the origins of the organisation, from our humble beginnings to our growth to become Ireland's largest environmental NGO. To mark the occasion, and to also celebrate its 60th year, we hosted a very successful and enjoyable two-week Wildlife Festival from our Bird Observatory on Cape Clear Island. I would like to thank all who contributed to our celebrations and to thank all members and supporters who gave so generously to our 50th Anniversary Appeal, which raised over €40,000.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the term of the current Board was extended well past our usual AGM date in June. Due to the extended term, the Board met on fourteen occasions since the last AGM. I have set out below a schedule of board meetings for the term.

I was delighted to welcome **Conor O'Keeffe** and **Aisling Tallon** to the Board. Together they bring a wealth of experience in business and human resources. As part of our normal board rotation, **Jim Fitzharris** falls due to retire as a Director. Our heartfelt thanks are extended to Jim for his tireless work as a volunteer and for the enormous contribution he has made over many years with his company secretarial expertise.

The day-to-day management of BirdWatch Ireland during 2019 was overseen by our Interim CEO, **Declan O'Sullivan**. I would like to thank Declan for his dedication to the role during his tenure and for his support and advice in transitioning from an interim role to the appointment of **Nicholas P Williams** as our new CEO. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome Nicholas and to wish him all the very best in the role.

Our *Annual Report* sets out the incredible conservation and public awareness work undertaken during the year across Surveys, Research & Monitoring, Species & Land Management, Policy & Advocacy, Reserves, Branches, Media, Education and Publications. Our ongoing work in protecting birds and biodiversity is overseen by the professionalism, expertise and dedication of our staff. I would like to

express sincere thanks on behalf of the Board and our members to our team for their dedication and support.

As my four-year term as Chairperson draws to a close, I would like to reflect on some of the achievements we have made as an organisation over the last number of years. We oversaw changes to our reporting structure and transition from an interim to full-time CEO. We rolled out a detailed IT strategy, including upgrade of our internal computers and servers, our accounting and membership systems and our website, all of which has helped us to grow our membership income by 18% since 2015. We recently implemented the last piece of the current strategy with the 'Time and Attendance' system. We also published our Governance Handbook, which sets out the standards to which we aspire and consolidates key policies and procedures. We also improved our processes to ensure better outcomes for conservation projects. I would like to sincerely thank my colleagues on the Board for their proactive input into Board discussions and decisions over the last number of years.

Finally, to all our members and donors, thank you again for your support.

Gerry Lyons,
Chairperson, BirdWatch Ireland

Attendance at BirdWatch Ireland Board meetings during the latest term.

	28 th Aug 2019	25 th Sept 2019	23 rd Oct 2019	20 th Nov 2019	18 th Dec 2019	13 th Jan 2020	22 nd Jan 2020	19 th Feb 2020	25 th Mar 2020	22 nd Apr 2020	20 th May 2020	24 th Jun 2020	22 nd Jul 2020	26 th Aug 2020	9 th Sep 2020
Catherine Casey	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x
Jim Fitzharris	x	x	x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Gerry Lyons	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Breffi Martin	x	x	x	x		x		x	x	x	x			x	x
Andrew McMillan	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Conor O'Keeffe	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x
Aisling Tallon	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

BirdWatch Ireland Directors in 2019

Gerard Lyons (Chairperson)

Jim Fitzharris (Secretary)

Catherine Casey

James Francis Dowdall (resigned on 15th June 2019)

John Lynch (resigned on 15th June 2019)

Breffi Martin

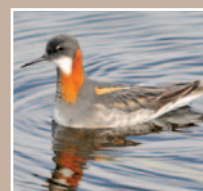
Andrew McMillan

Conor O'Keeffe (appointed on 15th June 2019)

Aisling Tallon (appointed on 15th June 2019)

Stephen Wilson (resigned on 15th June 2019)

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BirdWatch Ireland complies with the Governance
Code for the Community, Voluntary and Charitable
Sector in Ireland.
Registered charity: CHY 5703 / RCN 20008963



COVER
PHOTOGRAPH:
**Red-necked
Phalarope**
by Richard T Mills



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

Annual Report 2019

Surveys, Research & Monitoring

The Irish Garden Bird Survey has been running for 31 years now, and winter 2018/19 had the second-highest level of participation ever, with over 1,600 households across the country taking part. There was a great response to the survey again last year, with lots of media attention. We are very grateful to **Ballymaloe** for their sponsorship of the project in 2019.

