



# I-WeBS News

The Newsletter of the Irish Wetland Bird Survey

Issue 27 August 2023



Shoveler  
Shay Connolly

## Cheers to our 30 years!

**W**hat an incredible feat to have reached this point! The 2023/24 season will be the 30<sup>th</sup> year of the Irish Wetland Bird Survey. That's three whole decades of data, discoveries and many stories and memories collected by those carrying out the survey. For this anniversary issue, we want to turn the focus away from the science and towards the people who made it all possible: you, the indispensable counter networkers. In the centre pages, you will read about the experiences of some counters during their time surveying. No two surveyors have the same motivations. No two will have the same tale to tell. What is your I-WeBS story?

In this issue, we revisit the contentious plan to build an airport on Portugal's largest wetland. Recent research from the Tagus harnesses the power of ringing to reveal how we have overlooked the value of connected networks of wetland sites (see page 2). They show not only is it important to preserve individual wetland sites, but also the network of refuges that surround them.

Disturbance is a hot topic in this issue. In the species profile, you will read how **Grey Plover** are faithful to not just one site, but to one small patch. Could displacement be detrimental to an Fheadóg Ghlas (see page 6)? Plans to reduce canine disturbance on wetlands have been implemented on Dublin's **Bull Island** – read page 3 to find out more.

Avian influenza has been a devastating issue again this summer. We have yet to find out if, or how, it will affect our wintering birds. As with previous count seasons, please remain vigilant for sick or dying birds and, if encountered, please do report them.

Don't forget to cast an eye over the back page for the scheduled I-WeBS dates, along with other updates and information. Happy counting for the season ahead!

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

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An tSeirbh  is P  irceanna N  isi  nta  
agus Fiadh  la  
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# The importance of considering connectivity

Lisbon study finds impact assessments underestimated risk to godwits

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



A study\* published this year found that Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) may hugely underestimate the number of birds impacted by a development, by failing to consider the movement of individuals.

The study focused on the Tagus Estuary in Lisbon, Portugal, and the potential impact of a planned airport on the wintering **Black-tailed Godwit** population that uses the Special Protection Area (SPA) at the estuary (see *I-WeBS News*, No 24, for more background).

The 'impact footprint' of the airport and the associated noise disturbance overlaps with part of the SPA as well as with unprotected parts of the estuary used by the godwits and other waterbirds.

While the EIA relied on count data alone, this study incorporated more than 20 years of resightings of nearly 700 colour-ringed godwits to examine site fidelity and the within-winter movements from one part of the estuary to another.

Many species use a network of locations in a given area during the winter, which may vary depending on seasonal food availability, tidal state, weather, water levels, competition, density, disturbance or a range of other factors. If a species is mobile and uses more than one part of a wetland during the winter, then the number of birds that rely on any individual location will far exceed any peak count due to 'turnover' of individuals.

Of the ringed godwits at the Tagus, 83% used sites inside the SPA, 68% used sites outside the SPA, and 61% used sites inside



Black-tailed Godwits, one colour-ringed, North Lagoon, Bull Island, Dublin Mark Carmody

and outside the SPA. Of 30 sites across the wetland complex, 24 were determined to be part of the 'network' used by Black-tailed Godwits, 16 of which were unprotected, and 14 of those supported birds that also used the SPA.

From a connectivity point of view, the SPA was found to include only two of the five most important sites for the godwits. The main 'stepping-stone' site is outside the SPA.

By simulating the 'removal' of sites which will suffer disturbance from aircraft noise, the study revealed significantly reduced connectivity across the estuary-wide network and *increased* the relative importance of undisturbed sites, many of which are outside the SPA and therefore are lacking statutory protection.

Ultimately, the predicted disturbance would likely reduce the available habitat to the godwits, decreasing the size of the SPA population through death and/or

relocation of individuals, as well as increasing disturbance and physiological stress on those that remained.

## Birds depend on networks

Around 45% of the SPA's godwit population would actually be impacted, and 68% of the entire estuary population. This greatly exceeds the estimated 0.46%-5.5% of the SPA's godwit population that was predicted to be impacted in the EIA for the proposed airport. This study is important because it suggests that other EIAs may be significantly underestimating the impact of disturbance or habitat loss by not considering the network of locations used by wintering waterbird populations over the course of a season.

