I-WeBS News

The Newsletter of the Irish Wetland Bird Survey

Issue 26 August 2022

Lapwing
Dick Coombes

Last of the twenties: I-WeBS enters its 29th year

In this age of biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse, the value of surveys such as I-WeBS cannot be overstated. Your steadfast dedication to this survey could not be more valued! Thanks to consistent long-term monitoring, we are able to highlight the rise and fall in numbers of our migratory wintering waterbirds. As is all too common a tale nowadays, the losses far outweigh the gains. However, the story may not be consistent across all sites. To paint a more detailed picture we have started to develop species trends at site level. To find out more, please see page 4, while on page 6, learn how you can help to record the drivers of species declines at your count sites.

Across the years, we have gained a good understanding of our wintering waterbirds, but there are always gaps in our knowledge that we yearn to fill. For instance, what proportion of our breeding waders stay here for winter? A number of exciting ringing projects have just been launched with the aim of better understanding the movements and behaviour of our breeding Curlew, Lapwing and Ringed Plover populations in both the winter and breeding seasons (see pages 2 and 5).

Yet another unprecedented virus outbreak has taken centre stage during 2022 as Avian Influenza sweeps through wild bird populations, in particular seabird colonies, across Europe. Last winter the strain of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza had a devastating effect on our waterbirds, especially Barnacle Geese in Sligo and Donegal. Has the response to this deadly virus been sufficient? Read more on page 3. In the coming count season, please remain vigilant for sick or dying birds and, if encountered, be sure to report them. Be sure to cast an eye over the back page for the scheduled I-WeBS dates, along with 2022/23 workshops and deadlines for sending in your data! Happy counting for the season ahead.

Niamh Fitzgerald (I-WeBS National Organiser)

Contents

2 Colour-ringed Curlews and Lapwings
3 Avian influenza
4 Irish waterbird trends
5 Species Focus: Ringed Plover
6 Pressures and threats
7 Can we expand I-WeBS coverage?
8 I-WeBS dates and information

Published by BirdWatch Ireland on behalf of I-WeBS. I-WeBS is funded by the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

BirdWatch Ireland, Unit 20, Block D,
Bullford Business Campus, Kilcoole, Co. Wicklow
T: +353-1-2819878
W: www.birdwatchireland.ie

@BirdWatchIE

Compiled by the I-WeBS Office
Designed by Cóilín MacLochlainn
Printed by AR & T Print

An tSeirbhís Páirceanna Náisiúnta agus Fiadhúlra
National Parks and Wildlife Service

BirdWatchIreland

Have you seen these colour-ringed waders?

Appeal for re-sightings of colour-ringed Irish Curlews and Lapwings

By **Seán Kelly** and **Jason Monaghan** (National Parks and Wildlife Service)

Lapwing 'AT' ringed in Kilcoole, Co Wicklow *Jason Monaghan (NPWS)*

Curlew 'CCT' ringed in Kildare *Seán Kelly (NPWS)*

As most I-WeBS counters will be all too aware, many wader species have undergone significant declines in both their wintering and breeding populations. For example, since the 1980s, breeding Curlew populations have declined by 98%, and breeding Lapwing populations have declined by 95%.

Numerous conservation management and policy initiatives to conserve Irish breeding waders are being progressed by eNGOs, community groups, government departments and others. It has become apparent how little data there are on each species in Ireland – and good data are central to evidence-based conservation management and policy.

To inform these conservation efforts and their improvement, two new **colour-ringing schemes** have recently been established: one for breeding **Lapwings** and another for breeding **Curlews.**

Colour-ringing schemes are an effective tool to learn more about the demography and ecology of species. Once a sufficient database of re-sightings is built up – and this is key – it is possible to draw conclusions about annual survival, winter and breeding sites use, dispersal and site fidelity, migration patterns, age of first breeding, and longevity.

All of this information can feed directly into conservation action. For example, if a breeding population is declining, one needs to understand where and how to act: is breeding productivity too low to maintain the population, or is annual mortality too high, or perhaps both?

However, all of this depends on a sufficient number of records of the colour-ringed birds. Hence, we are appealing for your help in re-sighting colour-ringed Lapwings and Curlews in Ireland. We know I-WeBS counters have keen eyes for picking up colour rings!

National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) staff, in collaboration with other ringers, have been colour-ringing breeding adult Curlews and chicks in the midlands, the west and the north-west of Ireland. Some early re-sightings are telling us these birds can travel huge distances, with a Donegal breeding bird recorded overwintering in coastal County Kerry. The Curlew scheme uses a yellow ring with a black three-letter code (e.g., CCT) above the bird's left 'knee' and a plain blue ring above the bird's right 'knee.'

