I-WeBS News I-WeBS

The Newsletter of the Irish Wetland Bird Survey

Issue 25 August 2021



A hopeful year ahead

elcome to the twenty-eighth season of the Irish Wetland Bird Survey. Thank you to all observers for your patience and dedication to I-WeBS last season. I am happy to report that it was not a total loss, because so many sites were surveyed when the regulations allowed. So, fortunately, season 27 will not be a complete blank spot in the database. Let me begin by welcoming our newest team member; John Kennedy. As one of the Scientific Officers on the team, he has already jumped in with both feet and has been invaluable for developing the database side of the new online system. Speaking of which, the uptake of the new online system has been better than expected (hear about it from John on page 3). We are overjoyed about this as it helps to streamline many aspects of the survey.

Also, inside this issue of *I-WeBS News*, read about how to help increase count cover in your county on page 4; perhaps take inspiration from the success of a community-led project at Harper's Island Wetlands nature reserve in Cork (page 5); and find out about our highest priority wintering waterbirds now on the Irish Red list (page 6). Adding some mystery to the mix, discover how we are still quite in the dark when it comes to Shelduck moult migration (page 7). The back page (page 8) contains the scheduled count dates for this season's I-WeBS, and a link to some new online training tools.

We will continue to keep a close watch on how events unfold this coming season and we will be sure to update you, where relevant. If you are apprehensive or have any concerns about the season ahead, please do not hesitate to reach out to me at any time. Stay safe and happy counting!

Contents

- 2 Goose and swan news
- 3 New online I-WeBS form
- Gaps to fill in count coverage 4
- 5 Site Focus: Harper's Island, Cork
- 6 Ireland's Red-listed waterbirds
- 7 Shelduck: the migration mystery
- 8 I-WeBS dates and information

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An tSeirbhís Páirceanna Náisiúnt tional Parks and Wildlife Service



Shades of grey

The origins of many of our new feral Greylag flocks is unclear

By Brian Burke (I-WeBS Office)



Over the last few years, we have been trying to improve our knowledge of Ireland's **Greylag Goose** populations, both the migratory Icelandic birds and the resident 'feral' flocks. We are eager to receive records of Greylag Geese, particularly counts from the summer months which fall outside of I-WeBS core counts, so please keep a close eye on your local flocks and send us any counts you can!

We have a pretty good handle on the preferred locations of our Icelandic migrants, at sites in Donegal, Louth, Dublin (irregularly), Wicklow and Waterford/Kilkenny. Our resident or feral Greylag Geese, however, occur across a much larger part of the country and they seem to be thriving. During the time of the 1986 census,¹ only two flocks of feral birds were documented on the island of Ireland: 527 feral Greylags at Strangford Lough (Down, Northern Ireland) and seven at Annamoe in Wicklow, with some uncertainty around 22 birds at Tacumshin in Wexford. By the time of the 1988-91 Breeding Bird Atlas² there were additional breeding birds in north Cork and further south at Inishcarra near Cork city. The 2007-11 Bird Atlas³ found Greylag Geese in 10% of Irish 10-km squares during the breeding season, a range increase of 326% in twenty years.

A census in the 2007/2008 season⁴ estimated a population of 1,711 feral Greylag Geese in the Republic of Ireland, and we suspect that in more recent years the figure has reached twice that amount. Since the 2007/2008 census ten new flocks have appeared across



Recorded distribution of Greylag Geese from the Icelandic population (yellow), feral resident population (red), a mix of both populations (green) and short-staying birds of unknown origin (blue) from 2017/18 to 2019/20



Greylag Goose Richard T Mills

the country, four of which already number >100 individuals. The origins of these new flocks are likely to be expansion of, or breakaways from, existing nearby flocks, new releases by gun clubs in certain areas and, though perhaps unlikely, we cannot exclude the possibility of expansion from further afield.

Recent research in the UK has indicated that resident Greylags may not be as sedentary as previously assumed,⁵ particularly where they occur in mainland Britain (as opposed to on islands) and where there is a high density of suitable habitat in a particular region.