In 2019, BirdWatch Ireland took on the role of data manager for the **Irish Rare Breeding Birds Panel**, helping to ensure that records of Ireland's most rare and vulnerable species were properly documented and encouraging birders and the public to submit records. We published a summary of rare breeding bird records from 2017 and 2018 in *Irish Birds*.

The 2019/20 winter marked the 26th season of the **Irish Wetland Bird Survey (I-WeBS)**, funded by the **National Parks and Wildlife Service**. In addition to its nationwide wetland counts, I-WeBS coordinated surveys for **post-breeding tern aggregations** in August-September, and for **Icelandic Greylag** and **Pink-footed Geese** in November, increasing our understanding of species not well accounted for through I-WeBS core count methodology alone. 2019 saw some milestone publications for the project, including the publication of updated waterbird population estimates (*Irish Birds*), which highlighted the declines in many species over the last 25 years. We also published an *Irish Wildlife Manual* (No 106), available online, which provides a fully up-to-date summary of the status and distribution of 72 regularly occurring wintering waterbirds.

The **Countryside Bird Survey (CBS)**, funded by the **National Parks and Wildlife Service**, had its best coverage ever, with 329 squares surveyed during 2019. The project also had a landmark publication, *The status and trends of common and widespread breeding birds 1998-2016 (Irish Wildlife Manuals, No 115)*. Both I-WeBS and CBS benefited from training workshops funded by the **EPA**, held in Athlone, Donegal and Cork, while further workshops in Dublin, Dungarvan and Galway were held in advance of the **8th International Swan Census**, held in January 2020. Our dedicated volunteers are vital to both projects, so, as a way to say 'thank you,' we launched long-service award pin badges during 2019, these badges awarded at 5, 10, 20 and 30 years of participation in I-WeBS, CBS, and other BirdWatch Ireland-coordinated volunteer surveys.

The **Dublin Bay Birds Project (DBBP)**, supported by **Dublin Port Company**, in 2019 was in its 7th year of gathering data on the wintering waterbirds and breeding terns of Dublin Bay. In excess of 600 pairs of **Common and Arctic Terns** nested on four structures in the Dublin Port area in 2019. The colony's success is at least in part due to the management and conservation measures employed by the DBBP team and Dublin Port Company. The team continued to receive valuable observations of colour-ringed terns hatched in Dublin Port – from England, Wales, Spain, Norway, Mauritania, Namibia and Ghana – outside the breeding season. And increasing numbers of colour-ringed terns are being observed in Ireland as the first tern chicks ringed in 2015 have now returned as breeding adults, having reached reproductive maturity.

The **wader colour-ringing** database now holds almost 5,000 observations from over 200 people in countries across the East Atlantic Flyway, including Ireland, Iceland, Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Scotland, England and the Faroe Islands. These observations continue to fill gaps in our knowledge about the movements of Dublin Bay's wintering waders, both within Dublin Bay and when they have left for their breeding grounds. The project's dataset can inform sustainable decision-making processes regarding developments and activities planned for Dublin Bay. The Dublin Bay Birds Project demonstrates how nature and wildlife can benefit when commercial and conservation stakeholders work together.

The most extensive survey of **Nightjar** undertaken to date was carried out in counties Tipperary and Waterford, funded through the **National Biodiversity Action Planning** funding, through the Department of Culture,

Heritage and the Gaeltacht and Tipperary and Waterford County Councils. The objective was to assess the presence of breeding Nightjar by focusing on some of the last known occupied areas, namely in the Galtee Mountains and Knockmealdown Mountains. Although Nightjars were not recorded in any of the survey squares, the presence of two 'churring' males in suitable nesting habitat in the Ballyhouras was confirmed, providing evidence that the species still breeds in Ireland.

A survey of the breeding birds of Carrownagappul Bog was undertaken in association with Galway County Council through funding from the **National Biodiversity Action Planning** funds, which is informing management and education works at this site.

Research into the interactions of **Barn Owls** with major roads and the effects they have on them – a collaboration between **Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII)** and BirdWatch Ireland – reached its conclusion in 2019. This innovative research project has provided new insights on the behavioural response of Barn Owls to major roads and the factors that influence the risk of collision with vehicles; the findings are being used to design and develop mitigation measures to reduce the incidence of Barn Owl mortality on roads.

