



Cape Clear Bird Observatory Annual Report 2023/2024



Prepared by Steve Wing, John Horton & Brian Caffrey

REPORT NUMBER 31

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CCBO Annual Report 2023/2024 Production Team

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Cover photograph: *Upland Sandpiper, Bill of Clear, October 9–13th 2023 (Steve Wing)*



Turtle Dove (Steve Wing)

Cape Clear Bird Observatory Annual Report 2023/2024

INTRODUCTION

This is the 31st annual report for BirdWatch Ireland's Cape Clear Bird Observatory (CCBO). It covers the years 2023 and 2024.

Founded in 1959, the Observatory is located on Cape Clear Island, situated 13 kilometres (eight miles) off the coast of west Cork. Cape Clear is one of the best places to watch seabird migration in Europe, especially during the late summer months.

Spring and autumn bring large numbers of songbirds moving to and from their breeding

grounds, amongst which there are usually one or two strays from North America or Siberia.

BirdWatch Ireland's observatory on Cape Clear is visited annually by dozens of birdwatchers, bird ringers and general wildlife enthusiasts.

The long tradition of bird and biodiversity recording on the island makes Cape Clear Bird Observatory a beacon for environmental research, education and monitoring in Ireland.

Steve Wing, John Horton & Brian Caffrey*

** The texts for the year 2023 were written by Steve Wing, who sadly passed away in September 2024. The texts for 2024 were written by John Horton. The final texts were read and approved by Brian Caffrey.*

SURVEYING & MONITORING 2023

The Daily Log

During 2023, the formal Daily Log was called on most nights from March 23rd until October 31st, with casual observations added in the period prior to and after the dates mentioned. The table below shows the number of days the Daily Log was called each month in the main recording period, with bad weather or absence from the island being the reasons for missing days.

As usual, our thanks to Mary Cadogan and Dr Geoff Oliver for contributing observations during the months either side of our standard recording period. This helped to give us a more complete picture of the island’s birdlife for 2023.

Seawatching

The total number of hours (6,055) spent seawatching in 2023 was almost exactly the same as in 2022. The monthly breakdown is shown in Table 2 below.

As with 2022, we had a rather good summer weatherwise, and (paradoxically) this contributed to the lower number of seawatching hours and seabird records. It was disappointing not to record the huge numbers of Cory’s Shearwaters experienced by those watching from several headlands in Cork and south-west England at the time – but this was not from lack of looking!

Rather sadly, our local boatman, who for many years had taken us on pelagic trips and to carry out breeding seabird surveys, was suffering from ill health for most of 2023 and was unable to facilitate us.

Table 1. Number of days the Daily Log was called each month during the main recording period in 2023.

Month	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October
Totals	5	28	23	30	22	30	30	30

Table 2. Hours of seawatching carried out by Cape Clear Bird Observatory in 2023.

Month	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November
Totals	0	735	315	515	1050	1050	890	1500	0



Cape Clear Bird Observatory, North Harbour, Cape Clear (Steve Wing)

Table 3. Number of days each of the four main shearwater species were recorded each month in 2023.

	April	May	June	July	August	September	October
Species							
Great	0	0	0	4	2	5	3
Cory's	0	0	0	4	5	11	2
Sooty	0	0	0	5	8	9	12
Manx	10	6	12	18	23	11	10

Table 4. Total number of birds of each shearwater species recorded each month in 2023.

	April	May	June	July	August	September	October
Species							
Great	0	0	0	54	7	19	54
Cory's	0	0	0	3334	1171	3900	182
Sooty	0	0	0	92	42	27	4030
Manx	13665	1659	15432	70208	50528	11724	293

Bird ringing

Despite the good weather during much of the main migration periods and more visiting bird-ringers than usual, it was a disappointing season as far as ringing was concerned.

For far too many sessions we were checking empty nets, time and time again.

There had been quite extensive maintenance to the net lanes over the winter period, and all nets were available to be used, so those were not the reasons for the low numbers trapped.

It seems there were just not the same number of migrants moving through.

I did wonder if it could be attributed to my dislike of tape lures, which some ringers used during their visits, but to no great effect.

The Constant Effort Site (CES) season was not blessed with ideal weather at the times when it was needed or when I was able to attempt the sessions.

Of the 12 periods of the season, I was away for one, and four were not possible due to wind and/or rain. Just seven ringing sessions were completed for the CES in 2023.

The year's totals are shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Bird ringing totals in 2023.

New	404
Subsequent captures	404
Total	808 (of 33 species)

Moth trapping

Very little moth trapping was carried out in the Observatory garden during 2023 – after so many nights of low catches while others on the island were getting considerably more, it had an impact on morale and effort. It was a good year, though, and the results are presented later on in this report (*see page 45*).

Our thanks to our regular mothing visitors – Eamonn O'Donnell, Michael O'Donnell, Chick McNally, Lorraine Benson and Cape Clear resident Geoff Oliver.



Vestal (CCBO)

WILDLIFE REPORTS

Unlike in previous years, our official recording season in 2023 began on April 3rd, a little later than usual. However, casual recording was carried out from New Year's Day right up to the start date, with me [Steve Wing], Geoff Oliver and Mary Cadogan all adding observations. The recording year ended in early November, with closing down and report writing filling the rest of the month.

The Observatory added Upland Sandpiper, Iberian Chiffchaff and a 'heard only' Barolo Shearwater to our already impressive species list, taking the total to 331.

As with last year [2022], the whole of western Europe was treated to American passerine visitors – with the exception of west Cork. Yet again, there was no obvious reason for this anomaly, but at least our close neighbours – Galley Head and the Mizen Head peninsula – suffered the same fate.

I wonder if the demotion of Fastnet Lighthouse to a weaker LED lamp has altered the number of migrants being attracted to our corner of Ireland, with the lights of, say, Galway city, being more of an attraction? It is something we may never know.

On a brighter note, we did get two American waders, an Upland Sandpiper and a juvenile Pectoral Sandpiper, the first and eighth records respectively of the species for the island.

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Birds

MONTHLY BIRD SUMMARY 2023

January and February

Typical west Cork weather reigned for the first two months of the year – a mixture of sun, rain, fog and gales – but we still had calm mornings.

My New Year's Day morning walk produced a good variety of ducks (16 Teal, 11 Mallard, 2 Shovelers), waders (3 Redshanks, 3 Snipe), winter thrushes (1 Mistle Thrush, 1 Fieldfare, 17 Redwings, 7 Song Thrushes) and a Common Buzzard around Lough Erril. A male Blackcap was present around Cotter's Garden and the village area.

Cold weather on January 17th brought in more thrushes, with over 50 Fieldfares and 100+ Redwings joining the Mistle Thrush still present around East Bog. The first Lesser Black-backed Gull of the year was reported on January 25th.

February saw an increase in Buzzard sightings around the island, with a high count of 3 on the 19th. A walk through Cotter's Garden on the morning of the 12th flushed a Woodcock and a Sparrowhawk.

A single Water Rail took up residence in the Nordy Wood stream from the 21st, staying in that area until well into March. A Black Redstart on the 25th was a nice surprise, as was a very early Collared Dove on the 27th.

March

The first week of March gave us a light north-westerly breeze with broken skies before it turned south-

westerly and increased, at times to strong gale force.

The two Shelducks who had arrived at the beginning of March last year re-appeared at the lake this year on March 1st; we assume they were the same pair. They were joined on March 3rd by a Cape scarcity – Wigeon – seven of them, along with six Teal.

Wigeon numbers increased to 11 on the 5th before dropping to 4 on the 7th, a day when a Grey Heron was seen in North Harbour.

The first Curlew of the year was seen on March 6th – it turned out to be one of the few for the year. Also on the 6th, good spring numbers of Meadow Pipits (14) and Rock Pipits (7) were found scattered around the Wheatear Field, along with a high count for the month of 12 Choughs.

A nice feeding flock of Black-headed Gulls (80) was observed off the north end of the island on the 8th. On the same day, we had a late flurry of Fieldfares (10) and Redwings (10), while the first Little Grebes (2) of the year appeared on the 9th.

Four Great Northern Divers were seen from the ferry on March 13th, surprisingly the first of the year. These were followed on the 14th by the first large numbers of Lesser Black-backed Gulls (36) and Meadow Pipits (350+).

On March 17th, 245 Fulmars were found back on their breeding sites on Cape, and the year's first Kestrel was also noted on that day.

The 18th had several good sightings, including the year's first Gadwall on the lake, with 8 Teal, 4 Little Grebes and a Buzzard also found there.

Over the sea, 32 Manx Shearwaters passed with 85 Gannets and, on the water, we had 47 Guillemots and 22 Razorbills.



Meadow Pipit (*Steve Wing*)

A month's high count of Rock Doves (84) was recorded on Mary Cadogan's roof on the 20th, with a few of the 12 recorded Song Thrushes in her garden too, and a Chiffchaff also seen.

The first Sand Martin of the year was seen on March 24th, with the first Swallow appearing on the 26th. That day also produced the first Wheatears (4) and Rooks (2) – the latter an unusual spring visitor to the island. The month drew to a close with 2 Blackcaps on the 27th and with the Gadwall still present at the lake.

April

The month of showers didn't disappoint, with the first week seeing south to south-easterly winds, varying from force 4 to 7, with sun, showers and fog. The second week had northerly winds to start with, and storm force 10 winds on the 12th, before backing to the southerly quarter, staying there until the end of the month, and remaining bright apart from a grey, misty day on the 29th.

The first good sea passage of the year occurred on April 3rd, with Manxies (2,280 per hour) passing westwards and 360 Gannets noted. A pair of Cormorants took up residence at the mouth of South Harbour and could be seen pretty well every day throughout the year, although no sign of breeding was witnessed.

The Teal, 2 Shelducks and Buzzard remained around the lake for most of the month. Six Woodpigeons were seen near the Post Office on the 3rd, and the year's first

Willow Warbler (1), Chiffchaffs (4) and Goldcrests (2) were also seen that day, along with increased numbers of Greenfinches (17) and Goldfinches (28).

The 4th was a day to remember! Approaching Cotter's Garden, a small 'creamy' heron was flushed, flying back towards and beyond the Observatory. It was then flushed again and good flight views confirmed it to be an adult Black-crowned Night Heron! A full description of this sighting follows later in the report (*see page 37*), but most interestingly, it was joined in short order by a second bird, a juvenile.

A single Little Grebe at the lake was joined by an amazing 5 Black-winged Stilts on the 4th, when the long-staying male Gadwall was also noted. Two Swallows, 1 Sand Martin and 2 Wheatears were also noted in that area.

Two Grey Herons in North Harbour, 2 Blackcaps in Cotter's and a Sand Martin were all that kept the 5 Stilts company for the next couple of days – with the stilts all remaining until the 22nd.

The 7th saw 2 Red-throated and 7 Great Northern Divers being recorded from the ferry, 4 Little Grebes and 8 Oystercatchers at the lake, and Golden Plover and Tree Pipit flyovers along the High Road. Wheatear numbers had increased to 21, mainly around Ballyieragh but a few near the Old Lighthouse also.

The bird of the day, though, was an adult Purple Heron, found on the Low Road near East Bog. Sadly, the bird didn't survive its journey – for more on this see the Systematic List later in this report.



Whinchat (Steve Wing)

A new adult Black-crowned Night Heron was seen at the lake on the 8th, a Hoopoe was found in fields along the Lighthouse Road, and the stilts and Purple Heron were still present. Three Sandwich Terns seen from the ferry, increased numbers of Swallows (36) and Willow Warblers (29) and a Water Rail in the Nordy Wood all made for an excellent daylist.

A seawatch on the 9th saw 1 Great Northern Diver, 2 Bonxies, 160 Kittiwakes, 28 Puffins and – the star bird – a Velvet Scoter! Three Grey Herons plus the Purple Heron and the Night Herons made this an excellent heron day for the island.

The first Merlin (11th) and White Wagtail (12th) of the year and a Hoopoe (13th) were the best birds over the next few days until the first House Martin was seen on the 14th, along with a long-staying Woodchat Shrike (remaining until the 22nd). A quiet few days followed, with Cuckoo (18th), 6 Common Scoters, 1 Common Sandpiper (19th) and Cuckoo and Yellow Wagtail (20th) the main highlights. Three of the stilts left overnight on the 22nd, leaving us with just two, one of which had suffered a broken wing. The first Common Whitethroat and Pied Flycatcher of the year were found on the 29th.

May

The month started with a week of light southerly winds, with cool and cloudy days. The rest of the month saw mainly calm, sunny days, reflected in a decline in avian arrivals.

The Little Grebe and now only one Black-winged Stilt were still at the lake on the 1st, the latter not seen after the 3rd. A small arrival on the 5th saw 2 Great Northern Divers, Kestrel (1), Peregrine (2), Collared Doves (3), the first Turtle Dove (1) and Sedge Warblers (12) and Common Whitethroats (18).

A Whinchat on the 7th and a single Whimbrel and 400 Swallows on the 12th were the few highlights over the next few days, until a flock of 11 Whimbrel were seen flying over the Bill on the 16th and 5 Collared Doves were recorded.

No recording was carried out between the 20th and 28th.

The 29th saw the first Spotted Flycatcher, a Black Redstart and 7 Willow Warblers. The 30th saw a Long-eared Owl being heard in the Mass Track woods and a Nightjar nearby, only the 7th record for the island.

June

A very changeable month weatherwise, with the first two weeks giving mainly northerly breezes and sunny weather at first, then showery, followed by a week of calm, hot sunny days until the 22nd. Increasing south-westerly winds in the fourth week saw a lot of showers, some very heavy, with the wind turning to a stiff north-westerly for the last two days, with good sunny spells.

The Long-eared Owl seen on May 30th was heard on the Mass Track, along with the begging calls of one chick on the 1st, proving breeding for at least the



Juvenile Barn Swallow (Steve Wing)

second year running! Also on the 1st, a Swift and 1 Spotted Flycatcher were seen. Also proving breeding this time, for the first time, were the Grey Herons that had 'practiced' last year on a ledge in North Harbour, with the first chick seen poking its head above the parapet on the 2nd.

Plenty of Wheatear fledglings were evident around the Wheatear Field from the 2nd onwards. On the 4th, 3 Grey Heron chicks were seen in the nest, with 2 Collared Doves, 17 Sedge Warblers and 2 Buzzards recorded and a pair of Collared Doves showing signs of courtship in Michael Vincent's garden.

A good passage of Manxies (4,560 ph) was seen on the 5th and a ringtail Hen Harrier was seen over North Harbour that evening. A quiet spell followed before 3 Long-eared Owlets were heard calling in the Mass Track woods on the 10th, and a newly fledged Collared Dove was seen with its parents in trees along the Low Road – yet another first proven breeding record!

Little Grebe numbers were beginning to increase around the 20th, but unfortunately the three Grey Heron chicks became only two on that day. The pair of Peregrines were pretty active around North Harbour for most of the month, causing mayhem amongst the Rock Dove flock. An increase in Stonechats (26) and Common Whitethroats (60) was noted on the 21st. A small passage of Manx Shearwaters (3,580 ph) and Gannets (820 ph) was the last notable movement of the month.

July

The month started reasonably well weatherwise, with light north-westerly winds and sunshine, but from the 7th onwards the wind came from every quarter, ranging from light to strong and bringing rain, fog or both for much of the time.

The two remaining Grey Heron chicks continued to thrive and provided much-enjoyed 'scope views for the many tourists who came our way. As would be expected in July, passerine sightings were not exceptional, and any excitement came from the sea. The first 'good' day occurred on the 7th, with 8,000+ Manxies, 6 European Storm-petrels, 2 Wilson's Storm-petrels, 560 Gannets, 16 Puffins and an adult Sabine's Gull passing the south end. The 10th had fewer numbers, but had 5 Great Shearwaters (an addition to the year list), 3,000+ Manxies and a couple of Stormies. The star of the show, though, was a bird I heard late in the evening as I was standing outside the Obs, listening to the Manxies calling, a magical sound. In amongst them, and coming into the North Harbour, was a bird that I know was a Barolo Shearwater. The full story is related later in this report (*see page 35*) – but wow! What a sound!

Good numbers of Manxies (4,260 ph) and Gannets (690 ph) passed on the 13th, with 85 Swallows recorded that day. The 18th saw a massive movement of Manxies (11,000+ ph), the first Cory's Shearwaters (13) and first Sooty Shearwater (1) of the year and 2,520 Gannets.

Eleven Swifts on the 20th was an incredible daily count for Cape and were the only Swifts seen all month. A Long-eared Owl was seen hunting along the Low Road on the evening of the 21st and again on the 23rd.

The 22nd saw 4 Sooty Shearwaters and 2,400 Manxies, but little else with them. The 23rd, however, was very different, with Fulmar (640), Great Shearwater (1), Cory's Shearwater (14), Sooty Shearwater (9), Manx Shearwater (6,580), Balearic Shearwater (1), Gannet (1,860), European Storm-petrel (7), Wilson's Storm-petrel (1), Bonxie (1), Arctic Skua (1), Guillemot (600+), Razorbill (150+) and Puffin (57) all recorded; all heading west.