We have many records of short-staying individuals or small groups of Greylags in the I-WeBS database, in counties where they aren't regularly seen, and it is increasingly difficult to decide whether these are migrants that have taken a detour or residents that are exploring areas beyond their previous horizons.

What are the conservation implications to this expansion? Should we welcome what is seemingly the filling of an unoccupied ecological niche in Ireland? Is there potential for other species to benefit where there are conservation efforts directed towards Greylags by gun clubs around the country? Or is there potential for breeding Greylags to negatively impact rarer breeding waterbirds on some of our key lakes? Is there a risk that negative attitudes from landowners towards large flocks of these birds could transfer to less controversial species of higher conservation priority such as **White-fronted Geese** or **Whooper Swans**?

There's no easy answer to any of those questions, but the only way we can begin to answer them is with data. So, please try and count your local Greylag Goose flock (even better if it's before the Icelandic birds arrive in September), and be sure to send us your counts via the online form at www.bit.ly/greylag-counts.

References

1 Merne, OJ (1986). Greylag Geese in Ireland, March 1986. Irish Birds 3, 207-214.

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3 Balmer, DE, Gillings, S, Caffrey, BJ, Swann, RL, Downie, IS, and Fuller, RJ (2013). *Bird Atlas 2007-2011: the breeding and wintering birds of Britain and Ireland.* BTO Books, Thetford.

4 Boland, H, and Crowe, O (2008). An assessment of the distribution range of Greylag Goose (Icelandic-breeding and feral populations) in Ireland. Unpublished report. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Environment Agency Northern Ireland and BirdWatch Ireland, Wicklow.

5 Brides, K, Wood, KA, Petrek, S.W, Cooper, J, Christmas, SE, Middleton, J, Leighton, K, and Grogan, A (2019). Moult migration, site fidelity and survival of British Greylag Geese *Anser anser* at Windermere, Cumbria. *Ringing & Migration* **34(2)**, 84-94.

Results of International Swan Census 2020

The full results of the **8th International Swan Census** in Ireland, carried out in January 2020, were published in this year's *Irish Birds* journal. The results at flyway-level for **Whooper Swans** in the census are expected to be published in the journal *Wildfowl* in the near future. Many thanks to the record number of surveyors who took part in the census in Ireland, covering more locations than ever, and documenting a significant increase in our Whooper Swan population.

Burke, B, McElwaine, JG, Fitzgerald, N, Kelly, SBA, McCulloch, N, Walsh, AJ and Lewis, LJ (2021). Population size, breeding success and habitat use of Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* and Bewick's Swan *Cygnus columbianus bewickii* in Ireland: results of the 2020 International Swan Census. *Irish Birds* **43**, 57-70.

Gathering your data

New improved form will help us put your valuable data to work

By John Kennedy (I-WeBS Office)



Over the last twenty years, I have found volunteering on **BirdWatch Ireland** surveys to be a great way to keep in touch with the real world as I pursued a career in IT. In December 2020, both of these paths merged into one...

and so it is now my pleasure to introduce myself as a Scientific Officer on the I-WeBS team, one with particular responsibility for managing the data being gathered by the project.

I-WeBS has gathered a tremendous amount of data since its launch in 1994. With the 28th season about to begin, the I-WeBS database now contains detailed records from nearly 80,000 survey visits, by over 1,100 counters, at over 1,500 subsites around the country. Almost 700,000 counts of 174 species have been gathered. These numbers do not include the data for the most recent season - these are currently being compiled and processed.



Data comes to the I-WeBS team in a variety of ways, each having to be handled differently. For example, any paper forms received are manually transcribed into a digital format. We are very pleased to see the uptake in the use of the new online system since it launched last year. Thank you to those who are currently submitting their survey results online.

If you have not done so already, why not consider switching to paperless submission this season? Receiving survey results in this way saves the I-WeBS team a significant amount of time in pre-processing the data, and it allows us more easily to validate the counts that come into us, before loading them onto the I-WeBS database.