In collaboration with ecologist **Alan Lauder,** the NPWS also has a study colour-ringing Lapwing chicks. This study is focusing initially on the NPWS-managed wetlands at Cooldross, Kilcoole, Co Wicklow, but we hope to extend this in the coming years. The rings used are an orange flag with a two-character black code (e.g., AT) above the bird's right 'knee' and a plain green ring above the left 'knee.'

Valuable data are already emerging: two Lapwing chicks ringed in 2021 returned to Cooldross in 2022 to breed for the first time, and they successfully raised broods.

These colour-ringing studies will help assess the efficacy of conservation measures at various sites and determine if or where they can be improved. The power of this information cannot be understated.

We would very much appreciate your help in re-sighting these birds during the wintering or breeding periods, as they may end up anywhere! There is a lot to learn, and it will all contribute directly to the conservation of these species.

➲ Please send your sightings to **sean.kelly@housing.gov.ie**

Acknowledgments

We would like to express sincere thanks to all those who have supported and contributed to these projects, particularly the staff of the **NPWS Curlew Conservation Programme** and the **BirdWatch Ireland-led Curlew EIP;** our NPWS colleagues **Alyn Walsh, Damian Clarke, Wesley Atkinson** and **Declan Ward; Kendrew Colhoun** and **Alan Lauder;** and all the landowners who provided access to their lands for this work.

Avian influenza spreading

Unprecedented number of cases reported during winter 2021/22

By **Lesley Lewis** (I-WeBS Office)


Barnacle Goose *John Carey*

Winter 2021/22 sadly saw an unprecedented number of cases of the **Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza** (HPAI) subtype **H5N1** throughout Ireland and further afield. The first case in a wild bird was confirmed during November 2021: an infected **Peregrine** found in County Galway. By May 2022, the **National Disease Control Centre** of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine had reported that 80 wild birds had tested positive for H5N1 in Ireland, across sixteen counties.

Sadly, we have now received reports of several wintering waterbird species affected by this fatal virus, including **Light-bellied Brent Goose, Barnacle Goose, Greylag Goose, Mute Swan, Whooper Swan, Herring Gull, Grey Heron** and **Cormorant.** The Department of Agriculture has provided an interactive map, courtesy of the **Centre for Veterinary Epidemiology and Risk Analysis** (CVERA) in UCD, which shows the locations of reported avian influenza cases last winter – the map is shown in Figure 1, but is available for closer scrutiny at **bit.ly/bird-flu-cases-ireland.** It includes many I-WeBS sites, including Dublin Bay, Galway Bay, Lough Swilly (Co Donegal), Trawbreaga Bay (Co Donegal), Sligo Harbour and Tacumshin Lake (Co Wexford).

Our wintering population of **Greenland Barnacle Geese** appear to have been particularly badly hit. This species has a restricted winter distribution in Ireland, with the main concentrations found on the coasts and offshore islands of the north-west. Reports of dead Barnacle Geese that had tested positive for H5N1 at Trawbreaga Bay, Co Donegal, started to circulate in January 2022. Local National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) staff reported tens of dead birds and estimated that hundreds more could have perished on offshore islands.

At around the same time, reports were coming in of the Barnacle Goose population on the Scottish island of **Islay** being badly affected. Serious concerns were also raised by BirdWatch Ireland's **Sligo Branch** members and I-WeBS counters, who have been keeping a close eye on their local wintering Barnacle Goose flock for years. At Sligo Bay and Drumcliff there were reports during March of carcasses lying by ditches and throughout the grazing range of the Sligo flock, most especially within the National Nature Reserve at **Ballygilgan,** known locally as the "Goose Field."

Similar impacts to populations were recorded in Britain: in the Solway Firth, a sea inlet between north-west England and Scotland, an estimated 11.6% of the wintering population of **Svalbard Barnacle Geese** died from the virus.*

While the impact of the virus on the **Greenland Barnacle Goose** population cannot yet be fully quantified, reports from the NPWS suggest that close to 1,700 of these Barnacle Geese have perished.

Reports of avian influenza usually increase as the autumn bird migration starts. While the outbreak last winter was unprecedented, there were concerns over the lack of a co-ordinated response from the relevant government departments. Once the virus had been detected, there was no co-ordinated plan to recover dead and dying birds in the wild. This is concerning, because the virus could be transmitted through scavengers such as gulls and foxes.