The 29th saw 3 Wilson's Storm-petrels and an estimated 3,000+ Cory's Shearwaters passing – part of a record-breaking year for Cory's off the Cork coastline. We didn't get anywhere near the numbers seen further east of Cape, but not for lack of looking! Fewer Cory's Shearwaters (307) were seen on the 30th, along with Great Shearwaters (11), Sooty Shearwaters (30), Stormies (18), Bonxie (1), Arctic Skuas (2) and Puffins (45). The month ended with a flurry of Manxies (8,500+ ph), Great Shearwaters (37), Sooty Shearwaters (48), Arctic Skuas (3) and Puffins (20).

August

Like the previous month, August was predominantly damp with mainly north to north-west winds of strengths ranging from calm to near gale force. The second week had light to moderate south to south-west winds with sunshine and showers.

August is generally considered to be 'the' seawatching month on Cape, but, after a promising start, things tailed off pretty quickly. The 1st saw good numbers of Manxies (4,800+ ph), Sooties (12), Great Shearwaters (6), Cory's Shearwaters (16), Arctic Skuas (2), Puffins (15) and Common Scoters (3). Sooty Shearwaters were seen virtually every day for the rest of August, but only in small numbers. The two Grey Heron chicks were progressing well and still entertaining the visitors. The 3rd saw over 5,600 Manxies passing but with very little with them. A small fall of Blackcaps (14) indicated the start of their return migration.

On the 8th, we saw over 6,000 Manxies and 18 Stormies, while an out-of-season Lesser Whitethroat was reported from the Nordy Wood. A single Lesser Redpoll on the 10th was also a little early for Cape. A single Great Shearwater, 2 Cory's Shearwaters and 3 Sooty Shearwaters passed on the 11th, with two more Cory's passing the following day.

An amazing passage of Swallows was seen on the 16th, with over 600 recorded. Little Grebe numbers

increased to 12 on the 17th, with 3 Sparrowhawks and 28 Pied Wagtails also noted. The 19th saw the first Spotted and Pied Flycatchers of the autumn, with one of each being seen. The following day, 3 Teal, 2 Whimbrel and 2 Curlew were seen or heard, heralding the wader migration.

At sea, 1,100 Cory's Shearwaters were reported, while only 180 Manxies were with them! Pied Flycatcher numbers increased to four, a good number for Cape. The 21st saw the return of the Manxies, with over 6,000 recorded, but with no Cory's.

A Redshank and a male Gadwall were on the lake on the 22nd, while 4 Sparrowhawks, 2 each of Spotted and Pied Flycatchers and the first Whinchat of the autumn were also seen.

2 Water Rails were heard on the 23rd, one in the Nordy Wood, the other in West Bog. Also on the 23rd were a Ringed Plover, 2 Black-tailed Godwits (a Cape rarity), Redshank, 2 Whimbrels and a Common Sandpiper, with 3 Sand Martins, 2 Spotted and 4 Pied Flycatchers.

The Little Grebe count increased to 11 on the 25th, with the male Gadwall, 1 Whimbrel and 2 Curlew also around the lake. A Common Sandpiper was seen in South Harbour (it was reported there often during the next few weeks) and the Buzzard count increased to four on that day also. 51 Cory's Shearwaters were seen on the 26th as the Buzzard numbers increased by another one.

A flyover Tree Pipit on the 29th was one of few highlights in the last week of the month, with another heard on the 31st, along with the season's first Grey Wagtail.

September

Yet another month of predominantly north to north-west winds, with only a few days (5–10th and the 27th with Storm Agnes) when the wind was from the southerly quarter. The first two weeks were generally dry, the third showery and the fourth wet.

As with August, the month started with a moderately good seawatch on the 1st, with Great Shearwaters (4), Cory's Shearwaters (58), Sooty Shearwaters (4), only 850 Manxies and Bonxies (2) being the highlights. Little Grebe numbers had reached 14, and also on the lake were the long-staying Gadwall, one Teal and a Grey Wagtail. Five Sand Martins, a single Tree Pipit and 6 Buzzards were the other headline birds. Good numbers of Cory's Shearwaters (560), 1 Great Shearwater, 4 Sooty Shearwaters and 1 Bonxie passed the island on the 2nd, when the 2 Grey Heron chicks were looking increasingly restless.



Juvenile Rose-coloured Starling (Steve Wing)

The 3rd saw more Cory's Shearwaters (228), Great Shearwaters (6), Sooty Shearwaters (6) and Manxies (2,100 ph) passing. There were now 7 Buzzards present, and one of the Grey Heron chicks had fledged. The following day saw 2,346 Cory's Shearwaters, along with Great Shearwaters (4) and Gannets (1,800), moving west.

Really good numbers of Sand Martins (200+), Swallows (150+) and House Martins (80) were recorded on the 4th, and the second Grey Heron chick had also fledged. Hirundine numbers fell considerably on the 5th, with only 180 Swallows, 6 Sand Martins and 80 House Martins seen. The Common Sandpiper was seen in South Harbour again, and there were 5 Spotted and 2 Pied Flycatchers present that day.

A flock of 15 Golden Plover was seen flying over the Wheatear Fields on the 6th, with 1 Swift, 1 Whinchat, 11 Spotted Flycatchers, 8 Pied Flycatchers and a Lesser Redpoll recorded. The star of the day, though, was a Western Bonelli's Warbler, which was found in Mary Mac's garden, this bird staying until the 16th. A Hoopoe was found between Michael Vincent's and West Bog on the 7th and stayed in that area until the 15th. Two flyover Dunlin, a Turtle Dove, a White Wagtail, a second Whinchat, a few each of the 15 Spotted Flycatchers and the 10 Pied Flycatchers, and 4 Teal were also seen in that area.

The 8th saw 2 Arctic Skuas passing, and an Iceland Gull was on the lake briefly, while, on land, an impressive 3 Wrynecks, 1 Garden Warbler, 2 Grey Wagtails, 20 Spotted Flycatchers and 6 Pied Flycatchers and the Turtle Dove were seen. Late in the evening, a Barn Owl was seen hunting around the village.

The 9th was a quiet seawatch day, with 4 Great Shearwaters, 2 Sooty Shearwaters and a Bonxie passing by. Spotted Flycatcher numbers rose to an incredible 31, while Pied Flycatcher numbers rose to 7 and the Garden Warbler was joined by 4 Reed Warblers. The 10th had 36 Cory's Shearwaters, 2 Sooty Shearwaters, 70 Stormies, 3 Arctic Skuas, a single Puffin and 1 Common Scoter passing. An Osprey was reported, as were 4 Kestrels, while, on land, there were 2 Turtle Doves, 6 Spotted Flycatchers, 3 Reed Warblers and a single Whinchat.

A single 'large' shearwater, 31 Cory's Shearwaters and 1 Arctic Skua were the seawatch highlights on the 11th. On land, Kestrel numbers rose to 5, and there were 2 Wrynecks, 2 Reed Warblers and a Turtle Dove. The 12th saw 307 Cory's Shearwaters passing but with little else with them. Four Grey Herons were seen (the family group from North Harbour), and now 8 Buzzards were present, still 2 Wrynecks, 6 Reed Warblers, 1 Whinchat, 3 Grey Wagtails and 1 Lesser Redpoll. The 13th was a little quieter, with 2 large shearwaters, 1 Sooty



Red-breasted Flycatcher (*Steve Wing*)

Shearwater, 3 Common Scoters and 2 Sandwich Terns from the sea. A Collared Dove, 4 Sand Martins, 2 Grey Wagtails and a single Pied Flycatcher were the best on land.

Four male Greenland Wheatears seen on the 14th, 2 Swifts, a Curlew and 3 Northern Wheatears on the 15th, and 13 Greenland Wheatears on the 17th marked the start of a quiet spell. A few Cory's Shearwaters, Sooty Shearwaters and the long-staying Turtle Dove were the highlights up to the 20th. The 21st saw the Little Grebe flock at 16, Teal numbers had risen to 9 and we had 2 new Reed Warblers and a single Pied Flycatcher.

Two reports of a 'probable' Cliff Swallow were received on the 21st, with neither giving conclusive views, but, added together, may be enough to get it confirmed. Another few quiet days followed until a Sabine's Gull was reported off the south end on the 24th. The following day, a Grey Phalarope was found on the lake, giving superb views and staying until the 29th. The 28th saw Cape's second Glossy Ibis, also at the lake, this bird staying until October 13th.

A Rose-coloured Starling was found on the High Road on the 29th, staying between there and Brid's garden until October 18th. Also on the 29th, a Corncrake was flushed from behind the Bird Observatory, but sadly was not relocated, while a small fall of Goldcrests (32) and a reasonably late Spotted Flycatcher were recorded.

October

In a month when we need strong westerlies, October failed miserably. The first twelve days had light to moderate west or south-west winds, then a week of light breezes from the northerly quarter, with the month ending with light, variable winds. The whole month was mainly damp, with showers or rain, but we were blessed with a few sunny days.

The month started quietly, with the long-staying Glossy Ibis, Rose-coloured Starling and Gadwall being the only birds of note on the 1st. Six Sooty Shearwaters, 1 Bonxie and 5 Arctic Skuas were the best on a seawatch on the 2nd, while on land a good passage of Meadow Pipits (500+) and the year's first Red-breasted Flycatcher were noted. A stunning male Common Redstart was found at the start of the High Road on the 3rd, staying around there until the following day.

An adult Sabine's Gull and a Puffin were seen on the 6th, and the Red-breasted Flycatcher was seen again at Ciaran Danny Mike's. A Mediterranean Gull was seen between Cape and Sherkin on the 7th, and a second Glossy Ibis was seen flying over the Waist – the other was being watched at the lake – and another Red-breasted Flycatcher was found. On the 8th, a juvenile Glaucous Gull visited the lake briefly, a Whimbrel flew over the island, and a Whinchat and the first Yellow-browed Warbler of the year were found.

The bird of the year was found on the Bill on the 9th –



Pectoral Sandpiper (Steve Wing)

an Upland Sandpiper, the first for Cape! The bird stayed in that area until the 13th, being somewhat elusive at times. While watching it on its first day, an adult Glaucous Gull was seen in a feeding flock of gulls just offshore and, on the way back home, a ringtail Hen Harrier was seen hunting over the Wheatear Fields and West Bog. There were now 2 Yellow-browed Warblers, 44 Goldcrests, 6 Willow Warblers and 7 Rooks on the island.

A flock of 15 Golden Plover flew over on the 10th, and there were increased numbers of Common Snipe (18). A Short-eared Owl was found hunting over East Bog, a Pomarine Skua flew past the south end, and in the early evening a Little Egret was flushed from North Harbour. Teal numbers reached a peak of 24 on the 12th, with 19 Sooty Shearwaters, 11 Common Scoters and a Mediterranean Gull the highlights from a seawatch.

On land, a long-staying Merlin was found, 13 Wheatears, 9 Redwings, a late Spotted Flycatcher and the first flush of winter finches arrived, with 24 Lesser Redpolls, 120 Siskins, 50+ Goldfinch and 22 Chaffinches.

The 13th was a quieter day as far as numbers were concerned, but it did produce another first for Cape – an Iberian Chiffchaff, which was heard and seen briefly in Cotter's Garden. A Hen Harrier and Short-eared Owl were seen around the bogs, 6 Cory's Shearwaters passed by, and a Yellow-browed Warbler was trapped in the Nordy Wood nets.

The first Red-throated Diver of the winter was seen

offshore on the 14th, 15 Pink-footed Geese flew over the lake, and a small flock of 12 Skylarks was seen moving through the island.

There were 7 Buzzards present, along with 8 Rooks and 172 Siskins, and the Short-eared Owl and Iberian Chiffchaff were still present. A Barn Owl was seen hunting around the Waist on the 15th, a Mediterranean Gull was near Bird Island, and 5 Turnstones and a Curlew were on Tradooncleara.

A flock of 8 Long-tailed Tits was around Brid's garden, 19 Coat Tits were on the island, and an impressive 60+ Lesser Redpolls were recorded. The 16th saw a Stock Dove, unusual on Cape, the first Black Redstart of the autumn, 4 Ring Ouzels, 1 Fieldfare, 1 Firecrest and an amazing count of 40 Buzzards!

The 18th had 18 Little Grebes and 2 Common Redshanks on the lake, 6 Common Scoters and 3 Sandwich Terns passing by, a Common Sandpiper in South Harbour, where a Little Egret flew over, the Short-eared Owl and a Lapwing around the bogs, 3 House Martins, 4 Black Redstarts, 16 Fieldfares, 60+ Song Thrushes, 41 Redwings, 2 Mistle Thrushes, 30 Blackcaps, 4 Willow Warblers, 60 Chiffchaffs, the first Lesser Whitethroat of the autumn, 3 Reed Warblers, 1 Yellow-browed Warbler, 1 Firecrest, 50 Goldcrests, 1 Pied Flycatcher, 100+ Goldfinches, 200+ Siskins, 20 Lesser Redpolls and the Stock Dove and Gadwall were still on the island. An amazing day!

The 19th was a little quieter, but still had some

excellent birding. A good count of 29 Oystercatchers, a Lapwing, 1 Redshank and a Turnstone made a good wader day for Cape. There were a good number of Swallows (30), 3 Black Redstarts, 37 Fieldfares, 1 Mistle Thrush, 60 Chiffchaffs, 2 Reed Warblers, 2 Yellow-browed Warblers, 3 Black Redstarts, 2 Pied Flycatchers, 21 Greenfinches and a Snow Bunting flyover.

The birds of the day, however, were a Cattle Egret in fields along the Lighthouse Road and 2 Siberian Chiffchaffs, making this another special day.

The 20th was a much quieter day, with 2 Redshanks on the lake, 10 Swallows, 1 Black Redstart, 106 Fieldfares, 30 Chiffchaffs, 1 Pied Flycatcher, 40 Siskins and 1 Yellow-browed Warbler present. A Great Northern Diver and 2 Curlew were seen on the 21st. Two Redshanks were on the lake, the Short-eared Owl was still present, and there were 4 Black Redstarts, 1 Wheatear, 120 Fieldfares, 45 Song Thrushes, 50 Redwings, 23 Blackcaps, 1 Reed Warbler, 3 Yellow-browed Warblers and 6 Rooks noted.

The 22nd saw the Great Northern Diver still present and a flock of 11 Black-headed Gulls feeding offshore. Ten Buzzards passed over the island during the day, but a Red Kite over Bullaun was the best bird by far.

The 23rd saw the Red Kite still over the Wheatear Fields, 2 Red-throated Divers and 1 Great Northern were offshore, a female Hen Harrier was around the bogs, 28 Common Gulls and 5 Mediterranean Gulls were seen feeding off the east end, and a cracking male Bullfinch was seen along the Low Road.

The Black-headed Gull flock had decreased on the

24th, and two late Swallows, 1 Little Egret, 1 Ring Ouzel, 2 Willow Warblers, 3 Siberian Chiffchaffs, 2 Yellow-browed Warblers, 1 Brambling, 1 Bullfinch and 54 Siskins were all present.

A brief seawatch on the 25th recorded 2 Great Shearwaters, 80 Sooty Shearwaters, 16 Common Scoters, 2 Arctic Skuas and a Puffin. Forty-four Chaffinches and 1 Yellow-browed Warbler were present and a juvenile Common Rosefinch was seen in Mary Cadogan's garden.

Two Great Northern Divers, 1 Great Shearwater, 2 Arctic Skuas and 350 Sooty Shearwaters were seen on a seawatch on the 27th. On land was much quieter, with 1 Redshank on the lake and a single Ring Ouzel, Fieldfare and Lesser Redpoll the best birds.

The 28th was definitely a seawatch day, with 51 Great Shearwaters, 180 Cory's Shearwaters, an incredible 3,490 Sooty Shearwaters, 50+ Manxies and 6 Arctic Skuas counted. The long-staying Reed Warbler, 1 Yellow-browed Warbler and 2 Siberian Chiffchaffs were the only other birds of note on the day.

The 29th had much fewer seabirds passing, with 60 Sooty Shearwaters the best. A single Shelduck was on the lake, but the bird of the day was a Pectoral Sandpiper, found at the bottom end of Central Bog – in the same puddle that the Northern Waterthrush had been found in years before!

The Shelduck was still on the lake the following day, and a very late Garden Warbler was seen along the Low Road. The recording year came to an end on the 31st, with 10 Teal on the lake and 30 Common Gulls offshore.

NOTE: WILDLIFE REPORT 2024

Given the very sad and sudden loss of our CCBO Warden, Steve Wing, in September 2024, we don't have a monthly bird summary for 2024.

However, our new CCBO Warden, John Horton, has used the Bird Observatory's Daily Log notes from 2024 to put together a systematic list of birds that combines Steve's reports for 2023 and the Daily Log data for 2024 into a single bird report (*see following pages*).

In addition, the 2024 wildlife report includes the bird-ringing totals (*see page 41*) and the moth records for the year (*see page 49*).

We also include a tribute to Steve, sadly missed on Cape Clear Island and beyond (*see page 57*).



Steve Wing in North Harbour, September 2024 (*Dick Coombes*)

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF THE BIRDS 2023/2024

This list follows the sequence and nomenclature of the International Ornithological Congress (IOC) World Bird List (version 12.1): Gill F & D Donsker (Eds), 2019. IOC World Bird List (12.1). doi 10.14344/IOC.ML.12.1.