This, of course, has implications for Ireland too, as our wintering waterbirds likely use a network of locations over a given area, both wetland and wider, with high degrees of site fidelity. This needs to be considered when evaluating potential impacts, designating protected sites and targeting conservation actions.

➡ From an I-WeBS point of view, please let us know if waterbirds are using a location in your area that is not currently part of the I-WeBS monitoring network so we can add it as a new subsite.

➡ Also, please keep a close eye out for ringed birds of any species, and email [bburke@birdwatchireland.ie](mailto:bburke@birdwatchireland.ie) to report them or if you need help to report them.



Colour-ringed Black-tailed Godwits photographed in Ireland Joe Lennon, Richard T Mills

\* Nightingale, J, Gill, JA, Pórisson, B, Potts, PM, Gunnarsson, TG and Alves, JA (2023) Conservation beyond Boundaries: using animal movement networks in Protected Area assessment. *Animal Conservation*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/acv.12868>



# New restrictions in place at busy Bull Island

Will they be enough to reduce the impact of disturbance on birdlife at this important Dublin site?

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

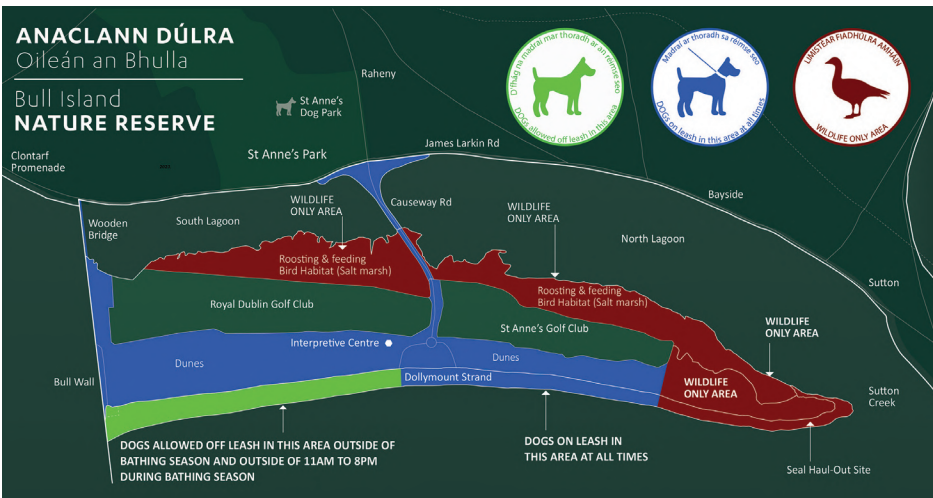
Earlier this year, **Dublin City Council** announced plans to restrict walkers and dogs from parts of Bull Island, for the protection of birds and wildlife. As of this summer, dogs will only be allowed off leash on the southern half of the beach and must be kept on a leash on the northern half of the beach and throughout the sand dunes.

Furthermore, walkers are now asked not to use the saltmarsh that runs the length of the landward side of the island, and the northern tip of the island is similarly off limits.

The new visitor access management plan is voluntary, however, so it remains to be seen how effective it will be or if there will be any noticeable changes in behaviour that benefit the birds and allow them more respite.

That being said, it would appear to be a step in the right direction and an acknowledgment of the scale of disturbance at this very important site and the impact this has on breeding and on migratory non-breeding birds alike.

The issue of recreational disturbance will be familiar to many I-WeBS counters. We are trying to gather as much information as possible about the pressures and threats facing wintering waterbirds at I-WeBS sites



Dublin City Council map of restrictions on Bull Island. Red areas (saltmarsh and tip of island) are off limits to walkers. Dogs must be kept on leash in blue areas (sand dunes and northern half of beach), while dogs are allowed off the leash at times in green area (southern half of beach).

across the country. As such, we can more accurately report on the problems facing the wintering birds at Irish wetlands and hopefully influence changes to address them.

We're asking all I-WeBS counters to fill out our online **Pressures & Threats** form at least once per season, for each I-WeBS site that you count, so we have a representative snapshot of what the problems are, and where they are.

