



CAIRDE EANLAITH NA GAILLIMHE

BIRDWATCH GALWAY

www.birdwatchgalway.org

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER – EDITOR: NEIL SHARKEY

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The aim of this Newsletter is to give members a local viewpoint and to promote a common interest in birds & their conservation.

THOUGHT FROM THE CHAIR

Winter and early spring tend to be the busiest seasons for BirdWatch Galway, with fewer surveys, talks and meetings during the summer. Looking over the activities of the Branch over the last few months it struck me once again how many people are committed to BirdWatch in various ways. Talks don't just happen, they take a lot of organising and somebody has to look after speakers, publicity, 'takings', the attendance book and the shop; survey figures don't just appear in note books, they have to be gathered in the field, often under unfavourable conditions; outings don't just materialise, they are planned and co-ordinated.

As we cannot spread ourselves too thin we are very fortunate to have so many committed branch members willing to contribute their own particular expertise, be it editing or contributing to Newsletters, guiding birdwatchers at monthly outings on Nimmo's Pier or Rusheen Bay or keeping finances or Web-site in order. Not to mention several of our members looking after the hides and sanctuaries - go and have a look at the newly planted trees in The Small Wood at Rusheen Bay, the cleaned-up Belclare hide or the reinforced hide at Rostaff. And then there are those gluttons for punishment who are prepared to write minutes and articles or sit in on meetings of various Galway Corporation and/or County bodies. Far removed from the joys of watching birds but very necessary to ensure those joys will be there when the planners have finished!

With the summer recess coming up soon this is an appropriate time to acknowledge the input of each and every one of our active branch committee members who made the season gone by such a successful one. There are still some items on the agenda for the next couple of months (see **COMING EVENTS**) and I hope you will enjoy these. If you have any queries about the programme, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone or e-mail. Have a good summer!

Marianne ten Cate

'BAYWATCH' - THE ORNITHOLOGICAL VERSION!

Last Easter I visited San Francisco and the Bay area of Northern California. My base, for the stay, was a penthouse above St Phillip's School in the Noe Valley district. This proved to be an ideal base for some top class birdwatching. *Red-tailed hawks* circled overhead regularly and on several occasions parties of *cedar waxwings* passed through. A male *Hooded oriole* provided a blaze of colour one morning and a noisy party of feral *yellow headed parrots* flew overhead on several afternoons. In marked contrast flowering shrubs attracted several *Anna's hummingbirds* and along the footpaths of urban San Francisco *Brewers blackbirds* were very common. *Mocking birds* and *Morning doves* were ubiquitous. Several visits to Fisherman's Wharf produced parties of *brown pelicans*. In the world of gulls *Western* and *California gulls* were very plentiful as were *ring billed* and *glaucous winged*. *Heermann's gulls* were scarce - they are summer visitors which winter in Baja on the Mexican border but I did manage to connect with two juvenile birds. Other bird species I observed in the Fisherman's Wharf area were *double crested cormorant*, *western grebe* and, offshore, large rafts of *Surf scoter* and the occasional *Pigeon guillemot*.

A visit to the Marin Headlands across the Golden Gate Bridge produced several *Turkey vultures*, which glided majestically overhead, a raft of up to 2000 *Western grebes*

offshore and two *black oystercatchers* foraging along the rocky shoreline.

This is only a fraction of the avian wonders this fabulous area of California has to offer the visiting birdwatcher.

Tim Griffin

IRISH RARE BREEDING BIRDS PANEL

Paul Hillis, secretary of the Irish Rare Breeding Birds Panel, has sent me a note asking for any past years' and current records of rare breeding birds in the west of Ireland. Possibilities are black necked grebe, gadwall, wigeon, pochard, curlew, redshank, corncrake, Mediterranean gull, little tern, rock dove, yellowhammer and quite a few more. I have the full list for those requiring it. Dare we hope for red-throated diver on one of those eminently suitable Connemara lakes? Records to Paul at hillis@ireland.com or send to me and I will pass on. NS

