



## CAIRDE EANLAITH NA GAILLIMHE

### BIRDWATCH GALWAY

[www.birdwatchgalway.org](http://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

Spring migration always causes a bit of a stir in the branch. We listen for the cuckoo and the chiffchaff, watch for the various members of the swallow family the return and keep the telephone lines buzzing with reports of 'firsts'. After a while things quieten down and apart from the Countryside Bird Survey, which gets some members out of bed very early twice during the breeding season, there is not much more we can do than enjoy watching busy birds building nests and attending to their demanding broods. In a way the breeding season peters out a bit after all that. We don't usually report last sightings, except in passing, and soon our attention turns to the autumn migrants expected to return to Galway over the next couple of months.

All this tends to be the reverse when it concerns the human species. New members gradually get into our activities and quietly establish themselves as active branch members. They don't get telephone lines buzzing or made a fuss of. But, when somebody who has been a mainstay of the branch for years departs, we certainly do take notice! Unless, of course, they promise to be back and re-join us in the not too distant future. Galway being a city which is home to a very transient population of students we have had our fair share of departures over the years. Career moves have to be made when opportunities arise and there is no stopping that. But the most recent departure, of Gerry O'Keefe, was harder to swallow – he chose somebody else above us! Gerry's enthusiasm, help with Galway Bay counts and good humoured introductions to our speakers were just some of the things he contributed to branch-life for almost twenty years. Needless to say, he will be missed but we wish him lots of happiness and good bird-watching in the north of Donegal.

Of course, I cannot just leave it at that. The usual plug at the end of my 'thought' has to follow – we are running low on Galway Bay counters and this will have to be remedied before the first count next November. Anybody willing to get out a full day three times during the winter to take part in this huge team effort, please let me know and join. Your help will be very much appreciated, as it will secure unbroken records of nearly twenty-five years!

**Marianne ten Cate**

### NAMIB ADVENTURE

Early last March I was lucky enough to be able to take a week's trip to Namibia. Our small group was met by our guide Ben at Windhoek airport, from whence we travelled directly by road to Etosha National Park. The jewel of Namibia's parks, it is centred on a vast white saltpan that we had seen from the air on arrival. The trip was supposed to be under canvas, but the heavens opened just as we arrived at camp, pouring about an inch of rain in about half an hour, and prompting wimps like myself to rent a chalet for the first night.

We saw a variety of antelope, together with Zebra, Giraffe, Warthog and other mammals. The park is mainly arid bush, with permanent waterholes that attract wildlife. Unfortunately, rain such as we had experienced allows many grazers to avoid these potential predator ambush sites; thus they were not as productive as hoped. Birdlife is very varied with many of the birds that one would expect in dry climates, e.g. Sandgrouse, Ostrich and Bustard. The latter were common with 4 species seen, including the Black Korhaan and the Kori (reputedly the world's heaviest flying bird). Raptors were well represented, with Pale Chanting Goshawk being the commonest and most approachable. Small eagles were very much in evidence and I was able to identify Wahlberg's, Booted and Lesser Spotted amongst all the others that I couldn't!

Although we know that many summer migrants winter in Africa, it was striking to see birds from home in such different surroundings. There were Ruff, Curlew Sandpiper and Black-necked Grebe on a lagoon, Swift and Swallow everywhere and European Nightjar hawking for moths at a floodlit waterhole where Sand Martins were roosting in the reeds.

The last few days were spent further south in the Namib Desert. Although wildlife was not as numerous here as at Etosha, it is worth visiting for the scenery alone. Local birds included Ostrich, more Bustards and Raptors and a bewildering variety of brown Larks and Chats. We visited the famous Namib dune fields, which consist of hundreds of high, Sahara-like dunes blown in from the coast. Part of the experience were the famous dew-collecting dune beetles and the Dune Lizard, which TV viewers may have seen lifting alternate legs off the hot sand during the day. Memorably, on a desert walk to a dried-up pan (or vlei), we stopped beneath a Camel Thorn tree and, looking up, saw a wonderful Spotted Eagle Owl sitting just a few yards above.

