

BirdWatch Galway Annual Report (01.01.2011 – 31.12.2011)

This annual report is presented in the same format as the reports of the last few years for ease of compilation and comparison. With regard to the latter, there have been some changes in branch activities in 2011, most notably the discontinuation of monthly branch meetings, no weekend outings, a change of leadership at the monthly Nimmo's Pier outings and fewer talks. All this was to minimise the work load for those who have been putting in great efforts for a great many of years and are now definitely to be relieved of their chores.

Meetings

At the 2011 Annual General Meeting (attended by 11 members) it was decided to discontinue the mid-month Wednesday branch meetings so none were held since the AGM on 19 January. The only notable branch meeting during the year was on 9 December when the 75th special issue of the Galway branch *Newsletter* was officially launched at our annual pre-Christmas gathering. This festive occasion was attended by 27 members.

Committee

At the AGM in January 2011 the officers of the committee were due to be discharged but because of a lack of volunteers to replace them, it was decided to operate a 'skeleton' committee that would only meet at the instigation of any of its members. There have been no such meetings; all communications took place via phone, e-mail and personal contacts. Deirdre Comerford continued to manage the accounts, Neil Sharkey edited the four quarterly branch newsletters and helped formatting the Annual Accounts and the secretary looked after most of the correspondence and organisation and notification of events, including the Corrib count. Chris Peppiatt continued as our Recorder, Web-site manager and Galway Bay count organiser.

Unfortunately, Tim Griffin had to discontinue his involvement with the Nimmo's Pier outings but we are very glad that he is back on the road bird watching. Tom Cuffe took over the reigns at Nimmo's Pier, ably assisted by Brendan Dunne.

Talks

Talks were given by Dave Suddaby (Reserves Manager with BirdWatch Ireland) on *Places for nature – developing our nature reserves*, John Murphy (from the Clare branch) on *The birds of Lésvos*, and John Lusby (Raptor Conservation Officer with BWI) on *Barn Owls, their habits and habitats*. All talks were extremely well researched and presented; they attracted attendances of 22-24 members. Many thanks to the speakers and also to the audiences, who, again, expressed their appreciation very generously.

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 and Marianne ten Cate gave a talk on garden birds to children and their parents in the Village Bookshop in Moycullen.

Outings

Tim Griffin, Tom Cuffe and Brendan Dunne 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 (in 2011 this ranged from 22 to 29 per outing) and the number of participants (ranging from 8 to 19 in 2011).

On 6 March eight members of the Westmeath BirdWatch branch visited Galway and were welcomed by Tom Cuffe and Marianne ten Cate who gave them a guided tour of our prime coastal sites.

Later in March, members John Carey and Colin Conroy tried to revive the young bird watchers club but the turn-out at their first outing in Dangan was very disheartening. Unfortunately, personal circumstances have paid put to their best intentions.

During our annual National Dawn Chorus outing at Dangan in May, Brendan again kept the records. Thanks are due to NUI Galway for permission to host the event in the sports grounds.

During the National Heritage Week in August, Tom Cuffe - Galway Bird Guide - led a Nimmo's Pier outing under the auspices of The Galway Civic Trust.

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. 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. The contribution to the surveys made by Galway members is very much appreciated and will be gratefully acknowledged in the publication of the Atlas, which is due in 2014.

On 26 November fourteen Galway members attended an I-WeBS workshop in Oranmore. It was a good occasion to evaluate our I-WeBS input, to meet old friends from all over the country and to be inspired by the I-WeBS organisers, Helen Boland and Olivia Crowe. Pete Capsey hosted the afternoon visit to Rahasane turlough.

Sightings

The quarterly bird report (normally included with the quarterly *Newsletter*) continued to be compiled by Chris Peppiatt. This is quite a chore and Chris deserves great credit for his meticulous reporting. He is also compiling the next issue of *Birds of Galway*, now due to be published in 2012. 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! Dermot Breen has compiled overviews of the rarities seen in County Galway.

Web-site

Our web site at www.birdwatchgalway.org attracted 6,466 visitors, a lot more than in previous years. Thanks again 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 other events and one can also access the forthcoming programme in our *Newsletter* via download from the web site.

Conservation

The Small Wood required little maintenance this year. Padraig Keirns kept an eye on the newly planted trees and Chris Peppiatt checked the bird and bat boxes.

Publications

In November the quarterly *Newsletter*, as edited by Neil Sharkey since April 1993, reached its 75th issue which was cause for celebration and lots of appreciation for Neil's sustained efforts and all those who, over the years, have contributed articles to the *Newsletter*.

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. Brendan Dunne represents BirdWatch at the Glenard Residents Association. We received and responded to communications from various agencies and individuals. 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. At the last AGM it was decided not to carry any more merchandise so Deirdre Comerford and Marianne ten Cate tried to sell the remnants of our stock throughout the year at the talks.

Conclusion

15 February 2012
Marianne ten Cate
Reluctant Secretary