



CAIRDE EANLAITH NA GAILLIMHE BIRDWATCH GALWAY

www.birdwatchgalway.org
QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER – EDITOR: NEIL SHARKEY
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Thought from the Chair

At the recent BirdWatch Galway AGM I finished my term as chairperson of the branch and Chris Peppiatt was elected to succeed me. Therefore, this will be my last "thought". Producing these "thoughts" always focussed the mind on the role BirdWatch plays as a non-profit NGO largely dependent on its members, both financially and as far as fieldwork and record-keeping is concerned. The extent to which the organisation succeeds in making a crucial contribution to regional, national and international conservation efforts for birds and their habitats is quite substantial and is a credit to its members. The Galway Annual Report** shows how much work is put into the activities of the organisation by our branch members and it has been very rewarding for me to co-ordinate this as chairperson of the branch. I am very grateful for all the support throughout my term of office and I trust Chris will enjoy at least as much support from all concerned.

Best wishes for good bird watching in 2004.

Marianne ten Cate

The Annual Report will be on our web-site.

Birds in Poetry

W.S. Merwin, one of America's leading poets was born in New York in 1927. He is a prolific author of eighteen volumes of poetry and numerous translations. He now lives in Hawaii where he tends a garden of rare palm trees. In this brief poem *The Summer* there is a feeling of commonality between the artistic concerns of the poet and the suitor penguin choosing a pebble to present to his mate.

Pat Finnegan

The Summer

*After we come to see it and
know we scarcely live without it
we begin trying to describe
what art is and it seems to be
something we believe is human
whatever that is something that
says what we are but then the same
beam of recognition stops at
one penguin choosing a pebble
to offer to the penguin he
hopes to love and later the dance
of awkwardness holding an egg
on one foot away from the snow
of summer the balancing on
one foot in the flash of summer.*

W. S. Merwin

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The Birds of New Zealand - A Natural History - Part 1

Think of New Zealand, and images conjure up in your mind of dwarfs in All-Black colours, elves attempting the haka, and orcs bungy-jumping! Think again. Snow capped mountains alongside misty fiords lined with dense sub-tropical forest. Volcanoes, mud pools, geysers, rugged coastline, golden beaches and of course kiwis. This unique bird did not come about by chance. Its inability to fly, its whiskers and the fact that its nostril is at the end of its beak, were not overnight deliveries from DHL. To put it simply: isolation. Some 80 million years of isolation to be exact.

The island of New Zealand started out some 100 million years ago after it had broken free from the super continent of Gondwanaland (Australia and Antarctica). The island was colonised mainly by birds and practically no mammals (except two species of bat). During the next 80 million years, the avifauna evolved and taking into account no terrestrial mammals being present, they occupied the top portion of the food chain. This lack of predators allowed birds to become flightless, ground dwelling and large. When the Maoris colonized the islands approximately 1000 years ago, they stumbled onto a hunter's paradise; large flightless Moas, some standing two meters tall at the shoulder, unafraid and unaware of the threat of these humans. Overkill is an understatement. Through a combination of hunting and habitat loss due to slash and burn techniques, all 11 species of Moa were made extinct in a 800 year period up to the arrival of the Europeans in the mid 1800's. These giants were not the only ones to suffer. Some 32 species of native bird vanished (and for much the same reason) in the same period. Included were Harpagornis, the world's largest eagle, (capable of killing an adult Moa) a swan, a crow, an Owllet-nightjar, a big harrier hawk, two flightless geese, a snipe, a coot, several flightless ducks and rails, a whole suite of little flightless wrens, and the Adzebill; big as a turkey, and looked like a cross between a chicken and a dodo.

Early October 1769, Captain James Cook steps out on to the North Island of New Zealand. In his shadow, unknown to him crept an ecological nightmare. Within the next 70 years, New Zealand and its first-born succumbed to full-blown European colonisation. Whalers and sealers bloodied the coast. Logging campaigns cleared vast swathes of native forest. Gold prospectors diverted rivers and immigrant farmers introduced (accidentally or intentionally) more than fifty species of mammal before World War I, including rabbits, weasels, stoats, mountain goats, cats, dogs, mice, rats, deer, possums and wallabies, to name but a few.