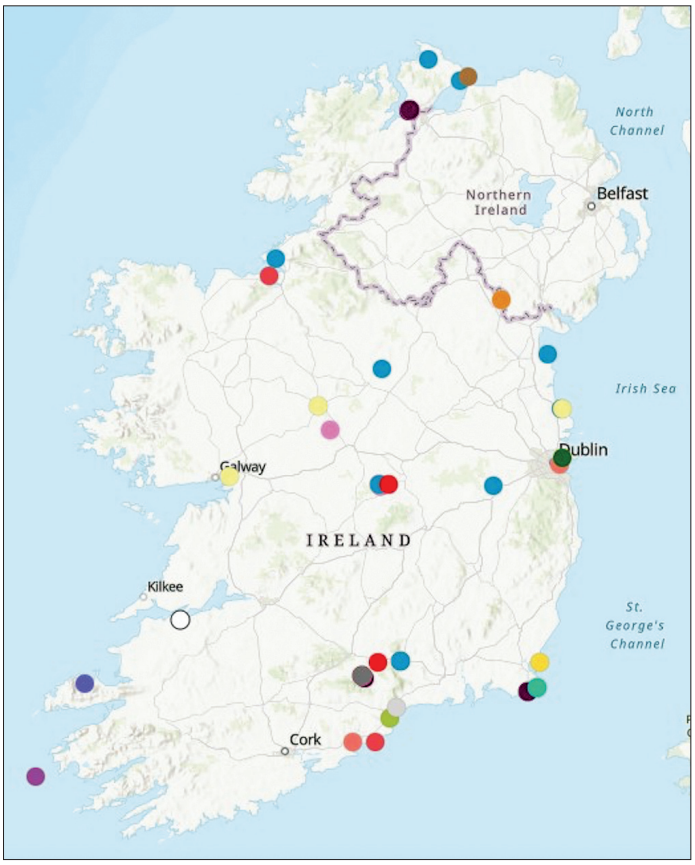


Fig 1. Cases of avian influenza reported in Ireland in winter 2021/22

- Barn Owl
- Barnacle Goose
- Light-bellied Brent Goose
- Buzzard
- Crows
- Greenland White-fronted Goose
- Greylag Goose
- Guillemot
- Grey Heron
- Herring Gull
- Kestrel
- Magpie
- Merlin
- Mute Swan
- Peregrine
- Raven
- Swan sp
- Water Rail
- White-tailed Eagle
- Whooper Swan

A protocol is urgently needed that will ensure that, in similar future outbreaks, dying birds will be euthanised humanely and carcasses removed to help prevent transmission of the virus by scavengers.

At time of writing (end of July 2022), our worst fears became a reality when H5N1 was found present within some of our **breeding seabird colonies.** This came after harrowing footage from breeding seabird colonies in Great Britain and elsewhere in Europe – hundreds of **Common Terns,** for example, died at colonies in Germany and Great Britain.

Ireland has many seabird colonies of high biogeographical importance, and the colonial nature of their breeding could result in rapid transmission of the virus. Their low reproductive rates also make them extremely vulnerable and means any population recovery will be very slow. It is a worrying time for seabird researchers, and only time will tell how our breeding seabirds fare.

To keep up to date, or for details on what to do if you find an ill or dying bird with suspected avian influenza, please consult **bit.ly/bird-flu-ireland** on the Department of Agriculture's website, or check out Avian Check at **bit.ly/bird-flu-ireland-report** to report a suspected case of avian influenza.

Thank you to all of you who contacted us with information.

* Avian influenza in wild birds, winter 2021-22. **NatureScot,** 2022. You can download NatureScot's latest update on the bird flu (July 2022) at **www.nature.scot/doc/avian-influenza-bird-flu**

Setting our sights on local trends

We have updated waterbird trends both nationally and at site level

By **Lesley Lewis** (I-WeBS Office)

Pochard *Michael Finn*

Arguably the most important use of I-WeBS data is to produce national trends of our wintering waterbirds – what species are increasing or decreasing, and how has that changed or progressed in the short, medium and long terms. In April 2022, as well as publishing updated national trends online, we have also made available the species trends at individual I-WeBS sites across the country.

Trends were produced and published for sites counted in >50% of I-WeBS months since the survey began in 1994, a total of 97 sites ***(see Figure 3).*** Some sites that weren't included have been consistently well covered in recent years and we look forward to them being included in future analyses. For those sites included, any missing data or poor-quality counts are statistically imputed, resulting in a complete dataset across months and years, from which annual indices are calculated.

