



**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

There have been a fair amount of newspaper headlines recently about avian influenza, or 'bird flu'. There is a lot of information about avian influenza available from the Irish Government and organisations like Birdlife International and BirdWatch Ireland, but I thought that I would just make a few brief points about the current situation. The viral strain which has been causing concern (H5N1) appears to be spreading, with recent outbreaks in China, Russia and around the Black Sea. Although wild birds infected with the virus have been found, it is till not certain that they have transmitted the disease between countries or regions. In Southeast Asia movements of domestic poultry have been implicated in the transmission of the disease. As far as the best recently available information goes, there have been no known instances of the transmission of avian flu between infected wild birds and humans and the virus is not currently contagious between humans. There is a risk of a human pandemic should the H5N1 virus mutate in such a way that it becomes capable of transmission from one person to another and such pandemics have occurred in the past. A real fear from the conservation point of view is that public fears might lead to calls for the culling of wild waterbirds. However, culls would be unlikely to stop the spread of the disease, would be extremely difficult to implement and are not recommended by any national or international bodies. There is no government advice that people should avoid the countryside or stop watching birds. While it is not unusual to find the occasional dead bird, the authorities should be informed if a number of dead wild birds are found at the same time and place. It is also advised that dead birds should not be handled unnecessarily. Whilst I would not like to tempt fate, there does not appear to be any reason to panic at present and I, for one, am far more worried about road safety and my occasional smoking habit than about avian 'flu.

**Chris Peppiatt**

### TRIBUTE

The Galway Branch of BirdWatch Ireland was set up circa 1970. It coincided with what can be described as a watershed in Irish birdwatching. Since then the branch has grown steadily from a handful of members to a present total of over three hundred. Keeping in touch with all our Galway members has always been a concern of mine as indeed it is of those others involved with our various committees and activities. This newsletter has been the principal means together with our programme of talks and outings. In the course of editing and delivering the newsletter I have been fortunate to meet or be in contact with many of our Galway members. Last year one such contact was a phone call from Mrs Doreen McConnell who lives in Cornamona. In the course of our chat it emerged that Mrs McConnell was involved with the early days of Irish birdwatching. Being always interested in such matters I arranged to call on her, which, after many unforeseen delays, I finally did last August. I'm sure Mrs McConnell will not mind me saying that she has now reached a great age although this has not at all dimmed her lively manner and recollections of times long past. From her earliest years in her native Dublin she had a great love of nature and birds. Encouraged by her father – the late Mr Henry Reeves – she was involved initially with the Dublin Field Naturalists and then with the Irish Society for the Protection of Birds (ISPB), a forerunner of

the Irish Wildbird Conservancy - now BirdWatch Ireland. She knew all the 'greats' of the earlier era of Irish ornithology – T. H. Mason; Fr Kennedy SJ, Major Rutledge, William Finlay and many more. Her recollections of outings and the happenings of those times were enthralling to listen to. In addition she served as Honorary Secretary of the ISPB from 1940 to 1960 – a very long period of fulfilling such a demanding role. Why am I writing all this? To pay tribute to Doreen McConnell and all those earlier birdwatchers mentioned above. Whatever has been achieved by BirdWatch Ireland and our Galway Branch in more recent times is built on the foundation of the dedication and time that they gave to birds and their conservation in years gone by. In particular I am writing this to thank Mrs McConnell for the long years in which she served the development of Irish birdwatching. It is our privilege to have her as a senior and most valued member of the Galway Branch. On behalf of all I wish her many more years of good health and birdwatching.

**NS**

### BIRDS IN POETRY

Edward Thomas was born in London in 1878 and after graduating from Oxford in 1900 he embarked on a career as a writer of prose often with themes based on his love of nature. In 1913 he was introduced to Robert Frost who recognised the poetic qualities of his prose and with Frost's encouragement he produced a remarkable body of poetry. The poem *The Swifts* refers to next May but Thomas did not live to see it, dying in the Battle of Arras in April 1917.

**Pat Finnegan**

### The Swifts

How at once should I know,  
When stretched in the harvest blue  
I saw the swift's black bow,  
That I would not have that view  
Another day  
Until next May  
Again it is due?

