



### **BIRDWATCH GALWAY**

This newsletter is issued in support of the Galway Branch of BirdWatch Ireland. To get involved or to get on the email notice list contact Secretary Blaithe Kennedy [blaithe.kennedy@gmail.com](mailto:blaithe.kennedy@gmail.com) or Chairperson Cyril Manning ([cyril.manning@hotmail.com](mailto:cyril.manning@hotmail.com))

### **LOUGH RUSHEEN BIRD HIDE**

The Lough Rusheen hide overlooking the tidal back strand at Silver Strand off the Barna Road was set up by the Galway BirdWatch branch about thirty years or more years ago. My recollection is that we had a formal opening by the Galway Mayor of the time. It is a simple stone structure that allowed a sheltered binocular and telescope bird viewing point over the water and strand. In the right tidal conditions and time of year it affords really excellent views of waders and other water birds. Sadly however the path in and around it had got completely over grown mainly with furze bush. Recently Tom Cuffe on one of his BWI outings there as part of the Galway City Biodiversity Week met up with local resident there - Tom Purtil - who kindly offered to clear up all the undergrowth much deserves Galway birdwatchers gratitude and thanks.



NS

### **BIRDS OF GALWAY & MAYO by R.F. RUTLEDGE (Published 1950) (Continued to Redstart**

**Restart. phoenicures phoenicures (L).** Very rare straggler. One was shot At Blackrock off County Mayo on September 13<sup>th</sup> 1891 (Clare Island Survey. (Aves p.8). One was seen and heard singing in a wood at Doolpough Co. Mayo on April 1931, by Mrs Hall,

**Black Redstart, Phoenicurus ochrurus gibraltariensis (Gm).** Rare straggler on migration. It has occurred repeatedly at Blackrock Lighthouse Co. Mayo and specimens have been received from Eagle Lighthouse ; at Slyne Head in Co. Galway (Clare Island Survey. Aves, p 18) . Most of these occurrences took place in autumn, but one was at Blackrock on March 13<sup>th</sup>. From November the 26<sup>th</sup> to December the 8<sup>th</sup>, 1838 a female or immature bird was present at Dunsadle near Athenry Co. Galway. (*Irish Nat. Jour. Vol vii p 114*)

**British Robin. Erithacus rubecula melaphilus Hart.** Resident common and generally distributed. Resident on the larger marine islands. Increasing on the Mullet (Bingham 1924). I have noticed it absent from Inishark and Inishere in Co. Galway. Even in the most desolate parts on Connemara it is abundant even in winter.

**British Hedge –Sparrow. Prunella modularis occidentalis (Hart).** Resident. Common and widespread on the mainland and islands alike with the exception of Inishbofin, in which Ussher recorded it. Cott did not find it in June 1920, nor myself in June 1932, though I saw a pair in 1943; thus it is not plentiful in this island as in others. Common even on the Mullet'

**Wren. Troglodytes troglodytes (L)** Resident, common and perhaps the most widespread of our birds. Plentiful in woodland, bog, lake and marine islands no matter how desolate, and on the Mullet.

**Irish Dipper. Cinclus cinclus hibernicus Hart.** Frequents mountain streams in both counties as well as some rivers in the lowlands. Other observers as well as myself have failed to see it on the shores of Loughs Carra and Mask though Ussher recorded it as frequenting these. (Clare Island Survey. Aves p.11) I have once seen one on an island in Lough Corrib. Rare in the Louisburgh district, Co. Mayo. On some streams in Co. Mayo it is missing though one would expect to find it. Plentiful throughout Connemara and the Maam Valley in Co. Galway. Seems absent from the marine islands other than Achill and perhaps

Clare Island. In April 1945 J. Barlee and I failed to find any on the latter island on which Ussher knew it.

