



CAIRDE EANLAITH NA GAILLIMHE BIRDWATCH GALWAY

www.birdwatchgalway.org
QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER – EDITOR: NEIL SHARKEY
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This is a local forum newsletter –
contributions and comments are
most welcome.
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winter. The other park speciality is of course the Red-throated Diver, locally known as the Rain Goose. It is estimated that only around 6 pairs breed in Ireland each year. Their strange calls remind me of a mixture of Red Grouse, goose and gull calls. They usually nest on the smaller isolated lochans and feed on the larger loughs or even along the coastline. As soon as the chicks are capable of flying the whole family moves to the coast. The Lough Swilly system is the most productive site in this large county for wetland birds. The site is internationally important for Whooper Swan (c.2000), Greylag (c.3000) and Greenland White-fronted Geese (c.1000). It is the single most important wintering site in Ireland for the first two, particularly during October and November when large numbers use the site as a staging area. The two outstanding "sub-sites" within the system are Inch Lough with its surrounding levels and Blanket Nook. During the last two winters I have seen 22 species of duck between these two man made lagoons, highlights being American Black Duck, Green-winged Teal (4), Garganey (5), Ring-necked Duck (3-5), Lesser Scaup (2), Surf Scoter, Smew (2) and Goosander. I've encountered a good number of Whooper Swans, Greylag, White-fronted and Brent Geese with neck collars and leg rings also. Due to the large concentrations of wildfowl and waders, birds of prey are often present with especially good numbers of Buzzards. This site is one of the last strongholds for both Yellowhammers and Tree Sparrows in Donegal because of the large number of cereal fields.

Killybegs is probably best known for gulls and its unpleasant aroma that can often be detected a mile or two away with the right wind conditions! Herring Gulls can number in their thousands here. Small gulls are usually quite scarce but Mediterranean, Little and Ring-billed have been seen. White-winged gulls also feature prominently during the winter months particularly. Counts of up to 50 Iceland Gull have been made here with Glaucous present in smaller numbers. Due to the large numbers of gulls, species and subspecies such as Kumlien's (annual), Thayers (2), American Herring, Yellow-legged, Caspian, Ross's Gull have been recorded. There are always a few unusual and strange hybrids present which will have you scratching your head.

Donegal can also be productive for seawatching with a choice of viewpoints such as Rocky Point, Aranmore Island, Melmore Head, Fanad Head, Malin Head and Bloody Foreland. The latter site would be my local patch. I've noticed that Manx Shearwater numbers here are always quite low. On a good seawatch in September, Sooty Shearwaters will often outnumber Manx. In my two years here I've been fortunate to witness big movements of Great Shearwater, a very scarce bird in Galway. 2007 proved particularly productive. On the 9th September Brad Robson estimated that 3000 birds passed Tory Island. I *only* had around 150 in a very quick seawatch the same evening. Interestingly,

over 7000 were seen passing the Outer Herbrides on 8th September while 4000 passed Annagh Head in Mayo on 10th September. I counted 656 passing back on 26th August 2006 here also. Other good birds seen in the last two years include Balearic Shearwater, Leach's Storm Petrel, Sabine's and Little Gull, while seabirds such as Soft-plumaged Petrel, Wilson's Storm Petrel, Cory's Shearwater and Long-tailed Skua have all been recorded from Donegal headlands and from pelagics.

There are many spots in Donegal which I've hadn't had time to go into detail here including Tory Island (Corncrakes, seabirds and autumn migrants), Donegal Bay (sea ducks, divers, wildfowl), Malin Head (wintering Barnacle Geese) and New Lake just outside Dunfanaghy to name a few. Like most counties in Ireland, Donegal is very underwatched and really deserves a lot more attention.

Dermot Breen

BIRDS IN POETRY

Ted Kooser, an American Poet Laureate and winner of the Pulitzer Prize for his *Delights and Shadows*, is acknowledged as a master of the short poem and a worthy successor to Robert Frost. His poems have a quiet reflective core and *At Nightfall* is a wonderful blend of descriptive detail, delight in nature and thoughtful engagement with contemporary problems.

