



CAIRDE EANLAITH NA GAILLIMHE
BIRDWATCH GALWAY
www.birdwatchgalway.org
QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER – EDITOR: NEIL SHARKEY
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This is a local newsletter. To help us keep distribution costs down we ask that you agree to receive it by e-mail. Over seventy members are now doing so. Please send me your E-mail address if not done so already.

An Appreciation – Bernie McGrath

It was with great sadness that branch members learned of the recent death of Bernie McGrath following a struggle with motor neurone disease. Bernie was a branch stalwart for many years, regularly traveling from her home near Roundstone to Galway for evening meetings or talks. As well as participating in Inner Galway Bay counts and I-WeBS, Bernie surveyed a square as part of the Countryside Bird Survey. A great promoter of BirdWatch Ireland in Connemara, Bernie arranged talks in the area and also had a detailed and intimate knowledge of the local natural history.

Bernie's love of travel took her to dozens of countries on every continent (except perhaps Antarctica and I may be wrong there!) and she must have seen more birds than anyone else in Galway. Not long before her illness Bernie visited the Pribilof, Aleutian and Kurile islands, a journey including landings from ship in small boats across the Arctic Ocean. Bernie's travel interests were much wider than birds alone, she also loved the history, architecture and culture of the countries she visited, but her natural modesty was such that she only mentioned her travels when asked about them.

I'm sure that I speak for all branch members when I say that Bernie was always a pleasure to meet and to talk to and was a fine Galway naturalist who will be keenly missed. Our thoughts and sympathies are with Bernie's family at this sad time. Those wishing to make a contribution to the Irish Motor Neurone Disease Association can do so at IMNDA, Coleraine House, Coleraine Street, Dublin 7 (1800 403403). CP

Birds in Poetry

This, our second of W.S. Merwin's poems, is entitled *One Night in April* in which he captures a sense of the continuous rhythms of migration. Pat Finnegan
One Night in April

*Tonight no sound
of any bird
second night after
the full moon
only the wind now
I think the plovers
must have flown
I see the silver
clouds crossing the moon
out of the east
northeast
moving fast
a day ago
I heard them
fly over calling
and a night ago
they were still there
I heard them overhead
but by now they are
maybe a thousand
miles on their way
northward over
the dark of the ocean
as they fly they are
calling those two
notes now too far
tonight to hear*

W.S. Merwin

Acknowledgement to Knoph Inc. N. Y. 10019 USA

Bird Ringing with Chris Benson

In late June branch members visited Chris Benson at his ringing site near Milltown. Cassandra Brophy – our

youngest member on the outing -has written the following account of the morning:

My bird outing

On Sunday 27th of June my Dad (Ian) and I went to see a man ringing birds. His name was Chris. Chris had seven nets but could only put up five because of the bad weather. He caught birds like Willow Warblers, Grasshopper Warblers, Bullfinch, Chaffinch, juvenile Robins and a Wren. He told us how to hold the birds. I was the only child there so I got to hold a lot. The rings were all detailed different. There were different sizes as well. None of the birds were over 20 grams. He measured the birds from their wing elbow to their primaries. He showed us the marginations on the wings to show us the difference between the Chiffchaff and the Willow Warbler. On the Willow warbler it goes to the fifth tip – on the Chiffchaff it goes up to the sixth. Ha also showed us a male Willow Warbler that was molting. He does this twice a year. He is about the only bird that molts twice a year. Chris doesn't get any money out of this – it is just a well loved hobby. He has caught a Hoopoe before. He has caught up to 50 different birds in his area. And to top it off we had a delicious piece of chocolate cake. What a wonderful way to spend your Sunday.

Cassandra Brophy (Age 10)

Monsters and midgets -Tanzanian's birds amaze in size as well as every other aspect.

Short summary of an amateurs' trip to Ngorongoro Crater and Tarangire National Park in July 2004.

"Never use size for identification" These words of a friend and bird expert race round in my head as we look down at the pool under the dripping tap and then look up to the yellow barked acacia trees. Well the teeny brown things below had to be mannekins of some sort and monster storks in high trees are often Marabouts, aren't they? Monsters and midgets all have their place and Tanzania compared to Ireland for bird watching is definitely the magnificent monster. Our birds of East Africa identification book¹ has over 1,300 species and there's 550 of them recorded in Tarangire National Park which we are going to visit today. Of the 1,186 threatened species in the world, 49 of them are here in East Africa. Tanzania contains over seventy Important Bird Areas.