In 2019, **Supporting Hen Harriers in Novel Environments (SHINE)** continued into its third and final year. This project is coordinated by **University College Cork**, with BirdWatch Ireland as a partner, with funding from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, with four peer-reviewed publications produced to date, adding to our understanding of Hen Harrier ecology and conservation requirements in Ireland. **Dublin Zoo** has supported our raptor monitoring, conservation and education work on an ongoing basis, including work on **Kestrels**, **Long-eared Owls** and **Barn Owls**.

2019 was another busy year for **Swift-related** projects, with full county surveys taking place in counties Sligo, Meath and Wicklow. The surveys were supported with funding from the local authorities and the **National Biodiversity Action Plan** fund. Our long-running **OPW Swift Project** continued, with OPW sites being surveyed in counties Galway, Mayo, Meath and Cork. We also delivered a training programme for OPW staff at a selection of heritage sites holding breeding Swift populations. 2019 also saw the *Saving Swifts* guide published in collaboration with local authority Heritage Officers from across the country.

With funding from the Department of Agriculture and in partnership with the National Biodiversity Data Centre, we coordinated the **Breeding Lapwing Survey 2019**, collecting records from around the country.

Our annual biodiversity events programme, run in conjunction with the OPW Phoenix Park Visitor Centre, was extended further in 2019, with demand and attendance up, year on year. All events were well attended, with the bat evenings being the highlight of the programme. We were also invited to host talks and walks at the first Phoenix Park Biodiversity Festival, run in conjunction with the annual honey show – a wonderful day of celebration.

A number of smaller events were organised during the year, including the Cabragh Wetlands Wild Child Day as part of Heritage Week. We also did a number of birdsong workshops with service users at the National Council for the Blind Ireland, in partnership with the Heritage Council; these were very well received by service users and is a programme we hope to build on in the future.



Swift

STEPHEN LAWLOR

Species & Land Management

In 2019, the Species & Land Management Division continued to deliver critical conservation management work on the ground for priority red-listed species, including **Curlew** and **Lapwing**, both Near Threatened (Globally), as categorised by the IUCN; and **Roseate Tern**, **Little Tern** and **Corncrake**, all Annex 1 species under the EU Birds Directive. We delivered this work across our reserves and by working with farmers on private farmland.

Our reserves

Late October 2019 saw us celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Wexford Wildfowl Reserve, which we established in collaboration with the National Parks and Wildlife Service. The reserve and other sloblands on the north and south sides of Wexford Harbour are internationally important for our logo species, the **Greenland White-fronted Goose**, around 7,500 of which were present during the annual spring count in 2019. The ongoing management of the reserve focuses on providing undisturbed feeding grounds for these and other wintering geese and swans.

Although several of our reserves burst into life with the arrival of wintering waterfowl – for example, Wexford Wildfowl Reserve, East Coast Nature Reserve, Rogerstown Estuary Reserve, our reserves in the Shannon Callows, etc – others are most important in summer, for their breeding birds. We have very important seabird colonies on our offshore uninhabited islands, such as the **Gannet** colony on Little Skellig and the **European Storm-petrel** colony on Illaunmaistir.

During 2019, we added a new breeding seabird reserve to our reserves portfolio when we became the legal owners of **Umfin Island**, off Derrybeg, Co Donegal, an island that holds an important colony of breeding gulls.

Breeding waders are increasingly recognised as being species in trouble. During the 2019 summer, a survey of breeding waders on coastal grasslands in counties Mayo and Galway found that their populations had declined by over 60% in the last 10 years. However, in contrast, their numbers at our Annagh Marsh reserve increased, with a total of 34 pairs being recorded by the survey. Of these, 17 pairs were of **Lapwings**, which successfully reared at least 31 chicks to the flying stage, while a pair of **Redshanks** reared two chicks to the flying stage. The other 15 pairs were **Snipes**, based on the maximum count of drumming male Snipes recorded. The number of breeding male **Red-necked Phalaropes** at the marsh increased to three, with at least two of these noted with chicks in July; this was the highest total for some 50 years. At our Sheskinmore Reserve, some 10 pairs of breeding **Lapwings** failed to produce any flying young. Badgers proved to be the main predator there and, despite a lot of effort trying to stop them, they continued digging underneath the predator exclusion fence and impacting on the birds. At our Rogerstown Estuary Reserve, the numbers of breeding **Lapwings** were down on previous years, but some chicks managed to reach the flying stage, and a pair at our East Coast Nature Reserve were successful. Also at this increasingly popular reserve, at least one pair of **Great Spotted Woodpeckers** and increasing numbers of **Reed Warblers**, both recent colonists, bred successfully.

