



**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.

### THOUGHT FROM THE CHAIR

When you read this BirdWatch Galway members will have completed the November Inner Galway Bay count. Anyone interested in birds who have visited Nimmo's Pier or Grattan Road will realise that there are a lot of birds around from autumn until spring. The count is designed to record the numbers of wintering waterbirds (swans, ducks, geese, waders and gulls) present. This is quite an undertaking and the region from Barna all the way around to Ballyvaghan, Co. Clare, is divided into four sections for the purpose. Each section has beautiful and/or interesting spots: Barna to Oranmore has Rusheen Bay, Lough Atalia and Oranmore Bay (where large numbers of Golden Plover can be seen in late afternoon); Oranmore to Clarinbridge has Tawin island, the shore by the mud cliffs at Ballinacourty and a turlough at Ahapouleen; Clarinbridge to Aughinish the beautiful coast by the tower house on Aughinish peninsula, Traught beach and the ruined Tyrone House; Ballyvaghan to Coranroo the sandy spit known as the Rinn, the brackish lagoon Lough Muree and the Flaggy Shore. The whole area is counted once during each November, January and March, on either a Saturday or a Sunday. The different sections and all of the sub sites within them were originally defined by the late Tony Whilede and the count has been going since 1976. Data from the count were incorporated into the all-Ireland Winter Wetlands Survey, which ran for three winters from 1984/85 to 1986/87 and (since 1994/95) they have been incorporated into the Irish Wetland Bird Survey (I-WeBS). Counting the bay is a great way to get to know birds and the area itself. The committee are always happy when new counters volunteer and there are always experienced people on hand to help beginners. If you are interested in joining in future counts please contact Marianne (091 552519) or Chris (086 3125356).

### ETHIOPIAN ENDEMICS

For ten days in late February 2004, I was part of organised trip of five Irish and six English birders in search of endemic bird species in the Ethiopian Highlands. Although totals vary due to lumping and splitting of species, there are up to 934 species on the Ethiopian list of which we saw around 330. Most of these were new to me as it was my first time out of Ireland.

Some familiar species included Little grebes, Kestrel, Greenshank, and Black-headed Gull. Quite a few of our summer visitors were common while we were there e.g. Swallows, Swifts, Chiffchaffs, Blackcaps, etc. For me the large birds were very impressive. I saw 28 new species of raptors alone. Widespread species like Black Kites, African Fish Eagles, Augur Buzzards and Tawny Eagles always gave close and prolonged views, unlike at home. Even the wildfowl were surprisingly species rich with numerous geese and duck that were looked completely alien such as the endemic Blue-winged Goose. Some well-represented groups of birds included Vultures (six species), Doves (eleven), Kingfishers (five) and Starlings (nine).

We seemed to see different species at every spot we stopped at. The pace was often chaotic to say the least, as we were literally running from one spot to another, to see a new species for a few brief seconds before the call went up that something new was yet again found just up the track. Unfortunately a lot of species were only seen from the bus as we were often caught for time (Montagu's Harrier, Kittlitz's Plover, Woodchat Shrike, Northern Carmine Bee-eater). But if it was good enough the bus stopped and vacated in double quick time!

The highlights of the trip for myself would have to include species like Saddle-billed Stork (enormous), Verreaux's Eagle (pair soaring just over head), Marsh Sandpiper, Great Black-headed Gull, Cape Eagle Owl (with fully grown chick), Half-collared Kingfisher, African Emerald Cuckoo (colours defy description!) and Masked Shrike.

Amongst some of the mammals seen were Warthogs, Rock & Tree Hyrax, Vervets & Black and White Colobus monkeys, Olive Baboons, Abyssinian Hares, Gelada Baboon and Mountain Nyala (last 3 endemics species). However the mammal highlight of the trip had to be the rare Ethiopian Wolf, seen in the Bale Mountains, just short of 4000m high. Absolutely stunning!

Dermot Breen

### BIRDS IN POETRY

In this, the third and final poem of our W.S. Merwin's series, his *Unknown Bird* captures the poet's interest in nature and endangered species. The poignant nature of potential extinction is captured with great lyrical intensity.