In 2023, for the second year running, a total of 155 species was recorded on Cape Clear Island. Two new species, Upland Sandpiper and Iberian Chiffchaff, were added to the island's list. In 2024, a total of 144 species was recorded. If the records of Cliff Swallow and Barolo Shearwater from 2023 are both accepted by the IRBC, then the island list will stand at an impressive 335 species.

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Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis*

(Gé Ghiúrainn)

■ **Rare visitor**

2024 Recorded on two consecutive days – 2 on October 8th and 11 on October 9th.

Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*

(Gé Ghobghearr)

■ **Vagrant**

2023 A flock of 15 flew over Lough Errul on October 15th, only the third record for Cape Clear Island.

2024 One at the lake on October 9th, the fourth record for Cape.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

(Eala Ghlórach)

■ **Rare visitor**

2024 Two long-staying spring birds were present in fields towards the east end from March 31st to May 1st. Six flew over the island on October 10th.

Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

(Seil-lacha)

■ **Rare. Breeds on neighbouring islands**

2023 The pair that had spent the last few winters on Cape were on the lake again in the spring. We assume they were one of the Calf Island or Sherkin Island



Whooper Swans, east end fields, 2024 (Mary Cadogan)

breeding pairs. A single bird was present for the last few days of October.

2024 A single bird was recorded at the lake on two dates in January, once in February and on four dates in March. A pair was recorded daily from April 8th to 29th and was seen regularly through to June 9th.

Northern Shoveler *Spatula clypeata*

(Spadalach)

■ **Rare visitor, increasing in recent years**

2023 A pair was present on the lake on January 1st and 4th. Two were seen in South Harbour in early November.

2024 Recorded at the lake on three dates in January, with the highest count of 3 on the 7th. Two present from February 7th to 10th, then 3 from February 18th to 21st. Two on April 28th, 1 on June 4th, 1 on September 30th and 1 on October 4th.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

(Gadual)

■ **Rare visitor**

2023 An adult male was seen on two occasions in March, once in April, and then from the middle of August until the end of the recording year. We assume it was the same individual returning.



Pink-footed Goose, October 9th 2024 (Eric Masterson)

2024 A male was present at the lake from May 21st to June 1st. Three were seen on September 5th.

Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*
(Rualacha)

■ **Rare visitor**

2023 Seven at the lake on March 3rd, increasing to 11 on the 5th, and then dropping to 4 on the 7th.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*
(Mallard)

■ **Common**

Breeds in numerous sites around the island.

Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca*
(Praslacha)

■ **Scarce but regular visitor at both ends of the season**

2023 Highest count 24 on October 12th.

2024 Small numbers overwintered at the lake until April 4th. Autumn records from September 15th. Highest count 18 on September 30th.

Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis*
(Praslacha Ghlaseiteach)

■ **Vagrant**

2024 A male at the lake for just one day, May 2nd.

Velvet Scoter *Melanitta fusca*
(Sceadach)

■ **Vagrant**

2023 A single bird was seen on April 9th during a seawatch from Bullig – the fifth record for Cape Clear.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*
(Scótar)

■ **Regularly seen on seawatches**

2023 The only spring records were of 6 on April 19th and then 25 on May 7th. Five were seen in July, 3 in August, 12 in September and 42 in October.

2024 No spring records. Forty-two on June 17th, 12 on June 20th, 18 on July 8th, 30 on July 26th, 34 on July 29th, 5 on August 8th, 3 on August 12th, 8 on October 12th, 1 on the 13th.

Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*
(Piasún)

■ **Found all around the island year-round. Breeds**

Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*
(Lóma Rua)

■ **Rare and irregular on spring and autumn passage**

2023 Single birds were seen on April 7th and 17th and on October 14th. Two were recorded on October 23rd.

2024 One was seen on April 1st.

Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*
(Lóma Mór)

■ **Scarce on spring and autumn passage**

2023 Most of the year's 24 sightings were in April and May, with a few in October.

2024 Recorded on 2 days in April and 2 days in May, then on 3 days in October. Highest count of 15 on May 6th, seen from the ferry.

Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*
(Guairdeall Wilson)

■ **Very rare, usually seen on seawatches**

2023 Lower numbers than usual recorded this year, owing to lack of pelagic trips from Cape. All records were in July, with 2 seen from the south end on the 7th, 1 on the 23rd and 3 on the 29th.

2024 Four seen on May 19th.

European Storm-petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*
(Guairdeall)

■ **Regularly seen on seawatches**

2023 Numbers recorded were well down this year, owing to the lack of pelagic trips from Cape. The first was seen on July 7th and the last on September 17th.

2024 One on June 13th. Recorded on 3 days in August (highest count 10 on the 17th), once in September (7 on the 13th) and 1 on October 5th.

Northern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*
(Fulmaire)

■ **Abundant. Breeds in good and increasing numbers**

2023 Good numbers recorded around the coast, although passage numbers seemed to be well down on previous years.

2024 Several high counts of 200+ breeding birds during the spring months. Highest count of 248 on April 14th.

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris borealis*
(Cánóg Cory)

■ **Seen in abundance on summer/autumn passage**

2023 A massive passage along the south Cork coastline gave record numbers for the county, but most seemed to miss Cape. A total of 8,587 birds recorded was not too shabby, though, with the earliest sighting on July 18th and the last on October 28th. Highest daily counts occurred on July 29th (3,000+), August 20th (1,100) and September 4th (2,346).

2024 First passage of year on July 29th (427). Recorded on 15 dates in August (highest count 360 on the 18th) and last sighted on September 17th.

Sooty Shearwater *Ardeanna grisea*
(Cánóg Dhorcha)

■ **Seen in abundance on summer/autumn passage**



Juvenile Black-crowned Night Heron, April 4th 2023 (Steve Wing)

2023 The first record of the year was of a single bird on July 18th. A steady passage of low numbers throughout the rest of the season, until the last few days of October, when a huge number (3,490) passed on the 28th. The last record occurred the following day.

2024 Two seen on May 28th, 2 on June 13th, two on July 8th. Recorded on 18 days in August (highest count 55 on 27th), then 7 days in September (highest count 94 on 14th) and one day in October (24 on 18th).

Great Shearwater *Ardenna gravis* (Cánóg Mhór)

■ Regularly seen on summer/autumn passage

2023 Another quiet year for the species, with only 134 recorded, none in the spring. The first were seen on July 10th (5) with another little flurry at the end of the month. Only one bird seen in August and very few (17) in September. A late passage of 50+ birds on October 28th pushed the annual total up a little.

2024 Recorded on 11 days in August (highest count 120 on 13th), 6 days in September (highest count 208 on 14th) and two days in October (highest count 66 on 18th). Total number recorded: 589 birds.

Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus* (Cánóg Dhubh)

■ Abundant on passage, peaking in July/August

2023 Good numbers were seen passing regularly throughout the season. Birds were heard calling at night in several locations, but no proof of breeding was found.

2024 First record of year was on March 31st (2). Regular counts of between 1,000 and 4,500 during June, July and August (highest count 8,100 on August 21st). Last record on October 18th (48).

Balearic Shearwater *Puffinus mauretanicus* (Cánóg Bhailéarach)

■ Seen scarcely on seawatches

2023 One recorded passing the island on July 23rd.

2024 One seen on May 28th.

Barolo Shearwater *Puffinus baroli* (Cánóg Bheag)

■ Vagrant

2023 One was heard calling with Manx Shearwaters over North Harbour on July 10th. A full report on the event is included later in this report (see page 35).

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* (Spágaire Tonn)

■ Scarce; breeds in low numbers

2023 Numbers have been increasing in recent years, and breeding has continued. Generally low numbers were seen in the early months, but they built up to a high of 21 on September 22nd.

2024 Recorded in all months from February to October. High counts of 17 on August 17th and October 4th.

Black-crowned Night Heron

Nycticorax nycticorax
(Corr Oíche)

■ Vagrant

2023 Fourth, fifth and sixth island records: an adult and then a juvenile were found on April 4th, both in North Harbour, and then a different adult was found at the lake on April 8th, which stayed until the following day.

Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* (Éigrit Eallaigh)

■ Vagrant

2023 Fourth island record: one was found in fields along the Lighthouse Road on October 19th, staying on the island until the 21st. It became very mobile and was seen pretty much wherever there were cattle, from the Lighthouse to the High Road.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* (Corr Réisc)

■ Common; breeds rarely

2023 Last year's pair, which had been showing signs of reaching maturity, successfully bred this year and fledged two youngsters. This is the first known breeding record for the island and was in the most unlikely of places – on the cliffs, right at the entrance to a busy, noisy North Harbour. Other individuals were regularly seen in South Harbour, at the Fish Farm and in Coosadouglas.



Purple Heron (Steve Wing)

2024: Recorded on one day in January, 2 days in February and 4 days in March. Then recorded on most days from April to end of October, with the highest count of 9 on October 4th.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*
(Corr Chorchra)

■ **Vagrant**

2023 Third island record: an adult, flushed from the road by East Bog on April 7th. It then moved, via Central Bog, into the West Bog, where it stayed until the 10th. It was found moribund beside the bog and taken into care but, sadly, it died overnight.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*
(Éigrit Bheag)

■ **Rare visitor, becoming more frequent**

2023 Three records, all in October and possibly all involving the same bird. The sightings were on the 11th, the 18th and the 25th of October.

2024 Three records of single birds – on June 25th, September 9th and October 6th.

Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus*
(Gainéad)

■ **Common and abundant on sea passage**

2023 A good, steady passage was noted all year, with highest count of 2,520 ph heading west on July 18th.

2024 Regularly recorded from February to end of October. Highest count of 1,260 on August 25th.

European Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*
(Seaga)

■ **Common and breeds**

2023 With no seabird breeding survey this year, it was difficult to gauge numbers, but there did not appear to be any significant change from previous years.

2024 Recorded in all months. Highest count of 146 on October 14th.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*
(Broigheall, Cailleach Dubh)

■ **Regular. Seen throughout the year in small numbers**

2023 No evidence of any attempt to breed this year.

2024 Recorded in small numbers from March to October. Highest monthly counts: July 8th (10) and October 14th (17).

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*
(Íbis Niamhrach)

■ **Vagrant**

2023 Second and third island records: one was found feeding around the lake on September 28th and stayed there until October 13th. A second bird was seen flying across South Harbour on October 7th while other observers were looking at the one on the lake.

Western Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*
(Coirneach)

■ **Very rare visitor**

2023 A single bird was reported on September 10th.

2024 One seen on October 6th.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*
(Spioróg)

■ **Common visitor**

2023 Recorded throughout the year.

2024 Occasional records from January to July, then seen almost daily from August through to end of October. Highest count 4 on October 11th.

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*
(Cromán na gCearc)

■ **Scarce visitor**

2023 A 'ringtail' was seen on June 5th flying over North Harbour and being mobbed by two Ravens. Recorded on three dates in October – the 9th, 13th and 23rd – birds that could have been three different individuals.

2024 Recorded on 8 dates between October 2nd and 29th with the sightings involving 4 individuals.

Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*
(Cromán Móna)

■ **Rare visitor**

2024 One present from August 22nd to 26th.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*
(Cúr Rua)

■ **Vagrant**

2023 One was seen on October 22nd, hunting over Bullaun – only the eighth record for Cape Clear. One hunting in the same area on the 24th was presumably the same bird.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*
(Cúr Dubh)

■ **Vagrant**

2024 Two records – one from September 2nd to 3rd, another on October 11th.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*
(Iolar Mara)

■ **Vagrant**

2024 One seen on April 2nd.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*
(Clamhán)

■ **Common visitor, increasing in numbers**

2023 Recorded throughout the year, with a maximum count of 41 on October 16th. At least one bird overwintered (2022/23).

2024 Recorded in all months. Highest monthly counts of 10 on May 13th and 10 on August 30th.

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*
(Rálóg Uisce)

■ **Common and breeds**



Glossy Ibis (Steve Wing)

2023 Seen throughout the year, mainly in the Nordy Wood in winter and in the bogs in summer.

2024 It was recorded occasionally in small numbers from April to September, then daily throughout October.

Corncrake *Crex crex*
(Traonach)

■ **Scarce visitor, has bred in the past**

2023 A single bird flushed from behind the Observatory on September 29th was the only record this year.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*
(Cearc Uisce)

■ **Uncommon**

2023 Single birds were seen on four occasions during the year.

2024 A better than average year. Days recorded per month: April (1), May (2), June (6), July (7), August (13), September (1), October (3).

Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*
(Roilleach)

■ **Common and breeds**

2023 No breeding survey was carried out this year (reasons explained elsewhere).

2024 No breeding survey carried out. Highest count of birds gathered at the lake post-breeding season was 15 on October 25th.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*
(Scodalach Dubheiteach)

■ **Vagrant**

2023 Five birds were found feeding around the lake on April 4th – the second island record. All stayed until the 22nd, when three left. Of the two remaining on the 23rd, one had a badly broken wing. They stayed together until the healthy one left on May 30th. The remaining bird was last seen on June 3rd.



Black-winged Stilts (Steve Wing)

European Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*
(Feadóg Bhuí)

■ Scarce visitor

2023 One was heard calling over the Wheatear Fields on April 7th. A flock of c15 was seen over the lake on September 6th, and another flock of 15 was seen on October 11th.

2024 Singles seen on May 4th and June 6th. Then 3 on October 8th, one on the 9th and one on the 26th.

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*
(Feadóg Bhuí Mheiriceánach)

■ Vagrant

2024 One present on October 2nd and 3rd.

Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*
(Feadóg Chladaigh)

■ Scarce visitor

2023 One was seen flying over the lake on August 23rd.

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*
(Pilibín)

■ Scarce visitor

2023 One was present in the Wheatear Fields and Bullaun area on October 18th and 19th.

2024 Three were seen on September 28th.

Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda*
(Gobadán Sléibhe)

■ Vagrant

2023 A juvenile was found near the tip of the Bill of Clear on October 9th – the first island record. It stayed in the area until the 13th.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*
(Crotach Eanaigh)

■ Common on spring and autumn passage

2023 The first of the year was one on May 12th, while a flock of 11 flew over on May 29th. Another singleton on May 31st marked the end of spring passage. The first of the autumn was seen on August 6th, followed by 2 on the 20th, 2 on the 23rd and then one from 25th to 28th. The last of the year was seen on October 8th.



Upland Sandpiper (Steve Wing)



Pectoral Sandpiper (Steve Wing)

2024 One on April 25th, then one on June 23rd. Recorded on 12 days between August 12th and September 13th (highest count 6 on September 12th).

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*
(Crotach)

■ **Common visitor, decreasing in numbers**

2023 The first of few records this year was of 2 on August 20th, followed by another 2 on the 25th. A smattering of single records were noted before the last record of the year, 2 birds on October 21st.

2024 Spring sightings on April 12th and May 7th, a sighting on June 7th, then autumn sightings on 6 dates in August, 1 date in September and 6 dates in October.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*
(Piardálaí Trá)

■ **Scarce on spring/autumn passage, rare in winter**

2023 Three on Tradooncleara on September 27th, 5 there on October 15th and a single bird on October 19th.

2024 One seen on January 21st, then 1 on September 10th, 3 on October 3rd and singles on October 13th, 17th and 22nd.

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*
(Gobadán Cosbhuí)

■ **Scarce spring and autumn visitor**

2024 One seen on October 18th.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*
(Breacóg)

■ **Scarce spring and autumn visitor**

2023 The only record this year was of two birds flying over on September 7th.

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*
(Gobadán Uchtach)

■ **Vagrant**

2023 Eighth island record: one was found on October 29th in the same puddle at the south-west end of Central Bog that the Northern Waterthrush and Solitary Sandpiper were seen on in 2008!

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*
(Naoscach)

■ **Common visitor, has bred**

2023 Seen regularly throughout the year, with highest count of 18 on October 11th.

2024 Recorded in all months, with highest count of 8 on October 26th.

Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*
(Falaróp Gobmhór)

■ **Rare autumn passage migrant**

2023 Seen mainly on seawatches, but occasionally sheltering close inshore during stormy weather. One was present on the lake from September 25th to 29th, giving exceptionally close views.



Grey Phalarope (Steve Wing)

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*
(Guilbneach Earrdhubh)

■ **Very rare visitor**

2023 A single record of two birds flying around the lake on August 23rd.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*
(Gobadán Coiteann)

■ **Scarce spring and autumn migrant**

2023 Two sighted in South Harbour on April 19th and again on April 27th. There were autumn sightings of single birds, again in South Harbour, on August 23rd and 25th and on September 5th, and of one that remained from October 18th to 20th.

2024 Single birds seen on July 19th, September 1st, 5th and 6th and on October 8th.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*
(Gobadán Glas)

■ **Rare visitor**

2024 Recorded in August only this year: one on the 11th, then one present from the 27th to 30th.

Common Redshank *Tringa tetanus*
(Cosdeargán)

■ **Rare autumn and winter visitor**

2023 A single bird was present at the lake on August 22nd and 23rd, with possibly the same bird there on 27th. Two were present at the lake from October 18th to 21st, with three from October 27th to 30th.

2024 One seen January 7th, then up to 2 on 7 dates in February. One from March 31st to April 14th. Then one from October 6th to 9th and single birds on October 17th and 28th.

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*
(Laidhrín Glas)

■ **Rare visitor in all seasons**

2024 One seen at the lake on September 15th.

Black-legged Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*
(Saidhbhéar)

■ **Common, particularly on spring/autumn passage**

2023 Passage numbers were well down on previous years. There still appears to be a roost of over 1,000 birds split between the Bill of Clear and Fastnet Rock to the south of Cape.