Pat Finnegan

At Nightfall

In feathers the color of dusk, a swallow,
up under the shadowy eaves of the barn,
weaves now, with skillful beak and chitter,
one bright white feather into her nest
to guide her flight home in the darkness.
It has taken a hundred thousand years
for a bird to learn this one trick with a feather,
a simple thing. And the world is alive
with such innocent progress. But to what
safe place shall any of us return
in the last smoky nightfall,
when we in our madness have put the torch
to the hope in every nest and feather?

Ted Kooser

Acknowledgement: University of Pittsburgh Press
for *Flying at Night*.

A LOST BITTERN

In early April a Bittern was found in Aran in an exhausted and dying condition. Local resident Mick O Connell, who could be described as BirdWatch's official 'representative' on the island got the bird to Padraic Reaney who with great skill, patience and perseverance nursed the bird back to health. So, on April 30th the bird was released into the large reed

habitat on the Corrib off the Curragh Line. Before release Chris Benson ringed it. For those present it was a great thrill to see this magnificent bird take to the wing and then settle into the reed beds – it's natural home. I hope to have a photograph in the next issue. Great credit is due to Padraic and Aonghus O Donnell for all the hard work and dedication they put into this. **NS**

BIRD ATLAS 2007-11

To give members a chance to become familiar with the methodology of the Atlas survey we recently had an outing in the vicinity of Ballyloughan where three distinct habitats were visited: the woodlands of Merlin Park, the coast and its immediate hinterland and the urban area around GMIT and Renmore. It was a great way to get to know the ropes and do some useful work together. Between the 11 of us we recorded 46 species and so far confirmed 9 to be breeding while we expect to confirm at least another 20+ species to be breeding too. There will be one more of these outings on Sunday June 15th so if you missed the first outing there is a second chance for you to become involved! We are looking forward to seeing you then. **MtC**

CONTRIBUTIONS

This issue has a record number of contributors and I thank Dermot Breen, Alf MacLochlainn, John Carey, Tom Cuffe and others for this. The whole object of the newsletter is to act as a platform for members to become involved. So this response was most encouraging and I ask them and others to keep contributions coming in. The deadline for the new issue is end July – so let's hear from you. **NS**

FORTHCOMING PROGRAMME

For further details and queries, please contact mariannetencate@gmail.com or ring 091-552519.

Wednesday 14 May, Branch Meeting, Anno Santo Hotel, Threadneedle Road, Salthill, 8.00pm. All members are welcome to attend our monthly branch meetings!

Sunday 18 May, National Dawn Chorus Day. Gather in the car park of the NUIG Sports Grounds at Dangan at 5.00am for an hour's walk along the River Corrib under the guidance of experienced birdwatchers.

Sunday 15 June, Bird Atlas outing to cover a tetrad in the vicinity of Renmore, Ballyloughan and Merlin Park (2 hours). Meet at 5pm in the car park at Ballyloughan. Previous experience is not required.

Wednesday 18 June, Branch Meeting, Anno Santo Hotel, 8.00pm. This is the last meeting of the season. Monthly Branch meetings will resume in September

BirdWatch Galway (Branch of BirdWatch Ireland)