The form has a comprehensive list of issues, but should only take a few minutes to fill out.

If you fill in your I-WeBS counts online, you'll find a link to the form at the end, but otherwise it can be accessed here: [bit.ly/iwebs-jotform](https://bit.ly/iwebs-jotform).

➔ For further information, please contact [bullisland@dublincity.ie](mailto:bullisland@dublincity.ie).

## Knot your average holiday!

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



This spring, I had the opportunity to see some of our wintering waterbirds in a whole new light – on their staging and breeding grounds in Iceland. What a treat that was! There were breeding birds at every turn – **Whimbrels** singing on fence posts, **Redshanks** and **Oystercatchers** in display flight, **Whoopers** nesting on the side of the road, dozens of **Arctic Terns** nesting in fields, and **Red-throated Divers** in full breeding plumage within arm's reach.

The ethereal volcanic landscape offered spectacular views of species I would not often see in Ireland, such as **White-tailed Eagles** and **Arctic Skuas**. Connecting with some 'lifers' was quite the thrill, e.g., **Harlequin**

**Duck, Ptarmigan** and a glimpse of an **Arctic Fox**. Seeing **Red Knots** sporting their gorgeous brick-red plumage and carrying out courtship displays was a major highlight.

The flocks of Knot (*spp islandica*) were the very thing drawing us to south-west Iceland. The international team (comprising waterbirds enthusiasts from Norway, the Netherlands, Ireland, Scotland and England) travelled north with the aim of ringing and ring-reading Knots to learn more about their journeys along the East Atlantic Flyway.

The team leader, **Jim Wilson**, has been studying Knots since the early 1970s, over which time he has made many discoveries about their habits and movements.

In spite of howling winds and rain, the trip was very successful. On the second day of my trip (17<sup>th</sup> of May)



we managed to catch 304 Knots, five of which had been ringed before in Iceland, France and the Netherlands, and two in England. The remaining birds were fitted with a brand-new suite of rings and an inscribed flag.

A total of 287 individuals were resighted by the team over the course of the trip. Already these sightings have revealed some very interesting findings, including one bird ringed in the USA (see Table 1, below).

As I write, one of the 2023-ringed birds has just been spotted in the UK. It won't be long now before they start showing up on our shores. Keep those eyes peeled and be sure to let us know if you see any ringed birds!

Read more in **Carole Davis'** and **Bernard Siddle's** blog at [bit.ly/looking-for-knot](https://bit.ly/looking-for-knot).

**Table 1.** Resightings of colour-marked Knots.

| Region where colour-marked | Number resighted in Iceland during trip |
|----------------------------|---|
| The Netherlands            | 108                                     |
| United Kingdom             | 102                                     |
| Iceland                    | 69                                      |
| Norway                     | 6                                       |
| Ireland                    | 1                                       |
| USA                        | 1                                       |



Paddy Martin on an early morning count Clive Darling



Dublin Bay counters at Bull Island Niall O'Byrne

# The people who count

We asked some long-time I-WeBS counters to tell us what motivated them to take part in the survey

By **Amy Lewis** (Communications Officer, BirdWatch Ireland, *pictured*) and **Niamh Fitzgerald** (I-WeBS National Organiser)



Since the Irish Wetland Bird Survey (I-WeBS) was established in 1994, a huge amount of data has been gathered, which has greatly informed water-

bird conservation and management in Ireland.

This work could not be done without the dedication, enthusiasm and knowledge of our network of close to 500 I-WeBS volunteers. Every one of these volunteers has made a contribution. Every one has a story to tell.

Indeed, in addition to gathering vital information about wintering waterbird populations, these volunteers have collected memories throughout the hours of surveying at sites around the country.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Pat Smiddy** has been taking part in I-WeBS in Cork since the very beginning, having sharpened his skills through his involvement in **Clive Hutchinson's** Wetlands Enquiry in late 1972. His desire to continue contributing to surveys, coupled with the joy he felt in encountering some of the same birds year after year, encouraged him to get and remain involved.