2024 The most regular passage was recorded during August, peaking at 120 on the 14th. Latest record on October 7th (2).

Sabine's Gull *Xema sabini*
(Sléibhín Sabine)

■ **Rare autumn migrant**

2023 Three records this year: a single bird on July 7th, another singleton on September 24th and another on October 6th.

2024 One record: a single bird on August 7th.

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*
(Sléibhín)

■ **Common autumn migrant, rare in spring**

2023 Thirty were recorded in a gull flock feeding off the east end on October 2nd. Sixteen were there on October 8th, with small numbers seen intermittently until the 23rd, when 82 were present.

2024 Seen daily from April 8th to 18th (highest count 6 on the 8th). Then seen on 4 dates in September (highest count 4 on the 7th), and 6 dates in October (highest count 14 on the 17th).

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*
(Sléibhín Meánmhuirí)

■ **Scarce on passage**

2023 One seen from the ferry near Bird Island on October 7th, and probably the same bird there again on the 12th and 15th. Five seen offshore on October 23rd.

Common Gull *Larus canus*
(Faoileán Bán)

■ **Scarce on spring and autumn passage**

2023 The first record was as late as October 23rd, when 28 were seen in a gull feeding flock at the east end. Low numbers were seen over the next few days until 20 were seen on the 29th October and 30 on the 30th.

2024 One seen on September 1st. Recorded on 3 dates in October: 3 on the 4th, 1 on the 9th and 3 on the 17th.

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*
(Droimneach Mór)

■ **Common and breeds**

2023/2024 No noticeable change in status.

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides*
(Faoileán Íoslannach)

■ **Rare winter visitor**

2023 A second-year bird was seen briefly on the lake on September 8th.

Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*
(Faoileán Glas)

■ **Rare winter visitor**

2023 A juvenile was found on the lake on October 8th, while an adult was seen near the castle the following day.

European Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*
(Faoileán Scadán)

■ **Common and breeds**

2023/2024 Seen throughout the year; no noticeable change in status.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*
(Droimneach Beag)

■ **Common and breeds**

2023 The first, very early, record was of a single bird on the lake on January 25th. On March 14th, 36 were seen, again on the lake. Birds were subsequently recorded monthly, with the last being a sighting of one on October 30th. Highest count 120 on April 10th.

2024 First spring arrivals were 5 at the lake on February 7th. Recorded daily from March 30th through to September 18th, then occasionally until the last record on October 22nd (2).

Sandwich Tern *Thalasseus sandvicensis*
(Geabhróg Scothdhubh)

■ **Scarce spring and autumn migrant**

2023 Three were seen from the ferry on April 8th, 4 on April 18th. Two were seen on September 13th, 1 on September 27th, 3 on October 1st, 3 on October 18th.

2024 Two on March 30th, and two August records (6 on the 9th, 3 on the 19th), then 1 on October 2nd.

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*
(Geabhróg Artach)

■ **Scarce on spring and autumn passage**

2024 Two on August 19th, 1 on August 27th.

Great Skua *Stercorarius skua*
(Meirleach Mór)

■ **Scarce on spring and autumn passage; decreasing**

2023 Two seen on April 9th, 2 in July, 2 again in August, 10 in September, 2 more in October. Sadly, 2 was the highest count for any single day in the whole year.

2024 Four on April 14th, 4 on August 13th, 6 on August 27th, then three September records – on the 1st (1), 10th (2) and 17th (1).

Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*
(Meirleach Pomairíneach)

■ **Rare on spring and autumn passage**

2023 Just one record, a single bird on October 11th, making it one of the worst years for the species in a long time.

2024 One record involving 6 birds on August 27th.

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*
(Meirleach Artach)

■ **Scarce spring and autumn migrant**

2023 The only spring record was of 4 on April 30th, with the next sighting, of a single bird, on July 23rd. Then 2 on the 30th, 3 on the 31st, 2 on August 1st and

2 on August 5th. There was a long gap before the next record – 2 on October 8th – with 26 more being seen during the rest of October (highest count 6 on the 29th).

2024 Four August records – on the 2nd (1), 13th (2), 27th (4) and 31st (1). Some 19 individuals recorded over seven dates between September 8th and 17th.

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*
(Meirleach Earrfhada)

■ **Very rare passage migrant**

2024 Two were seen on July 29th, 1 on August 27th.

Common Guillemot *Uria aalge*
(Foracha)

■ **Common and breeds**

2023 No noticeable change in breeding numbers.

2024 Highest monthly counts of 85 on July 17th and 70 on September 13th.

Razorbill *Alca torda*
(Crosán)

■ **Common and breeds**

2023 Still breeding in small numbers around the south and west coasts of the island.

2024 Highest count 26 on June 17th.

Black Guillemot *Cepphus grylle*
(Foracha Dhubh)

■ **Common and breeds**

2023 The island strongholds for the species remain the North Harbour and the cliffs between Bullaun and the Bill.

2024 Highest monthly counts of 32 on April 18th and May 22nd and 35 on June 11th.

Atlantic Puffin *Fratercula arctica*
(Puifin)

■ **Common visitor. Has bred**

2023 Seen offshore all summer.

2024 An estimated 100+ recorded on June 13th.

Rock Dove *Columba livia*
(Colm Aille)

■ **Common and breeds**

2023 Seen all year, mainly on Mary Cadogan's roof in the early mornings, from where they disperse around the island every day.

2024 In excess of 50 individuals recorded regularly. Highest count of 85 on October 14th.



Turtle Dove (Gerry Lyons)

Stock Dove *Columba oenas*
(Colm Gorm)

■ Scarce. Has bred

2023 One was seen at the east end on August 26th. Another was present around the Marriage Stones from October 16th to 18th.

Common Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*
(Colm Coille)

■ Common and breeds

2023 Seen in most months, usually at or near the Post Office woods and at the east end.

2024 Recorded in small numbers all year, but only in double figures once – 10 on August 27th.

European Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*
(Fearán)

■ Scarce spring and autumn migrant

2023 One was found in Mary Mac's garden on May 5th before it moved to Mary Cadogan's and then returned to the lake, before moving again to the Low Road, staying there until May 12th. One also here on June 20th. One found on September 7th, which stayed until the 20th; it was joined by a second bird on the 10th and 17th.

2024 One present from September 15th to 19th. A second individual recorded on September 27th and 30th and stayed until 16th October.

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*
(Fearán Baicdhubh)

■ Scarce spring and autumn migrant. Breeds

2023 Seen regularly from mid-April until late June and

then a few records until the on October 15th. Two adults and a freshly fledged squab were seen in Maurice Foley's garden along the Low Road – the first known breeding record for the island.

2024 Recorded almost daily in small numbers from April through to June (highest count 4 on May 31st). A single record in July, 1 on the 12th. One seen on August 28th was the last record of the year.

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*
(Cuach)

■ Scarce summer migrant. Has bred

2023 Three calling male records, probably all the same bird, around the crossroads and east end of the island, on April 18th, 20th and 22nd.

2024 One on May 28th.

Western Barn Owl *Tyto alba*
(Scréachóg Reilige)

■ Rare visitor

2023 One on September 8th and one on October 15th – both seen hunting in the late evening in Cumar.

2024 One recorded on October 9th.

Short-eared Owl *Asio flames*
(Ulchabhán Réisc)

■ Rare spring and autumn migrant

2023 Six records, all of single birds and probably the same individual, around the west end on October 11th, 13th, 14th, 18th, 21st and 22nd.

2024 Two spring records, both single birds, on April 20th and May 4th.

Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*
(Ceann Cait)

■ **Rare but breeds. One pair at present**

2023 The pair in the Mass Track wood bred again this year, with one owlet food-begging on June 1st and at least 3 heard calling for food on the 10th. The last record of the year was of 1 on July 23rd.

2024 There were occasional sightings of the breeding pair in the Mass Track wood from April to August. Three fledged owlets were recorded in June.

European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*
(Tuirne Lín)

■ **Vagrant**

2023 One was seen on the evening of May 30th, hawking below the old windmills; the seventh Cape record.

Common Swift *Apus apus*
(Gabhlán Gaoithe)

■ **Scarce visitor**

2023 One was seen on June 1st, with the next record being of 11 birds on July 20th, a high daily count for Cape. Another was seen on September 6th, with 2 on the 15th being the last of the year.

2024 Only 5 records. Single birds sighted in spring on April 20th and 22nd and on May 28th. Singles also seen on August 11th and finally September 5th.

Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops*
(Húpú)

■ **Rare spring and autumn migrant**

2023 One was found on April 8th in fields along the Post Office road. The same bird was seen again on the 13th and 15th, moving to the Glen Road and back. One was seen on September 7th in Michael Vincent's garden, remaining in that area until the 15th and loosely associating with a Turtle Dove.

Eurasian Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*
(Cam-mhuin)

■ **Rare autumn migrant**

2023 Amazingly, three were found on September 8th – 1 in Geoff Oliver's garden, 1 along the High Road and a third on the Post Office Road. Two stayed until the 12th.



Hoopoe (Steve Wing)

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*
(Pocaire Gaoithe)

■ **Breeds. Scarce autumn migrant**

2023 A single bird around the High Road for 6 days in mid-April, but no more records until July 9th. Seen almost daily from then until October 30th (highest count 4 on September 15th).

2024 Table 6 below shows the number of days this species was recorded each month.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*
(Meirliún)

■ **Rare spring and autumn migrant**

2023 A single spring record on May 3rd was followed by 2 on August 28th, 2 on September 29th and then singles up to October 29th.

2024 No spring records. Two on August 2nd, then five singles recorded during September and October.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*
(Fabhcún Gorm)

■ **Scarce but breeds**

2023 One pair successfully fledged two chicks.

2024 Recorded on two or three dates in all months to October, when up to 3 individuals were observed almost daily.

Table 6. Number of days that Kestrel was recorded each month from January to October 2024.

January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October
0	0	0	2	5	1	5	19	18	20



Woodchat Shrike (Steve Wing)

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*
(Scréachán Caille)

■ **Vagrant**

2023 A female was found near the Post Office on April 14th, staying until the 22nd and giving excellent views.

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*
(Oireal Órga)

■ **Vagrant**

2024 One was seen on May 14th.

Eurasian Magpie *Pica pica*
(Snag Breac)

■ **Common and breeds**

2023 Present in good numbers, with the highest counts of 30 in the spring and 40+ in the autumn.

2024 Recorded daily from March to October.

Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*
(Cág Cosdearg)

■ **Common and breeds**

2023 Seen daily throughout the year, with the island population remaining stable at around 20 birds.

2024 A high count of 25 on September 9th.

Western Jackdaw *Corvus monedula*
(Cág)

■ **Common and breeds**

2023 The island population remains stable. Highest counts of 30 in the spring and 160 in the autumn.

2024 Spring highest count 38 on May 18th. Autumn highest count 45 on September 8th.

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*
(Rúcach)

■ **Rare visitor**

2023 A rare spring visitor, 2 were seen on March 26th and were seen on and off again until April 27th; a third

joined them on the 19th. One was seen on August 16th, then the more usual autumn records from October 1st until the 22nd (highest count of 14 on October 15th).

2024 No records until October, when recorded on 4 dates – the 8th (4), 9th (1), 10th (5) and 16th (1).

Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix*
(Caróg Liath)

■ **Common and breeds**

2023 A stable population, but with an obvious increase during October. Highest counts of 40 in the spring and 85 in the autumn.

2024 Regular high counts of 40 to 45 individuals throughout the year.

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*
(Caróg Dhubh)

■ **Rare visitor**

2023 One record: 4 on March 30th.

Northern Raven *Corvus corax*
(Fiach Dubh)

■ **Scarce resident, breeds**

2023 At least 4 pairs successfully bred this year.

2024 A high count of 16 recorded on October 17th.

Coal Tit *Periparus ater*
(Meantán Dubh)

■ **Rare visitor**

2023 The first of the year was of 1 on October 6th, with 19 on the 15th and singles until the 26th.

2024 One record: 1 bird on October 8th.

Eurasian Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*
(Meantán Gorm)

■ **Common and breeds**

2023 The population appears to be stable. Numbers increased, as usual, in the autumn, with highest count of 50+ on October 19th.

2024 All highest counts were in October, when 20 were recorded on two dates – October 15th and 16th.

Great Tit *Parus major*
(Meantán Mór)

■ **Common and breeds**

2023 As with Blue Tits, the island population remains stable, with the usual increase during the autumn. The highest count was of 35 on October 11th.

2024 Highest count 15 on October 17th.

Eurasian Skylark *Alauda arvensis*
(Fuisseog)

■ **Common and breeds**

2023 Ballyieragh and the Red Route remain the best

places to find this species. There were 4 Skylarks around the Wheatear Fields on March 18th, and birds were seen in every month til' the end of the recording year. Highest counts 15 on April 13th and 12 on October 14th.

2024 Recorded in small numbers almost daily from end of March to early June (max count 3). Occasional summer records on the Red Route. No records during September. Autumn passage from October 4th to month's end. Highest count 25 on October 25th.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* (Gabhlán Gainimh)

■ Common spring and autumn migrant

2023 Spring passage lasted from March 24th until May 10th (highest count 6 on April 19th). Two on August 20th heralded start of their return passage, over a week earlier than in 2022, and ending on October 13th. There was an exceptional passage of 202 on September 4th.

2024 The first spring record was not until April 13th, then recorded almost daily until May 15th. Then 2 on May 26th and 2 on June 2nd. Spring highest count 6 on May 8th. A brief flurry of records from July 7th to 11th preceded the year's highest count of 10 on August 2nd. A rather lean year petered out with 6 on September 17th and finally 1 on October 9th.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* (Fáinleog)

■ Common and breeds

2023 First spring record on March 26th, a week earlier than in 2022. Seen daily thereafter, until the last on October 24th. Highest spring count 80 on May 9th; the autumn high was of 600+ on August 16th.

2024 First recorded on April 2nd, then daily through the spring and summer to September 18th. Occasional late September and early October sightings followed by 12 on October 26th and finally 3 on October 30th.

Common House Martin *Delichon urbicum* (Gabhlán Binne)

■ Common and breeds

2023 No noticeable change in status. It is nice to see they are still cliff-nesting near the outfall of the lake and also prospecting at cliffs near the Old Lighthouse. The first record of the spring was of one on April 14th. Spring highest count 25 on April 20th, and autumn highest count 100+ on September 4th. The last record was of 3 on October 19th.

2024 First spring record April 9th, and spring highest count 18 on May 17th. Recorded daily from June through to September 17th, with highest counts of 45 on August 2nd and 42 on 12th September. The last record was 1 on September 29th.



Western Bonelli's Warbler (Steve Wing)

American Cliff Swallow

Petrochelidon pyrrhonota
(Fáinleog (Meiriceánach) Aille)

■ Vagrant

2023 One was seen briefly over the lake on September 21st and again, a few hours later, over the start of the Low Road – the first Cape record. A full description of the events follows later in this report (see page 35).

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus* (Meantán Earrfhada)

■ Rare visitor

2023 A family group of 8 was seen in Brid's garden and along the Low Road on October 15th and 16th and were joined by 2 more on the 18th. The 8 were seen again on the 23rd, with just 2 remaining on the 24th.

Western Bonelli's Warbler

Phylloscopus Bonelli
(Ceolaire Bonelli)

■ Vagrant

2023 One was found in Mary Mac's garden on September 6th and stayed in that general area until the 16th. It was the seventh island record.

Yellow-browed Warbler

Phylloscopus inornatus
(Ceolaire Buímhalach)

■ Rare autumn visitor

2023 The first of the year was a single bird on October 8th, then 2 seen the following day. One or two were then seen on many days until the end of the month, with a record of 3 on the 21st.

2024 One on September 27th and 28th precluded a run of daily records from 4th to 30th October, with highest count of 12 on the 7th.

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus*
(Ceolaire Breacdhórcha)

■ Vagrant

2024 One record: 1 on October 24th.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*
(Ceolaire Sailí)

■ Common and breeds

2023 Spring passage began on April 3rd, as it did in 2022; highest count 29 on April 8th. Highest autumn count was 16 on August 3rd. Last record was of 2 very late individuals on October 24th.

2024 Spring passage began on March 26th; highest count 25 on May 13th. Small numbers seen fairly regularly through June and July, then daily throughout August, on 12 dates in September and 9 dates in October, with the last record being 1 on the 25th.

Northern Willow Warbler

Phylloscopus trochilus acredula

■ Rare migrant

2024 One recorded on September 15th.

Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*
(Tiuf-teaf)

■ Common

2023 Spring passage began on March 17th (highest spring count 24 on April 20th). Recorded almost daily throughout spring and until the end of June. Autumn passage began on August 1st (highest counts 60 on October 18th and 19th). Last record: October 30th.

2024 The first spring record was on March 26th (highest spring count 32 on April 1st). Only 1 record during July and 6 during August. Autumn passage began in late September (highest count 50 on October 8th).

Siberian Chiffchaff

Phylloscopus collybita tristis

■ Rare migrant

2023 Two birds of the *tristis* subspecies were present on October 19th – one in Cotter's Garden and one along the Low Road. They remained in the area until the 28th and one was found here on the 29th. They were joined on the island by a third bird, present on 24th and 26th.