Dammit even the intensely human-impacted campsites are places where you can't relax and eat meals due to the relentless bamboozlement by numerous birds new to the amateurs eyes! From breakfast-time we see bronze mannekins, marabouts, yellow-vented bulbuls, hadada ibis and sunbirds around the campsite at Mto wa Mbu, we get lunchtime excitement from cheeky and chatty ashy starlings, jet black drongos and cute cordon bleus at Tarangire's² Kigongoni campsite.

Yesterday at Ngorongoro Crater the large wild animals were superbly interesting but even a male lion rolling over in the afternoon sun competes for grace, elegance and beauty with a flight of sixteen crested cranes or the shimmering pink reflection of thousands of flamingos³ on

Lake Manyara. During this three day trip we'd also seen the largest flightless bird in the world, the ostrich and marvelled at the speed with which they run and the vivid blackness and the whiteness of the males' feathers. The kori bustard which is the heaviest flying bird in the world⁴ is common in the crater⁵. Both of these big birds, together with the brightly coloured superb starling, are easy to get close to for photography. The secretary bird, which we spied, was less photogenic so we must be content with guidebook images and memories of its strange writing quill-like appendages and proprietary gimp as it took off from the short grassland.

Unsure of what bird experts say about numbers, we amateurs were awestruck by the hundreds of nests swinging from every acacia tree in parts of Tarangire National Park. At ranges of 20-100 nests per tree we reckoned that there must be an average of 500 nests in some of the square kilometres of this national park. Weavers and sunbirds seemed to be the main owners of these golden grass pendula and, even if they only produce one live chick per hatching and only one hatching per year, we calculated about 1,500 individuals per square kilometre!! And that's only weavers and sunbirds!! In two three-hour visits to Tarangire, as we concentrated on looking for giraffes, elephants and other large wild animals, we casually came across Egyptian geese, buffalo weavers, hooded vultures, magpie shrikes, fish eagles, a crowned or an immature long-crested eagle, crowned and blacksmith plovers, lilac breasted rollers (perhaps the northern race of lilac throat), yellow-necked spur fowl with chicks, broad tailed paradise wydah, Yellow-collared lovebirds, African Grey hornbill, red-billed hornbills, northern white crowned shrike, possibly a pigmy falcon and Ruffel's Griffon vultures. We saw fifteen vultures which were enjoying a gory breakfast of wildebeest calf guts consumed by poking bloody bills into the rear end of the poor suck. Our guide, Jackson, reckoned the calf had died from causes other than predation by large animals. His and many guides attitudes to birds are fairly dismissive. Their main focus is to show the tourists the different species of large wild animals. Eavesdropping on guide and driver conversations reveals that only those large four-legged species are important to them. It often goes:- "Have you seen anything interesting?" "No these tourists are only looking at birds!" They want to please the majority of their demanding clients and often speed across the plains to plonk their hot dusty tourist load in front of the lion or rhino which their friend saw 20 kms. away this morning. That's one way to do a safari, but perhaps some of us can increase appreciation and attention for the birds and their habitats by showing our appreciation for both the monsters and the midgets. Next time we'll focus on the birds and let the elephants happen casually into of the lens of the binoculars!

Rose Hogan

Many thanks to Rose for this wonderful insight into Tanzania's birds. She is a Galway member getting her newsletter by e-mail, which illustrates the benefit of e-mail transmission.

wardens are witnessing the deaths of hundreds of flamingos from mysterious causes. One wonders if it could be chemical pollution from anti-tsetse spraying of tourist vehicles?

⁴ The Rough Guide to Tanzania, first ed. Jens Finke 2003, Rough Guides Ltd.

⁵ Ngorongoro Crater is a World Heritage Site

¹ Stephenson and Fanshawe. Field Guide to the Birds of East Africa

² Tarangire National Park is one of the best places in Africa to see birds (A Birdlife International IBA) and African elephants.

³ A week after writing this article we heard, on the Tanzanian national news bulletins, that wildlife



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Coming Events

Sunday 29 August, meeting Mayo Branch at the Killala Bay car park at 2pm for outing to Kilcummin Head; departure from Galway Cathedral at 11am. Bring packed lunch.