"I recall nationally minor but locally significant events, such as new peaks for individual species or the occurrence of new species at my study sites. As bird populations using wetlands have changed significantly over the years, I recall the first **Little Egrets** and their subsequent

increase; the increase in **Brent Geese** and wintering numbers of **Lesser Black-backed Gulls**.

"Alongside these, the decline of other species brings on a tinge of sadness and foreboding for what the future might have in store, but there is comfort in knowing that we now have a body of data that is of enormous value, which must be continued," he says.

\* \* \* \* \*

Like Pat, **Derek Brennan** has contributed to I-WeBS since day one and, prior to that, was involved in Clive Hutchinson's Wetlands Enquiry. In 2021, he became the Lough Swilly Site Coordinator; a role previously held by **Ralph Sheppard** for almost 30 years.

"It's nice to be able to direct some of the knowledge acquired over the years into something that might make a tangible difference. If the work helps in some way to preserve what we have, it's well worth the effort," says Derek.

Derek's surveying has seen him cross paths with many like-minded individuals, along with a wide variety of birds and several other species. Indeed, some of his fondest memories concern the many unexpected sightings he has had along the journey.

"An **Otter** approached me once and proceeded to bark and whistle at me. Hasn't happened before or since! A small pod of **Bottlenose Dolphins** once emerged out of the dense fog. The count was cancelled, but the memory stays. Seeing a field full of newly arrived **Whoopers** feeding and calling excitedly [is another fond memory of mine]," he says.

\* \* \* \* \*

Recognising the many pressures facing our natural world, including climate change and habitat loss, **Damaris Lysaght** decided to harness her passion and interest in birds and begin surveying for I-WeBS. She has been surveying in west Cork for 13 years now.

"I learn which species use my sites, where they feed depending on the tide, weather and time of day, and where their high-tide roosts are. I like watching for returning migrants. I never know what I will see on any one day's count. Maybe a rare bird will turn up. Exciting, too, is finding a ringed bird and discovering where and when it was ringed and how far it has travelled."

Indeed, Damaris has had a number of exciting encounters, including a flyover from a **White-tailed Eagle** while counting in Ardroom; a **Spoonbill** sighting at Ringarogy Island; and a ringside view of an **Osprey** catching a fish in its talons at Lissagriffin Lake.

\* \* \* \* \*

While he considered birdwatching a hobby, **John Fox** was keen to make a greater contribution to conservation, so when he heard that BirdWatch Ireland was seeking I-WeBS recruits, he didn't hesitate to sign up.

That was back in 2008 and, since then, so much has happened for John. As a member of the North Dublin Bay count team, John has expanded his knowledge of birds, as well as his social circle.

One of his fellow volunteers, the late **Ger Franck**, became a dear friend to John





I-WeBS counters at Lough Swilly, Co Donegal Aengus Kennedy

and the pair often met on the causeway to Bull Island before dawn. While Ger sadly passed away in 2022, he will remain in John's thoughts as he continues contributing to I-WeBS.

"Ger and I started I-WeBS surveying on the same Saturday morning in 2008.

[Former I-WeBS National Organiser]

**Helen Boland** accompanied us that first time, introducing us to everyone, showing us the vantage points for our section and the methodology for the survey itself.



The late Ger Franck *John Fox*

"From then on, Ger and I usually covered that same section together, either by ourselves or with a few others. We often had beginners with us, and we would show them the ropes, just as Helen had done for us," he recalls.

"Ger and I developed a comfortable way of working together. We both knew the other's strengths and weaknesses, allowing us to get the surveys done harmoniously. We would often confer, looking down each other's scopes to see an unusual bird or, in a gale and rain, to try to decide on a difficult-to-identify flock of distant waders. Over the years we spent surveying our section and birding together, I learned a lot from Ger. He was a wonderful friend and, as I continue with

I-WeBS since his sad passing in 2022, I continue to miss him greatly."

\* \* \* \* \*

Pat, Derek, John and Damaris are some of the many people who have helped to build I-WeBS into one of Ireland's premier long-term biological monitoring programmes. Since its establishment, it has evolved into a key tool in waterbird conservation and management, as **Seán Kelly** from the **National Parks and Wildlife Service** (NPWS) explains:

"I-WeBS underpins a major part of the network of designated Special Protection Areas and is central to our understanding of how over 60 species of waterbird are faring at the local, national and international level.

