



**CAIRDE EANLAITH NA GAILLIMHE**  
**BIRDWATCH GALWAY**  
**www.birdwatchgalway.org**  
**QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER – EDITOR: NEIL SHARKEY**  
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This is a local newsletter. To help us keep distribution costs down we ask that you agree to receive it by e-mail. Over 150 members and others are now doing so. Please send me your E-mail address if not done so already.

### THOUGHT FROM THE CHAIR

The Galway Branch is just about to emerge from its summer hibernation (aestivation?) for the beginning of winter. Winter is always the busiest period for birds in Galway and the branch will be carrying on with its usual I-WeBS counts in Galway Bay, Lough Corrib and at the many smaller lakes and turloughs in the county. As usual, BWI members (or intending members) are welcome to get in contact with us if they are interested in participating in these activities.

I should mention here that, as the Branch's contribution to National Heritage Week, will be setting up scopes etc. at Nimmo's Pier from 10AM to 1PM on Saturday the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September. All are welcome; perhaps folk could combine participating in our event with a visit to the Terryland Forest Park tree walk that starts at 3PM on the same afternoon?

Chris Peppiatt

### FAREWELL TO DUBAI

I have just returned from Dubai – my fourth or fifth visit since my first in Jan 1999. Back in 1999, when you told people you had been there, most hardly knew where it was. Certainly it had an air of a mysterious and slightly exotic location. Nowadays Dubai is as well known as any other world holiday location – it is seldom out of the news with stories of its massive building – one quarter of the world's building cranes are located there: some statistic for one city. Everywhere skyscrapers loom out of the skyline – islands are being created offshore and overnight what was open sea is now a place of villas and high rise apartments – the would be homes of the Beckhams and other celebrity 'idols'! Public transport is more or less non-existent except for a sparse bus service used almost wholly by the thousands of 'guest' workers – with front portion of the bus being reserved for ladies. Otherwise it is a city of powerful four wheel drive vehicles – Land Cruisers, Range Rovers etc – nothing under 4 litres passes muster. They speed along the four or five lane highways – and change laneways with terrifying speed and imprecision, almost like a mad giant 'scaletric' set up.

Although Dubai is a monument to consumerism and exotic lifestyles it is a surprisingly good place for birdwatching. In winter especially there is a huge influx of Siberian waders – the Khor Dubai, the Arabian Gulf inlet that reaches right into the city, teems with birds. Greater Flamingo, Spoonbills, Broad-billed Sandpipers, Kentish Plovers, Yellow-billed Storks, Red-wattled Lapwings, Black-winged Stilts and a host of other 'rarities'. Commonplace birds are Common Mynahs, Hoopoes, Indian Rollers and Purple Sunbirds. In the evenings, as darkness quickly comes, the air is full of the sound of screeching Ring-necked Parakeets hastening towards their night time roosts.

For all of that bird watching until recently was not greatly encouraged in Dubai – people with binoculars and telescopes always caught the eye of the ever-vigilant police. On previous trips to visit the main site – Khor Dubai – you needed a special permit. To get this you had to fax for an application form which asked the usual idiotic questions – your mother's maiden name, grandfather's occupation (I do not exaggerate). You then returned this together with a photo copy of your passport and in return got a permit document of complex impressiveness that would put your house deeds to shame. Now all is changed. Three splendid new bird hides have been built to the very highest standard. No permission is required – each hide has a resident warden and when you arrive you are given a pair of Leica binoculars and a top of the range telescope for your personal use. Where but in Dubai would such a turn around happen? This time, by virtue of a visit to an Omani area called the Musandum overlooking the

Straits of Hormuz, I increased my 'life' Dubai list to circa 115 species. New species were – Socotra Cormorants (present in their tens of thousands), Bridled Terns, White-cheeked Terns and Common Noddies.

This was my farewell visit to Dubai, a place of extraordinary but always interesting contradictions. **NS**

### GOOD WISHES

Our valued Galway member Mrs Doreen McConnell has moved to Wexford after being resident in Cornamona for very many years. As I mentioned in a previous note she played an important part in the early days of organised birdwatching in Ireland and on behalf of all I send our good wishes and hopes for many happy years in her new location.