NOTEBOOKS & LISTS - A PERSONAL VIEW

It has long been accepted by birdwatchers that your three essentials for birdwatching are - binoculars, notebook and bird guide. Of these three essentials previous generations of birdwatchers set huge store on the field notebook - it was their absolute bible - more important than binoculars or field guide. In an era of poor binoculars, pretty awful telescopes and hit and miss bird guides, sketching and careful notes were essential. Nowadays with the benefits of superb optics and excellent pocket field guides, making possible immediate identification, we seem to set far less store on notebooks. Likewise listing is nowadays often confined to noting rarities or transcribing counts on to special pre-printed forms for surveys, for example the complex form used on the Countryside Bird Survey. Up until the recent years my own experience with notebooks was, I regret to say, very hit and miss. I *always* had a notebook of some kind but quite often it was not to hand at the vital moment so sightings or lists often ended up on scraps of paper, backs of envelopes or whatever was to hand. About four years ago I remedied this by attaching one of those travel document pouches to the straps of my binoculars. These can be bought cheaply at any outdoor pursuits shop. Into this fits an inexpensive standard notebook - I am now on my fourth such one! On every outing or holiday trip I keep a species-seen list. Of course, once off rarities are also entered. However, writing up a species list gives added enjoyment to even the most casual outing or country walk. You reach the stage when seeing a hitherto missed wren or dunnock is a minor triumph! Overall the build up of records becomes full of interest. On one date are your birds seen on a walk along Nimmo's Pier - a few days later you have your bird list for perhaps a distant overseas holiday destination followed by those for that trip to Belmullet! So the purpose of this short article is to illustrate how adopting a simple 'always at hand' standard notebook can add immeasurably to your birdwatching enjoyment. NS

I-WeBS

Olivia Crowe has sent me a note thanking all of those who spent winter days visiting often remote western wetlands recording for I-WeBS. It is at times a painstaking and difficult task but well worth the effort. Olivia would now welcome early return of the various forms. Send either to me or directly to her at Rutledge House. NS

BIRDS IN POETRY

Peter Reading was born in Liverpool in 1946 and he has published more than twenty volumes of poetry. He developed an interest in nature, particularly birds and mammals in childhood, and his poems about birds have an unerring eye for descriptive detail. His iconoclastic attitude to life is well conveyed in a brief poem entitled *Everglades*.

Roseate Spoonbills
against a florid sunset,
transcending sunset...
[Balderdash: Nature Poems
(all poems) - inadequate.]

The intricate metrical structure of his verse is facilitated by clever use of the Latin nomenclature and is best appreciated when read aloud. The selection for this edition is taken from his recent collection, *Faunal*, published by Bloodaxe Books (2002). Pat Finnegan

Congress Avenue Bridge in Austin, Texas.

Mexican Free-tailed Bats,
Tadarida brasiliensis (mexicana),
over one million of them
at dusk emerging from roost-slots under the span.

They formed a granular trail
dispersing into the dark.
One of the most spectacular
phenomena I have ever been privileged to witness.

I threw the Zeiss in the Colorado River
(after 38 years they were ruined from sea-spray and grit - I remember, one time, their slithering into a rock-pool while I was busied banding a Purple Sandpiper) and then became drunk to celebrate the occasion.

The Sheriff's Department dealt with the peccadillo
(six hours stuck in stir
with a bunch of Mexican kids on a charge of Possession).

When I got out it amounted to two hundred dollars
(Public Intoxication).

Along the river
early next morning (I had the Bausch & Lomb
to replace the Zeiss) a Sora was stalking the reeds.
Overhead, Scissor-tailed Flycatchers
foretold the fall migration. Peter Reading

COMING EVENTS

Sunday 27 April, Branch Bird Race, for details contact Marianne at 091 552519.
Saturday 3 May, short outing with Tim Griffin, Nimmo's Pier, meet at 10.30am.
Sunday 11 May, National Dawn Chorus Day, Merlin Park Hospital grounds, Galway, with Tim Griffin et al. and Coole Park, Gort, with Gordon D'Arcy et al., meet at 5am at each venue;
Wednesday 14 May, committee/members meeting, Anno Santo Hotel, Threadneedle Road, Salthill, 8pm.
Weekend in second half of May, outing to Clare Island, Co. Mayo, for details contact Marianne.
Wednesday 18 June, last committee/members meeting before summer recess, Ardnasillagh, Oughterard, 8pm.
Saturday 6 September, short outing with Tim Griffin, Nimmo's Pier, Galway, meet at 10.30am.

