



CAIRDE EANLAITH NA GAILLIMHE
BIRDWATCH GALWAY
www.birdwatchgalway.org
QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER – EDITOR: NEIL SHARKEY
Telephone: 086 1680856 e-mail:neilsharkey@eircom.net
Issue No. 50 3/2005 1 Aug 2005

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

This issue of the newsletter is the 50th in the series. Neil Sharkey has been the editor since its inception in 1993 and I feel that this is a fitting time to acknowledge his efforts over the years and to wish him good luck with the newsletter going into the future. Neil himself has explained the changes that are happening to the newsletter following changes in the distribution of BWI's national *Wings* magazine. Please note that he is always eager to receive articles from members from the Galway area and from people who have visited Galway while birding.

I am also pleased to be able to announce that Michael Davis will be taking over as Co. Galway I-WeBS coordinator. Michael has agreed to take over from Neil Sharkey, who had been doing this invaluable job for the last ten years. Many thanks (again!) Neil.

Finally, I have been thinking about certain birds that are not often recorded in Co. Galway: Long-eared Owl, Barn Owl, Dipper, Kingfisher, Woodcock, Yellowhammer and Whinchat. Are these birds just scarce here, or are they often overlooked? I would be grateful to receive any Galway records for this short list, either via the web site or via e-mail (chris.peppiatt@iol.ie).

FAVOURITE BIRDS

In Issue No. 48 of the Newsletter our Editor started a new series and invited contributions from other Galway birdwatchers. Why did it take me so long to act on this invitation? The truth is I honestly cannot say I have a favourite bird. Yet, there are birds, which have a special place in my memory or are strongly associated with certain people and/or places. I'll never forget the time when a knowledgeable ornithologist, the one who introduced me to serious birdwatching, was baffled by a House Sparrow in an unlikely place while this was one of the very few birds I could confidently identify on my arrival in Ireland. Pigeons and sparrows were regulars in our backyard all through my childhood. Of course, associated with the same mentor are gulls, Common Gulls in particular – their Spring appearance at the back of our house and the subsequent nesting at Birchall, also near Oughterard, announcing the season to me more than any Cuckoo or Swallow will ever do. Likewise, Kittiwakes equal Summer at the Cliffs of Moher and on Inishmore. But, despite (or because of) having taken part in the All Ireland Tern Survey of 1984 terns just don't do it for me. Maybe, the baby in among the outboard engines in the back of the van was more important? Even though that same 'baby' now likes to remind me of the time I put her on a steep slope above the cliffs at Creevagh Head in North Mayo and told her, just two years old at the time, not to stir until I had counted the breeding birds there... The fascination with cliff nesting birds – and Roseroot for that matter – has never left me.

I have a slightly embarrassing association with Woodcock, which I have to mention here, too. There was a time when I couldn't have a little private stop in the woods without flushing a Woodcock. So much so that during one particular survey I was encouraged to drink more than I had a thirst for! Next on the list has to be the Kingfisher. For years I was hoping to spot my first one but when it eventually happened I convinced myself it was a little holy statue placed by my neighbour on a pile of rocks on the shore of Lough Corrib. Needless to say, this was during the time many statues were seen moving all over Ireland. When this particular one flew off I realised that I hadn't embraced the culture quite yet. Along the same stretch of

shore I had my first Barn Owl in the headlights of the car - I think it was in 1989 - the second and most recent one again in the headlights at Rahoon earlier this summer, 16 years later. Of course, one wouldn't readily associate Barn Owls with either the lakeshore or a busy crossroads in town. Unlike the Crossbills that brought us up to the Cloosh forestry where they may be elusive but at least expected (even if not seen!). And lastly, there is the Bullfinch. It may be because I am a Taurus and rather robust myself that this has to be the bird that would be most deserving of the heading's title. But I promise I never ever raided anybody's orchard the way these colourful birds like to do.