Namibia is a vast country and cannot be 'done' in just one short visit; I hope to return to do the things it wasn't possible to fit in. There is no political instability (long may this remain so) and tourist facilities and infrastructure are modern and efficient. I would heartily recommend a visit. Favourite birds: Bee-eater and Spotted Eagle Owl. Favourite mammal: Cheetah. Favourite memory: looking at thousands of stars while listening to Lions roaring. Holiday pictures: <http://www.iol.ie/~chrispepiatt>

**Chris Peppiatt**

### BIRDS IN POETRY

In this poem Peter Reading presents eclectic experiences of bird encounters on several continents. He again displays the recurrent patterns of his verse - fondness for descriptive terminology and the Latin names. There is also the characteristic iconoclastic ending.

The title can be defined as an over-mastering impulse, supernatural, poetic or otherwise (O.E.D.).

**Pat Finnegan**

### Affliatus

That cinnamon Nankeen Night Heron  
(slender, white nuchal plumes,  
black crown, black bill, cream belly)  
at roost on an island willow  
brushing the brown lake mirror  
in Melbourne Botanical Gardens...

And in Texas, that Painted Bunting  
(head purple, back green, rump red,  
red underparts, dark wings and tail,  
bizarrely designed by committee)  
picking at tumblegrass seed  
in our arid desert garden...

And on Bardsey, off the Welsh coast,  
that Wryneck (*Jynx torquilla*)  
we caught in the mist-nets, beating  
between the bracken and gorse clumps -  
the way its head twisted around,  
serpentine, primitive,  
its vermicular dead-leaf plumage...

And in Badgers Creek, that Lyre Bird  
(*Menura novaehollandiae*),

grey-brown, long filamentous tail,  
and feet like a couple of garden rakes  
grubbing the wet forest leaf-mould...

And on the Mexican border,  
that Plain Chachalaca, dull grey,  
long glizy green tail tipped white,  
guzzling the leaves from the branches,  
*cha-cha-lac, cha-cha-lac, cha-cha-lac...*

And I'd say (if I entertained  
such mawkish conceits) that on each  
of these affliatus encounters  
my soul ascended like that  
Skylark I watched as I lay  
and dreamed through a summer morning  
in a sweet pasture in Shropshire  
on an upland when I was younger.

**Peter Reading**

(Acknowledgement: Bloodaxe Books Ltd., NE18 1RP UK)

### COMING EVENTS

The following is the forthcoming programme for BirdWatch Galway:-

Contact: Marianne ten Cate, tel. 091-552519,  
email <[mariannetencate@eircom.net](mailto:mariannetencate@eircom.net)>

Saturday 6 September, short outing with Tim Griffin, Nimmo's Pier, Galway, 10.30am;  
Wednesday 10 September, committee/members meeting, Anno Santo Hotel, Threadneedle Road, Salthill, 8pm;  
Friday 12 September, talk by Anthony McGeehan on headland watching, Anno Santo Hotel, Threadneedle Road, Salthill, 8pm;  
Sunday 14 September, National Heritage Day - BirdWatch Galway at Nimmo's Pier, Galway, 2pm-5pm;  
Saturday 20 September, outing to Slyne Head, for information contact Marianne;  
Saturday 4 October, short outing with Tim Griffin, Nimmo's Pier, Galway, 10.30am;  
Wednesday 15 October, committee/members meeting, Anno Santo Hotel, Threadneedle Road, Salthill, 8pm;  
Saturday 1 November, short outing with Tim Griffin, Nimmo's Pier, Galway, 10.30am;  
Friday 14 November, talk by Dave Suddaby on the Annagh Marsh project, Anno Santo Hotel, Threadneedle Road, Salthill, 8pm.

### FAREWELL

Can I add very brief (no more space Gerry!) personal good wishes to Gerry O'Keefe on his departure to 'pastures new'. As Marianne has already written we are losing, or will see less of, a valued friend and active member and only hope that our loss will be Donegal's gain. NS