For the period 1994/95 to 2019/20 we have calculated short-term (5 years), medium-term (12 years) and long-term (23 years) trends for each species. The trends are then classified based on the overarching long-term 23-year trend, as shown in **Figure 1.**

Trend Range (%)	Classification
Lower than -50%	Large Decline
Between -50% and -25%	Moderate Decline
Between -25% and -1%	Intermediate Decline
Greater than -1%	Stable or Increasing

Figure 1. National and site trend classification, based on the long-term 23-year trend period.

Our new trends webpages provide updated national trends for 35 wintering waterbird species. There are no particular surprises in the national results, with six species showing large declines (>50%), including the diving ducks **(Goldeneye, Pochard** and **Scaup)** as well as three waders **(Lapwing, Grey Plover** and **Golden Plover). Dunlin** and **Curlew** are exhibiting moderate declines over the long-term period. Overall, 57% of the species are in decline and 43% are stable/increasing **(Figure 2).**

We would encourage everyone to visit the website and take a look at how the waterbirds are faring at or near the site you count. Comparing trends at your local site against national trends might show interesting results. For instance, in cases where a species is doing okay at national level but declining at site level, this may indicate a site-based issue that is causing the decline.

What's next?

We will be engaging with researchers in the newly established **Scientific Research Network** (see back page) to delve deeper into these results. For example, comparison of sites in the north vs south, and in the east vs west, might highlight regional trends, or looking at changes at inland sites compared to those on the coast might reveal shifts in distribution for some species.

Regularly updating species trends is crucial to monitoring and conservation, and we hope that seeing site-level trends for your locality will highlight for you the value of your count efforts over the years and the importance of continued local monitoring. We'd love to reach a position where we can run these trends on an annual basis, and receiving data as soon as the count season ends will be key for this (see also page 7 and back page).

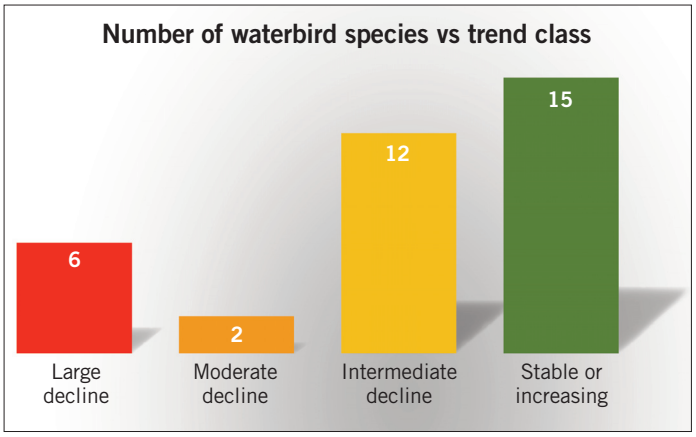


Figure 2. The number of waterbird species per trend class.

➲ **Link** – full results, guidance and methodology details are available at this link: **bit.ly/iwebs-trends**