The data are carefully validated before being loaded onto the database. Over 90 automated rules now screen for possible



Brian Burk

Adding important context: high levels of disturbance on the day of the count

inconsistencies, such as invalid dates; unknown species codes; or unusually high counts for a given species. Possible discrepancies are flagged for the team to review as part of the validation process. Loading only happens after the team is entirely satisfied with the rigour and integrity of the data.

When submitting your counts, all of the detail that you can provide on your forms is of value to us. Answers to questions such as overall "Count Accuracy," and speciesspecific "Count Quality," provide very helpful clarifications on the numbers recorded.

If a count has an overall Count Accuracy of "Low," this indicates that unusually low numbers might be related to inability to cover the whole subsite; poor visibility on the day; or high levels of disturbance encountered.

Similarly, the species-specific Count Quality confirms if the quantity is an estimate; a known underestimate; or if the species was definitely present but was not counted, for some reason. All of this detail

adds valuable context and insight to the fluctuation in numbers recorded at your site.

These recent improvements to the online form, data validation and loading processes are helping deliver scientific repeatability, and demonstrate the robustness of the historical data, and they are also reducing the amount of manual, time-consuming data-processing steps required.

As these processes become more streamlined, the I-WeBS team will be able to spend more time supporting your datagathering in the field, and more time on data exploration and analysis. This includes facilitating other research - national and international - to better understand the trends in wetland bird populations, and the drivers for these trends, and to help inform new policies and corrective actions to tackle those trends that are not going in the right direction.

Thank you for your support of our ongoing transition from paper to online forms. We will continue to enhance these systems over time to make them as efficient as possible, and to put your valuable data to work.

Gulls			
Where species were present I	but not counted, pleas	se indicate in 'Quality' Count Quality	
Black-headed Gull - BH	60	Known underestimate	~
Common Gull - CM		Okay Estimate	
Lesser Black-backed Gull - LB		Known underestimate	
		Present, but not counted	
11 1 0 11 110			

Clarifying a species count: a known underestimate

Help us cover our bases

Are we missing some important wetland sites we could cover?

By Niamh Fitzgerald (National Organiser, I-WeBS Office)



In an average year, we achieve good count coverage of a wide range of the most important wetland sites across the country. However, there are always some sites that are not surveyed, leaving

some gaps in our knowledge. This coming winter, we're hoping *you* might be able to help us achieve a greater level of I-WeBS coverage and to plug some of those gaps!

The more sites, or subsites, that we count, the more accurate a picture we get of how our waterbirds are faring. Many of the blue and green dots shown on the coverage map below represent our top sites – designated sites and those with significant waterbird numbers – which are covered consistently. It is critically important for the sake of data integrity that such key areas are surveyed on a regular basis, as they hold highly significant portions of our waterbird populations. However, to generate more accurate estimates and trends, the number of sites (of all shapes and sizes) that we include is also very important, as well as the consistency with which we count them.

The more sites we cover, the less likely we will be to miss important species. For example, a lone **Bewick's Swan** turned up on a small, unassuming grassland site during last year's **International Swan Census** and, had it not been for it being the year of the swan census, this important record might well have been lost forever.

There are **gaps in count coverage** right across the country (shown as red squares in the map below), but notable clusters exist in counties Cavan, Sligo, Leitrim, Donegal, Galway and Kerry. Many of these gaps exist in areas with scattered small wetland sites with low numbers (or a low diversity) of



I-WeBS site coverage map: 2020-2021 season. Cover is determined by the data received from each site. Sites with good cover are shown with blue dots (data received for seasons 2018/19 and 2019/20). Those with recent cover are shown with green dots (data from 2016/17 or 2017/18). Those with no recent cover are shown as red squares (no data received since 2015/16 or earlier)



Derrymacar Lough, Co Longford Cóilín MacLochlainn

waterbirds each winter. The beauty here is that a great number of these smaller sites can be counted in just a couple of hours: anyone with a basic knowledge of waterbirds can do it. And though they may not be priority sites, a few mid-winter counts from such sites could tell us an awful lot and help us to fill significant gaps in our knowledge base.