Pat Finnegan

#### Unknown Bird

Out of the dry days  
through the dusty leaves  
far across the valley  
those few notes never  
heard here before

one fluted phrase  
floating over its  
wandering secret  
all at once wells up  
somewhere else

and is gone before it  
goes on fallen into  
its own echo leaving  
a hollow through the air  
that is dry as before

where is it from  
hardly anyone  
seems to have noticed it  
so far but who now  
would have been listening

it is not native here  
that may be the one  
thing we are sure of  
it came from somewhere  
else perhaps alone

so keeps on calling for  
no one who is here  
hoping to be heard  
by another of its own  
unlikely origin

trying once more the same few  
notes that began the song  
of an oriole last heard  
years ago in another  
existence there

it goes again tell  
no one it is here  
foreign as we are  
who are filling the days  
with a sound of our own

W.S. Merwin

### KILCUMMIN HEAD OUTING

After an early start from Galway Cathedral on Aug 29th, five members arrived at Kilcummin at half past eight in the morning. The strong wind, which had been blowing from the southwest, was forecast to veer around to the west or northwest, conditions that are optimum for seawatching at Kilcummin. There were plenty of birds to be seen on the sea, with Gannet and Fulmar common and Manx Shearwater by the hundred, but Sandwich and 'Commic' Terns, Kittiwake, Arctic Skua etc. were also noted. The best birds of the morning were a single Leach's Petrel, a number of distant Storm Petrels, 2 Pomarine Skua and last, but not least, a wonderful adult Sabine's Gull, complete with grey head and yellow-tipped bill. This bird was picked out by Dave Suddaby, who was over from his BWI duties at Belmullet for the day. After lunch at a nearby pub the party reconvened at Killala Pier, where we met three more Galway members and more than twenty from the new Mayo Branch. After enjoying some waders (including Whimbrel) at the pier, everyone headed back to the head for more seawatching. During the afternoon we saw many of the species noted before, but a feature were more than twenty Great Skua flying one by one from the east very close to the head and more than 50 Sooty Shearwater further out. Although the wind never got as far to the northwest as one might have wished, it was an enjoyable day and thanks are due to our friends in Mayo for their hospitality.

Chris Peppiatt

### GALWAY COUNTY HERITAGE PLAN

Birdwatch Galway is mapping important breeding colonies in accordance with Galway County Heritage Plan 2004-2008. Letters have been sent to all Galway branch members asking for their records of breeding sites. I would like to thank those who have replied and ask those who have yet to reply, to kindly send in any records they may have the end of November.

Ann Fleming  
091 585359

### COMING EVENTS

Saturday 6 November, short outing, Nimmo's Pier, 10.30am.  
Saturday 13 November, Galway Bay Count - 9am. - contact Marianne at (091) 552519.  
Wednesday 17 November, committee/members meeting, Anno Santo Hotel, Threadneedle Road, Salthill, 8pm.  
Friday 26 November, talk by Kieran Grace on "Birds of Africa", Anno Santo, 8pm.  
Saturday 4 December, short outing, Nimmo's Pier, 10.30am.  
Wednesday 15 December, Committee/members meeting, Anno Santo, 8pm.  
Friday 17 December, Christmas Sale, get-together and raffle, Anno Santo, 8pm.  
Saturday 1 January, outing to Flaggy Shore. For details contact Marianne at (091) 552519.  
Sat./Sun. 15/16 January, Galway Bay count and Swan Survey, 9.30am.  
Wednesday 19 January, committee/members meeting, Anno Santo, 8pm.  
Friday 4 February, talk by Gordon D'Arcy: "An Irish naturalist in the Azores", Anno Santo, 8pm.  
Saturday 5 February, short outing, Nimmo's Pier, 10.30am.