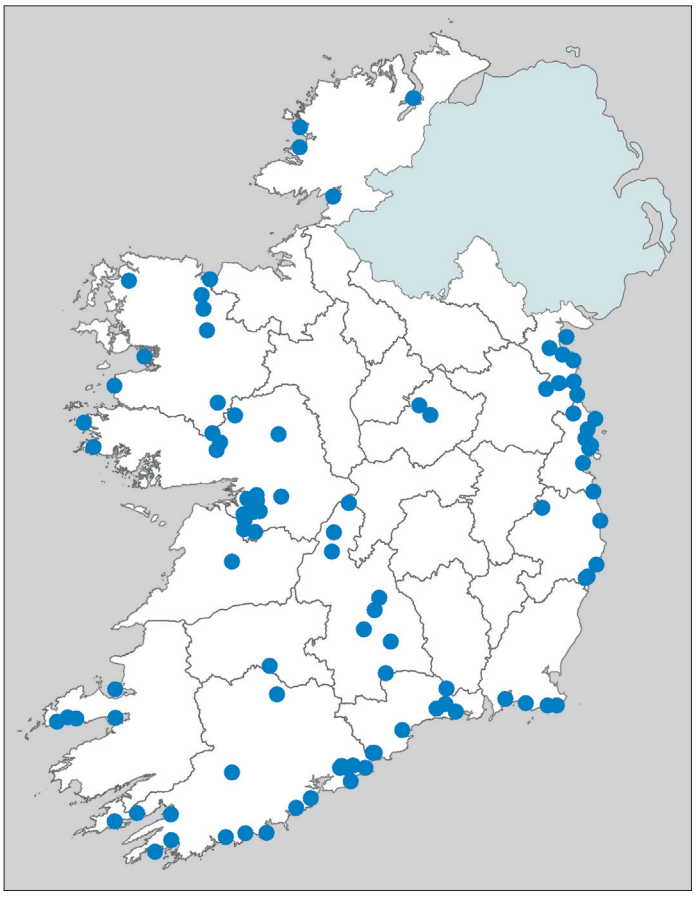


Figure 3. Image of the interactive online map at **bit.ly/iwebs-trends** which shows the 97 sites for which waterbird site trends are available.

Knowledge gaps to be filled

Movements studied using colour-ringing and geo-tagging

By **Brian Burke** (I-WeBS Office)

I-WeBS counters in coastal areas will be familiar with Ringed Plovers. Favouring sand, pebble and shingle intertidal areas, their distribution in both the breeding and the non-breeding season is near-continuous along the full length of the Irish coast. More than half of the mid-winter population is found in non-estuarine habitats, monitored at regular intervals through 'NEWS' – the Non-Estuarine Waterbird Survey.

Ringed Plover 'JK' *Jan Rod*

Although less well observed there, Ringed Plovers can be found nesting on lake islands, in quarries and on cutaway raised bogs in parts of the midlands. Their ever-present nature along most of the coast, unassumingly patrolling the length and breadth of a beach, means they are a species we perhaps take for granted. It's worth noting, then, that both breeding and wintering populations are now Amber-listed in Ireland.

Although Irish-breeding Ringed Plovers will nest twice during the summer, they are under constant pressure from recreational disturbance by walkers and particularly dogs; predation from mammals and corvids; and, of course, habitat loss from coastal squeeze.

The assumption is that our breeding birds disperse in autumn and winter, with the majority staying in Ireland. Some possibly move to Britain and a minority beyond that into mainland Europe. The reality, though, is that the patterns of movement of our breeding birds outside the summer months are poorly understood, so we can only infer from the UK population (also limited data) and other similar species.

As with other species, such as Whimbrel and Redshank, the constant traffic of passage Ringed Plovers over many months makes it almost impossible to accurately establish the importance of Irish coastal wetlands for these populations. What we do know, however, is that our mid-winter population is experiencing a similar decline to our breeding population. Habitat loss, in its various forms, and recreational disturbance are two known pressures, with aquaculture likely presenting an additional threat. All are undoubtedly putting Irish Ringed Plovers under pressure, whether they're here for a week or the whole year.

Colour-ringing

To help address some of the gaps in our knowledge of Ringed Plovers, a new **colour-ringing project** has begun this year, led by me **(Brian Burke)** and **Sam Bayley,** which will include birds from our breeding, passage and wintering populations. Please keep an eye out for individuals with a plain green ring on the right tarsus (lower leg) and a two-letter coded green ring on the left tibia (upper leg). Please report any sightings to **bburke@birdwatchireland.ie.**

Repeated sightings of birds in the same location are always welcome as they will help us determine site fidelity and the duration of a bird's stay. Look out for ringed birds from other projects too, and feel free to get in touch if you're having trouble identifying who to contact.

Ringed Plover 'PC' in Portrane, Dublin *Jan Rod*

Factfile

Name
Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*
Irish name
Feadóg Chladaigh

Ringed Plover is an Amber-listed Species of Conservation Concern

Mid-winter I-WeBS population
10,545 individuals in the RoI
16.5% decline in short term
18.7% decline in long term

Breeding population
c1,000 pairs (cautious estimate)
14% decline in the index over 20 years
23% decline in 40 years

Subspecies in Ireland
Three subspecies can be found in Ireland at different times of the year, though their relative proportions at any given site or time are largely unknown:

Charadrius hiaticula – the nominate race, breeds and winters in Ireland, Britain, northern Europe, southern Scandinavia, Baltics

C. h. psammodromus – breeds in north-east Canada, Greenland, Iceland; passage in Ireland; winters in Iberia, north and west Africa

C. h. tundrae – breeds in Russia, northern Scandinavia; passage in Ireland (likely smaller numbers); winters in Africa.

German Ringed Plovers wintering in Ireland

By **Dominic Cimiotti** (Michael-Otto-Institut im NABU, Wadden Sea coast) & **Martin Altemüller** (NABU-Wasservogelreservat Wallnau, Baltic Sea)

NABU (the BirdLife partner in Germany) launched a colour-ringing programme for Ringed Plovers in Schleswig-Holstein, the northernmost state of Germany, in 2015. At least 12 individuals from the Wadden Sea and 10 from the Baltic Sea have been re-sighted during the non-breeding season in the Republic of Ireland (especially in counties Wexford, Kerry, Mayo, Galway).