Breeding **Corncrakes** were recorded again at our Termoncarragh Meadows Reserve, with at least two males holding territories within the meadows between early May and late June. These meadows, and our Annagh Marsh Reserve nearby, are becoming increasingly noted for holding the largest populations presently known for the endangered **Great Yellow Bumblebee**. This was confirmed through



BRIAN BURKE

Roseate Tern at Rockabill Island, Co Dublin.

a study investigating the ecology of this bumblebee in Ireland, focusing on the Mullet peninsula and carried out by University College Dublin during the summer.

Showcasing our reserves and the array of wildlife they support is important to us and, in collaboration with Wicklow County Council, we held monthly public events at our East Coast Nature Reserve through the **Connecting People and Nature in Wicklow 2019** programme; all events were well attended and each focused on different aspects. Equally important was the contribution of volunteers to our reserve work, with regular work parties being held at some of our reserves. For example, at East Coast Nature Reserve, there was a weekly programme of maintaining and upgrading the infrastructure and habitats; at Rogerstown Estuary Reserve there was regular manning of the hides, and the access to the north hide was upgraded; at Kilcolman Nature Reserve there was a monthly programme of clearing vegetation and maintaining the infrastructure; and at Harper's Island Wetland Reserve (owned by Cork County Council and being developed in partnership with BirdWatch Ireland, the Cork Branch and Glounthaune community groups) regular volunteers assisted with the construction of a second hide and access trails as part of the 2019 works programme.

Conservation Across Borders for Biodiversity (CABB)

The overall objective of the Conservation Across Borders for Biodiversity (CABB) project is to bring about the recovery of breeding waders, **Marsh Fritillary** butterfly and peatlands at key sites in Northern Ireland, Scotland and the border counties. Seven partners are working on a cross-border basis to achieve this.

Ongoing management with farmers with **Curlews** at key sites in Donegal and Leitrim proved successful, with two fledged chicks for the first time in 10 years from one pair in Inishowen and fledged chicks for a second successive year from a pair at Lough Melvin. Reed clearance was undertaken on the BirdWatch Ireland land at Sheskinmore Nature Reserve, with the aim of encouraging **Lapwings** to nest again on the reserve after an absence of at least twenty years.

Twenty sites in counties Donegal and Sligo were again surveyed for breeding waders. A total of 366 breeding pairs were found,

including 164 pairs of **Lapwings**, 37 pairs of **Snipes**, 36 pairs of **Redshanks** and five pairs of **Dunlins**. Tory again held the highest number, at 151 pairs, and is likely to be the most important breeding wader site in Ireland. The second and third most important sites were the CABB-maintained predator fenced sites of Magheragallon and Rinmore, which together held 75 pairs. Rinmore was the most important site for **Lapwing**, supporting 36 pairs, or 7% of the Irish population. At Sheskinmore, as previously mentioned, badgers continued to impact **Lapwing** breeding success: no chicks fledged in 2019. Ongoing advice on habitat management is given to the farmers at these sites by the project.

Twelve of the above sites were surveyed for **Marsh Fritillary** butterfly, an Annex II species, in September and October. Five sites had suitable habitat, and larval webs were found at three sites, with Marsh Fritillary known to be present at a fourth site from previous work.

At Fiddandarry, Co Sligo, plans for blocking drains on 400 ha of blanket bog continued, with baseline monitoring of vegetation, water levels and flow rates undertaken. The drain-blocking work is planned for 2020, with the aim of blocking 22km of drains with peat dams mainly; this will be the first major drain-blocking project of blanket bog in Ireland.

The preparation of Conservation Action Plans for four sites in Donegal, including Lough Nilan and Pettigo Plateau Nature Reserve SPAs, is ongoing.

The Irish Breeding Curlew EIP

The full complement of project staff – consisting of the project manager, two Curlew keepers, one full-time ecologist and one seasonal ecologist – were in post by May 2019. Seventeen “possibly breeding” pairs of **Curlews** were recorded in the Lough Corrib and south Leitrim study areas. Twelve pairs hatched chicks and it is considered that eight chicks fledged. Background predator populations were high in both areas.

The Curlew Habitat and Conservation Keeping Schemes were initiated. Applications to the schemes were shortlisted and individual farm plans drawn up. A Local Advisory Group meeting, made up of key local stakeholders, was held in March 2019 and the project was publicised widely.