2024 2 recorded on October 29th and 3 on the 30th.

Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus ibericus*
(Tiuf-teaf Spáinneach)

■ Vagrant

2023 One was found in Cotter's Garden on October 13th and stayed there until the 14th – the first Cape record.



Barred Warbler (David Dillon)

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*
(Ceolaire Cíbe)

■ Common and breeds

2023 The first appeared on April 19th, a day later than in 2022. Highest spring count 15 on May 12th; the autumn high was 18 on August 24th. The last left on September 10th, two weeks earlier than in 2022.

2024 The first spring record was on April 20th, and then recorded almost daily to August 18th. Highest spring count 30 on May 2nd. Last record was on August 30th.

Eurasian Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*
(Ceolaire Giolcaí)

■ Scarce migrant

2023 A good year for the species, with 4 arriving on September 9th. Six present on September 12th, 2 on 21st and 22nd, and one stayed until September 29th. Another singleton was in the Nordy Wood area from October 17th to 29th and was joined by 2 more on the 18th and 1 on the 19th.

2024 One seen on July 25th, then birds seen daily from October 6th to 16th, with peak count of 4 on the 8th.

Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*
(Ceolaire Casarnaí)

■ Rare migrant; has bred

2024 5 records: 1 on May 30th and 31st, then singles on June 2nd, 6th and 8th.

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*
(Ceolaire Corraigh)

■ Rare migrant

2024 One present from August 22nd to 26th.

Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria*
(Ceolaire Barrach)

■ Rare migrant

2024 One present from October 6th to 8th.

Eurasian Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*
(Caipín Dubh)

■ **Common and breeds**

2023 Two present on January 1st and they, or a different pair, were still on the island on March 27th. Highest spring count 4 on April 22nd. Fourteen were recorded on August 3rd and the autumnal high count was 30 on October 18th. Last record: 2 on October 30th.

2024 First record of the year on March 30th, and recorded daily from April 19th to May 6th. Only 7 records from June 1st to end of August. Six records in September, then almost daily through October, with highest count of 12 on the 25th.

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*
(Ceolaire Garraí)

■ **Scarce migrant**

2023 Only two records, neither of them in spring. The first was seen on September 8th and 9th and then a late record of one along the Low Road on October 30th.

2024 Four records, all in October, when individuals were recorded on the 4th, 6th, 7th and 8th.

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*
(Gilphib Bheag)

■ **Rare migrant**

2023 An early record on August 8th was the first of the year. It was followed by just one more bird, which stayed around Michael Vincent's garden from October 18th to 25th.

2024 Singles on September 27th and 29th and October 6th, 2 on October 7th and singles on October 8th, 11th and 13th.

Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*
(Gilphib)

■ **Common summer migrant, breeds**

2023 Spring passage began on April 29th (1). There were good numbers present throughout the summer, with 60+ recorded on June 21st. The last record was on September 17th (1).

2024 Just one April record: 2 on the 22nd. Highest monthly counts of 15 on May 24th and 25 on June 5th. Recorded almost daily from May 2nd through to September 7th, then 1 on September 18th. The last sighting was on October 4th (1).

Common Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla*
(Lasaírchíor)

■ **Rare autumn migrant**

2023 Only one bird recorded all year, in Michael Vincent's garden from October 16th to 21st.

2024 Two records in October: 1 on the 6th, 2 on the 9th.



Wren (Steve Wing)

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*
(Cíorbhuí)

■ **Common and breeds in small numbers**

2023 Very few spring records. Autumn passage started September 6th and continued until recording ended on October 30th. Highest count 71 on October 7th.

2024 Occasional records from March 31st to June 22nd, then not recorded again until September 5th. Then seen almost daily from September 27th to October 31st. Highest count 25 on October 22nd.

Eurasian Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*
(Dreoilín)

■ **Common and breeds**

2023 Seen throughout the year.

2024 Seen throughout the year.

Eurasian Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*
(Snag)

■ **Rare visitor**

2024 One present from February 8th through to the 16th.

Rose-coloured Starling *Pastor roseus*
(Druid Rósach)

■ **Very rare migrant**

2023 A juvenile found at top of High Road on September 29th before it moved down to the Waist, and then to Brid's garden, where it stayed until October 18th.

Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*
(Druid)

■ **Common and breeds**

2023 Seen in every month, with a large increase in numbers in the autumn and highest count of 400+ on August 26th.

2024 Daily counts regularly exceeding 100 from mid-August through to end of October.



Spotted Flycatcher (Steve Wing)

Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus*
(Lon Creige)

■ **Common and breeds**

2023 Four seen on October 16th and single birds on October 18th, 24th and 27th.

2024 All records during October: singles on the 6th, 9th, 10th and 27th.

Common Blackbird *Turdus merula*
(Lon Dubh)

■ **Common and breeds**

2023 No noticeable change in breeding status. On several dates during October numbers increased to over 50 birds, but there were no massive 'falls' this year.

2024 Peak count 50 on October 8th.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*
(Sacán)

■ **Common winter visitor**

2023 The first of the year was on January 1st – a single bird in fields along the Low Road. Over 50 seen on January 17th, with a smaller 'fall' of 10 on March 8th. The first autumn arrival was a single bird on October 16th, with numbers increasing to 120+ on 21st. The last record was on October 27th.

2024 One seen on January 13th, 2 on 17th. The only other records were singles on October 22nd and 30th.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*
(Deargán Sneachta)

■ **Common winter visitor**

2023 17 were present on January 1st, with over 100 seen on the 17th, 35 on the 23rd and 10 on the 27th. Eleven birds arrived on March 8th. The next record was not until October 12th. Then seen daily until the end of the month, with highest autumn count 50 on the 21st.

2024 Three records in January. In the autumn, recorded on 16 days in October between the 2nd and the 30th. Highest count 35 on October 30th.

Icelandic Redwing *Turdus iliacus coburni*

2023 There were a few 'possibles' of the Icelandic *coburni* subspecies in the late-October fall, but none confirmed.

2024 One seen on March 31st.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*
(Smólach Ceoil)

■ **Common and breeds**

2023 Seen throughout the year, with highest spring count of 10 on May 10th. The best in autumn was the highest count of 61 on October 18th.

2024 Small numbers recorded almost daily throughout the year. The highest counts were obtained during the last week in October, when 10 to 20 were seen daily.

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*
(Smólach Mór)

■ **Scarce autumn and winter visitor**

2023 A single bird present on January 1st, and one also amongst the fall of thrushes on January 17th. Two seen on October 18th, 1 the following day, and the last record of the year was of 2 on October 22nd.

2024 One on October 14th, the only record for the year.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*
(Cuilire Liath)

■ **Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring**

2023 The first record was on May 29th and the last on October 12th (1), with a high count of 31 on September 9th.

2024 The first record was on May 15th, the first of 4 spring records. Recorded on 5 dates in September and 19 dates in October, with peak count of 6 on October 8th.



Red-breasted Flycatcher (Gerry Lyons)



Common Redstart (Steve Wing)

European Robin *Erithacus rubecula* (Spideog)

■ Common and breeds

2023 Present throughout the year, with a marked increase during the autumn. The high count of 240+ on October 2nd was probably a vast underestimate of the total numbers.

2024 The highest spring count of 50 on April 30th mirrored the autumn peak return figure of 50 on October 9th.

European Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca* (Cuilire Alabhreac)

■ Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring

2023 The first and only record of the spring was of a female found in Cotter's Garden on April 29th. The autumn migration began on August 19th (1), with 4 seen the following day. Recorded intermittently from then until end of October, with highest count 10 on September 7th and last on the 29th (1).

2024 No spring records. One present from September 3rd to 6th and 1 seen on September 29th. Sightings in October were on the 3rd (1), 6th (3), 7th (2), 8th (2), 9th (1) and 10th (1).

Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parve* (Cuilire Broinnrua)

■ Rare autumn migrant

2023 One found on October 2nd in trees near Ciaran Danny Mike's, staying there until the 7th. A second was found in Pat Con's driveway on October 7th and was

seen there again on the 8th.

2024 Two recorded in October, the first on the 3rd, the second on the 15th and 16th.

Black Redstart

Phoenicurus ochrurus gibraltariensis
(Earrdheargán Dubh)

■ Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring

2023 Just one spring record this year, a single bird on February 25th. Another bird on May 29th was the last before the autumn influx, the first of which was on October 16th, with up to 4 from 18th to 23rd October.

2024 All of the records fell between the 11th and 29th October. Highest count 6 on the 25th October.

Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* (Earrdheargán)

■ Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring

2023 Only one was seen this year, a superb male on October 3rd and 4th, which spent much of its time at the start of the High Road, just below Peg Regan's.

2024 None recorded.

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* (Caislín Aitinn)

■ Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring

2023 The only spring record was of one in Central Bog on May 7th and 8th. One was seen on August 22nd at the western end of the Low Road, and one at the bottom of Central Bog on September 6th, joined by a second on the 7th, one of which stayed until the 12th.

2024 No spring records. One seen on September 17th and 18th, another on the 30th. One on October 16th.

European Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*
(Caislín Cloch)

■ **Common and breeds**

2023 Seen in every month of the year. Highest spring count 14 on May 16th; autumnal high of 100+ on September 29th.

2024 Recorded throughout recording months, regularly in double figures, and peaking at 15 on October 17th.

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*
(Clochrán)

■ **Common and breeds**

2023 The first record of spring was of 4 birds on March 26th. Birds were present in good numbers until last record on October 21st. Highest spring count of 20+ on April 7th constituted a good spring passage for Cape.

The autumn passage never really got going and the highest count of 13 on October 12th was relatively low.

2024 First of the spring were 5 on March 30th. Highest spring count 12 on May 12th. Breeding recorded occasionally during summer months. Autumn passage peaked at 25 on October 12th.

Greenland Wheatear

Oenanthe oenanthe leucorhoa

■ **Scarce spring and autumn migrant**

2023 A single male was seen on April 23rd, the only spring record. Four were sighted on September 14th and 13 more on the 17th. The last was seen on October 19th.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*
(Gealbhan Binne)

■ **Common and breeds**

2023 Numbers remain quite stable, with 30–40 birds in the Cumar area alone.

2024 High counts of between 40 and 50 were recorded in most months.

Dunnoek *Prunella modularis*
(Donnóg)

■ **Common and breeds**

2023 Seen throughout the year, with a high count of 80 on October 2nd.

2024 Recorded daily, with high counts of 30 in September and October.

Western Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*
(Glasóg Bhuí)

■ **Rare spring and autumn migrant**

2023 One record of a single bird on April 20th, feeding

alongside the Black-winged Stilts at the lake.

2024 One seen in spring on May 2nd, and one in autumn on October 7th.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*
(Glasóg Liath)

■ **Common autumn migrant, rare in spring**

2023 Seen in small numbers irregularly from late August, with the last record on October 11th. No more than 3 were seen on any one day.

2024 Seen on 17 days, all between August 30th and October 29th. Highest count 4 on September 17th.

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba yarrellii*
(Glasóg Shráide)

■ **Common and breeds**

2023 Seen throughout the year, with a high count of 30 on June 21st.

2024 Recorded daily from April to July, occasionally in double figures. Double-figure counts were regular during August to October, with the highest count of 30 on October 9th.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba alba*
(Glasóg Bhán)

■ **Scarce on spring and autumn passage**

2023 The only spring record was of one on April 12th. Two were seen on September 7th, 1 on September 16th, then 5 singles in October, the last on October 19th.

2024 No spring records. Recorded on 12 days between September 6th and October 26th. Highest count 4 on September 6th.

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*
(Riabhóg Mhóna)

■ **Common and breeds**

2023 Seen in good numbers in every month, with highest spring count of 35 on May 17th and highest autumn count of 500+ on October 3rd.

2024 Highest spring count 32 on April 1st. Autumn numbers picked up in late August, with 40 on the 30th, then recorded daily through September and October, with the highest count of 300 on October 8th.

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*
(Riabhóg Choille)

■ **Rare spring and autumn migrant**

2023 One was heard flying over West Bog on April 7th – the only spring record. One was heard over Central Bog on August 29th, and it, or another, was heard in the same area on August 31st and September 1st.

2024 Only one record this year, an individual on October 7th, an unusually late record.



Common Rosefinches with Goldfinches (Mary Cadogan)

Eurasian Rock Pipit *Anthus petrosus* (Riabhóg Chladaigh)

■ Common and breeds

2023 Present throughout the year and much more obvious during or just after big storms, when they are forced up onto the top of the island. If a full breeding survey could be carried out on Cape for this species, the results would be fascinating to see.

2024 Recorded almost daily during March to October, with daily totals occasionally reaching double figures from late July. Highest count 18 on October 6th.

Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* (Rí Rua)

■ Common autumn migrant and winter visitor

2023 Two seen in Mary Cadogan's on January 1st, 4 on March 9th, 2 on March 18th and 21st, and 5 on March 20th. Ones and twos seen occasionally from then until end of June. The autumn passage, always much busier, started on September 9th (1) and continued until October 30th, with highest count 44 on the 25th.

2024 Individuals sighted on a handful of occasions during April, but none again until one seen on September 5th. Then seen almost daily from October 7th to month's end. Highest count 25 on October 24th.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* (Breacán)

■ Rare autumn migrant

2023 A very poor year for the species, with only one recorded, a bird in Mary Cadogan's garden from October 24th to 30th.

2024 The only record was of one on October 24th, seen again on 25th.

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* (Glasán Gobmhór)

■ Rare spring and autumn migrant

2024 Two were seen on March 31st.

Eurasian Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* (Corcrán Coille)

■ Scarce autumn migrant

2023 One was in Brid's garden on October 23rd and 24th, while a stunning male was seen at the start of the Low Road on the 29th.

2024 Three records of single birds, all during October – on the 11th, 28th and 29th.

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrurus* (Rósghlasán Coiteann)

■ Rare spring and autumn migrant

2023 A juvenile was seen around Cumar and North Harbour on October 25th and 26th.

2024 One was recorded visiting bird feeders in North Harbour on October 13th and 14th. It was joined by a second on the 15th, and both remained until the 17th.

European Greenfinch *Chloris chloris* (Glasán Darach)

■ Common and breeds

2023 Present in small numbers throughout the year, with a high count of 30 on a few days in April.

2024 Highest spring count of 30 on April 26th and, in autumn, a high of 31 on October 28th.

Common Linnet *Carduelis cannabina* (Gleoiseach)

■ Common and breeds

2023 Seen throughout the year, but with an obvious increase during the autumn. Highest count 180 on September 11th.

2024 Recorded almost daily from March 30th to end of October. Highest count 220 on October 7th.

Lesser Redpoll *Carduelis flammea cabaret* (Deargáadan)

■ Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring

2023 A single bird was present on August 10th, with a gap then until single birds were seen on September 6th and 12th. From October 2nd, numbers began to increase, reaching a peak of 60 on the 15th and then declining until the last was seen on the 27th.

2024 Recorded on 5 dates only, all in October. Highest count 6 on the 10th.

Common Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra* (Crosghob)

■ Rare autumn migrant

2023 The only record was a group of 3 flying over the Waist early on October 2nd.



Goldfinch (Steve Wing)

European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*
(Lasair Choille)

■ **Common and breeds**

2023 Present throughout the year, with a marked peak in the autumn. The highest count of 100+ on October 18th coincided with a fall of thrushes and other finches around that time.

2024 Between 10 and 20 birds were recorded regularly during March through to August. Numbers increased as autumn progressed, with 40 counted on September 11th, 50 on October 6th and 100 on October 30th.

European Serin *Serinus serinus*
(Seirin)

■ **Vagrant**

2024 A male was recorded on October 26th and 28th.

Eurasian Siskin *Carduelis spinus*
(Siscín)

■ **Common autumn migrant, rare in spring**

2023 The only spring record was of one on April 13th, but this is essentially an autumn visitor to Cape; the highest count was of 200+ on October 18th.

2024 No spring records this year. One was seen on July 22nd, 1 on September 30th, and then it was recorded on eleven dates in October, with the highest count 10 on the 15th.

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*
(Gealóg Shneachta)

■ **Rare autumn migrant**

2023 One flew over the Bill on October 19th, the only record for the year.

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*
(Gealóg Bheag)

■ **Vagrant**

2024 One was seen on October 7th, the first for the island since 2022.

Common Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*
(Gealóg Ghiolcaí)

■ **Common and breeds**

2023 Seen in small numbers throughout the year.

2024 Recorded almost daily through May to mid-June; otherwise only occasional records.



Upland Sandpiper, Bill of Clear, October 2023 – the first Cape Clear record (Steve Wing)

RARITY REPORTS 2023

Barolo Shearwater *Puffinus baroli* **July 10th, 2023, North Harbour, Cape Clear**

By Steve Wing

While listening to a handful of Manx Shearwaters calling around the North Harbour late on the evening of July 10th, I became aware of a call that was quite unlike the Manxies,' but rang bells in my memory. I was sure that I had heard this call on Xeno-canto years before when Lundy had two consecutive years with a calling male visiting – 2010 and 2011. Having lived on the island from 1977 to 1984, I was very interested in those records and listened often to the Xeno-canto recordings.

Having heard the first call, I ran into the Obs and logged into the Xeno-canto website, pulled up the Barolo page and played several of the recordings there. To my ears, many of the recordings sounded exactly like the bird I had just heard outside!