We might learn that some sites no longer support the numbers they once did; or we might find they host a species in steep decline, now more likely than ever, given how many of our waterbirds are in trouble. All this would be valuable information.

Regardless of their numbers or diversity, getting accurate counts of our waterbirds, from as many sites as possible, is absolutely vital to our database and its robustness, and on how reliable our overall results are.

➡ If you, or anyone you know (with a telescope and good waterbird ID skills) is interested in taking on one of the red sites highlighted in the map here, even just to count their birds in January alone, do get in touch with us at iwebs@birdwatchireland.ie.

 We are always in search of new volunteers to join our count teams, particularly to count very important areas such as Inner Galway Bay, Castlemaine Harbour and Tralee Bay.
Please do reach out if you can be of assistance to any of these teams.

Broad Lough, Co Wicklow Cóilín MacLochlainn



Site Focus Harper's Island

Creating space and sanctuary for nature

We heard about what it is like to cover Harper's Island as part of the Cork Harbour I-WeBS count site in issue 22 of *I-WeBS News*. Now **Tom Gittings**, the volunteer site co-ordinator, is back to tell us about the other ways in which local volunteers are working to protect and improve this area as a haven for wintering waterbirds and humans alike.

Harper's Island Wetlands nature reserve is a key wetland within Cork Harbour, one that supports one of the most important waterbird roosts in the area. Although just a small part of the harbour, the island often hosts internationally important numbers of Blacktailed Godwits as well as nationally important numbers of species such as Curlew, Redshank and Little Grebe.

Harper's Island is managed by a partnership between **Cork County Council, BirdWatch Ireland** and **Glounthaune Community Association.** This partnership combines the staff resources and access to funding of the local authority, with the scientific expertise in ecological monitoring and conservation management of BirdWatch Ireland, and the enthusiasm and practical skills of the local community.

While the priority is to protect and enhance the nature conservation value of the reserve, another key objective has been to develop visitor access to the island in a way that is compatible with this priority.



Part of the nature trail map at the entrance

The main challenges we faced were the sensitivity of the roosting waterbirds to disturbance, and the very close proximity of roosting flocks to the only access point onto the island. The solution was the development of a 2-kilometre nature trail, which is screened from the sensitive wetlands by over 500 m of soil bunds (earth banks), while two hides provide ample birdwatching opportunities.

The bunds were created from material generated by excavating two half-hectare wader scrapes within the wetland zone. These scrapes are a valuable addition to the reserve, extending the roosting and feeding



Creating a wetland scrape at Harper's Island Wetlands nature reserve in 2018 Tom Gittings

opportunities for waterbirds such as **Wigeon** and **Redshank**, as well as developing additional areas of important saltmarsh habitat. A significant amount of the work involved in the construction of the nature trail, including one of the hides, was carried out by the local community through the **Glounthaune Men's Shed**.

The southern part of the nature trail is a looped walk through an area of dry grassland less sensitive than other habitats, which allows more expansive access for visitors without creating disturbance risks. In addition to the bunds, this area is separated from the waterbird habitats by a linear wetland that was excavated during construction of the nature trail. This wetland has been planted with **Common Reed** *Phragmites australis.* As well as providing a buffer between the sensitive wetlands and the nature trail, it will also increase the diversity of wetland habitats in the reserve.

One of the management challenges is the dynamic nature of the wetlands. These have developed over the last 15 years and are still evolving. Ecological and hydrological monitoring programmes have helped us to understand how the system functions, through statistical modelling of water levels and investigations of the saltmarsh plant communities. Based on the monitoring results, we have recently introduced a summer horse-grazing regime to manage vegetation succession in the wetland habitats. Fortunately, the horses have shown a taste for **Common Cord-grass** *Spartina anglica* and are likely to make a significant contribution to controlling the incipient colonisation of this invasive species.