By the end of the twentieth century, another 14 species of native New Zealand bird vanished of the face of the earth. The main factors that contributed to extinction were mammalian predators, habitat loss and over harvesting. Maori hunted the Huia, for example, for its feathers. Only chiefs of distinction used these, along with the beak, head and the skinned body as ear adornments. However, the rewards offered by collectors incited Maori to hunt the bird, which were traded and eventually sold to collectors in Europe and the United States. However, the final blow to the Huia undoubtedly came with the visit to New Zealand of the Duke and Duchess of York to Rotorua at the turn of the century. At the great welcome given to the royal party by Maori, one of the guides removed the Huia feather from her own hair and placed it in the band of the bowler hat of the Duke. This simple act increased the demand for Huia feathers a hundredfold. The last one was seen in 1907.

The end for some was eminent. But for others, maybe not. Next issue: Relocation, Recovery and Rediscovery

Enda McLaughlin

Newsletter Distribution

Most members will now be aware of the changed situation with regard getting the Newsletter to Galway members. We would like to sincerely thank those who sent us stamps or agreed to receive it my e-mail. Between stamps, e-mails and some Galway City hand delivery we are able to send out about 50% of the newsletter without cost. This is an excellent start and we are most grateful for your support. However, can I renew the appeal to those of you who have put this on your 'things to do' list but have not yet got down to doing it. Do

please let us have your e-mail address or remember to finally put those stamps into a 1 Glenard Crescent, Salthill, Galway addressed envelope and send on to me. Thank you. **NS**

Coming events

- Saturday 7 February**, short outing with Tim Griffin to Nimmo's Pier, Galway City 10.30am.
- Wednesday 11th February**, members/committee meeting, Anno Santo Hotel, Threadneedle Road, Salthill, Galway City, 8pm.
- Saturday 21st February**, joint outing with the Liffey Valley Branch.
- Saturday 6th March**, short outing with Tim Griffin to Nimmo's Pier, Galway City 10.30am.
- Sunday 7th March, or Sat/Sun 20th/21st March**, Inner Galway Bay Count. Ring for details
- Wednesday 10th March**, members/committee meeting, Anno Santo Hotel, Threadneedle Road, Salthill, Galway City, 8pm.
- Friday 12th March**, a talk: 'Turloughs' by Eugenie Regan, Anno Santo Hotel, Threadneedle Road, Salthill, Galway City, 8pm.
- Saturday 3rd April**, short outing with Tim Griffin to Nimmo's Pier, Galway City 10.30am.
- Wednesday 14th April**, members/committee meeting, Anno Santo Hotel, Threadneedle Road, Salthill, Galway City, 8pm.

Galway Naturalists Field Club

Now in its third year the GNFC is well established. There is a varied programme. Outings last year encompassed trips to the Burren seashore and Inisboffin. GNFC also co-operates with and has close and friendly links with BirdWatch Galway. Get in touch with them through their Internet link via <http://homepage.eircom.net/~gnfc>, by e-mail at galwaynaturalists@eircom.net or by telephoning Padraig Keirns at 091-527158. **NS**

Thank You

As editor and on behalf of all BirdWatch Galway members can I thank Marianne for her four year term as chairperson now just finished. During the last four years Marianne gave unstintingly of her time and dedication. In doing so she brought the branch to a new level and we are all most grateful to her for all her good work. Good wishes also to Chris on being elected Chairperson in her place. **NS**

Cuan Caitriona

It is often thought that birdwatching in the outer part of Galway Bay - that is west of Barna or Spiddal - is not as rewarding as in the Inner Bay. This is a mistake. For some years back I have been walking stretches of the coastline following the often-mysterious signposts and waymarks for *Sli Chonamara*. Although I rarely encounter another human I never fail to record a good list of birds. A particularly productive spot is Cuan Caitriona near Inveran. Coming from Galway after Spiddal you pass *An Poitín Síil* on your right then on the same side a yellow-painted two-story house. Immediately after this house you take the next left-hand bye-road down to the sea. There are many such roads so be sure to get the correct one. A good number of winter waders are always present and it is one of the best spots for Purple Sandpiper. I recently had excellent views of Brambling there. There is usually a Great Northern Diver or two in sight and lots of seals. I write this particularly for the benefit of members living in or near this area. **NS**

BirdWatch Galway (Branch of BirdWatch Ireland)