BirdWatch Galway (Branch of BirdWatch Ireland)

A QUARTERLY BIRD REPORT BY TIM GRIFFIN & CHRIS PEPIATT

1st Quarter 2003

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DATE OF ISSUE: 18 April 2003

Species	Location	No	Date	Observer	Species	Location	No	Date	Observer
Hen Harrier	Nr. Gort	1-M	01.01.03	AR	Garganey	Rahasane Turlough	1-M	19.03.03	MD & NS
Glaucous Gull	Nimmo's Pier	1-1st W	01.01.03	TG	Hen Harrier	Curraghmore	1-F	20.03.03	TG
Iceland Gull	Nimmo's Pier	1-1st W	01.01.03	TG	Smew	Rahasane Turlough	1 F/Imm.	21.03.03	MD & AC
Twite	Grattan Road, Salthill	22	01.01.03	TG	Spotted Redshank	Rahasane Turlough	3	21.03.03	MaD
Sandwich Tern	Nimmo's Pier	1	01.01.03	TG	Purple Sandpiper	Inverin	18	21.03.03	TG
Eider Duck	Finavara, Co. Clare	2-F	01.01.03	TG	Hen Harrier	Rahasane Turlough	1-M	22.03.03	NS
Mediterranean Gull	Traught	1-AW	01.01.03	TG	Garganey	Rahasane Turlough	1-M	22.03.03	NS & TG
Velvet Scoter	Traught	1	02.01.03	TG	Velvet Scoter	Traught	2	22.03.03	TG
Little Gull	Nimmo's Pier	2	02.01.03	TG	Willow Warbler	Dyke Road, Glwy C.	1	25.03.03	CP
Little Egret	Traught	1	02.01.03	TG	Sedge Warbler	Dyke Road, Glwy C.	1	25.03.03	CP
Little Egret	Rossaveal	1	03.01.03	TG	Iceland Gull	Nimmo's Pier	1-1stW	29.03.03	AH
Mediterranean Gull	Waterside	1-AW	04.01.03	MD	Velvet Scoter	Rossaveal	1	29.03.03	TG
Ring Ouzel	Nr. Loughrea	1	04.01.03	PoMcN *	Little Gull	Nimmo's Pier	2 (1stW; A)	29.03.03	CP
Ring-billed Gull	Traught	1-AW	10.01.03	TG	Crossbill	Cloosh	4	29.03.03	TG
Ring-billed Gull	Waterside	4 (2-A, 2-2nd W)	12.01.03	MD **	Glaucous Gull	Rossaveal	2	29.03.03	TG
Little Gull	Nimmo's Pier	15	12.01.03	JnM	Velvet Scoter	Durras- Finavara	4	30.03.03	TG
Iceland Gull	Nimmo's Pier	2-1st W	12.01.03	JnM	Black-throated Diver	Traught-Finavara	15	30.03.03	TG
Twite	Nimmo's Pier	20	18.01.03	AOD	Long-tailed Duck	Durras-Finavara	10	30.03.03	TG
Black-throated Diver	Traught	11	18.01.03	TG	Little Egret	Traught	1	30.03.03	TG
Little Egret	Rusheen Bay	1	19.01.03	TG					
Glaucous Gull	Rossaveal	1	21.01.03	TG	ABBREVIATIONS				
Mediterranean Gull	Ballyloughan	1	23.01.03	SB					
Glaucous Gull	Nimmo's Pier	1-1st W	26.01.03	DB	Juv. = Juvenile; A = Adult; W = Winter; S = Summer; F = Female; M = Male;				
Iceland Gull	Nimmo's Pier	2 (1stW; A)	26.01.03	DB	Imm. = Immature; Leuc. = Leucistic; hyb. = hybrid.				
Mediterranean Gull	Nimmo's Pier	1-AW	26.01.03	DB					
Glaucous x Herring Gull hyb.	Nimmo's Pier	1-1st W	26.01.03	DB	NOTES				
Argentatus Herring Gull	Nimmo's Pier	1-A	26.01.03	DB					
Spotted Redshank	Nr. Tawin	2	30.01.03	NS & GOK	* This bird was present until at least 19.02.03.				
Twite	Nimmo's Pier	5	31.01.03	NH & SMcA	** Eleven different individual Ring-billed Gulls have been identified this winter (MD).				
Little Gull	Nimmo's Pier	10	01.02.03	AOD					
Twite	Nimmo's Pier	20	01.02.03	AOD					
Little Gull	Rossaveal	1-1st W	01.02.03	MD					