# BirdWatch Galway (Branch of BirdWatch Ireland)

A QUARTERLY BIRD REPORT BY TIM GRIFFIN & CHRIS PEPPIATT

3rd Quarter 2004

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

DATE OF ISSUE: 17 NOVEMBER 2004

Species	Location	No	Date	Observer	Species	Location	No	Date	Observer
Ring-billed Gull	Nimmo's Pier		1A 02.07.04	TG	Leach's Petrel	Baile na hAbhann	2	13.09.04	TG
Arctic Skua	Baile na hAbhann		3 02.07.04	TG	Leach's Petrel	Salthill	1	13.09.04	DB
Corncrake	Inishbofin	3-4 calling m	04.07.04	NE	Storm Petrel	Silver Strand	30+	14.09.04	TG
Greenshank	Rusheen Bay		6 04.07.04	DB	Black Tern	Silver Strand	1	14.09.04	TG
Arctic Skua	Spiddal		3 04.07.04	DB	Ring-billed Gull	Ballyloughaun	A	14.09.04	DB
Glaucous Gull *	Nimmo's Pier		1 04.07.04	many obs.	Arctic Skua	Rahasane Turlough	2	14.09.04	DB
'smithsonianus' Herring Gull **	Nimmo's Pier		1 04.07.04	many obs.	Ruff	Rahasane Turlough	2	14.09.04	DB
Osprey	Salthill		1 04.07.04	DB & MD	Leach's Petrel	Silver Strand	2	14.09.04	TG
Hen Harrier	Lough Atalia	F/Imm.	07.04.04	NE	Curlew Sandpiper	Rusheen Bay	1	17.09.04	TG
Common Sandpiper	Lough Atalia		6 10.07.04	NE	Ruff	Rahasane Turlough	5	17.09.04	TG
Greylag Goose	Coole Lough		1 10.07.04	BOM	Curlew Sandpiper	Kilcaimin	7	18.09.04	MD
Long-eared Owl	Kilclogan	2 Juv.	10.07.04	BOM	Curlew Sandpiper	Rahasane Turlough	1	18.09.04	MD
Crossbill	Cloosh		12 13.07.04	TG	Ruff	Rahasane Turlough	3	18.09.04	MD
Iceland Gull	Nimmo's Pier	2nd year	15.07.04	TG	Mediterranean Gull	Nimmo's Pier	1st W	19.09.04	DB
Little Egret	Traught		1 17.07.04	TG	Curlew Sandpiper	Rahasane Turlough	3	19.09.04	MD
Little Tern	Rusheen Bay		2 17.07.04	TG	Ruff	Rahasane Turlough	2	19.09.04	MD
Great Northern Diver	Silver Strand		1 18.07.04	TG	Swift	Waterside	1	20.09.04	MD
Whimbrel	Silver Strand		1 18.07.04	TG	Ruff	Rahasane Turlough	4	21.09.04	MD
Hen Harrier	Curraghline	1F	18.07.04	TG	Curlew Sandpiper	Rahasane Turlough	1	21.09.04	MD
Arctic Skua	Baile na hAbhann		5 26.07.04	TG	Arctic Tern	Rahasane Turlough	1	21.09.04	MD
Great Skua	Baile na hAbhann		1 26.07.04	TG	Spotted Redshank	Kilcaimin	2	22.09.04	EMcL
Common Scoter	Baile na hAbhann		6 28.07.04	TG	Curlew Sandpiper	Kilcaimin	2	22.09.04	EMcL
Little Tern	Silver Strand		4 29.07.04	TG	Snow Bunting	Nimmo's Pier	M	22.09.04	BD
Storm Petrel	Silver Strand		4 30.07.04	TG	Curlew Sandpiper	Kilcaimin	9	23.09.04	MD
Mediterranean Gull	Ballyloughaun	2A	30.07.04	MD	Spotted Redshank	Kilcaimin	2	23.09.04	MD
Common Scoter	Inisdoorus, Lough Corrib	3(F & 2Juv.)	01.08.04	CP	Leach's Petrel	Ballyloughaun	1	24.09.04	DB
Storm Petrel	Baile na hAbhann		3 03.08.04	TG	Curlew Sandpiper	Rusheen Bay	3	25.09.04	TG
Little Egret	Rossaveal		1 03.08.04	TG	Green Sandpiper	Rahasane Turlough	1	25.09.04	TG
Mediterranean Gull	Long Walk, Galway City	1st yr	04.08.04	MD	Ruff	Rahasane Turlough	1	25.09.04	TG
Storm Petrel	Silver Strand		9 10.08.04	TG	Curlew Sandpiper	Kilcaimin	1	25.09.04	DB
Mediterranean Gull	Waterside	Juv.	10.08.04	MD	Baird's Sandpiper ****	Rahasane Turlough	Juv.	25.09.04	DB
Knot	Rusheen Bay		13 12.08.04	TG	Pectoral Sandpiper ****	Rahasane Turlough	1	25.09.04	DB
Curlew Sandpiper	Coole Lough		2 16.08.04	BOM & COM	Curlew Sandpiper	Rusheen Bay	3	26.09.04	DB & EMcL