Corncrakes

Breeding **Corncrake** territories in east Donegal decreased to 17 in 2019, down from 21 the previous year. The season was generally cool, excluding the end of April. Corncrakes appeared to call infrequently, making them difficult to locate, and some habitat was lost due to early mowing in May. Malin Head, Fanad Head and Dunfanaghy each recorded four pairs, but all experienced significant losses. Two pairs were recorded at Downings for the first time in recent years.

Successful community engagement was delivered through local agricultural shows and the live RTÉ Radio 1 dawn chorus broadcast from Tory Island in May. The **2019 NPWS National Corncrake Census** recorded 163 breeding attempts.

Seabirds

Kilcoole Little Tern Project

This year was the 35th season in our conservation management efforts for **Little Terns** at Kilcoole, Co Wicklow. The site remains the Irish flagship for this species and is consistently the largest and most productive colony in the country. In 2019, we had 162 pairs

Cape Clear Bird Observatory

2019 was the 60th anniversary of the Bird Observatory and, to celebrate that milestone, a very successful Wildlife Festival was held on Cape Clear Island in the first two weeks of September. Guided wildlife walks, bird ringing demonstrations, whale-watching, family wildlife days, moth trapping, dragonfly recording and many excellent talks were just some of the highlights of the festival.

Some of the bird highlights of the year included a Cape first, **Red Kite**, an American passerine, **Red-eyed Vireo**, and a **Hume's Leaf Warbler**.

making 294 nesting attempts. The first chicks hatched on June 9th. Hedgehogs and Rooks proved to be the most serious predators and between them accounted for the loss of around 100 nests, mostly with eggs. Many of these re-laid and, overall, 283 chicks hatched, with an estimated average of 1.21 young per pair; very similar to 2018. We colour-ringed 139 chicks; thirty-six were subsequently seen at Portrane, Co Dublin, and at several other sites between there and the Boyne, while four were recorded at Gronant, North Wales. One four-year-old and three five-year-old adults ringed as chicks at the site were sighted this year; in 2020 we hope to improve the sighting rate using novel methods.

Roseate Tern EU LIFE Project

This EU-funded project supports our tern colony management and monitoring at Rockabill and the Dalkey Islands (both County Dublin). Rockabill is the premier site for **Roseate Terns** in Europe. In 2019, it supported a record 1,564 breeding pairs, with 1.07 chicks fledged per pair, up for the second year in a row. **Common Terns** numbered 1,833 pairs and also had a productive year, raising 1.03 young per pair. **Arctic Terns** continued to perform poorly, usually attempting to nest on the exposed fringes of the Rock and on the Bill, where their eggs are usually depredated by large gulls. Nineteen pairs of Arctic Terns did nest on the Rock and some young were fledged. The Dalkey Islands support a much smaller colony of terns: in 2019, 29 pairs of **Arctic Terns** nested and fledged 20 young from the sub-colonies on Lamb Island (13) and the main island (7). Young raised on the latter was a milestone ‘first’ for Dalkey. We ran the very popular Tern Watch each Tuesday in July, as well as guided walks on the island. Non-native Brown Rats have been limiting the productivity of the terns, but this year their impact was greatly reduced thanks to work to remove them as part of the EU LIFE Project. The work of the project is also supported by the National Parks and Wildlife Service and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council.

MarPAMM

In 2019, the MarPAMM team were active on both the north Irish Sea and west coasts, monitoring occupancy and productivity of a range of species including cliff-nesting **Kittiwakes**, **Fulmars**, **auks**, **large gulls** and **petrels**. Engraved colour rings were fitted to large gulls and **Great Skuas** in Donegal and Sligo and geolocators (light-level loggers) were used on **Kittiwakes** and **Fulmars** to examine long-term movements over the 2019/20 winter. We also deployed GPS units on foraging **Kittiwakes** in the north Irish Sea and on **Herring** and **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** in Sligo and Donegal.

Advocacy & Policy: Defending our Birds and their Habitats

2019 saw international scientists state that one million species globally are threatened with extinction. Coupled with the climate crisis, the Dáil then declared a biodiversity and climate emergency on May 9th and agreed to establish a Citizens' Assembly to address biodiversity loss. Wild birds don't have a vote, but people do. Positioning the need to safeguard wild bird populations in the eyes and ears of voters was key in 2019 as local and European elections were taking place and a national election was looming. In preparation, staff met with the various political party representatives and went to hustings around the country, asking prospective MEPs what their number one action would be for nature in Ireland. Branch committees sent their 'asks' to prospective local councillors and some got significantly increased exposure for their work. We also analysed the manifestos of the different political parties and our results graphics got a lot of traction online.