### I-WeBS & CBS

August marks the end of our birdwatching activities and in a way Sept 1<sup>st</sup> could be considered 'New Years Day' in the birdwatching world. Perhaps, therefore, it is worth mentioning that last year's CBS and I-WeBS records are now due for writing up and returning and in Sept it will be time to take up winter I-WeBS and other count activities. We are also asked to watch out for ringed gulls and for rings on Brent Geese and Whooper Swans. Anyone wishing to get involved or to report ring sightings should contact any member of the Galway committee.

### GARDEN BIRD SURVEY

Each year BirdWatch Ireland runs this survey and very many Galway members take part and return the *Wings* form to headquarters at the end of the winter period. As well as providing valuable information on common garden bird numbers it provides us all with an endless opportunity to observe and enjoy our local birds at close quarters. Details will be in the next *Wings* in time for the December commencement. This coming year I hope to carry out a mini Galway sub survey. To do this I am asking those members who take part to photo copy their completed form and post the copy to me. It will hardly be a scientific survey but it would give some interesting data on where Galway stands in bird numbers etc. I will mention this again in later issues – this is just a bit of advance notice.

### LITTLE EGRETS

A superb photo by Michael Davis taken last week of a group of five Little Egrets at Kilcaimen really illustrates how this bird has changed from a rarity to commonplace in a period of little more than ten years. It is about ten years back that Tim Griffin spotted the first Galway sighting at Rossaveal and for quite a while this solitary bird was the only one to be seen in the county. Now they are to be seen all along the inner bay and it must be only a matter of one or two more years before they breed in Galway. Who will be the first to record this?

### NEWSLETTER FEEDBACK

Up until 2002 the distribution of this single page newsletter was a simple matter. All we did was run off the 250 or so copies and the volunteer packers at BirdWatch HQ included your copy with the main *Wings* publication. In 2002 however this changed when distribution became mechanised. For the next two or three years we posted or hand-delivered them separately until cost and the logistics involved made this uneconomic. Since then we have been sending it by e-mail. This is quite efficient. However, we have no idea how it is performing in practice. Do people open the e-mail at all? Is the newsletter attachment left unopened in many cases? Do people read it (a) from the screen? (b) by printing it? or (c) read it at all? Some feedback, at present non-existent, would be appreciated.

### BIRDS IN POETRY

It is no surprise that John Clare has featured frequently in this column given his pre-eminence as a nature poet. The poem in this edition has an appropriate autumnal theme. It was probably composed before the first indication of the mental illness which blighted his life and is presented without punctuation as it was written.

Pat Finnegan

### ON SEEING TWO SWALLOWS LATE IN OCTOBER

*Lone occupiers of a naked sky  
When desolate november hovers nigh  
& all your fellow tribes in many crowds  
Have left the village with the autumn clouds  
Careless of old affections for the scene  
That made them happy when the fields were  
green*

*& left them undisturbed to build their nests  
In each old chimney like to welcome guests  
Forsaking all like untamed winds they roam  
& make with summers an unsettled home  
Following her favours to the farthest lands  
Oer untraced oceans & untrodden sands  
Like happy images they haste away  
& leave us lonely till another may*

*But little lingerers old esteem detains  
Ye haply thus to brave the chilly air  
When skys grow dull with winters heavy rains  
& all the orchard trees are nearly bare  
Yet the old chimneys still are peeping there  
Above the russet thatch where summers tide  
Of sunny joys gave you such social fare  
As makes you haply wishing to abide  
In your old dwellings through the changing year  
I wish ye well to find a dwelling here  
For in the unsocial weather ye would fling  
Gleanings of comfort through the winter wide  
Twittering as wont above the old fire side  
& cheat the surly winter into spring*

Taken from *The Midsummer Cushion*,  
published by Carcanet.

### FORTHCOMING PROGRAMME

Saturday 2 September, birdwatching and information stand at Nimmo's Pier, the Claddagh, Galway, as part of National Heritage Week, 10.00-13.00h. All welcome!  
Wednesday 13 September, members/committee meeting, Anno Santo Hotel, Threadneedle Road, Salthill, 8pm. All members welcome to attend.  
Saturday 7 October, short outing at Nimmo's Pier as part of World Birdwatch, 10.30am.  
Friday 13 October, talk by Gerry Murphy, chairperson of the Irish Whooper Swan Study Group and re-sighting co-ordinator: *Whooper Swans wintering in the mid-west of Ireland*, Anno Santo Hotel, 8pm.  
Wednesday 18 October, members/committee meeting, Anno Santo Hotel, 8pm.  
Saturday 4 November, short outing at Nimmo's Pier with Tim Griffin, 10.30am.  
Wednesday 15 November, members/committee meeting, Anno Santo Hotel, 8pm.  
Friday 24 November, talk by John Murphy of the Clare Branch of BirdWatch Ireland: *Birds of Florida*, Anno Santo Hotel, 8pm. All welcome!