Spotted Redshank	Tawin	3	07.02.03	MD & AOD					
Garganey	Rahasane Turlough	1-M	07.02.03	MD & AOD					
Ring-billed Gull	Nimmo's Pier	3 (2-A; 2nd W)	08.02.03	DB, MD & AOD					
Iceland Gull	Nimmo's Pier	1-1st W	08.02.03	DB, MD & AOD					
Little Gull	Nimmo's Pier	2	08.02.03	DB, MD & AOD					
Sandwich Tern	Nimmo's Pier	2	08.02.03	DB, MD & AOD					
Glaucous Gull	Rossaveal	2 (1stW; 3rdW)	08.02.03	DB, MD & AOD					
Twite	Nimmo's Pier	12	08.02.03	many obs.					
Jack Snipe	Rahasane Turlough	1	09.02.03	PC					
Iceland Gull	Nimmo's Pier	1-1st W	15.02.03	PK					
Ring-billed Gull	Waterside	2 (A; 2nd W)	15.02.03	Clare Branch outing					
Smew	Lough Rea	1-F/Imm.	16.02.03	PK					
Glaucous Gull	Rossaveal	3 (2-1stW; 3rdW)	16.02.03	MD					
Iceland Gull	Rossaveal	1-1stW	16.02.03	MD					
Barnacle Goose	Silver Strand	2	19.02.03	ER					
Slavonian Grebe	Nr. Mutton Island	1	19.02.03	ML					
Spotted Redshank	Rahasane Turlough	1	21.02.03	MD & AOD					
Curlew Sandpiper	Nr. Roundstone	1	23.02.03	BMcG & DMcG					
Little Gull	Waterside	1-1stW	28.02.03	MD					
Little Egret	Rusheen Bay	1	01.03.03	ROC					
Iceland Gull	Baile na hAbhann	1	01.03.03	TG					
Sandwich Tern	Rusheen Bay	4	02.03.03	PK					
Twite	Na Minna, Nr. Inverin	2	02.03.03	NS					
Wigeon (Leuc.)	Rahasane Turlough	1	02.03.03	TG					
Little Gull	Waterside	1	06.03.03	TG					
Mediterranean Gull	Traught	2-AW	08.03.03	DB, MF, AH & TG					
Long-tailed Duck	Traught	3-M	08.03.03	DB, MF, AH & TG					
Fulmar	Traught	3	08.03.03	DB, MF, AH & TG					
Iceland Gull	Galway Docks	1-A	09.03.03	MD	CONTRIBUTORS				
Little Egret	Kilcaimin	2	10.03.03	MD					
Little Gull	Nimmo's Pier	18	10.03.03	TG	DB = Dermot Breen; SB = Stephen Barrett; PC = Pete Capsey;				
Iceland Gull	Nimmo's Pier	2	10.03.03	TG	MiC = Marianne tenCate; AC = Austin Cooney; MaD = Mark Davis;				
Sand Martin	Nr. Ballyvaghan, Co. Clare	1	14.03.03	MD	MD = Michael Davis; MF = Mary Finnegan; PF = Pat Finnegan;				
Wheatear	Inis Mór, Aran Islands	2	14.03.03	AH	TG = Tim Griffin; AH = Anna Hahtola; NH = Niall Hatch; PK = Pádraig Keirns;				
Sanderling	Inis Mór, Aran Islands	1	14.03.03	AH	PuK = Paul Kelly; PL = Pat Lonergan; ML = Maria Long;				
Hen Harrier	Rahasane Turlough	1-F	15.03.03	AOD & MD	SMcA = Stephen McAvoy; BMcG = Bernie McGrath; DMcG = Deirdre McGrath;				
Merlin	Rahasane Turlough	1-M	15.03.03	AOD & MD	PoMcN = Poona McNally; JnM = John Murphy; ROC = Ronan O'Carra;				
Black-necked Grebe	Costelloe	1	15.03.03	PK & CP	AOD = Aonghus O'Donail; GOK = Gerry O'Keefe; CP = Chris Peppiatt;				
Twite	Nimmo's Pier	3	15.03.03	PK	ER = Eugenie Regan; AR = Adrian Rooney; VS = Vinciane Sacre;				
Gr. Whitefronted Goose	Rahasane Turlough	46	15.03.03	MF, PF & MiC	NS = Neil Sharkey.				
Long-tailed Duck	Traught	10	16.03.03	MaD, MD, VS & CP					
Crane	Rahasane Turlough	1	16.03.03	TG					
Iceland Gull	Nimmo's Pier	1-1stW	17.03.03	CP & MD					
Long-tailed Duck	Traught	15	17.03.03	TG					