The same year after year –  
But with the swift alone.  
With other things I but fear  
That they will be over and done  
Suddenly  
And I only see  
Them to know them gone.

(Acknowledgement Oxford University Press – *The Collected Poems of Edward Thomas*)

### MY FAVOURITE BIRD

The Peregrine has always had a peculiar, addictive hold on me. I first saw one on 25/3/1984. I was nine years old and walking along Nimmo's Pier. I had seen many drawings and a single colour photograph in a Childcraft book of birds given to me by my grandmother. I marvelled at the descriptions of its amazing powers of flight and longed to get even a glimpse of our largest falcon. Its habitat of mountains, sea cliffs and other wild and remote places only added to its aura but made it more than out of reach for a city-dwelling child. I was, and still am, in awe. Since that first sighting I have had many encounters with Peregrines. I have watched them year-round for many years now and still get excited every time I see one. Spring is the best time to watch Peregrines. The males engage in spectacular display flights that never fail to leave me awestruck. Stoops, figure-of-eights and loop-the-loops all performed at break-neck speed in the wildest

country on a crisp day in early March. It cannot be bettered.

At this time of year the Peregrine is most readily met with at our larger lakes and turloughs where it is attracted to large numbers of wintering wildfowl. Rahasane turlough, in particular, is a fine place to see Peregrines. Up to three birds have wintered here in recent years and any visit between August and March should be rewarded with a sighting.

John Baker, in his book *'The Peregrine'* speaks for all Peregrine addicts ; *'She drifted idly, remote, inimical. She balanced in the wind, 2,000 feet above, while the white cloud passed beyond her. Slowly her wings moved back. She slipped smoothly through the wind, as though she were moving forward on a wire. This majesty of the roaring wind, this majesty and noble power of flight, made me shout aloud and dance up and down with excitement. Now, I thought, I have seen the best of the Peregrine; there will be no need to pursue it further; I shall not want to search for it again. I was wrong of course. One can never have enough.'*  
**Aonghus O Donail**

### FORTHCOMING EVENTS

- Saturday 5 November, short outing at Nimmo's Pier, Galway, 10.30am.
- Wednesday 16 November, members/committee meeting, Anno Santo Hotel, Threadneedle Road, Salthill, 8pm. All members are welcome to attend!
- Friday 18 November, talk on 'Arctic Birds' by Pat Lonergan, Anno Santo Hotel, 8pm. All welcome!
- Saturday 19 November, Galway Bay Count, starting at 9.30am. Those willing to join, please contact Chris Peppiatt.
- Saturday 26 November, day outing to the Little Brosna and the Ashton hide. For a place on the bus, please ring Marianne at 091-552519 or 087-2378051.
- Saturday 3 December, short outing at Nimmo's Pier, Galway, 10.30am.
- Thursday 8 December, Christmas Sale and get-together, Anno Santo Hotel, 8pm - buy your Christmas cards and gifts. Bring a friend!
- Wednesday 14 December, members/committee meeting, Anno Santo Hotel, 8pm. All members are welcome to attend!
- Sunday 1 January 2006, New Year's outing - details to be announced at one of the previous events.
- Saturday 7 January, short outing at Nimmo's Pier, Galway, 10.30am.
- Saturday or Sunday 14/15 January, Galway Bay count. Start at 9am. Please, contact Chris Peppiatt for further details.
- Wednesday 18 January, members/committee meeting, Anno Santo Hotel, 8pm. All members are welcome to attend!
- Friday 27 January, talk on "Sea Bird Ireland" - field work experience from the Isle of May (Scotland), Rockabill Island and Greenland by Maggie Hall, Anno Santo Hotel, 8pm. All welcome!
- Saturday 4 February, short outing at Nimmo's Pier, 10.30am.
- Wednesday 15 February, members/committee meeting, Anno Santo Hotel, 8pm.

### Father Brendan Dillon OP

It is with great regret that we record the recent death in Tralee of Father Brendan (Gene) Dillon. He was the founder of the Galway branch of BirdWatch in the late 1960s and our Life President and will be sadly missed.