# BirdWatch Galway (Branch of BirdWatch Ireland)

A QUARTERLY BIRD REPORT BY TIM GRIFFIN & CHRIS PEPPIATT

2nd Quarter 2006

TEL. (091) 590154 or at [www.birdwatchgalway.org](http://www.birdwatchgalway.org)

DATE OF ISSUE: 31st August 2006

| Species                     | Location  | No               | Date               | Observer         | Species   | Location              | No      | Date     | Observer |
|-----------------------------|---|------------------|--------------------|------------------|---|-----------------------|---------|----------|----------|
| American Herring Gull       | Nimmo's Pier, Galway  |                  | 3rdW 01.04.06      | Many obs. (1)    | Storm Petrel  | Silver Strand, Galway | 14      | 21.06.06 | TG       |
| Glaucous Gull               | Nimmo's Pier, Galway  | 2                | (1-2ndW) 01.04.06  | Many obs.        | Merlin  | Nr. Cloonboe          | 1       | 21.06.06 | CBe      |
| Glaucous x Herring Gull hyb | Nimmo's Pier, Galway  | 1                | 01.04.06           | Many obs. (2)    | Storm Petrel  | Mutton Island, Galway | 10      | 23.06.06 | MD       |
| Ring-billed Gull            | Nimmo's Pier, Galway  | A                | 01.04.06           | TG               | Common Scoter   | Inverin               | 14      | 24.06.06 | TG       |
| Forster's Tern              | off Mutton Island, Galway   | A                | 01.04.06           | TG (3)           | Spotted Flycatcher  | Portumna Forest Park  | 1       | 28.06.06 | CP       |
| Iceland Gull                | Nimmo's Pier, Galway  | 1                | 02.04.06           | TG               | Ring-billed Gull  | Nimmo's Pier, Galway  | 1stS    | 29.06.06 | MD       |
| Twite                       | Long Walk, Galway   | 4                | 02.04.06           | TC               | Storm Petrel  | Silver Strand         | 3       | 29.06.06 | TG       |
| Red Grouse                  | Nr. Spiddal   | 5                | 04.04.06           | AO'D             | Great Northern Diver  | Inverin               | 1       | 29.06.06 | TG       |
| Marsh Harrier               | Curragline, Lough Corrib  | F                | 05.04.06           | Several obs. (4) | Ring-billed Gull  | Waterside, Galway     | 2nd yr. | 30.06.06 | TG       |
| Merlin                      | Ellagh, Headford  | 1                | 05.04.06           | NS               | Mediterranean Gull  | Ballyloughane, Galway | A       | 30.06.06 | MD       |
| Pheasant                    | High Street, Galway   | 1                | 07.04.06           | MD               | Storm Petrel  | Silver Strand         | 5       | 30.06.06 | TG       |
| Little Egret                | Baile an tSléibhe, Rossaveal  | 2                | 07.04.06           | CB & TG (5)      |   |                       |         |          |          |
| Little Tern                 | Grattan Road, Salthill, Galway                                      | 2                | 08.04.06           | TG               |   |                       |         |          |          |
| Willow Warbler              | Carrick, Cornamona  | 1                | 08.04.06           | TT               |   |                       |         |          |          |
| Willow Warbler              | Waterside, Galway   | 1                | 08.04.06           | DB               |   |                       |         |          |          |
| Whitethroat                 | Carrick, Cornamona  | 1                | 08.04.06           | TT               |   |                       |         |          |          |
| House Martin                | Nr. Wolfe Tone Bridge, Galway                                       | 1                | 08.04.06           | DB               |   |                       |         |          |          |
| Hen Harrier                 | Menlo, Lough Corrib   | 2                | 08.04.06           | TG               |   |                       |         |          |          |
| Scaup                       | Menlo, Lough Corrib   | 22               | 08.04.06           | TG               |   |                       |         |          |          |
| Common Tern                 | Angliham, Lough Corrib  | 1                | 09.04.06           | AO'D & PR        |   |                       |         |          |          |
| Purple Sandpiper            | Salthill Prom., Galway  | 3                | 09.04.06           | AO'D & PR        |   |                       |         |          |          |
| Common Scoter               | Silver Strand, Galway   | 10               | 09.04.06           | CP & DB          |   |                       |         |          |          |
| Little Tern                 | Nimmo's Pier, Galway  | 2                | 10.04.06           | DB               |   |                       |         |          |          |
| Whimbrel                    | Mutton Island, Galway   | 1                | 11.04.06           | MD               |   |                       |         |          |          |