# BirdWatch Galway (Branch of BirdWatch Ireland)

A QUARTERLY BIRD REPORT BY TIM GRIFFIN & CHRIS PEPIIATT

2nd Quarter 2003

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

DATE OF ISSUE: 18 July 2003

Species	Location	No	Date	Observer	Species	Location	No	Date	Observer
Little Egret	Rossaveal		1 01.04.03	TG	Great-northern Diver	Baile na hAbhann	4	23.05.03	TG
Swallow	Nr. Clarinbridge		2 02.04.03	GD	Glauous X Herring Gull hybrid *	Nimmo's Pier	1st yr.	24.05.03	MD & TG
Little Gull	Nimmo's Pier		1 A 02.04.03	TG	Glauous Gull **	Nimmo's Pier	1st S	24.05.03	MD
Velvet Scoter	Durras Pier		2 02.04.03	TG	Pomarine Skua	Silver Strand		24.05.03	TG
Long-tailed Duck	Durras Pier		3 02.04.03	TG	Arctic Skua	Silver Strand		24.05.03	TG
Eider	Traught		10 03.04.03	TG	Crossbill	Cloosh Wood		25.05.03	TG
Black-throated Diver	Traught		9 03.04.03	TG	Siskin	Cloosh Wood		25.05.03	TG
Bonaparte's Gull	Nr. Nimmo's Pier		1 AW 05.04.03	DB & TG	Little Egret	Rossaveal		25.05.03	TG
Ring-billed Gull	Nimmo's Pier		5 (1styr;2ndyr;3A) 05.04.03	DB & TG	Arctic Skua	Silver Strand		25.05.03	TG
Little Gull	Nimmo's Pier		1 A 05.04.03	DB	Storm Petrel	Silver Strand		30.05.03	TG
Iceland Gull	Nimmo's Pier		1st W 05.04.03	DB	Golden Plover	Clochar na gCon		31.05.03	TG
Glauous X Herring Gull hybrid *	Nimmo's Pier		1st W 05.04.03	DB, TG & AOD	Corncrake	Clochar na gCon		31.05.03	TG
Eider	Nimmo's Pier		2 05.04.03	DB	Glauous Gull	Nimmo's Pier		1st S 02.06.03	TG
Eider	Traught		11 05.04.03	DB, TG, AOD & MD	Storm Petrel	Finavarra, Co. Clare		3 10.06.03	TG
Long-tailed Duck	Traught		2 05.04.03	DB, TG, AOD & MD	Ring-billed Gull	Waterside		1st S 10.06.03	MD
Velvet Scoter	Durras Pier		2 05.04.03	DB, TG, AOD & MD	Storm Petrel	Baile na hAbhann		1 11.06.03	TG
Long-eared Owl	Carmmore		2 05.04.03	RMcN & AOD	Great-northern Diver	Baile na hAbhann		1 11.06.03	TG
Yellowhammer	Ballyvaghan, Co. Clare		2 05.04.03	JG	Black-tailed Godwit	Kilcaimin		1st S 12.06.03	MD
Red Grouse	Clochar na gCon		4 06.04.03	TG	Whimbrel	Silver Strand		1 12.06.03	TG
Ring-billed Gull	Waterside		1 A 09.04.03	TG	Hen Harrier	Clochar na gCon		1 F 13.06.03	TG
Velvet Scoter	Durras Pier		3 09.04.03	TG	Whooper Swan	Cooile Lough		2 16.06.03	TG
Black-throated Diver	Traught		5 09.04.03	TG	Crossbill	Addrageol, Nr. Moycullen		1 M 17.06.03	PK
Velvet Scoter	Angliham, L. Corrib		1 F 10.04.03	TG	Greenshank	Rusheen Bay		1 18.06.03	MD
Red Grouse	Clochar na gCon		2 11.04.03	TG	Red-throated Diver	Silver Strand		1 20.06.03	TG
Cuckoo	Poll na Clocha, Nr. Moycullen		1 14.04.03	PK	Red-throated Diver	Traught		1 22.06.03	TG
Whimbrel	Barna Pier		9 15.04.03	MD	Whimbrel	Kilcaimin		1 22.06.03	MD
Long-tailed Duck	Carraroe		2 16.04.03	TG	Arctic Skua	Baile na hAbhann		1 23.06.03	TG
Little Tern	Inverin		2 16.04.03	TG	Great-northern Diver	Baile na hAbhann		1 26.06.03	TG
Purple Sandpiper	Inverin		18 16.04.03	TG	Jay	Monivea		1 28.06.03	AOD
Glauous Gull	Rossaveal		1st W 17.04.03	MD & CP	Peregrine	Nimmo's Pier		1 28.06.03	AOD