Marianne ten Cate

BIRDWATCH GALWAY NEWSLETTER

The *Galway Branch Newsletter* is now in its thirteenth year of publication. The format is simple - a single A4 sheet with items of local and general ornithological content on one side and a fairly comprehensive quarterly County Galway bird report (edited by Chris Peppiatt and Tim Griffin) on the reverse side. Until the change of *Wings* distribution some time back it was included in *Wings* for all Galway city and county members. Following on this change we posted, hand delivered or e-mailed it to members as an interim measure. Well over 100 members and others are now receiving it by e-mail. We must now confine distribution to those who provide an e-mail address or send us stamped addressed envelopes in annual sets of **four** (not just stamps on their own). Send your stamped addressed envelopes to Marianne ten Cate, Ardnasillagh, Oughterard, Co. Galway or your e-mail address to neilsharkey@eircom.net. Keep in mind that you do not have to have an e-mail address yourself – with permission you can always use that of another family member or friend who can receive it on your behalf, print it off and pass it on to you.

In addition the newsletter will be available on the Galway Branch web site - www.birdwatchgalway.org. We are also happy to send it to any BirdWatch Ireland member outside Co. Galway on receipt of an e-mail address. **NS**

BIRDS IN POETRY

The Belfast poet, Michael Longley has won great acclaim and many prizes including the Irish Times Prize for Poetry and the T.S. Eliot prize. In 2001 he was awarded the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry. Longley has a home in County Mayo and the landscape and birds figure prominently in his work. The current selection, *Stonechat* comes from his brilliant collection *Snow Water* published in 2004 by Cape Poetry.

Pat Finnegan

Stonechat

*A flicker on the highest twig, a breast
That kindles the last of the fuchsia flowers
And the October sunset still to come
When we face the Carricknashinnagh shoal
And all the islands in a golden backwash
Where sanderlings scurry, two cormorants
Peeking at me and you over breakers
That interrupt the glow, behind us
A rainbow ascending out of Roonkeel
High above Six Noggins, disappearing
Between Mweelrea's crests, and we return
To the white cottage with its fuchsia hedge
To share for a second time the stonechat's
Flirtatious tail and flinty scolding.*

(Acknowledgement Jonathan Cape, Random House, London.)

PAST NEWSLETTERS

The pending change in newsletter caused me to look back at past copies, extracts from which may be of interest. The first issue was that of Spring in 1993. There was a short item on the history of the branch founded in the late 1960s. Tim Griffin reported a Ring-necked Duck in Lough Atalia, Tony While reported on a Raven survey in Connemara and mention was made of members assisting in a Burren breeding bird survey. Autumn '93 had an item by Marianne ten Cate on our Schools Project and there was a summary of a joint talk by Richard Douthwaite hosted by ourselves, An Taisce and the Irish Wildlife Federation. In Spring '94 Tim Griffin reported a Gyrfalcon at Tawin and there was mention of our AGM being held on Dec 8th, the night of the 'big wind' and total power failure. Summer 1994 had an item on Tuam Birdwatching by May Cashman and a request by Tony While for information on 'common' birds. Sadly this turned out to be Tony's last contribution as he was to die some months later. Winter 1994 had the first of Tim Griffin's 'where to watch birds' series dealing with Tawin. Summer 1995 was the first detailed bird report edited by Tim Griffin. The first entry was a Brambling by Pat Finnegan on Feb 26th. Summer 1995 saw the introduction of an improved format with more content. A Diamond Dove located in the Claddagh turned out not to be the rarity of the century but an escapee from Moycullen! Autumn 1995 had us involved in Whooper Swans with Graham McElwaine and planning a talk in Roundstone. In Spring 1996 we had our first 'Birds in Poetry' with *Postscript* by kind permission of Seamus Heaney. The Rostaff hide was repaired by the Headford Gun Club and a Double-crested Cormorant created an ornithological sensation at Nimmo's Pier. The Summer 1996 issue reported on the winter Waxwing invasion and my item on it reported 17 separate sightings in Galway city and county. I quoted Vladimir Nobokov's lines

I am the Waxwing slain

By the false azure of the window pane

To be continued

NS

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Saturday 27 August, outing to Bridges of Ross and Loop Head. Meet at Cathedral car park, Galway at 6am.

Wednesday 14 September, members/committee meeting, Anno Santo Hotel, Threadneedle Road, Salthill, Galway, 8pm. All members are welcome to attend!