| Yellowhammer                | Carraroe  | 2                | 14.04.06           | PR               |   |                       |         |          |          |
| Scaup                       | Menlo, Lough Corrib   | 42               | 14.04.06           | TG               |   |                       |         |          |          |
| Hen Harrier                 | Island Eddy   | F                | 15.04.06           | TG               |   |                       |         |          |          |
| Cuckoo                      | Nr. Ben Lettery, Connemara  | 1                | 15.04.06           | PK               |   |                       |         |          |          |
| Black-throated Diver        | Dooraspark, Nr. Traught   | 3                | 16.04.06           | TG (6)           |   |                       |         |          |          |
| Arctic Skua                 | Silver Strand, Galway   | 1                | 16.04.06           | TG               |   |                       |         |          |          |
| Grasshopper Warbler         | Nr. Milltown, Tuam  | 1                | 16.04.06           | CBe              |   |                       |         |          |          |
| Purple Sandpiper            | Inis Oirr   | 3                | 16.04.06           | NE               |   |                       |         |          |          |
| Night Heron                 | Cappagh Road, Galway  | poss. Juv.       | 18.04.06           | DO'K (7)         |   |                       |         |          |          |
| Hoopoe                      | Nr. Cleggan, Connemara  | 1                | 18.04.06           | ? (8)            |   |                       |         |          |          |
| Common Buzzard              | Portumna  | 1                | 19.04.06           | CP               |   |                       |         |          |          |
| Ring-billed Gull            | Waterside, Galway   | 3                | (2A&2ndW) 19.04.06 | MD               |   |                       |         |          |          |
| Goshawk                     | Nr. Moycullen   | 1                | 24.04.06           | PR               |   |                       |         |          |          |
| Sedge Warbler               | Nr. Milltown, Tuam  | 1                | 26.04.06           | CBe              |   |                       |         |          |          |
| Shoveler                    | Angliham, Lough Corrib  | Pair             | 27.04.06           | TC               | <b>ABBREVIATIONS</b>  |                       |         |          |          |
| Little Egret                | Salthill, Galway  | 1                | 28.04.06           | DC(9)            |   |                       |         |          |          |
| Glaucous Gull               | Nimmo's Pier, Galway  | 3rdW             | 29.04.06           | Many obs.        | Juv. = Juvenile; A = Adult; W = Winter; S = summer; M = male; F = female.           |                       |         |          |          |
| Iceland Gull                | Nimmo's Pier, Galway  | 1stW             | 29.04.06           | Many obs.        | poss. = possible; yr. = year.   |                       |         |          |          |
| Swift                       | Ballinasloe   | 1                | 30.04.06           | PC               |   |                       |         |          |          |
| Whimbrel                    | Galway City   | 40               | 30.04.06           | DO'K             | <b>NOTES</b>  |                       |         |          |          |
| Merlin                      | Ellagh, Headford  | 1                | 02.05.06           | NS               |   |                       |         |          |          |
| Glaucous Gull               | Nimmo's Pier, Galway  | 3rdS             | 03.05.06           | TG (10)          | 1 = The bird from 1st Quarter 2006 was present until 16.04.06.                      |                       |         |          |          |
| Common Scoter               | Silver Strand, Galway   | 1                | 03.05.06           | TG               | 2 = This bird was also seen on 02.04.06.  |                       |         |          |          |
| Arctic Skua                 | Silver Strand, Galway   | 1                | 03.05.06           | TG               | 3 = This bird was seen again on 26.04.06 at Rusheen Bay & 11.05.06 at Nimmo's Pier. |                       |         |          |          |
| Iceland Gull                | Mutton Island, Galway   | 1                | 04.05.06           | TG               | 4 = The bird from 02.03.06 was present until this date.                             |                       |         |          |          |
| Laughing Gull               | Waterside, Galway   | A                | 04.05.06           | Many obs. (11)   | 5 = These birds were still present on 14.04.06.                                     |                       |         |          |          |
| Little Tern                 | Inverin   | 12               | 05.05.06           | TG               | 6 = These birds were still present on 22.04.06.                                     |                       |         |          |          |