In 2020, NABU started to use ultralight (1g) GPS tags to study the year-round movements of Ringed Plovers in more detail. The data underline the importance of Ireland, with three of five males migrating to Ireland and Northern Ireland in autumn. An example is male "Bob," who moved from his breeding site in Beltringharder Koog to a wintering site in Galway from August 20-23rd, 2021, where he stayed until February 21st. He was back on his breeding territory on February 26th and, with his mate, successfully fledged two chicks in 2022.

➲ To find out more, see **bit.ly/NABU-RP** and **bit.ly/NABU-RP-BOB**

Under pressure

By **Brian Burke** (I-WeBS Office)

I-WeBS data, as gathered by hundreds of counters over nearly three decades, are used to show to a high degree of accuracy how our wintering waterbird species are faring over time.

The next step, of course, is to try to identify why they've changed as they have, and what might jeopardise them in the future. This is a key part of I-WeBS and bird monitoring and conservation in general, as well as something we must report on to the EU Commission on a regular basis.

Until now, the problems faced by our wintering waterbirds at sites across Ireland have been communicated via letters, emails and conversations – land drainage here, a development there, increased disturbance, decreases in grazing, amongst a long list of issues.

We've now set up a specific web page to capture all of this information in one place, in a standardised way, to ensure the pressures and threats affecting waterbirds across Ireland are documented and available for future use by BirdWatch Ireland, NPWS and other bodies wishing to address these problems. This will be a valuable tool to help inform conservation and policy priorities in the future, and so it's really important that you have your say and ensure your site is represented.

When we discuss a 'pressure' in this case, we mean a problem that has been seen to be affecting birds in recent years. A 'threat,' in contrast, is something expected to affect birds in the coming years.

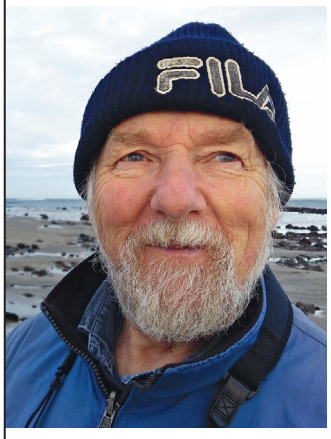
The idea behind this web page is that each counter will use it at the end of each I-WeBS season to make note of the pressures and threats affecting a particular site (note: not at subsite level, though multiple counters can fill it in for each site). The categories are standardised to be easily translatable to those used by the EU Commission and International Waterbird Census. Almost any pressure or threat you can think of is included, but if there's something you can't find then add it in a comment and we'll be sure to include it.

Dog chasing a Grey Heron at Seapoint, Co Dublin *Richard Nairn*

This will provide really important context for I-WeBS data in the future, based on the experience and knowledge you've gathered about your site over countless hours of observation, so please make sure to fill it out for every I-WeBS site that you count, at the end of each season. Whether you have a list of problems as long as your arm, or there's nothing discernibly 'wrong' with your site, it will still be an important contribution to tackling the biggest problems faced by Irish waterbirds.

➲ **Link** – please note the pressures and threats to your I-WeBS count sites here: **bit.ly/iwebsthreats.** If you need any help filling in the details for your site, contact me, Brian Burke, at **bburke@birdwatchireland.ie**

A tribute to Dr Don Cotton



It was with great sadness that we learned of the death of **Don Cotton** on January 13th following a long illness. Don was an integral part of the Sligo Bays team throughout I-WeBS, where he surveyed right up until November 2021. However, his legacy and contribution to conservation extends far beyond this survey. Don possessed great skill, not only in recording species but also for sharing his love and passion for the natural world with others. Some of Ireland's leading ornithologists and environmental scientists honed their skills under Don's leadership. Don will be deeply missed by all who knew him. We extend our deepest sympathies to all of his extended family and friends. May he rest in peace. – ***Niamh Fitzgerald***