BirdWatch Ireland branches were asked what their top five concerns were for nature in their counties, and in 2019 we wrote up a report outlining these. The number one concern by a good margin was the effects of the intensification of agriculture on birds and habitats. We share these concerns, and in 2020 staff were nominated to represent NGOs at the CAP Consultative Committee set up by the Department of Agriculture as negotiations on the next Common Agriculture Policy started in earnest. We investigated loss of an important breeding site for **Lapwings** in Donegal, due to agricultural activities, and raised our concerns with government, but we are still awaiting a satisfactory outcome. In October 2020, BirdWatch Ireland hosted a successful meeting of NGO representatives on the biodiversity, water and climate issues as they relate to agriculture.

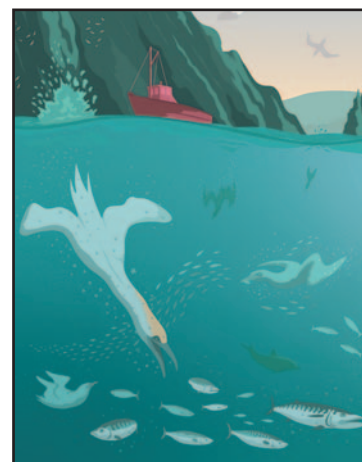


BIRDWATCH IRELAND

Representatives of BirdLife International partner organisations from across Europe at our three-day meeting in Clontarf, Dublin, in 2019.

Seabirds need a healthy marine ecosystem, and fish stocks are a critical part of that. Last year was a critical year in our fisheries policy work as it marked the deadline to end the practice of discarding fish at sea; it was also the last time fishing limits would be negotiated before the Common Fisheries Policies deadline to end overfishing by 2020. We worked with partners, nationally and internationally, to lobby the European Commission and the government in the build-up to important fisheries negotiations, and, through advisory councils, we worked with the fishing industry to try to identify and implement new measures to protect marine wildlife.

Disappointingly, the government missed the deadline to end overfishing, something we have criticised heavily in the media, but we successfully advocated for the introduction of new fishing gear to decrease bycatches of overfished stocks in several important fisheries. In addition, through our diplomatic efforts, we helped to secure unprecedented access for environmental NGOs in fisheries negotiations where previously doors were closed.



JACEK MATYSIAK

Forestry remained a key advocacy issue for us due to our concerns about where afforestation takes place, the model of forestry used and ongoing problems with the environmental safeguards that are implemented. Unfortunately, commercial forestry in its current form is not compatible with the conservation of threatened birds of farmland and upland habitats. Through our engagement with the sector, community groups and the government we proposed a range of changes to the current afforestation policies and forestry practices which we believe would greatly improve the sustainability of the sector moving forward. These were captured in our *Greening Irish Forestry* report.

We made several submissions to public consultations and on planning applications that would negatively impact bird populations as well as important sites for birds. The development of greenways and wind farms in inappropriate locations continued to be worrying. Several of our submissions resulted in successful outcomes for **Hen Harrier**, **Curlew** and water-bird populations.

Top five concerns of BirdWatch Ireland branches in relation to nature in their counties

1	Impacts on birds and habitats of intensification of agriculture in farmland
2	The deteriorating quality of hedgerows as habitat for birds and other wildlife due to inappropriate management, illegal cutting and removal
3	Lack of protection/management for specific SPAs and SACs, and lack of assessment of impacts to Natura 2000 sites
4	Apathy and failure of State bodies to enforce laws protecting nature
5	Failure to protect bogs, including raised bogs, blanket bogs, burning, turf cutting

Staff are also representatives on the National Economic and Social Council and the government's Brexit Stakeholder Forum and continue to work closely with the Environmental Pillar, Stop Climate Chaos and the Sustainable Water Network, collaborating on actions they have in common that support ecosystems and their wildlife. Staff also participated in a government committee looking at issues surrounding conflict with gulls in urban settings and the need to meet EU law requirements to protect birds.

We were honoured to host an important three-day meeting of the BirdLife Europe partnership in Clontarf, Dublin, and enjoyed a wonderful outing to Bull Island, all with the partial support of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. We worked on our submission to the EU Biodiversity Strategy and most of our 'asks' were taken on board in the 2020 publication of same.

Media, Social Media and Publications

BirdWatch Ireland's media profile continued to grow in 2019, with frequent coverage in particular on *Mooney Goes Wild* on RTÉ Radio 1, *The Hard Shoulder* on Newstalk, and the *Today* show, *Nationwide* and *Ear to the Ground* on RTÉ television.

