

BirdWatch Galway Annual Report (01.01.2010 – 31.12.2010)

During 2010 the Galway membership grew to a respectable 350 thanks to several membership recruitment drives undertaken by both staff of BirdWatch Ireland and our own local efforts. The branch has been busy catering for its members in various ways and contributed to national and international efforts monitoring and conserving Irish birds and their habitats. The following report outlines all the activities undertaken in Galway and we are very appreciative of everybody's input. The report will, hopefully, encourage more members to become involved in 2011 as it is clear that one can make a contribution in a great variety of ways.

Meetings

Seven of the ten monthly branch meetings (none during July and August) on mid-month Wednesday nights at the Anno Santo Hotel took place and were attended by 5 to 16 members (average 9). The monthly meetings offer a members' forum where all matters relating to the activities of the branch, birdwatching and the conservation of wild birds and their habitats can be discussed.

Jamie Durrant, BirdWatch Ireland's Membership Development Officer, attended the April meeting to get to know the branch and offer assistance.

Seven Galway members attended the All Ireland BWI/RSPB conference in March (Sligo) and two members represented the branch at the Branch Delegates meeting after the conference.

Committee

The officers of the committee consisted of Pat Finnegan (Meetings' Chair and Talks), Marianne ten Cate (Secretary, Outings and Merchandise), Deirdre Comerford (Treasurer & Merchandise), Chris Peppiatt (Recorder and Web-site), Tim Griffin (Nimmo's Pier Outings) and Neil Sharkey (Newsletter and Accounts). Several other members are regularly in attendance at the meetings, which is much appreciated.

Talks

Talks were given by Alex Copland, Senior Conservation Officer with BirdWatch Ireland, on farmland birds in Galway and Ireland - *From Corn Bunting to Linnets*, Niall Hatch, Development Officer with BirdWatch Ireland, on *The East Coast Nature Reserve*, Dermot Breen on *Birds in Connemara* and Anthony McGeehan on *Pelagic Magic*. All talks were extremely informative and well presented. The average attendance was over 30.

Tom Cuffe presented a wonderful video show of *Birds and Wildlife 2010* at our annual Christmas gathering.

Many thanks to all the speakers and also to the audiences who expressed their appreciation very generously.

Marianne ten Cate gave a talk for 25 Rosscahill Cub Scouts and Tom Cuffe continued to promote BirdWatch Ireland through his heritage talks in schools. Pete Capsey continued educational activities in east Galway on behalf of BirdWatch.

Outings

Tim Griffin, Tom Cuffe and Brendan Dunne again led eight short outings at Nimmo's Pier on the first Saturday of the month from January to May inclusive and from October to December inclusive. Brendan Dunne keeps the records of these outings and compiles an annual overview of species seen. At the May outing the branch had a stall at Nimmo's Pier to promote BirdWatch Ireland during the *Marine Madness Month*.

During our annual National Dawn Chorus outing at Dangan Brendan also kept the records - 34 species heard and/or seen by 10 participants. Thanks again to NUI Galway for permission to host the event in the sports grounds. Another Dawn Chorus walk was led by Aonghus O Donnell and Dermot Breen at Bridgit's Garden in Rosscahill, where 15 species were recorded by 20 participants.

Our weekend outing was at the end of February to Kerry, where local BirdWatcher Seamus Enright very kindly and generously shared his time and expertise with the seven participants on the trip. 80 species were seen.

In early February seven members took part in a Winter Roving Outing for the Bird Atlas and in April 14 members took part in a Spring Roving Outing. These outings were ably co-ordinated by John Carey.

In June 16 members travelled to Banagher for the BirdWatch Shannon Callows Wildlife Festival. Alas, no Corncrake was seen or heard but the day was very educational, thanks to Stephen Heery's expert guidance on the reserve walk and the challenging talks on wader conservation by BirdWatch Ireland personnel.

Surveys

Branch members have continued to contribute their time and efforts to the Irish Wetland Birds Survey (I-WeBS), the Countryside Bird Survey (CBS), the Garden Bird Survey and the Brent Goose census. In January 20 members and National Parks and Wildlife Service staff took part in the International Swan Survey, which, due to adverse weather, was no easy task. Furthermore, several members regularly surveyed tetrads for the new BTO/BWI Atlas of the birds of Britain and Ireland and many more sent in roving records.