"I-WeBS also contributes to the understanding of factors driving changes in waterbird numbers and distribution. The power of this is seen in the recently produced site-specific trends and recent scientific publications assessing the impacts of climate change on waterbird distribution across Europe, which utilised I-WeBS data.

"The survey provides vital data to inform the appropriateness of developments in waterbird areas.

"I-WeBS also provides hugely interesting and valuable data to local birders and counters interested in the health of their local wetlands and waterbird species, as well as being a great vehicle for engaging the public in conservation."

"Sometimes, when your fingertips are numb and eyes watering in a cold winter wind, it can be challenging, but the impact, power and value of this monitoring programme cannot be understated – and that is full credit to all the volunteer and professional counters from BirdWatch Ireland and the NPWS who make the survey what it is."

## "Ceist agam ort..."

The I-WeBS Office recently sent some counters a short questionnaire, asking for their thoughts on the survey and their fondest memories. **Máirtín Enright**, a long-term member of the Sligo Bays count team, responded to the questionnaire as follows:

### ■ What year did you start surveying with I-WeBS?

30 bliain ó shin; 1993.

### ■ What was your motivation for taking part in the survey?

Ón gcéad lá riamh, thuigeadh gur tionscnamh an-tábhachach é seo, tionscnamh a mhéadódh go mór lenár n-eolas ar líon na n-éan a chaitheann an geimhreadh ar na gnáthóga bogach. Léiríonn torthaí an tsuirbhé cén stádas náisiúnta agus idirnáisiúnta atá ag speiceas ar leith.

### ■ What do you like most about surveying your I-WeBS site/s?

Braithim go mbíonn lucht an tsuirbhé ag feidhmiú mar mhaoirseoirí ar na lapairí, ar na lachain, ar na h-ealaí agus ar na géanna fiáine. Cuireann sé lenár n-eolas ar ár gceantar áitiúil. Cothaíonn an suirbhé cáirdeas, comhlúadar agus cuideachta i measc na mball. Is caitheamh aimsire sláintiúil é; bímid amuigh cois cuain sa drochaimsir agus san aimsir bhreá comh maith céanna. Bíonn fáilte roimh an gcupán tae ag an teacht le chéile ag deireadh an tseisiúin, agus buailimid le héaneolaithe 'nua' ó am go ham.

### ■ What is your fondest memory from surveying your I-WeBS site/s?

Mar a deireann an sean-nath cainte, 'An rud is annamh is iontach.' Gealaíonn mo chroí nuair a chím **Cruidín** (Kingfisher) ar bharr sceiche cois abhainn, lapaire Meiriceánach nó gobadán neamhchoitianta (e.g. **Rufachán** (Ruff) nó gobadán gann) cois trá nó **Gé Shneachta** (Snow Goose) i measc na **gCadhan** (Barnacle Geese). Is díol suntais é 'míorúil' na himirce, na héin ag teacht thar n-ais go dtí na gnáthóga céanna ó bhliain go bliain.

### ■ Máirtín also commented:

"Mar a tharlaíonn sé, ghlac mé páirt i suirbhé na mbogach [Fiosrúchán na mBogach] i lár na 1970idí in éineacht le mo mheantóir **Noel Murphy**. Is ar an suirbhé sin den chuid is mó a bhunaigh **Clive Hutchinson** (nach maireann) a chuid oibre. Bhíodh mé féin agus Noel ag iarraidh talamh a chlúdach in aon lá amháin – talamh a chlúdaíonn trí nó ceithre fhoireann I-WeBS sa lá atá inniu ann! B'fhéidir nach raibh an suirbhé a rinne muidne chomh cuimsitheach le suirbhéanna an lae inniu, ach leag sé síos bonnlíne do shuirbhéanna eile a tháinig ina dhiaidh."



# Our declining Grey Plovers

We may be underestimating the effects of disturbance

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



The decline in numbers of wintering **Grey Plovers** in Ireland represents our second-largest declining wintering wader population. Only **Lapwings** are exhibiting greater

declines at national level.