Future plans include development of a third hide, which will provide views of another important roost site in the adjacent estuary, and an outdoor classroom.

Further wetland habitat improvement works are also planned. A more ambitious objective for the longer term is to replace the sea wall sluice that connects the wetlands to the estuary. This would open up exciting possibilities for enhancing the wetland habitats by providing greater control over the water level regime on the island.

To find out more about the reserve, visit https://birdwatchcork.com/about-harpers.



Horse grazing in summer is helping to manage vegetation succession in the reserve Tom Gittings

More waterbirds than ever are now Red-listed

By Lesley Lewis (I-WeBS Office)



Many of you will be aware that the latest list of 'Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland' was published earlier this year. Known as **BoCCI-4** for short, the review is the fourth of its kind and, as usual, uses the traffic-light system to indicate the conservation status of bird species by placing them onto three lists – Red, Amber or Green – indicating whether a species is of high, medium or low conservation concern.

This all-Ireland review was carried out by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (Northern Ireland) and BirdWatch Ireland, using data from a range of surveys including I-WeBS, the Countryside Bird Survey (CBS) and the Bird Atlas. A total of 211 bird species was assessed using defined criteria at global, European and national levels.





The results of the review make for stark reading, with more birds than ever now Red-listed in Ireland. A shocking 54 bird species (26% of the regularly occurring bird species in Ireland) qualify for the Red list, with an additional 79 species (37%) now Amber-listed. When grouped by habitat preferences, **wading birds**, both breeding and wintering, give the greatest cause for concern.

BoCCI-4 could, and should, act as a framework for conservation action, helping to guide where resources would be best directed or prioritised. So we hope that, with targeted efforts, the outcome for at least some of these populations could be improved by the time BoCCI-5 is completed, in about seven years' time.

Twenty-six waterbirds are now Red-listed. Discounting breeding populations and waterbirds of global conservation concern

(declining globally but not here, for now), we are left with a list of twelve wintering waterbirds, pictured below. These species are our wintering waterbirds of highest conservation concern, having experienced >50% decrease in abundance in Ireland.

Were there any good news stories in the BoCCI-4 review? Sadly, only a few. Little Grebe and Great Black-backed Gull, formerly Amber-listed, are now on the Green list, thankfully.

Numbers of **Bewick's Swans** have diminished to such an extent that the species may not be seen here at all by the time of the next BoCCI assessment, as it no longer needs to migrate as far to escape the cold northern winters, as the climate continues to warm. This relatively new 'short-stopping' migratory behaviour in these swans not only explains their precipitous decline here but may also explain declines in our numbers of wintering **Pochards** and **Goldeneyes**. With the population declines in these diving ducks being so severe, however, it would appear that there are other causative factors also at play, although pinpointing these is often difficult.

For many species, such as the waders **Grey Plover, Lapwing, Curlew, Dunlin** and **Purple Sandpiper,** we have seen long-term declines in numbers throughout I-WeBS. The **Snipe**, however, joins the Red list for the first time and, while this species is difficult to monitor, its presence and numbers at wetlands and across the wider countryside has so obviously diminished. Habitat changes associated with land drainage is the major contributing factor here.

By and large, our waterbird species are getting hit from all sides, by disturbance and land-use changes on both their breeding and wintering grounds. While the effects of climate change cannot be ignored, as ever we need also to recognise the many pressures these species face during winter in Ireland and, as a nation, make better efforts to address them.

C To read the full article on BoCCI-4, published in *Irish Birds,* No 43 (2021), please see **bit.ly/BoCCI4**.



Our priority list of twelve Red-listed wintering waterbird species

Shelduck: the moult migration mystery

Also, how might Shelducks on migration be affected by offshore windfarms?