# BirdWatch Galway (Branch of BirdWatch Ireland)

A QUARTERLY BIRD REPORT BY TIM GRIFFIN & CHRIS PEPPIATT

3rd Quarter 2005

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Species	Location	No	Date	Observer	Species	Location	No	Date	Observer
Whimbrel	Ardnasillagh, Lough Corrib		02.07.05	MtC	Ringed Plover	Inishmaan	50	17.09.05	NE
Kingfisher	Clare River		07.07.05	PO'D	Glaucous Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway	3(2-1stW & 3rdW)	18.09.05	MD
Sandwich Tern	Rusheen Bay, Galway	120	11.07.05	CP	Little Gull	Menlo, Lough Corrib	2	18.09.05	TG
Greenshank	Rusheen Bay, Galway		11.07.05	CP	Red-throated Diver	Silver Strand, Galway	1	19.09.05	TG
Rose-coloured Starling	Tirellan, Galway		18.07.05	TC (1)	Swallow	Rahasane Turlough	1	21.09.05	PC
Sparrowhawk	Dangan, Galway	fledglings	19.07.05	AP	Razorbill	Lough Rusheen, Galway	4	22.09.05	MD
Common Sandpiper	Lough Atalia, Galway	3	27.07.05	NE	Pomarine Skua	Baile na hAbhann	2	23.09.05	TG
Laughing Gull	Rusheen Bay, Galway	1st S	29.07.05	DB (2)	Arctic Skua	Baile na hAbhann	2	23.09.05	TG
Sanderling	Rusheen Bay, Galway	2	29.07.05	DB	Grey Phalarope	Baile na hAbhann	1	23.09.05	TG
Knot	Rusheen Bay, Galway	8	29.07.05	DB	Little Egret	Rahasane Turlough	2	25.09.05	PC
Sandwich Tern	Rusheen Bay, Galway	210	29.07.05	DB	Wheatear	Rahasane Turlough	2	25.09.05	PC
Mediterranean Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway	A	29.07.05	DB	Jay	Rahasane Turlough	1	25.09.05	PC
Ring-billed Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway	A	29.07.05	DB	Red-eyed Vireo	Inishbofin	1	26.09.05	per BINS (5)
Glaucous Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway	1st S	29.07.05	DB	Red-backed Shrike	Inishbofin	Juv.	26.09.05	per BINS (5)
Tree Sparrow	Porridgetown, Oughterard	1	29.07.05	MtC	Knot	Rahasane Turlough	1	28.09.05	TG
Mediterranean Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway	Juv.	30.07.05	DB	Grey Phalarope	Silver Strand, Galway	1	28.09.05	TG
Ruff	Rahasane Turlough	2	31.07.05	PC	Glaucous Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway	4(3-2ndW & 3rdW)	30.09.05	MD
Peregrine	Rahasane Turlough	1	31.07.05	PC					
Woodcock	Derryclare/Ballynahinch	1	31.07.05	AOD & CP					
Leach's Petrel	Silver Strand, Galway	1	02.08.05	DO'K					
Mediterranean Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway	2nd S	03.08.05	MD					
Mediterranean Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway	Juv.	04.08.05	MD					
Storm Petrel	Baile na hAbhann	2	05.08.05	TG					
Arctic Skua	Baile na hAbhann	1	05.08.05	TG					
Storm Petrel	Silver Strand, Galway	6	06.08.05	TG	<b>OTHER BEASTIES</b>				
Glaucous Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway	Juv.	06.08.05	TG	Sunfish	Baile na hAbhann	1	27.08.05	TG
Ring-billed Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway	A	06.08.05	TG					
Mediterranean Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway	A	06.08.05	TG					
Mediterranean Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway	A	07.08.05	MD (3)					
Ring-billed Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway	1st S	09.08.05	MD					
Arctic Skua	Silver Strand, Galway	3	11.08.05	TG					