With a 'large' national decline (-58.8% over 23 years), Grey Plovers are becoming harder to see at our coastal estuaries, where this wader tends to occur along the more muddy and sandy mud shores.

With a flyway population estimated at 200,000 individuals, the numbers wintering here are relatively small. The Republic of Ireland supports just over 1% of the flyway population during winter and no individual site holds numbers of international importance. But wintering numbers have been progressively declining over time.

During 2022, we published site trends for Grey Plover for 16 of our wetland sites, and declines are evident at all sites over the long term.<sup>1</sup> These sites are distributed round the coastline, from Killala Bay in the north-west to Dungarvan in the south-east.

Our wintering Grey Plovers originate from western Siberia and north-western Russia, flying along the migratory route known as the **East Atlantic Flyway**, across western Europe into western Africa. The East Atlantic Flyway population is in decline.<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, recent **UK Wetland Bird Survey** reporting shows declining populations in Northern Ireland, Scotland, England and Wales.

What is causing these declines? Grey

Plovers are likely to be experiencing threats both on their breeding grounds and wintering grounds, but also along their migration route. This makes it very difficult to predict causal factors.

A combination of many factors is likely to be at play. It has been suggested that the species may simply not be migrating as far as Ireland, short-stopping due to continental winters being less harsh. Climate change may be impacting the breeding grounds, with warming temperatures affecting food availability and predator-prey interactions at a crucial time for chicks. But factors on the wintering grounds could also be affecting this species.

Habitat loss and disturbance are increasingly worrying issues in Ireland. Repeated bouts of disturbance are equivalent to habitat loss if birds are disturbed many times over and cannot remain to forage in their preferred areas.

Grey Plovers are extremely site-faithful to a point where they can be highly territorial and faithful to specific 'patches' within wetland sites (within-site fidelity). **Klaus Michael Exo** and co-authors<sup>3</sup> found that tracked Grey Plovers (including birds tracked to Ireland) not only returned to the same site during winter but almost to the same spot!

Does this make this species more susceptible to the effects of disturbance? The answer is most likely yes. The common thought that birds 'have plenty of other areas to go to' cannot hold true when territoriality and patch faithfulness are clearly necessary for the bird's survival. Being forced to move to a less optimum patch may seriously impact foraging success and, indeed, winter survival. Ultimately, this may jeopardise future (reproductive) fitness of the bird



Grey Plover John N Murphy

when it arrives back on its breeding ground.

We need to look more closely at the effects of disturbance on our wintering waterbirds. The I-WeBS Office aims to review this subject in depth before our next round of assessment reporting.

## References

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3. Exo, KM, Hillig, F & Bairlein, F (2019) Migration routes and strategies of Grey Plovers (*Pluvialis squatarola*) on the East Atlantic Flyway as revealed by satellite tracking. *Avian Research* 10, 28. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40657-019-0166-5>.
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## Factfile

### Name

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

### Irish name

Feadóg Ghlas

### Other names

Sea Plover, Sea Cock, Strand Plover

### Distribution in Ireland

Almost exclusively coastal. Mostly estuaries with muddy sediment.

### Key wintering sites

Wexford Harbour & Slobbs, Dublin Bay, Dundalk Bay, Ballymacoda Bay, Dungarvan Harbour.

### Irish population

All-Ireland population estimated to be 2,940, of which 2,812 occur in the Republic of Ireland.<sup>4</sup>

### Migratory origins

The nominate subspecies breeds in the tundra zone of Siberia, from the Kanin Peninsula to the Bering Sea. There are two recognised flyway populations; the birds occurring in Ireland originate from western Siberia and north-west Russia.

### Status

Wetlands International<sup>2</sup> estimates a population size of 200,000 individuals with a declining population trend.