Sanderling	Nimmo's Pier		1 18.08.04	NE	Curlew Sandpiper	Kilcaimin	3	26.09.04	DB & EMcL
Corncrake	Tawnagh W., Kinvara	prob. F & 5Juv	22.08.04	JD	Spotted Redshank	Kilcaimin	2	26.09.04	DB & EMcL
Corncrake	Clofnet		1 22.08.04	FB	Whooper Swan	Rahasane Turlough	1	26.09.04	DB & EMcL
Barn Owl	Monacow, Tuam		1 22.08.04	CK	Ruff	Rahasane Turlough	1	26.09.04	DB & EMcL
Nightjar ***	Nr. Mountbellew		1 22.08.04	CK	Little Gull	Nimmo's Pier	2 (A+Juv.)	26.09.04	TG
Kingfisher	Millpark, Athenry		2 24.08.04	DBo	Ruff	Rahasane Turlough	4	27.09.04	DB
Arctic Skua	Baile na hAbhann		14 27.08.04	TG	Arctic Skua	Silver Strand	1	30.09.04	TG
Great Skua	Baile na hAbhann		1 27.08.04	TG					
Great Northern Diver	Baile na hAbhann		1 27.08.04	TG					
Merlin	Nr. Mountbellew	M	28.08.04	CK					
Ruff	Rahasane Turlough		9 28.08.04	TG					
Spotted Redshank	Rahasane Turlough		1 28.08.04	TG					
Curlew Sandpiper	Rahasane Turlough		1 28.08.04	TG					
Gannet	Furbo		3 29.08.04	NS					
Storm Petrel	Inverin		2 29.08.04	TG	<b>ABBREVIATIONS</b>				
Arctic Skua	Baile na hAbhann		12 29.08.04	TG	Juv. = Juvenile; A = Adult; W = Winter; S = Summer; F = Female; M = Male;				
Common Buzzard	Cappatagle		1 30.08.04	EMcL	Imm. = Immature; Leuc. = Leucistic; hyb. = hybrid.				
Barn Owl	Lavally, Tuam		1 01.09.04	CK					
Arctic Skua	Baile na hAbhann		22 02.09.04	TG					
Great Skua	Baile na hAbhann		1 02.09.04	TG	<b>NOTES</b>				
Sooty Shearwater	Baile na hAbhann		8 02.09.04	TG					
Red-throated Diver	Silver Strand		3 02.09.04	TG	* Bird from last quarter (now 2nd cal year bird) present until 14.09.04 at least.				
Arctic Skua	Baile na hAbhann		16 04.09.04	TG	** Bird from last quarter (now 2nd cal year bird) present until 19.09.04 at least.				
Curlew Sandpiper	Spiddal		8 05.09.04	MB	*** This bird was present until 29.08.04 at least.				
Mediterranean Gull	Nimmo's Pier	1st Win	05.09.04	NH & TG	**** This bird was still present at the end of the quarter.				
Common Scoter	Silver Strand		18 05.09.04	TG	***** This bird was present until 27.09.04 at least.				
Spotted Redshank	Spiddal		1 06.09.04	MB					
Pectoral Sandpiper	Rahasane Turlough	Juv.	06.09.04	MD					
Ruff	Rahasane Turlough	Juv.	06.09.04	MD	<b>CONTRIBUTORS</b>				
Water Rail	Oughterard		1 06.09.04	CP					
Brent Goose	Silver Strand		1 06.09.04	TG	BD = Brendan Dunne; DBo = Donal Bourke				
Arctic Skua	Silver Strand		23 06.09.04	TG	BOM = Breandán Ó Madagáin; COM = Claire Ó Madagáin;				
Lesser Redpoll	Ardnasillagh, Oughterard		14 07.09.04	MIC	CP = Chris Peppiatt; DB = Dermot Breen; MB = Maurice Berry;				
Crossbill	Cloosh		5 09.09.04	TG	FB = Francis Byrnes; EMcL = Enda McLoughlin; CK = Conor Kretsch;				
Eider	Nr. Slyne Head lighthouse		2 10.09.04	GO'D	MD = Michael Davis; PD = Pam Davis; NH = Nic Hallam;				
Curlew Sandpiper	Kilcaimin		2 11.09.04	MD, EMcL & WS	NE = Neil Ellis; NS = Neil Sharkey;				
Kingfisher	Rusheen Bay		1 11.09.04	PD & MD	JD = Julian Duggan; GO'D = Ger O'Donnell; MTC = Marianne ten Cate;				
Curlew Sandpiper	Rusheen Bay	3 Juv.	13.09.04	DB	TG = Tim Griffin; WS = Wendy Stringer.				
Storm Petrel	Silver Strand		11 13.09.04	TG					
Leach's Petrel	Silver Strand		1 13.09.04	DB					