Sightings

The quarterly bird report (included with the *Newsletter*) continued to be compiled by Chris Peppiatt. Chris is also compiling the next issue of *Birds of Galway*, due to be published in 2011. Records kept in your notebooks will not make it into this publication unless you send them in to Chris at chris.peppiatt@iol.ie for inclusion!

Web-site

Our web site at www.birdwatchgalway.org attracted 4,899 visits during 2010, slightly more than in 2009. Thanks to Chris Peppiatt for administering the site.

Media

Our events were publicised in the local papers and on Galway Bay FM. Posters were displayed in outlets in Galway city and county. Tom Kenny and Peadar O'Dowd mentioned most of our talks in their regular articles in the *Galway Advertiser* and the *Connacht Sentinel* respectively. We very much appreciate their help.

E-mail was used extensively to make announcements of talks and outings and one can also access the forthcoming programme in our *Newsletter* via download from the web site.

We provided information to the *Connacht Tribune* on the effects of bog fires on birds and at the Biodiversity Day in Glinsk in November Tom Cuffe was interviewed by Duncan Stewart for his EcoEye programme.

Conservation

The Small Wood required more maintenance and additional planting this year. Thanks to Padraig Keirns who topped up the planting and the eleven volunteers who cleared a damaged tree and lots of rubbish.

Publications

The quarterly *Newsletter*, as edited by Neil Sharkey since April 1993, has now reached its 71st issue. Since its inception it has undergone some changes but broadly speaking it has always presented some regular columns plus articles or holiday reports by branch members. Unfortunately, copyright issues have necessitated the discontinuation of the Birds in Poetry column, which has been a regular feature presented first by the editor and from 1998 onward by Pat Finnegan. Lately, the editor has suggested that a guest editor takes over once a year but so far nobody has volunteered to do so.

Liaison

Chris Peppiatt represented BirdWatch Galway on the Galway City Community Forum and on the Terryland Forest Park steering committee. Marianne ten Cate represented us on the Natural Heritage Working Group of the County Galway Heritage Forum. We received a small grant from the Forum toward the publication of the forthcoming issue of *Birds of Galway*.

Brendan Dunne represented BirdWatch at the Glenard Residents Association Fair with an information stand.

In February a few members manned a stand at the NUIG Green Fair and in May we had a stand at the Biodiversity Blitz in Bridgit's Garden, where hundreds of people visited. In July some members assisted Jamie Durrant and Niall Hatch from BirdWatch Ireland at the Claregalway Garden Festival where a lot of new members were recruited.

We received and responded to communications from Galway County Council, Galway City Council, Galway Civic Trust, the Galway Naturalists' Field Club, the Galway Bat Group, the Atlantaquarium, Club Aras na nGael, environmental consultants and a couple of Golden Mile and Tidy Town committees. As always, our BirdWatch remit and limited manpower dictate to what extent we cooperate with other organisations but we endeavour to respond promptly to any relevant queries.

Finance

The financial statement is presented separately. Thanks are due to our Treasurer Deirdre Comerford and to Neil Sharkey, who helped to put together the annual statement. Deirdre Comerford and Marianne ten Cate looked after the merchandise which we sold all through the year at talks and local events. However, we cut back severely on the merchandise as much of the stock went unsold and the return for our efforts is very slim.

Conclusion

The following is what I wrote last year and it still stands: *"As last year, one of our main concerns remains that it is getting harder to find members willing to serve on the committee, attend meetings and contribute on the hard slog of survey work. Having said that, we kept up our side with regard to commitments to national and international surveys and served those members who are mainly interested in short outings and/or talks. The fact that meetings are not so popular anymore is partly due to a change in communication channels in our society as more gets publicised, organised, teased out and decided via the internet. However, not all our members are linked into this cyberworld and we remain keen to cater for all – including those who do not communicate through the internet. And, of course, we also keep trying to cater for all different interests represented in BirdWatch Galway, be it indoor or outdoor activities, common birds or rare birds, regular counts or occasional surveys, short outings or weekend outings, BirdWatch business meetings or social gatherings. If anybody feels their interest is not catered for, we would welcome their suggestions to remedy this."* Although the attendance at the branch meetings earlier in the year was higher than last year, I regret to have to add that during the last quarter we had to cancel all three meetings due to too many apologies and very slim agendas. This needs to be addressed by the Annual General Meeting.

19 January 2011
Marianne ten Cate
Secretary