A QUARTERLY BIRD REPORT BY TIM GRIFFIN & CHRIS PEPPIATT

4th Quarter 2003

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

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Species	Location	No	Date	Observer	Species	Location	No	Date	Observer
Little Gull	Inveran	1 Juv.	01.10.03	TG	'argentatus' Herring Gull	Nimmo's Pier	1A	09.12.03	TG & MD
Arctic Skua	Inveran	9	02.10.03	TG	Brambling	Grattan Road, Salthill	3	10.12.03	SG & JG
Pomarine Skua	Silver Strand	10	03.10.03	TG	Ring-billed Gull	Nimmo's Pier	2A	10.12.03	SG & JG
Crossbill	Nr. Mountbellew	75 (50%M)	04.10.03	CK	Glaucous Gull	Rossaveal	A+1stW	10.12.03	TG
Lesser Redpoll	Nr. Mountbellew	17	04.10.03	CK	Long-tailed Duck	Carraroe	1M	10.12.03	TG
Gr.n.l.nd Whitefronted Goose	Rahasane Turlough	12	04.10.03	TG	Gr.n.l.nd Whitefronted Goose	Rahasane Turlough	94	11.12.03	PC
Ring-billed Gull	Nimmo's Pier	1 A	04.10.03	TG	Pintail	Rahasane Turlough	50	11.12.03	PC
Spotted Redshank	Kilcaimin	2	08.10.03	MD	Shoveler	Rahasane Turlough	120	11.12.03	PC
Curlew Sandpiper	Kilcaimin	1	08.10.03	MD	Black-tailed Godwit	Rahasane Turlough	600	11.12.03	PC
Great Skua	Inveran	1	08.10.03	TG	Sandwich Tern	Silver Strand	5	11.12.03	TG
Garganey	Rahasane Turlough	1M	09.10.03	TG	Jack Snipe	Rahasane Turlough	1	13.12.03	MD & CP
Common Tern	Waterside	1stW	10.10.03	MD *	Snow Bunting	Rine Point, Co. Clare	16	13.12.03	DMcN ****
Great Skua	Baile na hAbhann	1	10.10.03	TG	Mediterranean Gull	Nimmo's Pier	1stW	13.12.03	MD & DMcN
Arctic Skua	Baile na hAbhann	3	10.10.03	TG	Sanderling	Inveran	2	14.12.03	MD & NS
Little Egret	Rossaveal	1	11.10.03	TG	Purple Sandpiper	Inveran	1	14.12.03	MD & NS
Little Egret	Traught	4	11.10.03	DC & TG	Iceland Gull	Grattan Road, Salthill	1A	16.12.03	TG
Lesser Yellowlegs	Rahasane Turlough	1	11.10.03	TG **	Black-throated Diver	Traught	3	20.12.03	TG
Yellow-browed Warbler	Inishmore, Aran Islands	1	11.10.03	GG	Spotted Redshank	Kilcaimin	3	21.12.03	MD & MB
Whinchat	Inishmore, Aran Islands	2	11.10.03	GG	Iceland Gull	Nimmo's Pier	2A + 2ndW	22.12.03	TG
Hen Harrier	Carrowbrowne	1F	12.10.03	TG	Smew	Lough Atalia	1M	22.12.03	BINS
Garganey	Rahasane Turlough	eclipse M	12.10.03	DB	Common Scoter	Durras Pier	80	27.12.03	TG
Whooper Swan	Rahasane Turlough	20	12.10.03	DB	Little Egret	Traught	1	28.12.03	TG
Gr.n.l.nd Whitefronted Goose	Rahasane Turlough	50	12.10.03	DB	Iceland Gull	Nimmo's Pier	2ndW	30.12.03	DB
Goldeneye	Menlo	2	12.10.03	TG	Glaucous Gull	Nimmo's Pier	1st+2ndW	30.12.03	DB
Black-throated Diver	Bishopsquarter, Co. Clare	7	12.10.03	AOD	Ring-billed Gull	Nimmo's Pier	1A	30.12.03	DB
Crossbill	Cloosh Wood	11	14.10.03	TG	Mediterranean Gull	Nimmo's Pier	1stW	30.12.03	DB
Spotted Redshank	Traught	1	16.10.03	TG	'argentatus' Herring Gull	Nimmo's Pier	1A	30.12.03	DB
Hen Harrier	Curraghline, L. Corrib	4 (2 Juv., F, M)	18.10.03	AOD	Sandwich Tern	Nimmo's Pier	4	30.12.03	DB
Little Gull	Silver Strand	Juv.	23.10.03	TG					
Black-throated Diver	Finvara, Co. Clare	15	25.10.03	TG	OTHER BEASTIES				