Saturday 1 October, short outing, Nimmo's Pier, 10.30am.

Friday 7 October, introduction to BirdTrack by Niall Hatch and 'Birds of South Africa' by John Murphy. Anno Santo Hotel, 8pm.

Wednesday 19 October, members/committee meeting, Anno Santo Hotel, 8pm. All members welcome to attend!

Saturday 5 November, short outing at Nimmo's Pier, 10.30am.

Wednesday 16 November, members/committee meeting, Anno Santo Hotel, 8pm. All members welcome to attend!

Friday 18 Nov. 8pm – Anno Santo Hotel. Talk: 'Arctic Birds' by Pat Lonergan.

BirdWatch Galway (Branch of BirdWatch Ireland)

A QUARTERLY BIRD REPORT BY TIM GRIFFIN & CHRIS PEPPIATT

2nd Quarter 2005

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

DATE OF ISSUE: 9th August 2005

Species	Location	No	Date	Observer	Species	Location	No	Date	Observer
Swallow	Furbo		02.04.05	MS	Arctic Skua	Silver Strand, Galway	1	27.06.05	TG
Barnacle Goose	Rahasane Turlough		05.04.05	TG	Mediterranean Gull	Mutton Island, Galway	1A	27.06.05	MD
Iceland Gull	Nimmo's Pier	9	05.04.05	TG	Little Tern	Silver Strand, Galway	1	30.06.05	TG
Glaucous Gull	Nimmo's Pier	2	05.04.05	TG	Manx Shearwater	Silver Strand, Galway	170+	30.06.05	TG
American Herring Gull	Nimmo's Pier	1	05.04.05	TG	Barn Owl	Galway City	1	30.60.05	MTC
Ring-billed Gull	Nimmo's Pier	1A	05.04.05	TG	Poss. Red-backed Shrike	Inishbofin	1	midMay 05	AT
Glaucous Gull X Herring Gull hyb.	Nimmo's Pier	1	06.04.05	TG					
Little Egret	Rossaveal	1	08.04.05	TG					
Purple Sandpiper	Inverin	12	08.04.05	TG	OTHER BEASTIES				
Mediterranean Gull	Nimmo's Pier	1A	08.04.05	MC&BD	Holly Blue (Butterfly)	Small Wood, Rusheen Bay		24.04.05	DB
Long-tailed Duck	Durras Pier	5	09.04.05	TG	Monarch (Butterfly)	Inverin	1	24.06.05	TG
Brent Goose	Rabbit Island, Galway	102	10.04.05	DB					
House Martin	Waterside, Galway	1	10.04.05	TC					
Scaup	Angliham, Lough Corrib	14	10.04.05	TG					
Manx Shearwater	Baile na hAbhann	20	13.04.05	TG					
Little Tern	Inverin	3	15.04.05	TG					
Goshawk	Menlo, Lough Corrib	1	16.04.05	AO'D					
Peregrine	Menlo, Lough Corrib	1	16.04.05	AO'D					
Killdeer	Cleggan	1	16.04.05	BO'C					
Scaup	Menlo, Lough Corrib	28	16.04.05	DB&AO'D					
Cuckoo	Moyard	1	16.04.05	GO'D					
Black-throated Diver	Durras	8	16.04.05	TG					
Common Sandpiper	Coole Park	1	17.04.05	JG					
Waxwing	Maunsel's Road, Galway	12	20.04.05	TJ					
Hoopoe	Moyard	1	22.04.05	JK					
Waxwing	St. Mary's Road, Galway	12	23.04.05	AO'D (1)					
Whitethroat	Traught	1	23.04.05	TG					
Whimbrel	Nr. Milltown, Tuam	16	23.04.05	CB					
Red Grouse	Costello (Casla)	1	23.04.05	PR					
Merlin	Costello (Casla)	F	23.04.05	PR					
Little Gull	Menlo	1	24.04.05	TG					
Sedge Warbler	Nr. Milltown, Tuam	1	24.04.05	CB					
Great Northern Diver	Salthill-Silver Strand, Galway	207	24.04.05	DB					