### **NESTS –A BIRD REVIEW**

A unique book with beautiful cloth-bound boards: a book of life-size paintings of birds' nests, fifty-six paintings of twenty-eight species. The author emphasises from the start that it is against the law to disturb birds' nests in the breeding season, and to collect or possess birds' eggs. All the nests she painted were either old, definitely abandoned or displaced by wind or predators. Some, for instance the Yellowhammer's, were collected at the end of the season, after having watched the birds during the summer. The true-to-life paintings might not be to all tastes. The material birds use for their nests are not inherently colourful, especially at the end of the season; white feathers and green moss supply most of the colour, but there is plenty of quirky material on show as well. Ogilvy is a botanical artist and she has captured the details of the nesting materials (which are, after all, mostly botanical). She says she hopes she has done some justice to the architects. This she has certainly achieved, and the accompanying text is very interesting. Meanwhile closer to home, this year's nest building in my garden has brought drama and entertainment, as usual. A wren built an untidy flowing nest in last year's swallow's nest. The swallow arrived unexpectedly early on April 6<sup>th</sup> and ejected most of the wren's nest before building up the walls of its old one. As I write, four young are waving their heads over the mud walls. Across the shed, a second old swallow's nest has been commandeered by house sparrows and their nest is exactly like the one pictured in Ogilvy's book. A blackbird has built its nest in our hemi-ovoid yew bush, entering at the base and exiting through the tightly clipped foliage without leaving a mark or hole, rather like a ghost passing through a wall. On March 29<sup>th</sup> I put up a refurbished old blue tit nest box but made the hole a little too large. A pair of house sparrows were soon resident. At first they needed to squeeze themselves out of the entrance but later they had pecked the hole a little larger. My initial disappointment that sparrows, not blue tits, were using the box was just thoughtless prejudice against a species. House sparrows, who wear their hearts on their sleeve, turned out to be much more interesting to watch than secretive blue tits! The proprietorial chirping of the male, avid displays to the female, mating and other activities took place in full view on the branch



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on which the nest box rested. The young were ready to leave in the last week of May. Susan Ogilvy NESTS. Particular Books, 2021. €25 (ordered from Charlie Byrne's)

**Stephen Heery**

### **MERLIN BIRD SONG APP**

For those of you not aware of it I would recommend this very much. When downloaded on to your mobile phone and then opened when out and about it will clearly identify a singing or calling bird. A invaluable addition for all birdwatchers. **NS**

### **See an online review as follows**

Discover the bird world with the Merlin Bird ID's intuitive features!  
Merlin Bird ID stands out as an extraordinary bird identification app, bringing the expertise of the renowned Cornell Lab of Ornithology right to your fingertips. With its user-friendly interface and machine learning magic, bird identification becomes a breeze, making it a must-have for nature enthusiasts and seasoned birders alike. Merlin Bird ID is not just an application, but a comprehensive bird-spotting guide. Its identification process is as easy as answering a few simple questions or uploading a photo, and even offers the feature of recording a singing bird. All these features make for a fun and interactive approach to bird identification, making the learning experience enjoyable and engaging. The app is powered by eBird, the world's largest database of bird sightings, sounds, and photos. This ensures that the information provided is not only accurate but also up-to-date. It's like having a bird expert in your pocket, ready to help you identify any bird at any location, globally. One of the app's most distinctive features is its use of machine learning. By using deep learning to identify birds in photos and sounds, Merlin Bird ID transforms your device into a highly sophisticated bird recognition tool. This technology learns to recognise bird species based on training sets of millions of photos and sounds collected by birders globally. Moreover, Merlin Bird ID provides expert ID tips, range maps, and sounds to help you build birding skills. It also allows users to keep track of their sightings, which are linked to eBird, a global database of more than 1 billion bird observations. This feature not only enhances the user experience but also contributes to a global birdwatching community. In conclusion, Merlin Bird ID is an exceptional tool for bird enthusiasts, educators, and nature explorers. With its comprehensive database, user-friendly interface, and innovative features, it offers an

engaging and educational experience that makes bird identification both accessible and fun. It's more than just an app—it's a window into the fascinating world of birds. **NS**