| Arctic Skua                 | Silver Strand, Galway   | 1                | 05.05.06           | TG               | 7 = This coincided with an influx of this species into the country.                 |                       |         |          |          |
| Little Gull                 | Nimmo's Pier, Galway  | 2nd yr.          | 06.05.06           | TC               | 8 = This bird was present on 19.04.06 also.   |                       |         |          |          |
| Great Northern Diver        | Salthill Prom., Galway  | 1                | 06.05.06           | CP               | 9 = This bird was reported roosting in trees near to the heronry in The Crescent.   |                       |         |          |          |
| Arctic Skua                 | Silver Strand, Galway   | 1                | 07.05.06           | CP               | 10 = This bird was present until 30.60.06.  |                       |         |          |          |
| Spotted Flycatcher          | Nr. Milltown, Tuam  | 1                | 07.05.06           | CBe              | 11 = This bird was present until 11.05.06.  |                       |         |          |          |
| Whimbrel                    | <small>bet. Milltown, Co. Galway &amp; Ballindine, Co. Mayo</small> | 35               | 08.05.06           | CBe              |   |                       |         |          |          |
| Ring-billed Gull            | Waterside, Galway   | 1stS             | 15.05.06           | MD               |   |                       |         |          |          |
| Arctic Skua                 | Silver Strand, Galway   | 2                | 18.05.06           | TG               |   |                       |         |          |          |
| Arctic Skua                 | Silver Strand, Galway   | 8                | 19.05.06           | TG               |   |                       |         |          |          |
| Spotted Sandpiper           | R. Corrib near Menlo.   | AS               | 19.05.06           | CP               |   |                       |         |          |          |
| Red-throated Diver          | Silver Strand, Galway   | 3                | 20.05.06           | TG               |   |                       |         |          |          |
| Storm Petrel                | Silver Strand, Galway   | 1                | 20.05.06           | TG               |   |                       |         |          |          |
| Arctic Skua                 | Silver Strand, Galway   | 4                | 20.05.06           | TG               |   |                       |         |          |          |
| Great Skua                  | Silver Strand, Galway   | 1                | 20.05.06           | TG               |   |                       |         |          |          |
| Ring-billed Gull            | Nimmo's Pier, Galway  | 2ndS             | 27.05.06           | MD               | <b>CONTRIBUTORS</b>   |                       |         |          |          |
| Ring-billed Gull            | Waterside, Galway   | 1st yr.          | 28.05.06           | TG               |   |                       |         |          |          |
| Arctic Skua                 | Silver Strand, Galway   | 4                | 28.05.06           | TG               | MD = Michael Davis; TG = Tim Griffin; CB = Con Breen; TT = Tom Tarpey.              |                       |         |          |          |
| Arctic Skua                 | Silver Strand, Galway   | 3                | 01.06.06           | TG               | PC = Pete Caspey; DB = Dermot Breen; CP = Chris Peppiatt; DO'K = David O'Keefe;     |                       |         |          |          |
| Barn Owl                    | between Killimor & Gortymadden                                      | 1                | 04.06.06           | CP               | DC = Deirdre Comerford; NS = Neil Sharkey; AO'D = Aonghus O'Donall; TC = Tom Cuffe; |                       |         |          |          |
| Arctic Skua                 | Silver Strand, Galway   | 4                | 05.06.06           | TG               | NE = Neil Ellis; CBe = Chris Benson; KW = Kieran Walsh;                             |                       |         |          |          |
| Glaucous Gull               | Nimmo's Pier, Galway  | 2ndS             | 06.06.06           | MD               | PK = Pádraig Keirns; PR = Pádraic Reaney.   |                       |         |          |          |
| Glaucous Gull               | Nimmo's Pier, Galway  | 3rdS             | 12.06.06           | MD               |   |                       |         |          |          |
| Marsh Harrier               | Lough Hackett   | poss. F          | 16.06.06           | KW               |   |                       |         |          |          |
| Lesser Black-backed Gull    | Rossaveal   | intermedius race | 18.06.06           | MD               |   |                       |         |          |          |