A QUARTERLY BIRD REPORT BY CHRIS PEPIATT & TIM GRIFFIN

1st Quarter 2008

TEL. (091) 590154 or at www.birdwatchgalway.org

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Species	Location	Number	Date	Observer
Surf Scoter	Silver Strand, Galway City	1st W F	01.01.08	Many obs. (1)
Forster's Tern	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City	1	01.01.08	Many obs. (2)
Cattle Egret	Cartron, Nr. Corrandulla	3	01.01.08	Many obs. (3)
Glaucous Gull x Herring Gull Hyb.	Mutton Island causeway, Galway City	1	01.01.08	TG (4)
Sandwich Tern	Mutton Island causeway, Galway City	4	01.01.08	TG
Blackcap	Knocknacarra, Galway City	F	03.01.08	TG
argentatus Herring Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City	1	04.01.08	TG
Peregrine	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City	Pair	05.01.08	AOD
Ring-billed Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City	2	06.01.08	TG
Kumlien's Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City	1	06.01.08	TG
Mediterranean Gull	Rossaveal	2A	07.01.08	AOD
Iceland Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City	8	08.01.08	TG
Hen Harrier	Curraghline, Lough Corrib	F	09.01.08	AOD
Black Redstart	Kinvara	1	12.01.08	PK, DC, JG, UF
Purple Sandpiper	Mutton Island Causeway, Galway City	1	12.01.08	TC
American Herring Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City	A	12.01.08	TC (5)
Iceland Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City	9	12.01.08	Many obs.
Glaucous Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City	2	12.01.08	Many obs.
Spotted Redshank	Kilcaimin	2	13.01.08	TG
Hen Harrier	Curraghline, Lough Corrib	8 ringtail	13.01.08	AOD
Sandwich Tern	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City	4	13.01.08	JC & TG
Little Egret	Kilcaimin	5	15.01.08	TG
Little Gull	Mutton Island causeway, Galway City	2A	15.01.08	TG
Long-eared Owl	Moycullen	2	16.01.08	AOD
Woodcock	Moycullen	2	16.01.08	AOD
argentatus Herring Gull	Mutton Island, Galway City	1	16.01.08	MD
Greenshank	Rusheen Bay, Galway City	29	17.01.08	PT
argentatus Herring Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City	AW & 2ndW	18.01.08	MD
Forster's Tern	Loughnahulla Bay, Nr. Tawin	1	20.01.08	PT (6)
Peregrine	Loughnahulla Bay, Nr. Tawin	1	20.01.08	PT
Pintail	Mweenish Island, Nr. Tawin	12	20.01.08	PT
Hen Harrier	Curraghline, Lough Corrib	4 ringtail	20.01.08	AOD
Purple Sandpiper	Inveran	28	20.01.08	AOD
American Herring Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City	1stW	24.01.08	MD (7)
Common Scoter	Blackrock, Salthill, Galway City	20+	25.01.08	PT
Mediterranean Gull	Mutton Island, Galway City	1stW	25.01.08	PT
Little Gull	Mutton Island, Galway City	4	25.01.08	PT
Chiffchaff	Newtownlynch Pier	1	26.01.08	TG
Water Pipit	Loughaurrone, Nr. Oranmore	1	26.01.08	PT
Pintail	Loughaurrone, Nr. Oranmore	1	26.01.08	PT
Black-tailed Godwit	Oranmore Bay	400	26.01.08	PT
Black-throated Diver	Newtonlynch/Finvarra (Co. Clare)	5	26.01.08	TG
Long-tailed Duck	Newtonlynch/Finvarra (Co. Clare)	M	26.01.08	TG
Little Egret	Loughaurrone, Nr. Oranmore	1	27.01.08	TC
Ring-billed Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City	1	28.01.08	TC
Twite	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City	2	29.01.08	TG
Kumlien's Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City	2	30.01.08	TG
Common Sandpiper	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City	1	02.02.08	TG (8)
Little Egret	Kilcolgan	1	03.02.08	MIC
Little Gull	Mutton Island, Galway City	3	03.02.08	PT
Purple Sandpiper	Salthill, Galway City	5	03.02.08	PT
Kumlien's Gull	Rossaveal	2ndW	04.02.08	RB
Little Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City	2	05.02.08	TG
Velvet Scoter	Newtownlynch Pier	F	07.02.08	TG (9)
Long-tailed Duck	Newtownlynch Pier	1	07.02.08	TG
Brent Goose	South Park, Galway City	230	07.02.08	MB
Ring-billed Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City	3 (2A&1stW)	08.02.08	TC, DCh, RM & TG
Iceland Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City	13 (3A, 10-1stW&2ndW)	08.02.08	TC, DCh, RM & TG
Little Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City	2	08.02.08	TC, DCh, RM & TG
Glaucous Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City	2-1stW	08.02.08	TC, DCh, RM & TG
Hen Harrier	Luimnagh, Lough Corrib	F	09.02.08	DCo
Sandwich Tern	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City	4	09.02.08	DB
Kumlien's Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City	2	09.02.08	DB (10)
Glaucous Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City	1stW & 2ndW	09.02.08	DB
Ring-billed Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City	4A	09.02.08	DB
Common Sandpiper	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City	1	10.02.08	TG (11)
Lesser Scaup	Lough Rea	1	11.02.08	AK & PK
Kumlien's Gull	Galway City docks	2ndW	13.02.08	TG
Merlin	Ardnasillagh, Nr. Oughterard	M	13.02.08	MIC
Hen Harrier	Menlo	Ringtail	14.02.08	PT
Blackcap	Menlo	Ringtail	14.02.08	PT
Little Gull	Galway City docks	1	15.02.08	TG
Snowy Owl	Spiddal	1	15.02.08	AOD & GOD
Dipper	Loughrea town	1	16.02.08	PC (12)
Whooper Swan	Rahasane Turlough	107	17.02.08	PC
Greenland White-fronted Goose	Rahasane Turlough	81	17.02.08	PC
Kumlien's Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City	1	17.03.08	TG
Little Egret	Rinville Bay, Nr. Oranmore	3	18.02.08	SMcC