We played a prominent role in RTÉ's week-long series of *Big Week on the Farm: Harvest* live television broadcasts in September, attracting more than 350,000 viewers, with special focus on our tern conservation work on Rockabill Island, which was visible behind the set throughout the programme. We also played a major role in RTÉ Radio 1's *International Dawn Chorus* in May, a seven-hour live broadcast transmitted in over 30 countries.

In total, the organisation was featured in print and broadcast media on a record 1,157 occasions during the year.

May 2019 saw the launch of the new **BirdWatch Ireland website**, our first online upgrade since 2007. The new site includes a completely redesigned online shop and, for the first time, an online membership portal to allow members to track and control their own membership payments and donations, as well as to access PDF versions of our membership publications.

By year's end, 26,757 people were receiving our monthly *eWings* e-zine. Our social media presence increased to a total of 30,585 page 'likes' on Facebook and 26,533 followers on Twitter; an increase of 5,557 and 6,699 respectively since 2018.

Our extensive range of publications includes *Wings*, *Bird Detectives*, *Irish Birds*, *eWings*, *I-WeBS News* and *CBS News*. We also publish a sales catalogue and a calendar and run several project blogs.

Building & Supporting Our Networks: Branches, Members & the Public

BirdWatch Ireland branch volunteers and staff together hosted more than 450 free public events during 2019, with a range of activities taking place in every county.

Our showcase event once again was **Bloom**, Ireland's largest garden and food event, which attracted over 120,000 people over five days. Other key public engagement efforts included **Heritage Week**, **Science Week** and **Biodiversity Week** events, the **Dublin Horse Show** and Dublin City Council's **Rose Festival**. A range of family events were also run on behalf of the Office of Public Works.

2019 saw the continuation of our 12-month-long celebration of the 50th anniversary of the founding of BirdWatch Ireland, then known as the Irish Wildbird Conservancy, which commenced in November 2018.

Key branch initiatives during the year included, amongst many others, **bird races** in counties Cork, Dublin and Wicklow, our West Cork Branch's **Swift Survey**, our Westmeath Branch's **Swift nest box scheme** for schools, our Cork Branch's annual '**Know Your Nature**' **Primary Schools Quiz** and our South Dublin Branch's summer public tern viewing evenings in Dalkey.

Many BirdWatch Ireland branches undertook vital work on **Swift conservation**, providing much-needed assistance to and public awareness of this vulnerable migratory species.

Our membership base continues to provide much-needed support



MARY DUKKIN

Pat Durkin leads a walk at Kilkeny Castle to watch Swifts in July 2019.

for the organisation. By the end of the year the organisation had approximately 6,900 membership subscriptions.

In October, we launched our **Farmland Bird Appeal**, seeking financial support for the conservation of this most vulnerable group of birds. We would like to thank all of our members for their contributions through their subscriptions, donations and shop purchases and for their ongoing support for our work.

Education and Raising Awareness

2019 saw the beginning of our new **Seeing the World through Nature** Erasmus+-funded project, run in conjunction with our fellow BirdLife International partners in Poland, Malta and Cyprus. This project will run until March 2022, and its aim is to develop environmental educational resources for teachers who work with blind and visually impaired children, in consultation with international experts in this field. These resources, as well as a mobile application to assist with the recognition of birdsong, will then be made available free of charge across the BirdLife International partnership.

One of the most significant features of the new BirdWatch Ireland website is its **dedicated education section**, which gathers into one central hub all of our organisation's educational resources. We would encourage you please to visit this at <https://birdwatchireland.ie/our-work/fun-learning> and to spread the word about it.

Over 4,000 records were submitted to **Spring Alive**, our migration monitoring project for children and families. Special Spring Alive training was also provided to 75 teachers, with the support of Dublin Zoo.

The **Go Wild in Galway Festival** ran for its fourth year, in collaboration with the Vincent Wildlife Trust, GMIT, the NEAR Health Project at NUI Galway, and Friends of Merlin Woods, with funding from the Heritage Council and the Irish Environmental Network.

For the third year our **Go Wild Nature Camps** were held in County Galway during Heritage Week, in collaboration with the Vincent Wildlife Trust, GMIT, the NEAR Health Project at NUI Galway and local community groups, with the support of Galway County Council and the Heritage Council. Also in 2019, we launched the **Galway Biodiversity Maps** (www.galwaycity.ie/galwaybiodiversitywalks) to showcase the green spaces in and around Galway city, developed in association with Galway City Council through the European Green Leaf award.