Grasshopper Warbler	Milltown, Tuam		1 17.04.03	CB	Little Egret	Rossaveal		1 30.06.03	TG
Iceland Gull	Nimmo's Pier		1st W 19.04.03	TG & CP					
Little Gull	Nimmo's Pier		1st W 19.04.03	CP	<b>OTHER BEASTIES</b>				
Glauous Gull	Rossaveal		1st W 20.04.03	TG					
Little Egret	Rossaveal		2 20.04.03	TG	Sunfish	Silver Strand		1 27.05.03	TG
Manx Shearwater	Inverin		2 20.04.03	TG					
Iceland Gull	Nimmo's Pier		1st W 21.04.03	CP					
Common Sandpiper	Spiddal		2 21.04.03	IBC					
Little Egret	Traught		1 21.04.03	TG					
Black-throated Diver	Finavarra, Co. Clare		43 21.04.03	TG					
Glauous Gull	Nimmo's Pier		1st W 22.04.03	MD					
House Martin	O'Brien Bridge, Galway City		1 26.04.03	CP					
Gland Whitefronted Goose	Curraghline, L. Corrib		5 27.04.03	EMcL, IB, CP					
Glauous Gull	Waterside		1 27.04.03	TG					
Arctic Skua	Traught		1 27.04.03	CP, IB, EMcL					
Arctic Skua	Silver Strand		2 27.04.03	CP, IB, EMcL	<b>ABBREVIATIONS</b>				
Arctic Tern	Traught		1 27.04.03	AOD, NS & GOK					
Golden Plover	Inverin		1 27.04.03	JOC	Juv. = Juvenile; A = Adult; W = Winter; S = Summer; F = Female; M = Male;				
Purple Sandpiper	Salthill		14 28.04.03	ROC	Imm. = Immature; Leuc. = Leucistic; hybrid. = hybrid.				
Great-northern Diver	Nimmo's Pier to Salthill		18 28.04.03	ROC					
Velvet Scoter	Durras Pier		2 30.04.03	TG	<b>NOTES</b>				
Whitethroat	Milltown, Tuam		1 01.05.03	CB					
Glauous Gull	Nimmo's Pier		2-1st W 03.05.03	TG et al.	* This hybrid is sometimes known as 'Nelson's Gull'				
Black-throated Diver	Traught		4 03.05.03	TG	** Different bird from Waterside bird of 21.05.03				
Swift	Newtownsmith		12 04.05.03	TG					
Swift	Eyre Square, Galway City		1 04.05.03	CP					
Arctic Skua	Silver Strand		2 05.05.03	TG					
Greylag Goose	Nr. Ballyconneely		3 05.05.03	LH					
Arctic Skua	Silver Strand		6 08.05.03	TG					
Spotted Flycatcher	Rostaff, Co. Mayo		1 09.05.03	RT					
Pomarine Skua	Silver Strand		1 10.05.03	AOD	<b>CONTRIBUTORS</b>				
Little Tern	Silver Strand		6 10.05.03	AOD					
Pomarine Skua	Silver Strand		4 11.05.03	AOD	AOD = Aonghus O'Donail; CB = Chris Benson; CP = Chris Peppiatt;				
Arctic Skua	Silver Strand		2 11.05.03	TG & AOD	DB = Dermot Breen; EMcL = Enda McLoughlin; GD = Gordon D'Arcy;				
Corncrake	Mweenish Is., Connemara		1 11.05.03	SC	GOK = Gerry O'Keefe; IB = Ian Brophy; IBC = per Irishbirding.com;				
Arctic Skua	Silver Strand		3 17.05.03	DB, MD & CP	JG = Jo Gordon; JOC = John O'Caithniadh; LH = Leo Halliday;				
Mediterranean Gull	Rusheen Bay		2nd yr. 17.05.03	DB, MD & CP	MD = Michael Davis; NS = Neil Sharkey; PK = Pádraig Keirns;				
Ring-billed Gull	Rusheen Bay		2nd W 17.05.03	DB, MD & CP	RMcN = Randle McNally; ROC = Ronan O'Carra; RT = Roger Taylor;				
Long-tailed Skua	Slyne Head		1 21.05.03	IBC	SC = Seamus Collins; TG = Tim Griffin.				
Glauous Gull	Waterside		1st S 21.05.03	MD					
Arctic Skua	Silver Strand/Baile na hAbhann		6 23.05.03	TG					
Pomarine Skua	Silver Strand		5 23.05.03	TG					