By Ros Green (BTO Research Ecologist and University of Liverpool PhD student)

Despite being a relatively common and conspicuous species, there has been little research published on Shelducks in Ireland and the UK, especially regarding their migration and moult strategies. Evidence suggests that most of the Shelducks in Ireland and the UK migrate to the Wadden Sea (in the Netherlands and Germany) to moult between June and September, and then return to the areas where they breed between October and February. However, detailed information on the routes they travel on this outward migration, the timing of the migration (range of dates, time of day or night, timing in relation to tide and weather, etc) and what their flight characteristics are (speed and height), or when they return to their breeding grounds, is scarce. This overall lack of information makes it difficult to predict how and when Shelducks might interact with offshore windfarms in the Irish Sea and the North Sea.

There are already eleven active offshore windfarms in the Irish Sea, with possibly fifteen or more to come over the next two decades. Shelducks from Ireland and Britain, migrating to and from their moulting sites in the UK and the Wadden Sea, are more than likely to pass offshore windfarms within the Irish and North Seas. Consequently, the BTO and I, through my PhD, are now investigating Shelduck migration in more detail to see how offshore windfarms might affect the UK population. We have already tracked four birds in a pilot study, and we are hoping to deploy tags on another 40 birds at sites in Lancashire, Suffolk, Teeside and Strangford Lough between June 2021 and August 2022.

The findings of our original literature review and a report on the pilot tracking study carried out in 2019 (recently published in Ringing and Migration) summarise the first tracking data collected from Shelducks crossing the North Sea. All four tracked birds migrated from the Suffolk coast to a stopover site in the Dutch Wadden Sea, and three of them then continued on to the Heligoland Bight. Although this was in keeping with our previous understanding of Shelduck moult migration, it had never been hypothesised that Shelducks make a stop-over en route to their final moulting location.

Further, one of the four birds returned to the Dutch Wadden Sea, then flew back to the Heligoland Bight, and then flew back to the Dutch Wadden Sea again! This added approximately 1,000 apparently unnecessary kilometres to its migration.

We also collected data on their flight path, height and speed as they crossed the North



Routes taken across the North Sea by four Shelducks tracked from East Anglia in July and August 2019

Sea. It took the birds 3.5 hours (on average) to make the crossing, with all birds flying at heights that could lead to interactions with wind turbines (30-250 m above sea level). with the average being 36.7 m. The average migration flight speed was 35.4 knots (~65 kmh). The data strongly suggested that Shelducks could interact with offshore windfarms during their migration and could potentially collide with the turbines.



One of the four tagged Shelducks tracked in the 2019 pilot tracking study Kane Brides

Data gathered by I-WeBS counters could serve to fill some important knowledge gaps on Ireland's Shelducks. As we do not know where Irish breeding Shelducks moult, or whether they migrate across the Irish Sea at all, it would be of great value to our study if I-WeBS counters could check their local estuaries and wetland sites for Shelducks between June and September each year and count any they find. There is potential here for a ground-breaking discovery!

So, if you find large flocks (or a complete absence) of Shelducks, particularly flightless birds as they are moulting, or even just with moulted flight/tail feathers, at your local estuary during these months, I'd love to hear about it!

Acknowledgments

Thanks to our funders, The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) Offshore Energy Strategic Environmental Assessment (OESEA) programme, and particularly to John Hartley of Hartley Anderson Ltd. Also to Liverpool University for supporting the PhD research.

Read more on this study at www.bit.ly/shelduckmigration. **C** Read the report on the pilot tracking study at www.bit.ly/shelduck-pilot. Read the original literature review at www.bit.ly/shelduck-review. ➡ All of these are linked through Ros Green's BTO staff page at

www.bto.org/about-bto/our-staff/ros-green.