Summary of Accounts 2019

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

The details given below are a summary of accounts for BirdWatch Ireland and BWI Retail and Services Limited in 2019. A full set of accounts for the year ended 31st December 2019 is available from BirdWatch Ireland on request.

	2019 €	2018 €
Income		
Membership subscriptions	264,001	222,888
Donations & bequests	120,182	264,004
Grants	67,324	104,195
Development & events	12,498	4,154
Other income	36,876	68,585
Advertising income	14,030	7,380
Conservation projects	1,157,215	1,387,562
Investment income	147	10
Total	1,672,273	2,058,778

Expenditure		
Conservation project costs	(1,384,832)	(1,643,399)
Administration expenses	(578,100)	(255,675)
Total	(1,962,932)	(1,899,074)

Net (deficit) / surplus for year	(290,659)	159,704
Total funds brought forward	1,957,206	1,797,502
Total funds carried forward	1,666,547	1,957,206
Revaluation reserve	120,000	120,000
	1,786,547	2,077,206

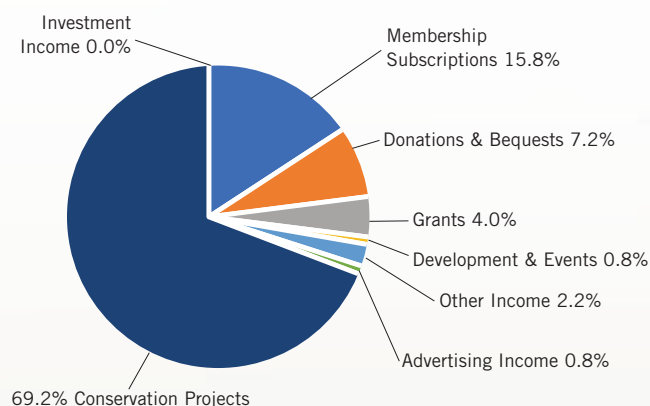
Represented by:		
Non-current assets	3,066,115	2,963,914
Net current (liabilities) / assets	(427,759)	20,471
Other creditors	(851,809)	(907,179)
Total	1,786,547	2,077,206

BWI Retail and Services Limited

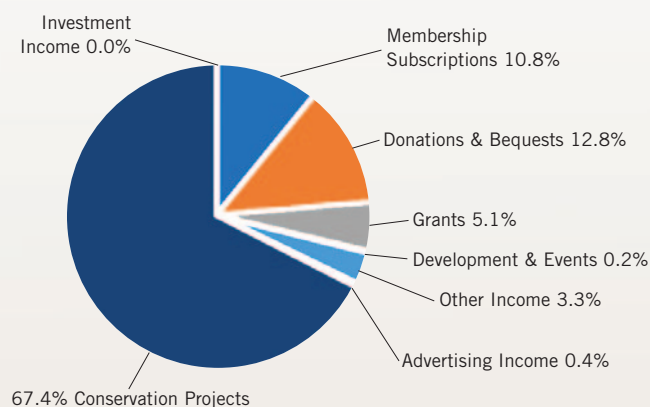
Turnover	128,474	132,419
Cost of sales	(79,636)	(77,577)
Gross profit	48,838	54,842
Administrative expenses	(48,398)	(54,320)
Interest payable	(161)	(192)
Profit before taxation	279	330
Tax on profit	(35)	(156)
Profit after taxation	244	174
Total funds brought forward	1,190	1,016
Total funds carried forward	1,434	1,190

Represented by:		
Fixed assets	744	936
Net current assets / (liabilities)	690	254
Total	1,434	1,190

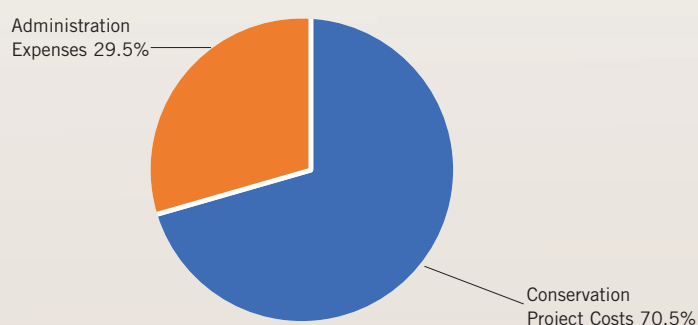
INCOME 2019



INCOME 2018



EXPENDITURE 2019



EXPENDITURE 2018