Grasshopper Warbler	Barna	1	25.04.05	DO'K					
Common Tern	Salthill, Galway	1	26.04.05	MC					
Iceland Gull	Rossaveal	1	27.04.05	TG					
Arctic Skua	Silver Strand, Galway	1	28.04.05	DB					
Iceland Gull	Silver Strand, Galway	1stW	28.04.05	DB					
Glaucous Gull	Silver Strand, Galway	1stW	28.04.05	DB	ABBREVIATIONS				
Little Gull	Menlo	7	30.04.05	TG					
Swift	Menlo	2	30.04.05	TG	Juv. = Juvenile; A = Adult; W = Winter; S = Summer; F = Female; M = Male;				
Kingfisher	Ower, Headford	1	01.05.05	NS	Imm. = Immature; Leuc. = Leucistic; hyb. = hybrid.				
Mediterranean Gull	Waterside, Galway	Juv.	01.05.05	TG					
Little Gull	Menlo	10	01.05.05	TG	NOTES				
Arctic Skua	Silver Strand, Galway	2	03.05.05	TG					
Arctic Skua	Silver Strand, Galway	5	05.05.05	TG	(1) Also present on 24.04.05 & 26.04.05.				
Garden Warbler	Angliham, Lough Corrib	1	08.05.05	TG	(2) Still present in area until 08.06.05..				
Little Gull	Angliham, Lough Corrib	5	08.05.05	TG					
Glaucous Gull	Rossaveal	1	08.05.05	TG					
Osprey	reported Inchagoill, L. Corrib	2	09.05.05	Anon. per AO'D					
Arctic Skua	Silver Strand, Galway	2	12.05.05	DB					
Sanderling	Nimmo's Pier	1	15.05.05	NE					
Marsh Harrier	Curraghline, L. Corrib	F	15.05.05	AO'D					
Arctic Skua	Silver Strand, Galway	2	19.05.05	TG					
Spotted Flycatcher	Merlin Park, Galway	1	21.05.05	DB					
Glaucous Gull	Nimmo's Pier	1stS	21.05.05	NE					
Scaup	Lough Atalia, Galway	1	21.05.05	NE					
Great Skua	Silver Strand, Galway	2	23.05.05	TG					
Great Northern Diver	Silver Strand, Galway	3	23.05.05	TG					
Arctic Skua	Silver Strand, Galway	3	23.05.05	TG					
Storm Petrel	Silver Strand, Galway	2	24.05.05	TG					
Greylag Goose	South Connemara	Pair with young	29.05.05	PR					
Whinchat	East Galway	2	04.06.05	TG					
Storm Petrel	Inverin	1	04.06.05	TG					
Glaucous Gull	Nimmo's Pier	2	04.06.05	TG					
Scaup	Black R. mouth, L. Corrib	12	05.06.05	PD	CONTRIBUTORS				
Gull-billed Tern	Corranroo Bay	1	06.06.05	MD (2)					
Great Northern Diver	Durras	2	08.06.05	TG	TG = Tim Griffin; NE = Neil Ellis; BO'C = Brendan O'Connor				
Little Gull	Mutton Island, Galway	1stS	09.06.05	MD	MD = Michael Davis; DC = Derek Charles; MS = Mary Silke				
Mediterranean Gull	Corranroo Bay	1stS	12.06.05	DC	DB = Dermot Breen; BD = Brendan Dunne;				
Storm Petrel	Silver Strand, Galway	1	24.06.05	TG	PR = Padraic Reaney; PD = Peter Dunphy; JG = Jo Gordon				
Whimbrel	Silver Strand, Galway	4	24.06.05	TG	GO'D = Ger O'Donnell; NS = Neil Sharkey				
Wren	Inverin	Albino	24.06.05	TG	AO'D = Aonghus O'Donnall; TJ = Tom Jenkins; JK = Jarlath King				
Glaucous Gull	Nimmo's Pier	1	26.06.05	TG	DO'K = David O'Keefe; MC = Michael Connolly;				
Common Scoter	Durras Pier	3	26.06.05	TG	MtC = Marianne ten Cate; TC = Tom Cuffe; AT = Ann Traynor.				