Running back out the door, I was delighted to hear the bird call three or four more times as it seemed to be circling the harbour, along with now just a couple of Manxies. They all left the area soon after and failed to return. The following few nights, I placed recording equipment outside the Obs and visited the lake area, but the bird was not heard again.

The call, I find difficult to describe, but was a lot shriller, more repetitive – *ie* not as varied as a Manxie's can be – and it consisted of a series of high-pitched, squeaky 'dit diddly-do, dit diddly-do' notes!

American Cliff Swallow *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota* **September 21st, 2023, Lough Errul**

By Steve Wing

Here is my brief account of two separate sightings of presumably the same bird by myself and another birder.

During my usual morning walk, I was passing the lake and started checking the Little Grebe numbers. My attention was drawn to a small group of hirundines feeding low over the water as they made their way north-eastwards towards the High Road. There were at least three Barn Swallows, a single Sand Martin and a fifth bird that looked different. I noted a square tail, a slightly paler but clear rump, and without the general 'gunmetal-blue' Barn Swallow-type upper plumage colour, and a very indistinct paler collar. I could not get any clear or prolonged views as the birds were very actively feeding and often at the far side of the lake.

I was aware of the influx of American Cliff Swallows



Adult Black-crowned Night Heron at the lake, April 2023 – the sixth Cape Clear record (Steve Wing)

in Ireland and I was trying hard to get conclusive views, as this is what I suspected the bird to be. I had not seen one before but was under the belief that the rump and/or collar should be pink in colour, but I wasn't able to pick out any pink at all in the brief views I had. The flock soon left the lake, and I put it down as one that got away.

An hour later, around midday, I was having brunch outside the Siopa when I got a call from a visiting birder – whose name I sadly failed to get – saying that he had just seen a group of hirundines, with three Barn Swallows, what he thought was an American Cliff Swallow and with either a Sand Martin or a possible second Cliff Swallow. His verbal description was a little better than mine, but he also felt that he didn't quite get enough to clinch the ID for a first for Cape.

While I agree that neither sighting on its own would be enough to get the record through, maybe both considered together might be enough? – **Steve Wing**

Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda* **Bill of Clear, October 9th, 2023**

By Tony Culley

My normal autumn sojourn on Cape Clear in the second week of October was interrupted this year due to a conflicting calendar scheduling at home. My first full day was now set for Monday, October 9th. I overnighted in Baltimore and was on the first ferry out to Cape the

next morning, anxious to connect with the Red-breasted Flycatcher, Rosy Starling and Glossy Ibis which had been reported on Sunday. In the event, I connected with none of them and went back to the Obs for lunch, cursing my luck. Well, my stars were obviously appropriately aligned, because my luck was about to change.

After lunch, I decided to trek out to the Bill in the hope of seeing a Snow Bunting or Black Redstart. I ambled out via Mary Mac's, walked parallel to the lake and up via the pines to the south of the lake. I think every birder on Cape loves that particular walk. It feels quite remote from the rest of the island, and the area in its totality has thrown up its fair share of rarities down the years. The weather, when I eventually got on to the Bill, was a tad mixed insofar as there was intermittent fog with breaks of sunshine every now and then.

About two-thirds of the way along the Bill I got 'blip' views of a wader in flight, which promptly dropped over the eastern ledge and out of sight. I immediately thought the bird was a Buff-breasted Sandpiper, and I was thinking that would be a good record for Cape. In fact, in the previous week, I had a similar experience on Brownstown Head in Waterford, where a Buff-breast flew in off the sea.

But then something happened which changed all that. I heard a call, one with which I was not familiar. I don't recall ever hearing Buff-breast call in Ireland. So, I checked out that call. It most certainly wasn't that. My next port of call was Upland Sandpiper. Well, my goodness (or words to that effect)! It was an Upland.

But now that I had a blip view and a call, should I alert others? I had an anxious few minutes wondering if I would hear or see it again. In the event, it reappeared approximately ten or so metres from where I was sitting, allowing me to rattle off a few shots. Although the light was awful, it was one of those heart-stopping moments.

I rang Dick Coombes, who was back in the Obs in between lunch and going out for the afternoon. I think my words went along the lines of “before I make a total fool of myself, I’m going to send you a photo of a bird, I’m not naming it, tell me what you think.” I gather Dick repeated the same mantra back in the Obs before pandemonium broke out at that end.

Word quickly got out via the island WhatsApp rare bird news group, which Steve Wing administers, ensuring everyone was briefed. I dropped Dick a note telling him I wasn’t going to move from where I was seated as I didn’t want to potentially disturb the bird.

In the event, the first birders appeared fairly promptly, and it was funny to watch the pace at which people are capable of covering the Bill when they have to. Poor old Steve ended up with a muscle tear! In the event, we needn’t have worried. The bird was, by the standards of recent Irish records, quickly refound and very confiding and put up a great show in magnificent sunny conditions.

The bird hung around the Bill until Friday the 13th, thereafter relocating across the inlet to the vast area of the upper reaches of the Wheatear Field and Fирbreaga. Another magic spot, by the way. It was briefly heard again on the 14th, but effectively it had disappeared from view at that point.

The bird represented a first Cape Clear record, so I was doubly chuffed when I heard that.

Black-crowned Night Herons *Nycticorax nycticorax* **North Harbour, April 4th, 2023**

By Steve Wing

At the start of the morning walk, I was approaching Cotter’s Bar when I noticed a small, creamy heron species flying down through Mary Cadogan’s garden. It could have come from Cotter’s or from Mary’s, but it went past me at roughly eye-level and behind the trees, so my view was partially obscured. I saw that it flew around North Harbour and dropped into one of the gullies behind the Obs, so I backtracked, hoping to relocate it.



Black-winged Stilt at the lake, October 2023 (Steve Wing)

As I walked along the edge of the first gully, the bird flew out, past and below me, giving me excellent but brief views of its upper side – a full adult Night Heron!

It disappeared around to the south-west and I left it to get hold of Mary Cadogan. We then went on a walk around the coastline behind the Obs, almost as far as the castle, but had no luck in refinding it.

On our return to the Obs for coffee, we were standing at the front door, talking to a group of visitors about the enormity of our sighting, when the heron flew back into North Harbour, landing on the road by the library. I ran to get my bins from inside and, when I got them onto the bird, it was obviously a juvenile Night Heron – a second bird!

A different adult bird was then found at the lake on April 8th, this one showing full white plumes that the first individual didn’t have.

Black-winged Stilts *Himantopus himantopus* **Lough Errul, April 4th, 2023**

By Steve Wing

On the same day that two Black-crowned Night Herons were seen in North Harbour, Mary Cadogan found *five* Black-winged Stilts feeding on the shores of Lough Errul. These represented only the second record for Cape, following a single bird in 2009, also found at the lake.

With the Night Herons and a Purple Heron also turning up at the same time, Cape was feeling very Mediterranean for a while!

BIRD RINGING 2023

2023 was a really strange ‘ringing’ year, with some ideal weather but very few migrants in the ringing sites. For the first time in many years we had groups of ringers visiting the island, and I really hope that they will not be put off by this year’s dismal results. We were, yet again, hindered with Avian Flu this year and we made the decision, early on, not to target the gull colonies, nor to try catching Storm Petrels. Maybe next year.

Table 7. Ringing totals for 2023, including the Constant Effort Site (CES) totals. **Note:** ‘N’ = new birds ringed; ‘S’ = birds subsequently recaptured; ‘Unknown’ = birds of an unknown age. (This is for certain species, such as House Sparrow and Willow Warbler, where both adults and juveniles have a complete moult in the autumn, making ageing impossible. It is accepted that if you are not certain of the age, you put it down as unknown.)

Species	Adult N	Adult S	Juvenile N	Juvenile S	Pullus N	Unknown S	Total
Blackbird	7	9	15	3		1	35
Blackcap	8		41	1			50
Blue Tit	1	25	31	28			85
Chaffinch	3		3				6
Chiffchaff	30	3	9	1			43
Dunnock	4	22	32	13			71
Goldcrest	1		17	6			24
Goldfinch	20	4	17	1			42
Great Tit	3	6	14	10			33
Greenfinch	3		6				9
Grey Wagtail			1				1
Herring Gull		1			2		3
House Sparrow	12	6	5				23
Lesser Black-backed Gull		33		3	213	1	250
Linnet	5		4				9
Magpie	1						1
Meadow Pipit	3		4				7
Pied/White Wagtail			1				1
Redwing	1		1				2
Reed Bunting			1				1
Reed Warbler			1	2			3
Robin	5	21	55	24			105
Rock Dove	50	105	23	26		1	205
Sedge Warbler	12	60	27	5	1		105
Song Thrush	4	2	6			1	13
Spotted Flycatcher	1		3				4
Stonechat	3	3	24	1			31
European Storm-petrel	6						6
Swallow	4		6				10
Tree Sparrow	2						2
Wheatear			1				1
Whitethroat	6	1	5				12
Willow Warbler	10	2	17	1			30
Wren	12	25	48	12			97
Yellow-browed Warbler			1				1
Grand Total	217	328	419	137	216	4	1321

CES Ringing Report 2023

The CES (Constant Effort Site) season was a virtual failure in 2023, with only seven of the 12 visits possible – a combination of holidays and poor weather causing the missed dates. We can only hope for better next year. The table below show the totals for each species over the seven visits.

Table 8. Species trapped in 2023 CES ringing season, showing the totals for each species over the seven visits.

Species	Total
Blackbird	5
Blue Tit	2
Dunnock	5
Goldfinch	6
Great Tit	3
Meadow Pipit	2
Reed Bunting	4
Robin	21
Sedge Warbler	56
Song Thrush	1
Stonechat	3
Swallow	4
Wheatear	1
Whitethroat	4
Willow Warbler	1
Wren	23
Grand Total	141



Robin (Steve Wing)



Blackbird (Steve Wing)

The table below shows the number of adults ringed in the CES each year from 2019 to 2023, highlighting the drop in numbers for most species.

Table 9. Numbers of adults caught each year in the East Bog Constant Effort Site (CES).

Species / Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Blackbird	10	1	3	5	3
Blue Tit	3	3	2	2	1
Chiffchaff	2		2		
Dunnock	6	1	2	2	2
Goldfinch		2	2	4	5
Great Tit	2	1	2	2	2
Greenfinch		1			
Lesser Redpoll		2	1		
Linnet			2	1	
Meadow Pipit		1	1	2	1
Reed Bunting	1	2	3		3
Robin	2		1	1	6
Sedge Warbler	34	23	34	25	37
Snipe			1		
Song Thrush	5			1	
Stonechat	2	1	2	4	2
Swallow	3	3		2	
Tree Sparrow				2	
Wheatear					1
Willow Warbler	2	1		1	
Wren	5	5	7	7	13



CES ringing site in East Bog reedbed. You can just make out the cross line of the mist net running from left to right (Steve Wing)

BIRD RINGING 2024

Table 10 below shows the bird-ringing totals for 2024 for all new birds ringed.

Table 10. Ringing totals for 2024, including the CES totals. **Note:** ‘N’ = new birds ringed. ‘Full-grown’ refers to adult-sized birds for which the year of hatching is unknown. ‘Juvenile’ refers to birds ringed during their first calendar year (for passerines, at least), while ‘Pullus’ refers to birds ringed prior to fledging or leaving the nest.

Species	Adult N	Full-grown N	Juvenile N	Pullus N	Total
Rock Dove	11		27		38
Herring Gull				18	18
Great Black-backed Gull				2	2
Lesser Black-backed Gull				147	147
Chough				4	4
Jackdaw	1		1		2
Blue Tit	8		18		26
Great Tit	3	1	5		9
Swallow	2		6		8
House Martin			1		1
Yellow-browed Warbler	1		5		6
Willow Warbler	7		8		15
Chiffchaff	6	3	25		34
Sedge Warbler	24		25		49
Reed Warbler			3		3
Blackcap	3		13		16
Garden Warbler			1		1
Lesser Whitethroat			1		1
Whitethroat	1		2		3
Firecrest			1		1
Goldcrest	1	2	2		5
Wren	10		24		34
Starling			1		1
Song Thrush	3		9		12
Redwing	3				3
Blackbird	9		13		22
Spotted Flycatcher			3		3
Robin	5		43		48
Pied Flycatcher			1		1
Stonechat	4		9		13
House Sparrow	3		1		4
Duncock	6		16		22
Meadow Pipit	1				1
Chaffinch	1				1
Greenfinch	3		1		4
Linnet			1		1
Goldfinch	10		2		12
Reed Bunting	2				2
Grand Total	128	6	268	171	573



Common Dolphin at sea off Cape Clear (Steve Wing)

Mammals 2023

Atlantic Grey Seal *Halichoerus grypus*

Seen throughout the year and in similar numbers to previous years. The arrival of small numbers of pups on the beaches in autumn indicate that they are still breeding around the island.

Harbour Porpoise *Phocoena phocoena*

Seen regularly throughout the season, with no apparent change from previous years.

Common Dolphin *Delphinus delphis*

The first record this year was on April 9th, and some were seen regularly from then until the last record on October 30th.

Bottlenose Dolphin *Tursiops truncatus*

Two were seen on September 22nd and another 6 on October 23rd .

Fin Whale *Balaenoptera physalus*

Recorded on one day only, October 24th, from the south end.

Humpback Whale *Megaptera novaeangliae*

Two were recorded on three dates – June 22nd, September 4th and September 17th.

Minke Whale *Balaenoptera acutorostrata*

Seen regularly from May 1st onwards until the last record on October 28th. Highest daily count of 6 seen on October 24th.

Otter *Lutra lutra*

Recorded once in the spring, on April 8th, and not again until August 26th, with seven more sightings between then and the end of October..

European Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*

Present in their 'millions.' There has been a marked increase in their numbers over the last few years and they are beginning to cause significant erosion around the lake and the paddocks near West Bog.

Brown Rat *Rattus norvegicus*

Present throughout the year and widespread around the island.

Bats *Pipistrellus* species

Pipistrelles were reported numerous times during the season, most assumed to be Common Pipistrelle. Four Leisler's Bats were recorded on June 20th.

Reptiles 2023

Common Lizard *Zootoca vivipara*

Seen throughout the season, with a high count of 14 on October 19th.

Jellyfish 2023

Portuguese Man o' War *Physalia physalis*

Very few recorded this season, most of which were in South Harbour.

Butterflies 2023

Not such a good summer for butterflies, with plenty of damp and windy days. The monthly totals were, in general, down on last year's figures. Nineteen different species were recorded; they are listed below, with monthly totals.

Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui*

An incredibly poor year for this species.

MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT	TOTAL
0	0	0	1	0	4	4	7	16

Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*

Reasonably good numbers in the autumn, but no real 'falls' as have been seen in previous years.

MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT	TOTAL
0	6	3	141	73	1105	740	247	2315

Clouded Yellow *Colias croceus*

A very sparse year for this species, only one being recorded on October.

MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT	TOTAL
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1

Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae*

A poor year for this species.

MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT	TOTAL
0	7	2	0	17	20	22	3	71

Peacock *Inachis io*

A reasonably good spring and early autumn for this species, but down in numbers generally.

MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT	TOTAL
0	53	6	0	8	50	5	4	126

Large White *Pieris brassicae*

No significant change from previous years.

MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT	TOTAL
0	0	8	33	46	22	47	0	156

Small White *Pieris rapae*

A quiet year for this species.

MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT	TOTAL
0	0	0	1	14	7	8	0	30

Green-veined White *Pieris napi*

A quiet year for this species.

MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT	TOTAL
0	2	21	0	2	11	0	0	36

Orange Tip *Anthocharis cardamines*

Good numbers seen in the spring.

MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT	TOTAL
0	1	111	1	0	0	0	0	113

Speckled Wood *Pararge aegeria*

One of the more commonly seen species.

MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT	TOTAL
0	62	33	85	16	331	112	0	639

Wall *Lasiommata megera*

A good autumn for this Cape regular.

MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT	TOTAL
0	0	27	11	2	119	38	1	198

Small Copper *Lycaena phlaeas*

A poor year for this species.

MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT	TOTAL
0	0	0	1	5	3	4	9	22

Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus*

A reasonably good autumn, but quiet in the spring.

MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT	TOTAL
0	0	1	77	0	300	65	0	443

Holly Blue *Celastrina argiolus*

Singles on April 5th and 7th, and 2 on April 13th, were the only records this year.

Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina*

Numbers down by almost half on last year.

MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT	TOTAL
0	0	0	237	214	125	6	0	582

Gatekeeper *Pyronia tithonus*

Marked as present on 10th and 11th August, the only records this year.

Ringlet *Aphantopus hyperantus*

An incredibly poor year for this species on Cape.

MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT	TOTAL
0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	3

Grayling *Hipparchia semele*

The first record was on August 4th and the last on September 2nd, with the highest counts of 10 on two dates.

Dark-green Fritillary *Speyeria aglaja*

There were only 4 days when this butterfly was seen, on August 10th to 13th consecutively.



Grass Webworm (Michael O'Donnell)



Old World Webworm (Michael O'Donnell)

Moths 2023

Seven moth species were recorded on Cape for the first time in 2023 (see Table 11 below). The most exciting of these was a Grass Webworm *Herpetogramma licarsisalis* trapped on October 7th. Not only was this species new to Cape, it was also new to Ireland. A second individual was trapped on Toe Head on the same night. It is a widespread species in the Old World tropics, including much of Africa, but appears to be expanding its range north into Europe.