Grey Plover Richard T Mills



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

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

By John Kennedy (I-WeBS Office)

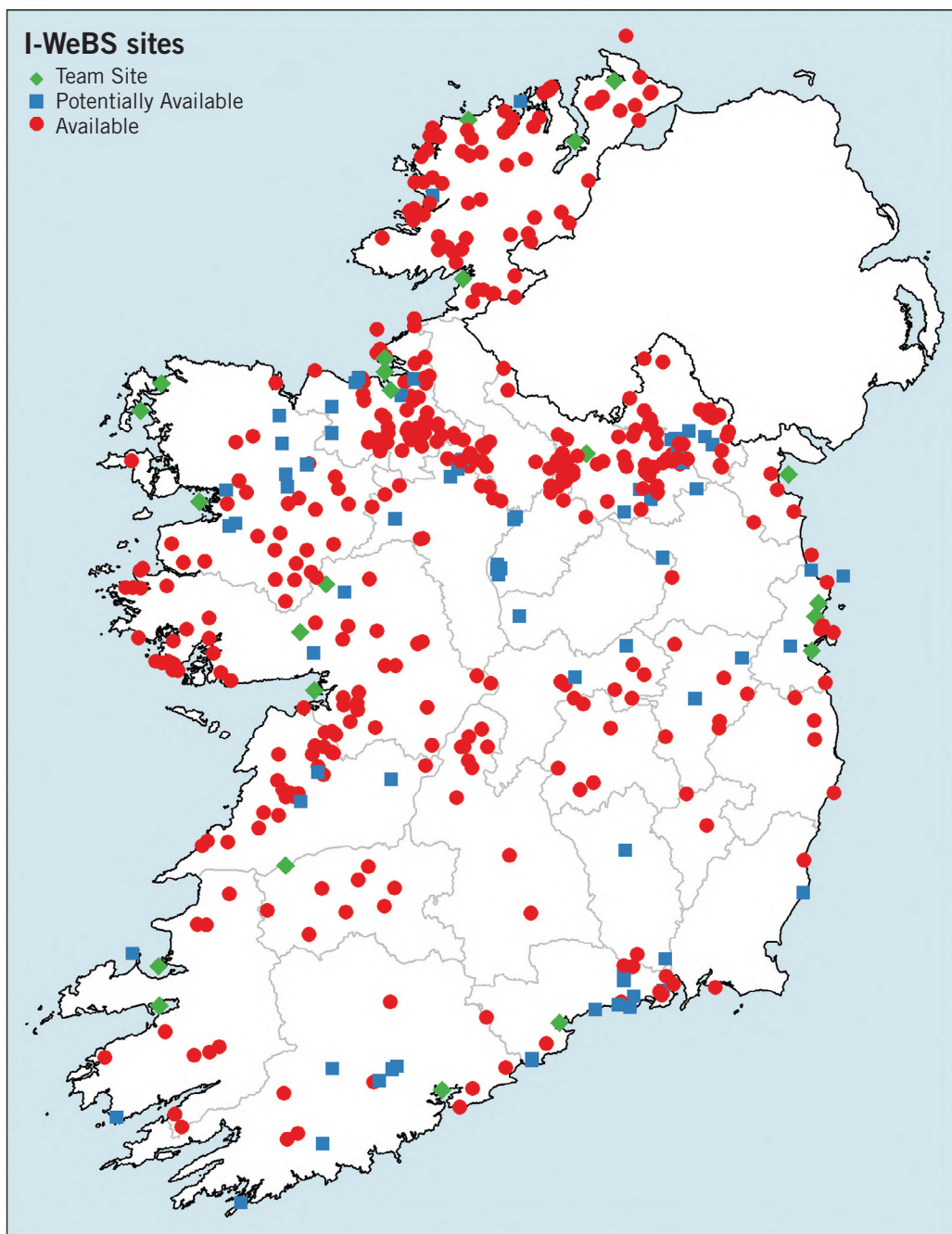


Do you know of anyone with a scope and good bird ID skills that would be interested in taking on one of the vacant sites shown below? Many of these sites are small and close together, meaning one person could easily fill several of these gaps in a few short hours.

The green diamonds represent sites where

surveys are carried out by a team of counters, and they are always in need of extra pairs of experienced eyes.

If you, or someone you know, would like to join a count team or help out at other sites, please do get in touch with Niamh at [iwebs@birwatchireland.ie](mailto:iwebs@birwatchireland.ie).