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1st Quarter 2008

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Species	Location	Number	Date	Observer
Common Buzzard	Rahasane Turlough		1 22.02.08	?
Mediterranean Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City		A 23.02.08	PS
Kumlien's Gull	Rossaveal		2ndW 23.02.08	PS
Hen Harrier	Curraghline, Lough Corrib		Ringtail 23.02.08	PS
Hen Harrier	Sonnagh, Nr. Kilchreest		1 23.02.08	? (13)
Scaup	Lough Atalia, Galway City		25 24.02.08	PS
Hen Harrier	Nr. Athenry		M 24.02.08	PS
Dipper	Nr. Athenry		1 24.02.08	PS
American Herring Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City		2 24.02.08	PS & TC
Iceland Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City		17 24.02.08	PS & TC (14)
Little Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City		2-1stW 24.02.08	PS & TC
Mediterranean Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City		A 24.02.08	PS & TC
Little Egret	Rusheen Bay, Galway City		2 25.02.08	JC
Surf Scoter	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City		2-1stWF 26.02.08	Many obs. (15)
Little Egret	Rusheen Bay, Galway City		2 25.02.08	JC
Little Egret	Rusheen Bay, Galway City		3 27.02.08	TG
Little Gull	Mutton Island Causeway, Galway City		2 27.02.08	TG
Little Egret	Kilcolgan		2 28.02.08	TG
Mediterranean Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City		A 28.02.08	TG
Green Sandpiper	Cloonkeen Bridge, Abbert R., Nr. Tuam		1 28.02.08	PT
Kumlien's Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City		2ndW 02.03.08	?
Little Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City		2 02.03.08	JC
Little Egret	between Tawin & Kilcaimin		3 02.03.08	CC
Peregrine	Ballinacourty		1 04.03.08	MK & MaK
Sandwich Tern	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City		5 06.03.08	TG
Little Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City		1 06.03.08	TG
Iceland Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City		14 08.03.08	TG
Greenland White-fronted Goose	Rahasane Turlough		98 17.03.08	PC
Greylag Goose	Rahasane Turlough		1 17.03.08	PC (16)
Merlin	Claregalway		F 17.03.08	JG
Wheatear	Nr. Cleggan		1 17.03.08	PT
Woodcock	Coolagh Hill, Galway City		12 17.03.08	CP
Peregrine	Coolagh Hill, Galway City		1 17.03.08	CP
Ring-billed Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City		2 17.03.08	TG
Little Egret	Clifden Harbour		2 18.03.08	BJ
Sand Martin	Tuam		1 18.03.08	JG
Iceland Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City		12 20.03.08	TG
Little Egret	Rinville, Nr. Oranmore		20 21.03.08	PT (17)
Woodcock	Rinville, Nr. Oranmore		1 21.03.08	PT
American Wigeon	Rahasane Turlough		M 22.03.08	JM (18)
Greenland White-fronted Goose	Rahasane Turlough		83 22.03.08	JM
Yellowhammer	Oakwood North, Abbey		3 22.03.08	PT
Greenland White-fronted Goose	Rahasane Turlough		93 23.03.08	TG
Black Guillemot	Salthill, Galway City		1 24.03.08	DOK (19)
Ruff	Rahasane Turlough		3 25.03.08	TG
Whooper Swan	west over Knocknacarra, Galway City		23 27.03.08	TG
Little Egret	Rahasane Turlough		12 29.03.08	DMcN
Iceland Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City		11 29.03.08	TG
Marsh Harrier	Angliham, Lough Corrib		F 30.03.08	TG (20)
Jack Snipe	Slieve Aughties, Nr. Derrybrien		1 30.03.08	PC, JC & NS
Merlin	Slieve Aughties, Nr. Derrybrien		1 30.03.08	PC, JC & NS
Common Buzzard	Slieve Aughties, Nr. Derrybrien		1 30.03.08	PC, JC & NS
Hen Harrier	Slieve Aughties, Nr. Derrybrien		2 30.03.08	PC, JC & NS
Crossbill	Slieve Aughties, Nr. Derrybrien		4 30.03.08	PC, JC & NS
Ruff	Rahasane Turlough		5 30.03.08	JM
Greenland White-fronted Goose	Rahasane Turlough		93 30.03.08	JM
Swallow	Headford		1 30.03.08	CC
Jack Snipe	Mutton Island, Galway City		4 31.03.08	MD
OTHER BEASTIES				
Otter	Mutton Island, Galway City		1 10.01.08	MD
ABBREVIATIONS			CONTRIBUTORS	
A = Adult; W = Winter; M = male; F = female; Hyb. = Hybrid.			TG = Tim Griffin; PT = Paul Troake; DB = Dermot Breen;	
			PC = Pete Capsey; TC = Tom Cuffe; MD = Michael Davis;	
			DC = Deirdre Comerford; AOD = Aonghus O'Donnail;	
NOTES			CP = Chris Peppiatt; CC = Chris Cook; JC = John Carey;	
1 = Bird from last quarter again present.	11 = Possibly the same bird as seen in the docks/pier area.		MB = Martin Byrnes; DCh = Derek Charles;	
2 = Bird from last quarter present until 31.03.08.	12 = One present again on 05.03.08 (JC).		MTC = Marianne ten Cate; UF = Una Fleming;	
3 = Birds from last quarter again present until 01.03.08	13 = Feeding on a Red Grouse.		JG = Jo Gordon; PK = Padraig Keirns;	
4 = Another or the same seen again on 06.03.08.	14 = Including 3A, 2ndW & 11-1stW.		DOK = David O'Keefe; GOD = Ger O'Donnell;	
5 = Bird from last quarter present until 01.02.08 at least.	15 = Presumably including the earlier single bird, present at Galway or Rossaveal until the end of the quarter.		NS = Neil Sharkey; RB = Richard Bonser;	
6 = Bird from Galway City wanders around the bay.	16 = Apparently wild, with Greenland flock last winter and this winter.		PS = Paul Slade; RM = Richard Millington;	
7 = Present until the end of the quarter.	17 = Roost site.		AK = Andrea Kelly; PK = Paul Kelly; MaK = Marie Kelly;	
8 = Present in the docks area until at least 24.02.08.	18 = Still present on 30.03.08 at least.		MK = Michael Kelly; SMcC = Stephen McCleary;	
9 = Present until 09.02.08 at least.	19 = Unusual here, common on south side of Galway Bay and further west.		JM = John Miurphy; DMcN = Dave McNamara;	
10 = Including 2ndW with missing leg.	20 = Possibly the bird from last year overwintering.		JG = Jim Glennon; BJ = Bernie Jeffries.	