Two site coordinators retire

For almost 30 years (1994/95 - 2020/21), **Ralph Sheppard** was the coordinator of I-WeBS counts at Lough Swilly, Co Donegal, one of our most important wintering waterbird sites. Of course, Ralph's legacy in waterbird conservation extends far beyond I-WeBS. His 1993 publication, *Ireland's Wetland Wealth,* provided unprecedented detail of our national waterbird population numbers off the back of the Winter Wetlands Survey, carried out in the 1980s. His contribution to waterbird conservation, in Donegal and throughout Ireland, has been invaluable. As a coordinator, Ralph always went the extra mile, producing a report of each monthly count, providing direct feedback to the count team, a custom that has been continued by the new coordinator, **Derek Brennan.**

In Dublin, **Jim English** has coordinated counts of Rogerstown Estuary for the last twelve years, totalling more than 70 counts of a site of national importance for a long list of species. Jim took many a newcomer under his wing over the years, as the team have always offered an open invite to participants of all levels. We welcome **Cormac Crowley**, who has now stepped into the role as site coordinator.

It has been a great pleasure to work with both Ralph and Jim over the years and we thank them both for sharing their time and expertise to help us better understand Ireland's wintering waterbirds. – ***Niamh Fitzgerald***

Let's try to count more of Ireland's wetlands

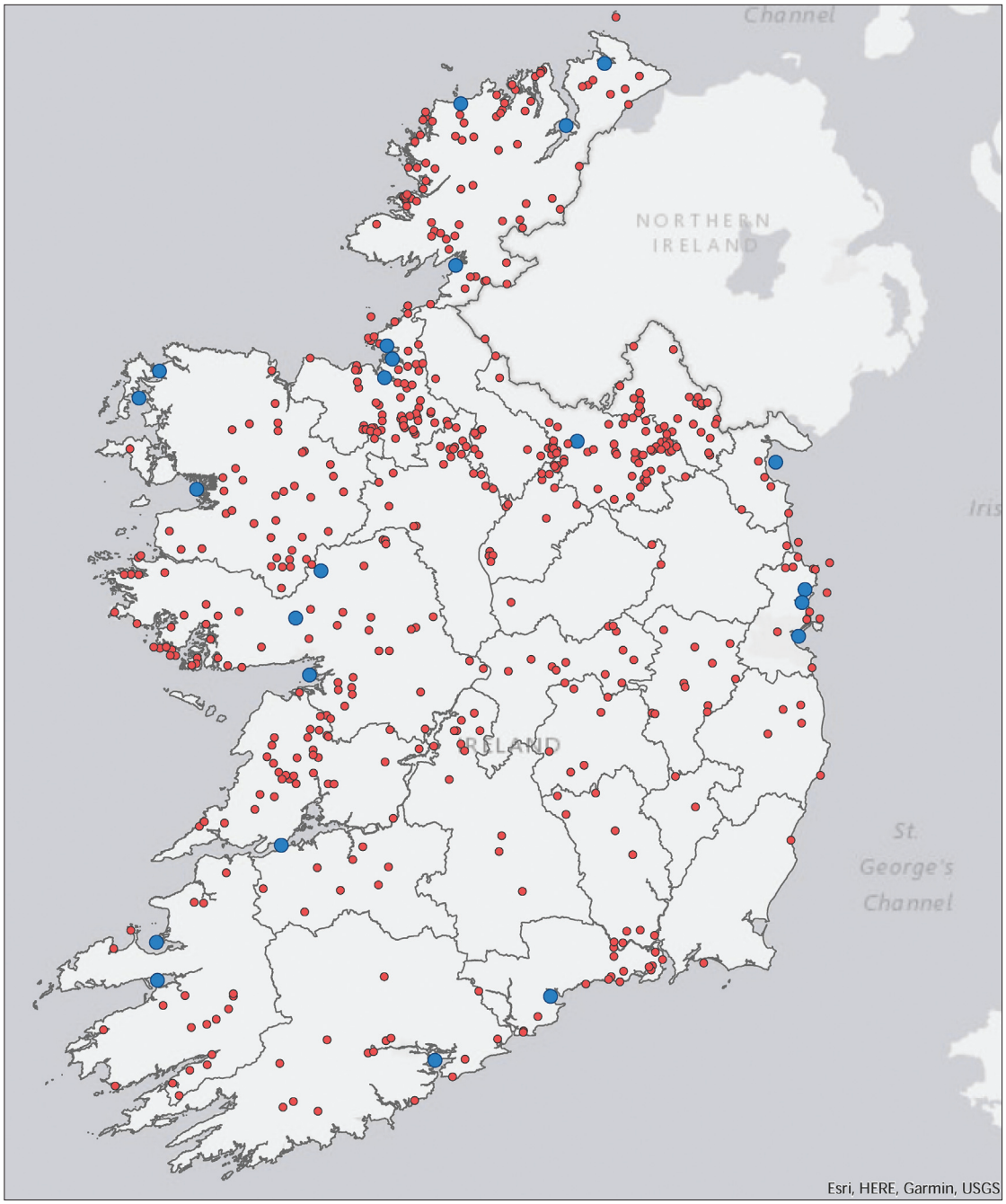
Know anyone who can take on of any of these sites?