**I-WeBS sites in need of cover.** Cover is primarily determined by the data received for each site. Green diamonds represent sites surveyed by a coordinated survey team and new team members are always welcome. Blue squares represent sites with potential availability – all subsites have counters assigned to them but no data has been loaded from any subsite within the last five years. Red dots represent sites with at least one subsite that does not have a counter assigned.

**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.



## I-WeBS Count Dates 2023/24

| East Coast & Inland Counties |                                      |  | South & West Coast Counties        |  |                                      |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| Weekend                      |                                      | High Tide (Sunday) Dublin <sup>1</sup> | Weekend                            |  | High Tide (Sunday) Cork <sup>2</sup> |
| Sep                          | 02 <sup>nd</sup> -03 <sup>rd</sup>   | 14:48                                  | 09 <sup>th</sup> -10 <sup>th</sup> |  | 15:24                                |
| Oct                          | 14 <sup>th</sup> -15 <sup>th</sup>   | 12:43                                  | 07 <sup>th</sup> -08 <sup>th</sup> |  | 13:31                                |
| Nov                          | 18 <sup>th</sup> -19 <sup>th</sup>   | 15:46                                  | 11 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup> |  | 16:43                                |
| Dec                          | 16 <sup>th</sup> -17 <sup>th</sup>   | 14:36                                  | 09 <sup>th</sup> -10 <sup>th</sup> |  | 15:31                                |
| Jan                          | 13 <sup>th</sup> -14 <sup>th</sup> * | 13:32                                  | 20 <sup>th</sup> -21 <sup>st</sup> |  | 13:58                                |
| Feb                          | 10 <sup>th</sup> -11 <sup>th</sup>   | 12:28                                  | 17 <sup>th</sup> -18 <sup>th</sup> |  | 12:09                                |
| Mar                          | 02 <sup>nd</sup> -03 <sup>rd</sup>   | 16:32                                  | 09 <sup>th</sup> -10 <sup>th</sup> |  | 17:32                                |

<sup>1</sup> Based on high-tide time predicted for the North Wall, Dublin

<sup>2</sup> Based on high-tide time predicted for Cork Harbour

Due to the way the tides are falling this season, there are a couple of months in which the south and west coast county dates will take place a week *before* the east coast and inland county dates

### \*International Waterbird Census

January 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> 2024

### Icelandic Greylag Goose Census

Late November

Here are the recommended dates for the 2023/2024 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.



Lapwing Richard T Mills

## Upcoming events

Workshops will be held in autumn again this year. There will be one online event and multiple in-person events at different locations. That is not the only event that will be happening this year. As you will have read on pages 4 and 5, we had the pleasure of speaking to a few participants about their experiences through I-WeBS. Later this year we will be hosting an online anniversary event for all survey participants. Join us to share your experiences and have your say on the future of the survey.

Details of the event dates and locations will be sent out via email, so be sure to keep an eye on your inbox. We look forward to seeing you all, whether on screen or in person!

## Data deadline

Thank you for the fantastic response to the May data submission deadline. We saw both paper forms and online entries fly in at pace after the season had ended. The deadline will remain the same going forward. Please get all of your survey results in by the end of May. If you do not have your personalised link for I-WeBS online, please email the I-WeBS Office.

## Scientific research

Would you like to use the **Irish Wetland Bird Survey** or **Countryside Bird Survey** datasets (both of which are freely available) in your research? If you have a project in mind for these datasets, we'd love for you to join our **Scientific Research Network** here: [bit.ly/BWI-network](https://bit.ly/BWI-network).

## Post-breeding terns

Our breeding terns were badly hit by the Avian Influenza outbreaks this summer. Now more than ever it is important for us to try to get a grasp on the numbers and locations of roosting tern flocks between the breeding season and their winter migration. Please help us keep tabs on our post-breeding terns by reporting any flocks via [iwebs@birdwatchireland.ie](https://iwebs@birdwatchireland.ie) or via [bit.ly/roosting-terns](https://bit.ly/roosting-terns).

## 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](mailto:iwebs@birdwatchireland.ie). You can also visit our website, [bit.ly/IWeBS](https://bit.ly/IWeBS), for other resources. For queries about I-WeBS data, please contact Lesley at [ljlewis@birdwatchireland.ie](mailto: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