Saturday 11 September, joint outing with Mayo Branch, Nimmo's Pier, 10am.

Wednesday 15 September, committee/members meeting, Anno Santo Hotel, Threadneedle Road, 8pm.

Saturday 2 October, short outing with Tim Griffin, Nimmo's Pier, 10.30am.

Wednesday 13 October, committee/members meeting, Anno Santo Hotel, Threadneedle Road, 8pm.

Friday 15 October, talk by Steve Newton on "Seabird 2000", Anno Santo Hotel, Threadneedle Road, Salthill, 8pm. All are welcome!

Saturday 6 November, short outing with Tim Griffin, Nimmo's Pier, 10.30am.

Wednesday 17 November, committee/members meeting, Anno Santo Hotel, Threadneedle Road, 8pm.

Friday 26 November, talk by Kieran Grace on "Birds of Africa", Anno Santo Hotel, Threadneedle Road, Salthill, 8pm. All are welcome!

BirdWatch Galway (Branch of BirdWatch Ireland)

A QUARTERLY BIRD REPORT BY TIM GRIFFIN & CHRIS PEPPIATT

2nd Quarter 2004

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

DATE OF ISSUE: 12 AUGUST 2004

Species	Location	No	Date	Observer	Species	Location	No	Date	Observer
Twite	Tawin	1	01.04.04	EMcL					
Peregrine	Tawin	1	01.04.04	EMcL					
'smithsonianus' Herring Gull *	Nimmo's Pier	1stW	01.04.04	Many obs.					
Iceland Gull	Nimmo's Pier	1	01.04.04	TG					
Black-throated Diver	Carraroe	1	01.04.04	TG					
Long-tailed Duck	Carraroe	11	01.04.04	TG					
Glaucous Gull	Rossaveal	1	01.04.04	TG					
Common Scoter	Silver Strand	2	02.04.04	TG					
Swallow	Templepark, Aughrim	1	03.04.04	EMcL & TL					
Chiffchaff	Aughrim Lakes	1	03.04.04	EMcL					
Wheatear	Lough Inagh, Connemara	1	03.04.04	Rmacn					
Little Egret	Rossaveal	1	03.04.04	TG					
Ferruginous Duck	Menlo	2	04.04.04	TC					
Arctic Skua	Silver Strand	1	04.04.04	TG					
Willow Warbler	Barna	1	05.04.04	DO'K					
Willow Warbler	Aughrim	1	05.04.04	EMcL & TL					
Manx Shearwater	Silver Strand	16	06.04.04	TG					
Long-tailed Duck	Carraroe	23	06.04.04	TG					
Purple Sandpiper	Inverin	26	06.04.04	TG					
Iceland Gull	Baile na hAbhann	1	08.04.04	TG					
Black-throated Diver	Durras Pier	4	09.04.04	TG					
Ring-billed Gull	Nimmo's Pier	2	09.04.04	TG					
Greylag Goose	Rahasane Turlough	1	09.04.04	TG					
Eider	Traught	14	09.04.04	TG					
Ring-billed Gull	Nimmo's Pier	1stW	10.04.04	MD & DB					
Ring-billed Gull	Waterside	1A	10.04.04	MD & DB					
Glaucous Gull	Rossaveal	3 (2-1stW & 1A)	10.04.04	MD & DB					
Long-tailed Duck	Durras Pier	18	11.04.04	TG					
Iceland Gull	Rossaveal	2-1stW	12.04.04	MD					
Forster's Tern **	Durras Pier	1	12.04.04	Many obs.					
Cuckoo	Inagh Valley, Connemara	1	13.04.04	LH					
Arctic Skua	Silver Strand	1	13.04.04	TG					
Grasshopper Warbler	Aughrim	1	17.04.04	EMcL					
House Martin	Aughrim	1	18.04.04	EMcL					
Corncrake	Inishbofin	1	19.04.04	per TGo					
Arctic Skua	Nimmo's Pier	1	22.04.04	MD					
Whimbrel	Milltown, Nr. Tuam	3	23.04.04	CB					
Glaucous Gull ***	Nimmo's Pier	1stW	24.04.04	Many obs.					
Brent Goose	Salthill	7	26.04.04	ER					
Swift	River Corrib, Galway City	5	27.04.04	MD					
Common Sandpiper	Luimnagh West, Corrandulla	1	28.04.04	DC					
Golden Oriole	Inishbofin	1 poss.	29.04.04						
Pomarine Skua	Hare Island, Galway Bay	12	06.05.04	NS & CP					