Sanderling	Salthill	1	26.10.03	MC	Pine Marten	Nr. Mountbellew	1	11.10.03	CK
Mediterranean Gull	Inveran	1A	27.10.03	TG	Otter	Lough Atalia	2	23.11.03	CP
Crossbill	Cloosh Wood	26	27.10.03	TG					
Glaucous Gull	Grattan Road, Salthill	1stW	01.11.03	TG					
Spotted Redshank	Tawin	1	02.11.03	MD & NS					
Mediterranean Gull	Nimmo's Pier	1stW	06.11.03	MD					
Garganey X Wigeon hyb.	Rahasane Turlough	1	08.11.03	MD					
Black-throated Diver	Traught	3	08.11.03	TG					
Glaucous Gull	Nimmo's Pier	3	08.11.03	TG					
Mediterranean Gull	Waterside	1stW	10.11.03	MD & TG					
Glaucous Gull	Silver Strand	1	10.11.03	TG					
Iceland Gull	Rossaveal	1	12.11.03	TG					
Brambling	Coral Strand, Ballyconneely	1	13.11.03	GO'D					
Mediterranean Gull	Waterside	2-1stW	18.11.03	MD & TG					
Hen Harrier	Nr. Annaghdown	1	19.11.03	NS & DC					
Common Sandpiper	Inveran	1	20.11.03	TG					
Purple Sandpiper	Inveran	5	20.11.03	TG	ABBREVIATIONS				
Crossbill	Nr. Mountbellew	12 (6M)	22.11.03	PK, TC, CP	Juv. = Juvenile; A = Adult; W = Winter; S = Summer; F = Female; M = Male;				
Woodcock	Nr. Mountbellew	1	22.11.03	PK	Imm. = Immature; Leuc. = Leucistic; hyb. = hybrid.				
Black-throated Diver	Traught	9	22.11.03	TG					
Long-tailed Duck	Traught	3	22.11.03	TG					
Black Redstart	Traught	1	22.11.03	TG	NOTES				
Kingfisher	Lough Atalia	1	23.11.03	CP					
Brambling	Traught	1	23.11.03	TG	* Present until 10.11.03.				
Glaucous Gull	Traught	1stW	23.11.03	TG	** Present since 26.09.03.				
Little Egret	Traught	1	23.11.03	TG	*** Present until year end at least.				
Forster's Tern	Nimmo's Pier	1AW	26.11.03	TG ***	**** Present until year end at least.				
Iceland Gull	Nimmo's Pier	1	28.11.03	TG					
Ring-billed Gull	Nimmo's Pier	2	28.11.03	TG					
Sandwich Tern	Traught	2	29.11.03	TG					
Mediterranean Gull	Nimmo's Pier	1stW	30.11.03	TG					
Pink-footed Goose	Rostaff Lake, Co. Mayo	1	01.12.03	TG	CONTRIBUTORS				
Sandwich Tern	Nimmo's Pier	2	02.12.03	TG	AOD = Aonghus O'Donail; BINS = Birds of Ireland News Service;				
Red-throated Diver	Silver Strand	5	02.12.03	TG	CK = Conor Kretsch; CP = Chris Peppiatt; DB = Dermot Breen;				
Brambling	Grattan Road, Salthill	2	06.12.03	TG	DC = Deirdre Comerford; DMcN = David McNamara; GG = Graham Gordon;				
Pied Wagtail	Eyre Square, Galway City	100 in evening roost	06.12.03	DB	GO'D = Ger O'Donnell; JG = Joe Geraty; MB = Martin Byrnes;				
Long-tailed Duck	Traught	3	06.12.03	TG	MC = Michael Connolly; MD = Michael Davis; NS = Neil Sharkey;				
Iceland Gull	Rossaveal	1stW	07.12.03	DB & MD	PC = Peter Capsey; PK = Pádraig Keirns; SG = Sean Geraty;				
Glaucous Gull	Nimmo's Pier	2ndW	07.12.03	DB & MD	TC = Thomas Connolly; TG = Tim Griffin.				
Ring-billed Gull	Nimmo's Pier	2A	07.12.03	DB & MD					
'argentatus' Herring Gull	Nimmo's Pier	1A	07.12.03	DB & MD					
Gadwall	Lough Atalia	3	07.12.03	DB					
Black-headed Gull	Lough Atalia	1 Leuc.	07.12.03	DB					