The Old World Webworm *Hellula undalis*, a very rare migrant, was also recorded on Cape for the first time. There had only been two Irish records prior to 2023, but there were at least seven further records during 2023, including one on Cape on October 18th, quickly followed by two more on 19th and 20th.

A number of other rare migrant species were recorded, including Convolvulus Hawk-moth *Agrius convolvuli* (4) and Vestal *Rhodometra sacraria* (44). The Vestal total of 44 was the highest annual total ever of this species for Cape, surpassing the previous high of 34 in 2010.

A total of 139 species were recorded on Cape during 2023. This brings to 427 the total number of moth species recorded on Cape.

Table 11. Moth species recorded for the first time on Cape Clear Island in 2023.

Taxon	Vernacular	Records	Date
<i>Agonopterix propinquella</i>	Black-spot Buff	1	23 March
<i>Coleophora discordella</i>	Lotus Case-bearer	1	31 July
<i>Herpetogramma licarsisalis</i>	Grass Webworm	1	7 October
<i>Hellula undalis</i>	Old World Webworm	3	18-19-20 October
<i>Eupithecia icterata</i>	Tawny Speckled Pug	1	17 August
<i>Leptologia macilenta</i>	Yellow-line Quaker	1	20 October
<i>Nola confusalis</i>	Least Black Arches	1	20 May

Table 12. Moth species trapped, and numbers of individuals recorded, on Cape Clear Island in 2023. Where “a moth” appears in the Vernacular column, this means there is no English name for the species.

Taxon	Vernacular	Record	Individuals
<i>Hoplodrina octogenaria/blanda</i>	Uncertain/Rustic agg.	7	14
<i>Mesapamea secalis</i> agg.	Common Rustic agg.	8	12
<i>Micropterix aruncella</i>	a moth	1	1
<i>Korscheltellus fusconebulosa</i>	Map-winged Swift	1	1
<i>Hepialus humuli</i>	Ghost Moth	1	1
<i>Heliozela resplendella</i>	a moth	1	
<i>Psychoides filicivora</i>	a moth	1	1
<i>Phyllonorycter rajella</i>	a moth	1	
<i>Ypsolopha dentella</i>	Honeysuckle Moth	1	1
<i>Plutella xylostella</i>	Diamond-back Moth	1	1
<i>Glyphipterix thrasonella</i>	a moth	1	1
<i>Glyphipterix simpliciella</i>	Cocksfoot Moth	1	100
<i>Agonopterix propinquella</i>	a moth	1	1
<i>Aproaerema anthyllidella</i>	a moth	1	1
<i>Teleiopsis diffinis</i>	a moth	1	1
<i>Coleophora discordella</i>	a moth	1	1
<i>Elachista atricomella</i>	a moth	1	1
<i>Alucita hexadactyla</i>	Many-plumed Moth	3	4
<i>Emmelina monodactyla</i>	Common Plume	7	10
<i>Acleris laterana</i>	a moth	1	1
<i>Acleris variegana</i>	Garden Rose Tortrix	1	1
<i>Acleris hyemana</i>	a moth	1	1
<i>Cochylichroa atricapitana</i>	a moth	2	8
<i>Bactra lancealana</i>	a moth	1	1
<i>Ancylis badiana</i>	a moth	1	1
<i>Crociosema plebejana</i>	a moth	1	1
<i>Cydia ulicetana</i>	a moth	4	6
<i>Zygaena filipendulae</i>	Six-spot Burnet	1	1
<i>Aphomia sociella</i>	Bee Moth	3	4
<i>Phycitodes binaevella</i>	a moth	1	1
<i>Pyrausta despicata</i>	a moth	2	2
<i>Udea ferrugalis</i>	Rusty-dot Pearl	7	41
<i>Udea lutealis</i>	a moth	1	1
<i>Patania ruralis</i>	Mother of Pearl	1	1
<i>Palpita vitrealis</i>	a moth	1	2
<i>Nomophila noctuella</i>	Rush Veneer	6	9
<i>Herpetogramma licarsisalis</i>	Grass Webworm	1	1
<i>Hellula undalis</i>	Old World Webworm	3	4
<i>Eudonia angustea</i>	a moth	2	3
<i>Agriphila tristella</i>	a moth	1	3
<i>Catoptria pinella</i>	a moth	2	2
<i>Thyatira batis</i>	Peach Blossom	2	3
<i>Habrosyne pyritoides</i>	Buff Arches	2	2
<i>Lasiocampa quercus</i>	Oak Eggar	5	5
<i>Macrothylacia rubi</i>	Fox Moth	3	13
<i>Saturnia pavonia</i>	Emperor Moth	3	3
<i>Agrius convolvuli</i>	Convolvulus Hawk-moth	4	4
<i>Macroglossum stellatarum</i>	Hummingbird Hawk-moth	15	29
<i>Deilephila elpenor</i>	Elephant Hawk-moth	1	1

Table 12 continued...

Taxon	Vernacular	Record	Individuals
<i>Idaea biselata</i>	Small Fan-footed Wave	9	22
<i>Scopula marginepunctata</i>	Mullein Wave	2	3
<i>Rhodometra sacraria</i>	Vestal	12	44
<i>Nyctosea obstipata</i>	Gem	2	2
<i>Xanthorhoe ferrugata</i>	Dark-barred Twin-spot Carpet	8	12
<i>Xanthorhoe montanata</i>	Silver-ground Carpet	2	2
<i>Epirrhoe alternata</i>	Common Carpet	3	4
<i>Hydriomena furcata</i>	July Highflyer	1	1
<i>Thera obeliscata</i>	Grey Pine Carpet	2	2
<i>Cosmorhoe ocellata</i>	Purple Bar	2	2
<i>Ecliptopera silaceata</i>	Small Phoenix	2	4
<i>Dysstroma truncata</i>	Common Marbled Carpet	5	12
<i>Colostygia pectinataria</i>	Green Carpet	4	7
<i>Lampropteryx suffumata</i>	Water Carpet	2	2
<i>Gymnoscelis rufifasciata</i>	Double-striped Pug	4	5
<i>Eupithecia pulchellata</i>	Foxglove Pug	1	1
<i>Eupithecia nanata</i>	Narrow-winged Pug	4	5
<i>Eupithecia icterata</i>	Tawny Speckled Pug	1	1
<i>Eupithecia subfuscata</i>	Grey Pug	1	1
<i>Lomasipilis marginata</i>	Clouded Border	1	4
<i>Petrophora chlorosata</i>	Brown Silver-line	3	52
<i>Opisthograptis luteolata</i>	Brimstone Moth	10	21
<i>Epione repandaria</i>	Bordered Beauty	4	5
<i>Selenia dentaria</i>	Early Thorn	12	37
<i>Odontopera bidentata</i>	Scalloped Hazel	2	8
<i>Ourapteryx sambucaria</i>	Swallow-tailed Moth	2	2
<i>Selidosema brunnearia</i>	Bordered Grey	1	1
<i>Alcis repandata</i>	Mottled Beauty	1	2
<i>Cabera pusaria</i>	Common White Wave	6	7
<i>Cabera exanthemata</i>	Common Wave	6	9
<i>Notodonta ziczac</i>	Pebble Prominent	2	2
<i>Phalera bucephala</i>	Buff-tip	1	1
<i>Scoliopteryx libatrix</i>	Herald	1	1
<i>Calliteara pudibunda</i>	Pale Tussock	1	5
<i>Spilosoma lutea</i>	Buff Ermine	5	20
<i>Spilosoma lubricipeda</i>	White Ermine	2	10
<i>Diaphora mendica</i>	Muslin Moth	2	19
<i>Phragmatobia fuliginosa</i>	Ruby Tiger	2	2
<i>Arctia caja</i>	Garden Tiger	3	3
<i>Tyria jacobaeae</i>	Cinnabar	42	284
<i>Utetheisa pulchella</i>	Crimson Speckled	1	1
<i>Eilema complana</i>	Scarce Footman	5	6
<i>Schrankia costaeirigalis</i>	Pinion-streaked Snout	6	10
<i>Abrostola tripartita</i>	Spectacle	3	3
<i>Autographa gamma</i>	Silver Y	11	12
<i>Acronicta cinerea</i>	Sweet Gale Moth	1	1
<i>Acronicta rumicis</i>	Knot Grass	2	2
<i>Xylocampa areola</i>	Early Grey	2	11
<i>Helicoverpa armigera</i>	Scarce Bordered Straw	4	4
<i>Spodoptera exigua</i>	Small Mottled Willow	2	3
<i>Phlogophora meticulosa</i>	Angle Shades	3	3

Table 12 continued...

Taxon	Vernacular	Record	Individuals
<i>Euplexia lucipara</i>	Small Angle Shades	2	3
<i>Helotropha leucostigma</i>	Crescent	1	1
<i>Hydraecia micacea</i>	Rosy Rustic	11	29
<i>Luperina testacea</i>	Flounced Rustic	10	59
<i>Rhizedra lutosa</i>	Large Wainscot	1	1
<i>Denticucullus pygmina</i>	Small Wainscot	4	5
<i>Apamea remissa</i>	Dusky Brocade	1	1
<i>Apamea monoglypha</i>	Dark Arches	5	14
<i>Litoligia literosa</i>	Rosy Minor	3	3
<i>Mesoligia furuncula</i>	Cloaked Minor	1	1
<i>Leptologia lota</i>	Red-line Quaker	10	12
<i>Leptologia macilenta</i>	Yellow-line Quaker	1	1
<i>Anchoscelis lunosa</i>	Lunar Underwing	6	23
<i>Aporophyla nigra</i>	Black Rustic	5	30
<i>Cerapteryx graminis</i>	Antler Moth	3	3
<i>Lacanobia oleracea</i>	Bright-line Brown-eye	1	3
<i>Hada plebeja</i>	Shears	1	1
<i>Sideridis rivularis</i>	Campion	10	13
<i>Sideridis reticulata</i>	Bordered Gothic	2	4
<i>Hadena bicruris</i>	Lychnis	6	6
<i>Hadena caesia</i>	Grey	3	4
<i>Hadena perplexa</i>	Tawny Shears	2	12
<i>Mythimna impura</i>	Smoky Wainscot	6	10
<i>Mythimna vitellina</i>	Delicate	1	1
<i>Mythimna unipuncta</i>	American Wainscot or White-speck	1	1
<i>Mythimna ferrago</i>	Clay	1	1
<i>Leucania loreyi</i>	Cosmopolitan	2	3
<i>Peridroma saucia</i>	Pearly Underwing	1	1
<i>Agrotis exclamationis</i>	Heart and Dart	2	2
<i>Agrotis segetum</i>	Turnip Moth	3	3
<i>Agrotis ipsilon</i>	Dark Sword-grass	4	5
<i>Ochropleura plecta</i>	Flame Shoulder	12	45
<i>Diarsia rubi</i>	Small Square-spot	9	16
<i>Cerastis rubricosa</i>	Red Chestnut	1	4
<i>Lycophotia porphyrea</i>	True Lover's Knot	12	64
<i>Noctua pronuba</i>	Large Yellow Underwing	6	8
<i>Noctua comes</i>	Lesser Yellow Underwing	11	41
<i>Noctua janthe</i>	Lesser Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing	13	55
<i>Xestia xanthographa</i>	Square-spot Rustic	10	23
<i>Xestia c-nigrum</i>	Setaceous Hebrew Character	3	4
<i>Nola confusalis</i>	Least Black Arches	1	1

Moths 2024

Table 13. Moth species trapped, and numbers of individuals recorded, on Cape Clear Island in 2024.

Taxon	Vernacular	Record	Individuals
<i>Korscheltellus fusconebulosa</i>	Map-winged Swift	1	1
<i>Hepialus humuli</i>	Ghost Moth	1	1
<i>Stigmella hybnerella</i>	a moth	1	2
<i>Stigmella salicis</i>	a moth	1	1
<i>Stigmella aurella</i>	a moth	1	
<i>Heliozela resplendella</i>	a moth	1	2
<i>Gracillaria syringella</i>	a moth	1	
<i>Aspilapteryx tringipennella</i>	a moth	1	1
<i>Parornix torquillella</i>	a moth	1	
<i>Phyllonorycter oxyacanthae</i>	a moth	1	1
<i>Phyllonorycter spinicolella</i>	a moth	1	2
<i>Phyllonorycter viminetorum</i>	a moth	1	2
<i>Ypsolopha dentella</i>	Honeysuckle Moth	3	3
<i>Plutella xylostella</i>	Diamond-back Moth	3	3
<i>Endrosis sarcitrella</i>	White-shouldered House-moth	1	1
<i>Hofmannophila pseudospretella</i>	Brown House-moth	1	1
<i>Anarsia spartiella</i>	a moth	1	2
<i>Helcystogramma rufescens</i>	a moth	5	4
<i>Teleiopsis diffinis</i>	a moth	1	1
<i>Elachista atricomella</i>	a moth	1	1
<i>Blastobasis adustella</i>	a moth	1	1
<i>Alucita hexadactyla</i>	Many-plumed Moth	7	13
<i>Amblyptilia acanthadactyla</i>	Beautiful Plume	1	1
<i>Emmelina monodactyla</i>	Common Plume	3	3
<i>Epiphyas postvittana</i>	Light Brown Apple Moth	1	1
<i>Celypha cespitana</i>	a moth	1	1
<i>Celypha lacunana</i>	a moth	1	1
<i>Ancylis badiana</i>	a moth	1	1
<i>Epinotia ramella</i>	a moth	1	1
<i>Eucosma cana</i>	a moth	1	1
<i>Eucosma campoliliana</i>	a moth	1	1
<i>Epiblema scutulana</i>	a moth	1	2
<i>Notocelia uddmanniana</i>	Bramble Shoot Moth	2	2
<i>Dichrorampha acuminatana</i>	a moth	1	1
<i>Cydia ulicetana</i>	a moth	2	3
<i>Zygaena filipendulae</i>	Six-spot Burnet	3	19
<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>	Red Admiral	1	1
<i>Aphomia sociella</i>	Bee Moth	8	17
<i>Delplanqueia dilutella</i>	a moth	1	2
<i>Phycitodes binaevella</i>	a moth	1	2
<i>Anania hortulata</i>	Small Magpie	1	1
<i>Udea ferrugalis</i>	Rusty-dot Pearl	9	16
<i>Udea prunalis</i>	a moth	4	5
<i>Patania ruralis</i>	Mother of Pearl	1	1
<i>Spoladea recurvalis</i>	a moth	1	1
<i>Palpita vitrealis</i>	a moth	4	6
<i>Nomophila noctuella</i>	Rush Veneer	4	13
<i>Eudonia angustea</i>	a moth	3	4

Table 13 continued...

Taxon	Vernacular	Record	Individuals
<i>Eudonia mercurella</i>	a moth	2	3
<i>Chrysoteuchia culmella</i>	Garden Grass-veneer	1	10
<i>Crambus pascuella</i>	a moth	1	1
<i>Crambus perlella</i>	a moth	1	1
<i>Agriphila tristella</i>	a moth	2	2
<i>Catoptria pinella</i>	a moth	2	2
<i>Thyatira batis</i>	Peach Blossom	2	2
<i>Habrosyne pyritoides</i>	Buff Arches	1	1
<i>Lasiocampa quercus</i>	Oak Eggar	7	10
<i>Laothoe populi</i>	Poplar Hawk-moth	4	4
<i>Macroglossum stellatarum</i>	Hummingbird Hawk-moth	25	138
<i>Deilephila elpenor</i>	Elephant Hawk-moth	1	3
<i>Idaea dimidiata</i>	Single-dotted Wave	5	8
<i>Idaea biselata</i>	Small Fan-footed Wave	7	10
<i>Idaea aversata</i>	Riband Wave	2	2
<i>Scopula marginepunctata</i>	Mullein Wave	1	1
<i>Rhodomestra sacraria</i>	Vestal	1	1
<i>Xanthorhoe fluctuata</i>	Garden Carpet	4	4
<i>Xanthorhoe ferrugata</i>	Dark-barred Twin-spot Carpet	8	9
<i>Xanthorhoe designata</i>	Flame Carpet	1	2
<i>Camptogramma bilineata</i>	Yellow Shell	1	1
<i>Epirrhoe alternata</i>	Common Carpet	1	2
<i>Thera britannica</i>	Spruce Carpet	3	3
<i>Dysstroma truncata</i>	Common Marbled Carpet	9	29
<i>Colostygia pectinataria</i>	Green Carpet	4	5
<i>Gymnoscelus rufifasciata</i>	Double-striped Pug	2	2
<i>Chloroclystis v-ata</i>	V-Pug	2	2
<i>Eupithecia nanata</i>	Narrow-winged Pug	3	3
<i>Eupithecia assimilata</i>	Currant Pug	1	1
<i>Eupithecia subfasciata</i>	Grey Pug	1	1
<i>Aplocera plagiata</i>	Treble-bar	1	1
<i>Acasis viretata</i>	Yellow-barred Brindle	1	1
<i>Abraxas grossulariata</i>	Magpie Moth	1	1
<i>Petrophora chlorosata</i>	Brown Silver-line	5	6
<i>Opisthograptis luteolata</i>	Brimstone Moth	10	16
<i>Epione repandaria</i>	Bordered Beauty	3	4
<i>Selenia dentaria</i>	Early Thorn	19	52
<i>Crocallis elinguaris</i>	Scalloped Oak	5	9
<i>Ourapteryx sambucaria</i>	Swallow-tailed Moth	1	1
<i>Selidosema brunnearia</i>	Bordered Grey	4	4
<i>Alcis repandata</i>	Mottled Beauty	2	4
<i>Cabera pusaria</i>	Common White Wave	3	5
<i>Cabera exanthemata</i>	Common Wave	10	16
<i>Charissa obscurata</i>	Annulet	1	1
<i>Pseudoterpna pruinata</i>	Grass Emerald	3	3
<i>Cerura vinula</i>	Puss Moth	1	1
<i>Notodonta ziczac</i>	Pebble Prominent	10	11
<i>Phalera bucephala</i>	Buff-tip	1	1
<i>Rivula sericealis</i>	Straw Dot	1	1
<i>Hypena proboscidalis</i>	Snout	5	5
<i>Spilosoma lutea</i>	Buff Ermine	1	5

Table 13 continued...