Count Dates 2021/22

East Coast & Inland Counties			South & West Coast Counties		
	Weekend	1 High Tide (Sunday) Dublin ¹	Weekend	High Tide (Sunday) Cork ²	
Sep Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar	$\begin{array}{c} 11^{th}-12^{th} \\ 9^{th}-10^{th} \\ 6^{th}-7^{th} \\ 4^{th}-5^{th} \\ 8^{th}-9^{th} \\ 5^{th}-6^{th} \\ 5^{th}-6^{th} \end{array}$	16:12 14:59 12:54 11:53 16:44 15:13 13:57	18 th -19 th 16 th -17 th 13 th -14 th 11 th -12 th 15 th -16 th * 12 th -13 th	17:23 16:20 13:57 12:05 16:41 15:39 14:09	

¹ Based on high-tide time predicted for the North Wall, Dublin
² Based on high-tide time predicted for Cork Harbour

* International Waterbird Census January 15th-16th 2022

Icelandic Greylag Goose Census See WWT's Goose News later in the autumn

Light-bellied Brent Goose Census Dates to be confirmed Here are the recommended dates for the 2021/2022 I-WeBS count season. These dates are chosen based on tidal conditions around Ireland's coastline, to allow coastal sites to be counted on a rising or high tide and to help maximise synchronisation of counts across the country, be they inland or coastal.

As always, we try to select dates that suit as many tidal states as possible, so that co-ordination of counts can be achieved.

If any dates are unsuitable, for whatever reason, please select the next most appropriate date and try to co-ordinate with any nearby sites, where relevant. Please refer to your *Counter Manual* for how best to cover your site. Mediterranean Gull: this bird, photographed in Wicklow, was ringed as a chick in Denmark in 2013. *Brian Burke*

Post-breeding terns

Our knowledge of where in Ireland tern flocks go to roost between the breeding season and the start of their winter migration has been building up over the past few years. Huge thanks to our wonderful observers for helping us to keep tabs on the terns at this time. Please keep the records coming via **iwebs@birdwatchireland.ie** or via **www.bit.ly/tern-roosts.**

International Waterbird Census resources

The **International Waterbird Census** (IWC) has recently compiled a list of scientific publications that have used IWC data, including I-WeBS data. The key themes of this research include assessments of the effectiveness of protected areas, and the effects of climate change on wintering waterbird populations. A list of these publications, and links to data from other IWC contributors, can now be found via our webpage at **www.bit.ly/IWeBS-International.**

New training resources

As we were unable to host the usual in-person workshops this year, we had to bring training online. Fortunately, there were only a few technical glitches and the events went well. A big thank you to all who attended. In conjunction with these EPA-funded online workshops, we also launched some online resources earlier in the year: the **I-WeBS methodology** workshop has been split into three courses:

- I-WeBS methods and more detailing the background and rationale for the methods
- Identifying waterbirds tips and tricks for identifying common waterbird species
- **Counting waterbirds** some clues on how to hone your counting skills.

Whether starting out or looking to refresh your skills before the big waterbird numbers build up, these courses give you the opportunity to peruse the counting methods and some surveying tips and tricks, in your own time. Try them out at **www.bit.ly/iwebs-training**.

The I-WeBS Office

I-WeBS team: Lesley Lewis, Niamh Fitzgerald, Brian Burke, John Kennedy

For queries about site coverage, counter co-ordination and general I-WeBS queries, please contact Niamh and Brian at iwebs@birdwatchireland.ie. You can also visit our website for other resources at bit.ly/IWeBS. For queries about I-WeBS data, please contact Lesley at ljlewis@birdwatchireland.ie.

The Irish Wetland Bird Survey (I-WeBS) is the monitoring scheme for non-breeding waterbirds in the Republic of Ireland, which aims to be the primary tool for monitoring their populations and the wetland habitats on which they depend. The data generated are used to assess the sizes of non-breeding waterbird populations, identify trends in their numbers and distribution, and assess the importance of individual sites for them. I-WeBS is funded by the **National Parks and Wildlife Service** of the **Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage** and is co-ordinated by BirdWatch Ireland.





An tSeirbhís Páirceanna Náisiúnta agus Fiadhúlra National Parks and Wildlife Service



An Roinn Tithíochta, Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreachta Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

The Irish Wetland Bird Survey (I-WeBS) is funded by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage)