



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.
Distributed by e mail only

BRANCH MATTERS

At the end of the recent RSPB/BWI All Ireland conference in Sligo I represented the Galway Branch at the Branch Delegates Meeting. There were representatives from at least ten other branches and it was very helpful to exchange experiences with the other delegates. A number of the BWI staff also attended the meeting and they were able to inform us about all matters relating to the running of branches, recruitment of new members, promotion of BWI, the sale of BWI merchandise, outings, insurance and survey matters. Most of these issues will be presented in a forthcoming 'best practice' document and regional workshops.

A plea was made by the staff to be informed of any big regional events where BWI might present itself, promote its objectives and possibly recruit new members. So, if you are aware of county shows, science exhibitions, biodiversity days or other events where the presence of BWI might be relevant, please inform Niall Hatch or Jamie Durrant at BirdWatch headquarters or inform me and I will pass on the information.

Over the years our organisation has changed from the Irish Wildbird Conservancy with a relatively small number of members, starting without any professional staff and relying entirely on the efforts of many volunteers nationwide to the present BirdWatch Ireland with about 14,000 members and a large staff of professionals, but still supported by that invaluable group of volunteers.

Of course, in this day and age, we are all covered by insurance while we are out on a BirdWatch mission, be it an outing or a survey, and there are a few further measures to be put in place in due course to comply with our duty of care, child protection and related matters. Little can be left to chance! It is important to stress that on some trips - such as those involving boats - BWI insurance only covers paid-up members. So, before committing yourself to such a venture, check whether you haven't let your membership lapse!

I sincerely hope I am only addressing fully paid-up members just now. If not, please take out or renew your membership as soon as you put down this *Newsletter*. Thank you for your continued support!

Marianne ten Cate

CO GALWAY BIRDING REVIEW 2009

2009 produced a grand total of 206 species compared to 215 the previous year. The autumn season did not live up to expectations but I think we were really spoiled in 2008, which was an exceptional year for rare birds in Galway. In 2009 23 species of rarities, totalling 43 individual birds, were recorded (31 & 68 respectively in 2008). The rarest bird of the year would have to be the Cedar Waxwing that turned up on Inishbofin in October. This was a first not alone for the county but for the

country. Unfortunately, it was only a one day bird which was just seen by its two finders Anthony McGeehan and Craig Nash, much to the disappointment of the 50+ twitchers the following day. Inishbofin also produced the only other new species for the county - White-billed Diver in May, being seen from the ferry. This is the third year in a row that the island has produced a mega.

On reflection, seawatching was reasonably good by Galway standards with a single Cory's, 6+ Great, 4 Balearic and a record county day count of 34 Sooty Shearwaters, 9 Leach's Petrels, 4 Long-tailed Skuas (all at Lettermullan in May), c. 10 Sabine's Gulls and 2 Black Terns. Offshore 1 Wilson's Petrel and "hundreds" of Great Shearwaters were noted by John Brittain from his charter boat. Two organised pelagics fared very poorly though.

As for wildfowl, the best duck was probably the female Red-crested Pochard off Angliham being only the 3rd county record. Also recorded were American Wigeon, Green-winged Teal, Garganey, 4 Ring-necked Ducks, Smew, Goosander and the returning male Lesser Scaup and female Surf Scoter. Numerous hybrid ducks resembling Green-winged Teal (2), Ring-necked Duck, Ferruginous Duck (2) and Lesser Scaup were also seen.

On the raptor front 2 different Hobbies were seen in the spring. Bizarrely, a white morph Gyr Falcon was seen flying over Nimmo's Pier by a visiting Dublin branch of BWI. One of the Kerry re-introduced White-tailed Eagles was seen on Lough Corrib, being seen there previously. There were two good reports of Snowy Owl also.

The best spot for waterbirds during the autumn was undoubtedly Rahasane Turlough producing a Great White Egret, 2 American Golden Plovers, Pectoral Sandpiper, 2 Buff-breasted Sandpipers and a Long-billed Dowitcher. The best wader of the year was surely the Stone Curlew photographed near Roundstone during the summer, an amazing record for the west coast of Ireland. Other good waders recorded included another American Golden Plover and Buff-breasted Sandpiper and 6 Pectoral Sandpipers. Interestingly, no Little Stints were recorded and Curlew Sandpipers were scarce.

It was an average year for what Galway is best known for - gulls. The American Herring Gull was again present on and off at Nimmo's Pier for its seventh winter now. It was also an excellent winter for Kumlien's Gulls with seven different birds being recorded between Nimmo's Pier, Rossaveel and Clifden. The Forster's Tern returned to Nimmo's also for its seventh winter.

The passerine migration "hotspots" of Inishmore and Inishbofin fared very poorly, that is if you omit the Cedar Waxwing of course! This was mainly due to a prolonged settled spell with high pressure dominating during September and October. This resulted in fair weather but hindered unusual migrants from reaching Ireland. Highlights were of a poorer quality compared to the previous

year. These included 2 Turtle Doves, 3 Black Redstarts, 5 Lesser Whitethroats, 1 Yellow-browed, 4 Garden, 2 *acredula* Willow Warblers, 4 Lapland and 4 Snow Buntings. The best passerine of the autumn came from neither of these sites but at Slyne Head - a Red-breasted Flycatcher in what has now been christened the "RBF Garden". A Pied Flycatcher was also seen nearby later.

Scarce spring migrants were typically almost none existent in the county save for a brief singing Wood Warbler at Ballynahinch Castle and a Turtle Dove on Inishbofin.

Dermot Breen

INISHBOFIN

Inishbofin is a firm favourite with birdwatchers and is increasingly gaining a reputation for both its Corncrakes and, recently, as can be seen from Dermot Breen's 2009 report, some stunning rarities. A BirdWatch member, Lorraine McLean, has contacted me asking to let readers know about the B&B facilities she offers on the island. Lorraine offers what she describes as peaceful and comfortable accommodation with all modern facilities. She offers reduced rates for longer stays and groups. Those interested should contact her directly at (087) 7454777 or at aframeinishbofin@hotmail.com.

NS

A KIND OF MAGIC

I'm sure we've all had days traipsing around a so-called birding hot spot, seeing nothing but Meadow Pipits and Woodpigeons. Occasionally though, just occasionally, a plan comes together and you get a truly golden day of birding. This is what happened to a friend and me way back in July 1991...

We had set off from Bristol at around 6:45am, heading for Devon and the RSPB reserve of Aylesbeare Common, a reserve made up of heathland, a habitat that is becoming extremely scarce. We'd never been there before but we thought we'd give it a try. The sun was shining, the sky was blue and expectations were high.

We arrived at Aylesbeare at about 8:30. We had just pulled up and were contemplating where to go first when a raptor sailed into view over the horizon. The cry "Buzzard" went up, then we realised it was a Red Kite. Plenty of cursing followed as we tried to get out of the car and find the binoculars, but the bird was good enough to hang around for about 10 minutes, giving us ample time to get good views. We couldn't see any wing tags, so assumed it wasn't one of the newly introduced birds from the south east of England. Phew, what a start!

We wandered into the reserve, wondering if the rest of the day would be an anti-climax. Almost immediately we spotted a family group of Green Woodpecker consisting of the adult pair plus one (very speckled) youngster. Next up was a pair of Dartford Warbler, flitting restlessly around the tops

BirdWatch Galway (Branch of BirdWatch Ireland) 1st Quarter 2010

QUARTERLY BIRD REPORT COMPILED BY CHRIS PEPIATT

DATE OF ISSUE: 14th May 2010

1st January: 7 (5 Ad. & 2 Imm.) Whooper Swan, Glendollagh lough, Connemara (Miryam & Michael Harris).
1st January: Hen Harrier, with wing tag, Angliham, Lough Corrib (Dermot Breen).
1st January: Ad. Forster's Tern, again present, Nimmo's Pier, Galway City. (1)
2nd January: Waxwing, Clifden (Dermot Breen).
2nd January: 180 Barnacle Goose, Inishark (Dermot Breen).
2nd January: Black Redstart, again present, Salthill promenade, Galway City. (2)
2nd January: 2-1st. Win Iceland Gull, 2 Ad. Ring-billed Gull, & Sandwich Tern, Nimmo's Pier, Galway City (Tim Griffin).
2nd January: 5 Black-throated Diver & 3 Long-tailed Duck, Newtownlynch Pier.
3rd January: leucistic Pochard, Angliham, Lough Corrib (Dermot Breen).
3rd January: 3 Spotted Redshank, Kilcaimin (Dermot Breen).
3rd January: 9 Scaup, Lough Atalia, Galway City (Neil Ellis).
5th January: Long-tailed Duck & Whimbrel, Barnaderg Bay (Dermot Breen).
7th January: Fem. Marsh Harrier & 8 (2 male & 6 ringtail) Hen Harrier, Angliham, Lough Corrib. (3)
8th January: female Brambling, Carragh Hill garden, Salthill, Galway City (Michael Davis). (4)
8th January: Woodcock, Ragoon, Galway City (Chris Peppiatt).
9th January: Jack Snipe, Mutton Island, Galway City (Michael Davis).
9th January: Jack Snipe, Laurecetown, Ballinasloe (Stephen Heery). (5)
10th January: male Ferruginous Duck X Pochard hybrid, male Ring-necked Duck X Tufted Duck hybrid, 3 Woodcock & Peregrine, Angliham, Lough Corrib (Dermot Breen).
10th January: 3 Dipper & Woodcock, Ballynahinch Castle, Connemara (Miryam & Michael Harris).
15th January: 2-1st. Win Iceland Gull & 2 Ad. Ring-billed Gull, again present, Nimmo's Pier, Galway City.
15th January: Ad. American Herring Gull, docks, Galway City (Tim Griffin & Tom Cuffe). (6)
16th January: 3 Ad. Ring-billed Gull, Nimmo's Pier, Galway City (Derek Charles).
17th January: Iceland Gull, Furbo beach (Aoife Boyd).
17th January: 70 Greenland White-fronted Goose, Greylag Goose, 94 Whooper Swan, 4,000 Wigeon, 124 Pintail, 216 Shoveler, 6 Little Egret & 250 Black-tailed Godwit, Rahasane Turlough (Pete Capsey).
19th January: 1st Win. Thayer's Gull & Ad. Ring-billed Gull, Ross Beach, Cleggan, Connemara (Dermot Breen). (7)
19th January: 3 Ad. Ring-billed Gull, again present, Nimmo's Pier, Galway City.
19th January: White Stork, Renville, Oranmore (per Irishbirding). (8)
20th January: Slavonian Grebe, male Ferruginous Duck X Pochard hybrid & male Ring-necked Duck X Tufted Duck hybrid, Angliham, Lough Corrib (Dermot Breen).
22nd January: Red-necked Grebe & 2 Long-tailed Duck, Newtownlynch Pier (Dave McNamara). (9)
24th January: 1st. Win. Glaucous X Great Black-backed Gull hybrid & 1st Win. Mediterranean Gull, Ross Beach, Cleggan, Connemara (Dermot Breen).
24th January: 3 Ad. Ring-billed Gull, again present, Nimmo's Pier, Galway City.
28th January: 71 Greenland White-fronted Goose, 47 Little Egret & Ruff, Rahasane Turlough (John Murphy).
30th January: Pacific Diver (first for Ireland), Oranmore Bay, Galway City (Michael Davis <i>et al.</i>). (10)
30th January: Ad. Mediterranean Gull & Ruff, Oranmore Bay (Dermot Breen).
30th January: Spotted Redshank & 3 Ruff, Rahasane Turlough (John Murphy).
31st January: Slavonian Grebe, Hare Island, Galway City (Sean Ronayne).
31st January: Fem. Merlin, Rinville, Oranmore Bay (Tom Tarpey).
5th February: 1st Win. Iceland Gull, Ross Beach, Cleggan, Connemara (Dermot Breen).
6th February: male Ring-necked Duck X Tufted Duck hybrid & male Scaup X Tufted Duck hybrid, again present, Angliham, Lough Corrib.
7th February: Black-throated Diver, Tawin (Dermot Breen).
7th February: 3 Long-tailed Duck & 4 Sandwich Tern, Newtownlynch Pier (Tom Chadwick).
7th February: 3 Ad. Ring-billed Gull, again present, Nimmo's Pier, Galway City.
13th February: 2 Dipper, Loughrea town (Pete Capsey).

13th February: 5 Whooper Swan & Dipper, Ballinahinch, Connemara (Miryam & Michael Harris).
14th February: 3,500 Wigeon, 152 Shoveler, 106 Pintail, 59 Little Egret, 300 Dunlin, 240 Black-tailed Godwit & 2 Greenshank, Rahasane Turlough (Pete Capsey).
14th February: Crossbill, Ahascragh (John Carey).
16th February: 43 Little Egret, Rahasane Turlough (Richard Bonser).
19th February: Slavonian Grebe, Ardfry (Paul Troake).
19th February: 250 Barnacle Goose, Crump Island, Renvyle (Dermot Breen).
19 th February: 2 Scaup, Oranmore Bay (Chris Peppiatt).
20th February: 81 Greenland White-fronted Goose, 24 Little Egret, 4 Ruff & Spotted Redshank, Rahasane Turlough (John Murphy).
27th February: 78 Greenland White-fronted Goose, Greylag Goose, 4 Ruff, Peregrine & Merlin, Rahasane Turlough (Dermot Breen).
27th February: 2 Peregrine, Belclare Turlough (Dermot Breen).
28th February: Ad. Ring-billed Gull, again present, Nimmo's Pier, Galway City.
28th February: Ruff, Rahasane Turlough (James Hayes & Clodagh Glasgow).
2nd March: 2 Long-tailed Duck, Newtownlynch (Paul Troake).
4th March: Scandinavian Rock Pipit, Mutton Island, Galway City (Tom Cuffe). (11)
6th March: Hen Harrier & Jay, Ballycurrin Bay, Lough Corrib (Tommy Carey).
6th March: 3 Stock Dove & Peregrine, Barna (Brendan Power).
7th March: 1,400 Wigeon, 39 Pintail, 4 Shoveler, 1,000 Teal, 126 Mallard, 67 Little Egret, 22 Black-tailed Godwit, 8 Greenhank, 40 Dunlin, 120 Redshank, 54 Curlew, Ruff, Kestrel, Sparrowhawk & 3 Lesser Black-backed Gull, Rahasane Turlough (Pete Capsey).
7th March: Cuckoo, Barna (David O'Keeffe).
8th March: 40 Little Egret, 4 Ruff & 2 Spotted Redshank, Rahasane Turlough (Paul Troake).
13th March: 5 Crossbill, Pollnacknockaun Wood, Slieve Aughties (Pete Capsey, John Carey & Neil Sharkey).
14th March: 4 Long-tailed Duck, Kinvara (Geoff Hunt).
14th March: 2 Ad. Ring-billed Gull, again present, Nimmo's Pier, Galway City.
15th March: Twite, Mweelin, Connemara National Park (Dermot Breen).
15th March: Snowy Owl, Clochar na gCon, Spiddal (Chris Peppiatt, Aonghus O'Donail & Dermot Breen).
17th March: 2-1st Win. Glaucous Gull, Mutton Island, Galway City (Dominick Mitchell, Chris Harbard & Roy Beddard).
3rd January: Ring-billed Gull, Waterside, Galway City (Tom Cuffe).
18th March: 2nd cal. yr. Glaucous Gull, Mutton Island, Galway City (Dominick Mitchell, Chris Harbard & Roy Beddard).
18th March: 126 Whooper Swan, Nr. Moylough (Ger O'Donohoe).
19th March: 1st Win. Iceland Gull, Mutton Island, Galway City (Michael Davis).
20th March: 30 Little Egret, Rahasane Turlough (Neil Ellis).
20th March: Wheatear, Tawin (Marianne ten Cate).
22nd March: 1st Win. Iceland Gull, Nimmo's Pier, Galway City (Tom Cuffe).
23rd March: Sand Martin, Tuam (Jim Glennon).
24th March: Barn Owl, Ballyhale, Headford (Mary Callaghan & Michael Sweeney).
24th March: Willow Warbler, Oughterard (David Rees).
25th March: Swallow, Nr. Milltown (Chris Benson).
28th March: 2 Ad. Sum. Mediterranean Gull, Newtownlynch Pier (Dermot Breen).
28th March: 2 Ad. Sum. Mediterranean Gull, Coranroo (Dermot Breen).
28th March: 58 Wigeon, 2 Pintail, 68 Teal, 64 Mallard, 33 Little Egret, 2 Greenhank, 1 Curlew, 2 Lesser Black-backed Gull & 5 Chiffchaff, Rahasane Turlough (Pete Capsey).
28th March: 400-500 Barnacle Goose, CroaghnaKeela Island (Chris Peppiatt & Lorraine Meehan).
28th March: Long-tailed Duck, Dog's Bay, Roundstone (Chris Peppiatt & Lorraine Meehan).
31st March: Drake Ring-necked Duck, Lough Rea (Josh Jones).
31st March: Ad. Ring-billed Gull, again present, Nimmo's Pier, Galway City.

NOTES:

- (1) The long-staying Forster's Tern from the last quarter was present in the Nimmo's Pier/South Park area intermittently until the 27th of March at least.
- (2) The Salthill Black Redstart was first seen in the previous quarter (27th December 2010).
- (3) A wintering female Marsh Harrier (probably the same bird) was seen at the same site on the 20th of February.
- (4) A female Brambling was seen at the same site on the 23rd of February.
- (5) The Laurencetown Jack Snipe was also present on the 10th of January.
- (6) The adult American Herring Gull (presumably the same individual that has returned to the area for the last few years) was also seen on the 16th and 18th of January.
- (7) The 1st winter Thayer's Gull was present in the area until at least the 10th of February. This is the first or second record for Co. Galway; a bird seen at the old city dump/Nimmo's Pier in March 1989 has never received a definitive decision from the Irish Rare Birds Committee.
- (8) No details of the observer available.
- (9) A Red-necked Grebe (presumably the same bird) was seen in the Aughinish/Newtownlynch area on the 2nd of March, the 6th of March and the 28th of March. Newtownlynch Pier has regularly produced records of this species.
- (10) This bird was the first confirmed for Ireland. There had been a claim for an individual of the same species in the same area at about the same time in 2009, but this was never confirmed.
- (11) The Scandinavian race Rock Pipit was again present on the 9th of March.

OTHER BEASTS:

28th March: Basking Shark, Nr. Dog's Bay, Roundstone.

HIGHLIGHTS:

Pacific Diver (first for Ireland), Thayer's Gull (first accepted for Co. Galway), White Stork, Waxwing, 3 Slavonian Grebe, Black Redstart, Snowy Owl, Ring-necked Duck, Brambling, Twite and Scandinavian Rock Pipit. Long stayers/returning birds included American Herring Gull, Forster's Tern, Marsh Harrier and 3 adult Ring-billed Gull. On a negative note, the numbers of white-winged (Iceland and Glaucous) gulls were well down on previous years.

First Summer migrants: Cuckoo (7th March!); Wheatear (20th March); Sand Martin (23rd March); Willow Warbler (24th March); Swallow (25th March).