Taxon	Vernacular	Record	Individuals
<i>Phragmatobia fuliginosa</i>	Ruby Tiger	5	6
<i>Arctia caja</i>	Garden Tiger	10	62
<i>Tyria jacobaeae</i>	Cinnabar	7	25
<i>Eilema lurideola</i>	Common Footman	1	1
<i>Eilema complana</i>	Scarce Footman	2	2
<i>Schrankia costaestrigalis</i>	Pinion-streaked Snout	2	2
<i>Abrostola tripartita</i>	Spectacle	2	2
<i>Abrostola triplasia</i>	Dark Spectacle	1	1
<i>Diachrysia chrysitis</i>	Burnished Brass	7	10
<i>Autographa gamma</i>	Silver Y	4	4
<i>Acronicta cinerea</i>	Sweet Gale Moth	25	138
<i>Acronicta rumicis</i>	Knot Grass	1	3
<i>Stilbia anomala</i>	Anomalous	5	8
<i>Helicoverpa armigera</i>	Scarce Bordered Straw	7	10
<i>Hoplodrina octogenaria</i>	Uncertain	2	2
<i>Hoplodrina octogenaria/blanda</i>	Uncertain/Rustic agg.	1	1
<i>Hoplodrina blanda</i>	Rustic	1	1
<i>Hoplodrina ambigua</i>	Vine's Rustic	4	4
<i>Phlogophora meticulosa</i>	Angle Shades	8	9
<i>Euplexia lucipara</i>	Small Angle Shades	1	2
<i>Gortyna flavago</i>	Frosted Orange	1	1
<i>Hydraecia micacea</i>	Rosy Rustic	1	2
<i>Luperina testacea</i>	Flounced Rustic	3	3
<i>Rhizedra lutosa</i>	Large Wainscot	9	29
<i>Archana dissoluta</i>	Brown-veined Wainscot	4	5
<i>Denticucullus pygmina</i>	Small Wainscot	2	2
<i>Apamea monoglypha</i>	Dark Arches	2	2
<i>Apamea lithoxylaea</i>	Light Arches	3	3
<i>Mesapamea secalis</i> agg.	Common/Lesser Common Rustic	1	1
<i>Litologia literosa</i>	Rosy Minor	1	1
<i>Mesologia furuncula</i>	Cloaked Minor	1	1
<i>Oligia strigilis</i> agg.	Marbled Minor agg.	1	1
<i>Xanthia togata</i>	Pink-barred Sallow	1	1
<i>Agrochola lychnidis</i>	Beaded Chestnut	5	6
<i>Leptologia lota</i>	Red-line Quaker	10	16
<i>Anchoscelis lunosa</i>	Lunar Underwing	3	4
<i>Aporophyla nigra</i>	Black Rustic	19	52
<i>Lacanobia oleracea</i>	Bright-line Brown-eye	5	9
<i>Sideridis rivularis</i>	Campion	1	1
<i>Hadena bicruris</i>	Lychnis	4	4
<i>Hadena perplexa</i>	Tawny Shears	2	4
<i>Mythimna conigera</i>	Brown-line Bright-eye	3	5
<i>Mythimna pallens</i>	Common Wainscot	10	16
<i>Mythimna impura</i>	Smoky Wainscot	1	1
<i>Mythimna vitellina</i>	Delicate	3	3
<i>Mythimna ferrago</i>	Clay	1	1
<i>Peridroma saucia</i>	Pearly Underwing	10	11
<i>Agrotis exclamationis</i>	Heart and Dart	1	1
<i>Agrotis segetum</i>	Turnip Moth	1	1
<i>Agrotis trux</i>	Crescent Dart	5	5
<i>Agrotis ipsilon</i>	Dark Sword-grass	1	5

Table 13 continued...

Taxon	Vernacular	Record	Individuals
<i>Axylia putris</i>	Flame	5	6
<i>Ochropleura plecta</i>	Flame Shoulder	10	62
<i>Ochropleura leucogaster</i>	Radford's Flame Shoulder	7	25
<i>Diarsia brunnea</i>	Purple Clay	1	1
<i>Diarsia mendica</i>	Ingrailed Clay	1	1
<i>Diarsia rubi</i>	Small Square-spot	10	14
<i>Lycophotia porphyrea</i>	True Lover's Knot	21	304
<i>Noctua pronuba</i>	Large Yellow Underwing	13	24
<i>Noctua comes</i>	Lesser Yellow Underwing	7	11
<i>Noctua interjecta</i>	Least Yellow Underwing	1	1
<i>Noctua janthe</i>	Lesser Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing	15	38
<i>Xestia baja</i>	Dotted Clay	2	2
<i>Xestia agathina</i>	Heath Rustic	4	5
<i>Xestia xanthographa</i>	Square-spot Rustic	17	116
<i>Xestia c-nigrum</i>	Setaceous Hebrew Character	15	75
<i>Xestia triangulum</i>	Double Square-spot	3	3
<i>Eugnorisma glareosa</i>	Autumnal Rustic	4	22

Damselflies & Dragonflies 2023

Azure Damselfly *Coenagrion puella*

A single record, on May 29th.

Emperor *Anax imperator*

The first record was on August 6th and the last on September 17th, with highest count of 8 on September 6th.

Common Hawker *Aeshna juncea*

The first record was on August 27th and the last on September 9th; highest count of 3 on September 9th.

Migrant Hawker *Aeshna mixta*

The first record was on September 5th and the last on October 18th; highest count of 4 on September 17th.

Common Darter *Sympetrum striolatum*

The first record was on August 15th and the last on October 3rd, with highest count of 8 on September 7th.

Ruddy Darter *Sympetrum sanguineum*

A single record, on September 6th..

Four-spotted Chaser *Libellula quadrimaculata*

Only one recorded, on September 9th.



Emperor dragonfly ovipositing (Steve Wing)



Common Darter (Steve Wing)



Two views of Liam Weddick's pond in Lissamona in early stages of construction in 2023 (*Steve Wing*)

NOTES

New habitat created in Lissamona

Back in the early spring of 2023, a few Capers took part in a Heritage Keepers training programme, run by the Burrenbeo Trust. We were just one of six groups around Ireland taking part, and it involved five two-hour online sessions, learning about the heritage we had in each of our own localities.

The end goal, in Module 5, was to present a project that we could carry out to improve and protect the heritage – in our case, on Cape Clear – for under €1,000. Our project was to dig two new ponds near the entrance to the old fish farm in Lissamona, to provide standing freshwater in an effort to encourage water beetles, dragonflies and maybe the odd wader or two!

If the project was deemed workable and of merit, the Trust would support it. Thankfully, our ideas were deemed worthy of the €1,000 grant.

The two ponds were dug in mid-April 2023 and were successful in getting water beetles and dragonflies visiting within a few weeks. Both ponds were enlarged later in the month, and they now provide an excellent

haven for a wide variety of species. The Burrenbeo Trust members were so impressed with our work that we were given a Special Recognition Award for the project.

Although they were dug on the same day, the two ponds have evolved totally differently. One pond (Paudie's), was in a fairly vegetated area and soon looked good, with a lot of wetland plants like Ragged Robin, Lady's Smock, Marsh Bird's-foot-trefoil and Royal Fern. The other (Liam's) is in a more open area, but it soon attracted a surprising number of birds, including pipits and finches, to drink and to bathe.

Within a few days water-skaters arrived, and Emperor dragonflies were soon seen ovipositing. Greater and Lesser Water-boatmen then arrived and hundreds of whirligig beetles were on the ponds by late summer.

It is interesting to wonder where all of these insects came from. We will continue to monitor the colonisation of the ponds. All species found will be identified fully and a complete list will be added to next year's report. – **Steve Wing**



Two views of Paudie Sheehan's pond in Lissamona in early stages of construction in 2023 (*Steve Wing*)



Two views of Paudie Sheehan's pond in Lissamona, one at an early stage, the second later in the year *(Steve Wing)*



Two views of Liam Weddick's pond in Lissamona, one at an early stage, the second later in the year *(Steve Wing)*

Ringling demonstration for the school

As part of our continuing efforts to promote the flora and fauna of Cape Clear, we held several ringing demonstrations and walks around the island during 2023, aimed primarily at the younger generation.

The first event involved the national school here on Cape on June 15th. Despite there being only two pupils attending the school at the time, this allowed them both a perfect opportunity to see birds in the hand and to learn how and, more importantly why, we catch birds.

Using very fine mist nets, we trapped a total of 10 birds and, with the pupils and teachers watching, we extracted the birds from the nets. This is not something many people get to see, and it is why we target our school and visiting educational groups.

We caught a Chiffchaff and a Willow Warbler (pictured), enabling me to explain how we can tell them apart using their different wing formulae



Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler *(Steve Wing)*

and by how the Chiffchaff has dark legs while the Willow Warbler has pale ones. This is much easier done in the hand than in the field and it was an invaluable lesson for the children and teachers.

Catching two Robins let me demonstrate just how relaxed birds can be when caught, which is something the children had expressed concern about at the start of the exercise. We were lucky to catch both an adult and a juvenile Dunnock. These birds allowed me to show how we can age some species by the colour of their eyes – juvenile Dunnocks have dull brown eyes, while adults have chestnut ones.

We also caught a Blackbird, a Whitethroat and a Wren. Both Blackbird and Wren are resident species on Cape, while the Whitethroat is a migrant that breeds on the island. So, I was able to explain how and why some species need to migrate and why others do not. – **Steve Wing**



Adult Dunnock – note chestnut-coloured iris (*Steve Wing*)

Irish college students event

On June 29th, we hosted a group from Coláiste Chiaráin, the Irish language college held on Cape each year. As with the national school event, we opened mist nets in Cotter's Garden, which let me explain why the garden has become internationally famous as a hotspot for rare birds.

A combination of location, shelter and food makes Cotter's a magnet for lost and hungry birds on migration, and I was able to stress the importance of

this to everyone. I explained why some species have long wings while others have shorter ones. I used the Willow Warbler and the Wren as examples of species that migrate (the warbler) and others that stay at home (the Wren).

The numbers involved in the event meant we had to split the group into two: it was interesting to see how the two groups differed in their attitudes to all aspects of what we were trying to show them! – **Steve Wing**

Visit from scout group

On July 7th, we had a visit from the Mizen Head Scout Group for the second year running. Despite the weather not being at all kind to us, we were able to open one of the more sheltered nets and we caught two birds. We went through the 'topography' of the birds, explaining the different feather tracts and body parts. The six young scouts showed real interest in this, and it was a pleasure to be with and to educate them.

We also went through the 'how and why' aspects of bird-ringing, using Sedge Warbler and Swallows to explain the wonders of migration and some of the huge distances involved.

We then discussed how feathers worked and how they have influenced many of the practical things in our lives, such as aircraft wing designs and Velcro. Luckily, I had a



Steve describes a feather to the scouts

feather with me, and handed it around to the group.

We then went for a walk to the South Harbour where we discussed the amount of plastics being washed up on our shores and the damage this was doing to our wildlife. The Obs hosts a volunteer group one weekend every month, and one of the activities that they carry out is a beach clean. This was discussed with the scout group, along with how we might cut down on the amount of plastic we use. – **Steve Wing**



Steve in South Harbour with some members of the Mizen Head Scout Group

Campa Samhraidh

Every year, Cape Clear holds a Campa Samhraidh, run by Cléire Lasmuigh via Maratacht.ie. On July 19th, we held a ringing demonstration for three groups on this camp, showing the children birds in the hand and, in some instances, allowing them to hold a bird.

We caught 10 birds during the session and, as with previous demonstrations, each group was able to look at how the wing was made up, noting its wing formula, as well as some of the ways you can tell an adult bird from a juvenile one.

We also discussed how bill shape dictates what food a bird will eat, and how bill shape can help us to identify it. – **Steve Wing**



Whitethroat (Steve Wing)



Swallow (Steve Wing)



Sedge Warbler (Steve Wing)

In Memoriam: Steve Wing (1957-2024)

All at BirdWatch Ireland are deeply saddened and shocked by the sudden death on September 19th of our dear colleague and friend, Steve Wing, long-serving wildlife officer at Cape Clear Bird Observatory. Anyone who has had the pleasure of his company over the last 25 years, whether while being hosted by him at the observatory or simply meeting him and asking for advice, will have been struck by his friendly, informative and endlessly helpful manner.

Steve was born in 1957 in Bradfield, Berkshire. From a very early age he showed a keen interest in the natural world, attaining an “A” in nature study at his local primary school.

The family moved to Devon in 1966, where he completed his education. He then started work in a tax office, followed by a short time in a shipyard.

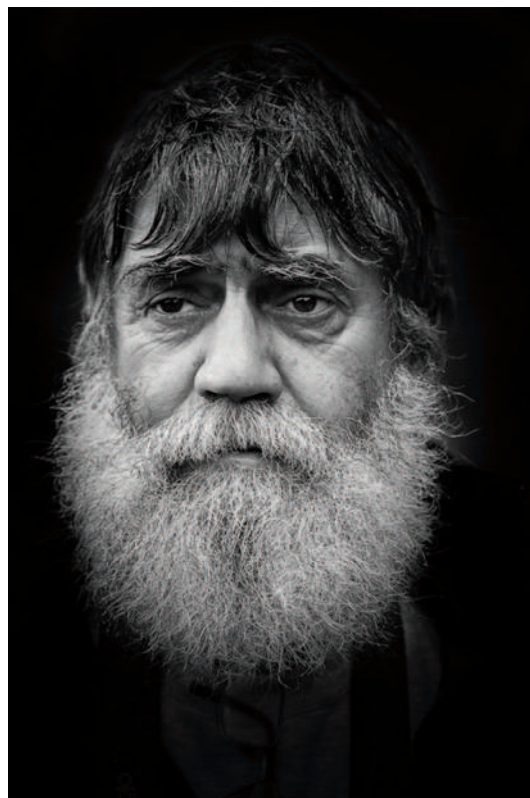
After a period working on building sites, Steve became a skilled mason and dry stone waller, and this expertise was put to good use when he applied for a nine-month contract on Lundy Island off the Devon coast. There he worked on repairing Marisco Castle and walls around the island.

It was on Lundy that he met his partner Mary Gade. The two of them contributed many interesting birds to the Lundy Bird Observatory log, including their exciting joint find of an American Robin.

Steve spent several years going back and forth to Lundy and then, in 1998, when the post of warden at Cape Clear Bird Observatory became vacant, he and Mary moved to Cape. The observatory was in need of an upgrade and Steve immediately put his building skills to use, gutting the place, putting in new stairs, stud walls, ceilings and floors and converting an adjoining shed into a whole new kitchen. Those who knew the somewhat primitive “Obs” of old were now treated to a luxurious, comfortable place to stay.

Steve diligently carried out his observatory duties – everything from the domestic running of the observatory, to walking the beat around the island to count birds, running weekend courses, ringing birds, and tirelessly filling out the Daily Log. His amiable nature made him the perfect person to act as a link between islanders and visiting birders – Steve simply got on with everybody.

There was always a warm welcome from Steve and Mary, and the pair totally immersed themselves in Cape life, involving themselves in all kinds of island activities, including Steve playing Santa Claus at Christmas. You could say, as far as the islanders were concerned, they were family.



Steve Wing (*Shay Hunston*)

Steve was observatory warden till 2012, and after that he and Mary ran Cotter’s Pub on the island for a few years. By then they had started doing a Thai night once a week – the superb meals they produced were simply legendary.

Sadly, Mary passed away in Devon in May 2018 after a long illness, and, later that year, Steve resumed his post at the observatory.

In his time on Cape Clear, Steve found many rare birds – some notable ones included Arctic Warbler, Eastern Olivaceous Warbler, Yellow Warbler and Ireland’s first Chimney Swift.

He wrote two wonderful books – *The Natural History of Cape Clear 1959-2019* and *Wing It with Steve: A Bird Guide for Cape Clear*.

His demos of bird ringing, good humour and generosity in imparting knowledge to others have left a lasting impression on so many people. Steve would invariably be the first person they met at the pier and the person they still spoke about years after. Steve said he would like to come back as a Chough – we will be keeping an eye out for you, Steve!

Dick Coombes

Steve Wing, born 1957; died September 19th 2024