Red Grouse	Inverin	1M	09.05.04	PR					
Merlin	Inverin	1M	09.05.04	PR					
Great Northern Diver ****	Nimmo's Pier	4	10.05.04	DS					
Arctic Skua	Nimmo's Pier	1 dark phase	10.05.04	DS					
Ring-billed Gull	Nimmo's Pier	1stW	10.05.04	DS	ABBREVIATIONS				
Red Grouse	Spiddal	1M	11.05.04	PR	Juv. = Juvenile; A = Adult; W = Winter; S = Summer; F = Female; M = Male;				
Crossbill	Cloosh	7	16.05.04	TG	Imm. = Immature; Leuc. = Leucistic; hyb. = hybrid.				
Siskin	Cloosh	4	16.05.04	TG					
White Wagtail	Baile na hAbhann	1	16.05.04	TG					
Corncrake	Claregalway	1	17.05.04	CO'M	NOTES				
Common Buzzard	Aughrim	1	17.05.04	EMcL					
Little Gull	Nimmo's Pier	1stW	19.05.04	TG	* Bird from 13.01.04, present throughout this quarter.				
Storm Petrel	Silver Strand	1	19.05.04	TG	** One of the birds from last quarter present in this area until this date.				
Green-winged Teal	Inishmore, Aran Islands	1M	22.05.04	DB & EMcL	*** This bird was still present at the end of this quarter.				
Turtle Dove	Inishmore, Aran Islands	1	22.05.04	FM	**** Single birds present until the end of this quarter.				
Spotted Flycatcher	Milltown, Nr. Tuam	1	23.05.04	CB	***** First returning bird in the same quarter as first arriving migrant.				
Arctic Skua	Silver Strand	2	25.05.04	TG					
Red Grouse	Clochar na gCon	2	26.05.04	TG					
Hobby	Inishmacateer	1	26.05.04	PD					
Barn Owl	Galway City	1	28.05.04	MD & CP	CONTRIBUTORS				
Knot	Lough Rusheen	1	31.05.04	MD					
Golden Eagle	Twelve Bens, Connemara	1	07.06.04	MG	CB = Chris Benson; CO'M = Ciara O'Mahony; CP = Chris Peppiatt;				
Crossbill	Cloosh	12	09.06.04	TG	DB = Dermot Breen; DC = Deirdre Comerford; DO'K = David O'Keefe;				
Kingfisher	Nr. Maum Bridge, Connemara	2	13.06.04	SM	DS = Dave Sivy; EMcL = Enda McLoughlin; ER = Eugenie Regan;				
Whimbrel *****	Milltown, Nr. Tuam	1	18.06.04	CB	FM = Finola Murphy; LH = Louise Hynes; MD = Michael Davis;				
Arctic Skua	Silver Strand	4	19.06.04	TG	MG = Michael Gibbons (via Irish Times); NE = Neil Ellis; NS = Neil Sharkey;				
Common Buzzard	Lough Atalia	1	21.06.04	NE	PD = Paul Deasy; PR = Padraic Reaney; Rmacn = Roger Macnaughton;				
Arctic Skua	Silver Strand	4	24.06.04	TG	SM = Susanne Martyn; TC = Thomas Cuffe; TG = Tim Griffin;				
Jay	Coole Park	4-5	29.06.04	NS	TGo = Tim Gordon; TL = Theresa Loughrey.				
Gannet	Nimmo's Pier	1A	29.06.04	TG					

BIRDS OF GALWAY: A review of recent records and field studies 1991 - 2000

The new edition is out! This publication is the result of a true team effort with many members contributing data, expertise, habitat descriptions and photographs. Unfortunately, our earlier editor, Tony Gordon, passed away before the book was completed. We would like to acknowledge his contribution here with appreciation. Obviously, records submitted after the year 2000 will be included in the next edition, which we sincerely hope to publish with less of a delay; this should be greatly facilitated by the more recent use of our web site and quarterly bird reports.

So, keep submitting sightings, please!

You can order a copy @ €10 from Marianne ten Cate at mariannetencate@eircom.net or by phone (091) 552519.

The Editors