Arctic Skua	Baile na hAbhann	11	12.08.05	TG					
Little Egret	Rahasane Turlough	1	14.08.05	PC					
Ruff	Rahasane Turlough	1	14.08.05	PC					
Gannet	off Salthill Prom.	100+	15.08.05	CP					
Sand Martin	Inchiquin Island, L. Corrib	1,200+	20.08.05	NS					
Herring Gull	Rusheen Bay, Galway	Leuc.	21.08.05	TG					
Great Skua	Silver Strand, Galway	1	23.08.05	TG					
Knot	Silver Strand, Galway	5	26.08.05	TG	<b>ABBREVIATIONS</b>				
Great Skua	Baile na hAbhann	1	27.08.05	TG					
Knot	Rahasane Turlough	1	27.08.05	MD	Juv. = Juvenile; A = Adult; W = Winter; S = Summer; Leuc. = Leucistic.				
Arctic Skua	Spiddal Pier	2	28.08.05	AO'D					
Ring-billed Gull	Waterside, Galway	2nd S	28.08.05	MD					
Little Egret	Rossaveal	1	28.08.05	TG	<b>NOTES</b>				
Mediterranean Gull	Mutton Island, Galway	1st S	29.08.05	MD					
Mediterranean Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway	A	30.08.05	MD	(1) This bird was present in the area until 21.07.05.				
Mediterranean Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway	1st S	31.08.05	MD (4)	(2) This bird was present in the area until 31.08.05.				
Cory's Shearwater	Lettermore	2	31.08.05	AO'D	(3) Belgian-ringed.				
Mediterranean Gull	Mutton Island, Galway City	A	01.09.05	MD	(4) Ringed bird.				
Brent Goose	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City	1	01.09.05	BD & MD	(5) Again present on 27.09.05.				
Spotted Redshank	Kilcaimin	1	01.09.05	MD & AO'D					
Golden Eagle	near Lough Nafuoey, Connemara	1	02.09.05	NS					
Arctic Skua	Baile na hAbhann	8	02.09.05	TG					
Sanderling	Inverin	10	02.09.05	TG					
Little Gull	Menlo, Lough Corrib	5	03.09.05	TG					
Black-tailed Godwit	Rahasane Turlough	1	04.09.05	PC					
Ringed Plover	Rahasane Turlough	Juv.	04.09.05	PC					
Kingfisher	Rahasane Turlough	1	04.09.05	PC					
Arctic Skua	Silver Strand, Galway	7	04.09.05	TG					
Great Skua	Silver Strand, Galway	1	08.09.05	TG					
Curlew Sandpiper	Kilcaimin	29	10.09.05	AO'D					
Black Tern	Menlo, Lough Corrib	1	10.09.05	TG					
Manx Shearwater	Menlo, Lough Corrib	1	10.09.05	TG					
Mediterranean Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City	1st W	12.09.05	MD					
Ring-billed Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City	A	12.09.05	MD					
Glaucous Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City	3rd W	12.09.05	MD	<b>CONTRIBUTORS</b>				
Common Scoter	Silver Strand, Galway	1	12.09.05	TG					
Great Northern Diver	Silver Strand, Galway	1	12.09.05	TG	BINS = Birds of Ireland News Service; TG = Tim Griffin; NE = Neil Ellis;				
Great Skua	Inverin	1	12.09.05	TG	MD = Michael Davis; PO'D = Peadar O'Dowd;				
Mediterranean Gull	Baile na hAbhann	1	12.09.05	TG	DB = Dermot Breen; BD = Brendan Dunne;				
Ruff	Truska, Ballyconneely	2	13.09.05	GO'D	GO'D = Ger O'Donnell; NS = Neil Sharkey; TC = Tom Cuffe;				
Chough	Spiddal	1	13.09.05	MNC	AO'D = Aonghus O'Donnell; AP = Alan Poole; CP = Chris Peppiatt;				
Common Scoter	Silver Strand, Galway	5	15.09.05	TG	DO'K = David O'Keefe; MNC = Maire Ni Chonghaile;				
Mediterranean Gull	Long Walk, Galway City	2	17.09.05	MD	MtC = Marianne ten Cate; PC = Pete Capsey.				
Wheatear	Inishmaan	1	17.09.05	NE					