By **Niamh Fitzgerald** (I-WeBS National Organiser)

On page 4 you will have read that we cannot accurately produce trends at a site level if a site does not meet the appropriate level of coverage. At present we have many sites that have not been surveyed since 2016/17 or earlier (shown as red dots on the map below), jeopardising our long-term ability to analyse trends at these sites.

In light of this, please take a look at the map and get in touch with us if you know of anyone with a scope and good bird ID skills who would be suitable to take on one of the vacant sites. Many of these sites are small and close together, meaning one person could easily fill several of these gaps in a few short hours.

The blue dots represent sites where surveys are carried out by a team of counters, and they are always in need of extra pairs of experienced eyes. So, do keep these sites in mind as well. Of course, if you are already taking part and would like to help out at other sites, do let us know.



I-WeBS sites in need of coverage. Coverage is determined by the data received for each site. Sites with no recent cover are shown as red dots (no data received since 2016/17 or earlier). Sites where surveys are carried out by co-ordinated count teams are shown as blue dots. The sites can also be viewed at **bit.ly/sites-map**

Note: We endeavour to create images that are accommodating to all ranges of vision, including colour-blindness, but if you experience an issue in interpreting any of our maps or other images, please do get in touch so we may improve our standards in the future.

Count Dates 2022/23

	East Coast & Inland Counties		South & West Coast Counties	
	Weekend	High Tide (Sunday) Dublin[1]	***Weekend***	High Tide (Sunday) Cork[2]
Sep	10th-11th	13:15	17th-18th	11:28
Oct	08th-09th	12:10	15th-16th	09:58
Nov	12th-13th	14:07	19th-20th	14:35
Dec	10th-11th	13:13	17th-18th	12:43
Jan	07th-08th	12:23	14th-15th*	10:44
Feb	11th-12th	15:35	18th-19th	16:54
Mar	11th-12th	14:29	18th-19th	15:48

[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 14th-15th 2023


Greylag Goose

Richard T Mills

Icelandic Greylag Goose Census
Late November


Ringed Plover 'PH' *Jan Rod*

Here are the recommended dates for the 2022/2023 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.

International Waterbird Census estimates

At the end of 2023, **Wetlands International** will be publishing an updated **East Atlantic Flyway** assessment – for more on this, see **bit.ly/flyway2020.** To ensure I-WeBS data are included in these important estimates, **please submit your January 2023 data straightaway after the season ends.**

To meet other key analysis and reporting deadlines in the future, we would like to ask that count data be submitted promptly after the end of each count season. The **deadline is the end of May** after each winter season ends.

We strongly encourage you to input counts after every monthly visit (for those entering online). This avoids gathering a backlog of data to enter which can then be time-consuming.

2022/23 workshops

Season 29 (2022/23) workshops will take place online, with outings in Tralee (Kerry) and at Lough Ree (Westmeath/Roscommon) during October 2022. The methods will be presented at the online event. Methods can then be put to the test at the outings, where we will have a short indoor session, lunch, and then carry out a count in the field.

Workshops are not only a great opportunity to meet and recruit potential new counters, but we are always delighted to see existing counters there as well. Please register your interest here: **bit.ly/BWI-workshops**

Scientific Research Network

Calling all scientists, researchers, ecologists, policy-makers and practitioners: do you want to help uncover the drivers behind the declines in our bird populations? Are there questions you can answer using the **Irish Wetland Bird Survey** and **Countryside Bird Survey** datasets? Since being established in the early 1990s, both surveys have built up robust, high-quality datasets and we want you to put them to use. We have recently established the **Scientific Research Network** to help support further research using these datasets. You can sign up to the network here: **bit.ly/BWI-network**

The I-WeBS Office

Lesley Lewis, Niamh Fitzgerald, Brian Burke and John Kennedy

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

BirdWatchIreland

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