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THOUGHT FROM THE CHAIR

An article in The Irish Times recently featured an expedition to an area in Indonesian western New Guinea called the Foja Mountains. The mountains are so remote that the local animals are unafraid of humans and the expedition found new species of plants and frogs. As well as this, a new species of bird (a honeyeater) was discovered. This is not as rare an occurrence as one might think; new species of birds are found almost annually, normally in tropical forest zones (surely a good argument against uncontrolled logging).

There is no need to go to the other side of the world to see unusual birds, though. In recent years Galway Branch members have seen Firecrest, Waxwing, Rose-coloured Starling and Ring Ouzel in their neighbourhoods, so members who participate in the winter Garden Birds Survey are in with a chance of a surprise. However, the winter is nearly over, the days are getting longer and the first primroses are in flower. With this in mind it is not too early to remind you that National Dawn Chorus Day is the 14th of May this year. Happy St. Patrick's Day and here's to summer!

Chris Peppiatt

BRENT GEESE AND WHOOPER SWANS

Graham McElwaine has asked all birdwatchers to keep an eye out for rings on Whooper Swans and Brent Geese. Ring details of Whooper Swans to Gerry Murphy at gbmurphy@eircom.net and those of Brent Geese to Graham McElwaine at grahammcelwaine@virgin.net. In the absence of e mail phone them to me or any committee member. NS

FALSTERBO FÄGELSTATION, SWEDEN

From the 1st August to 22nd October 2005 I was lucky enough to be an assistant ringer at Falsterbo Bird Observatory or "Fågelstation" in the extreme southwest of Sweden. Migration has been studied at this location since the early 1940s. Research into migration is examined by use of visual migration counts at Nabben point and standardized ringing at Flommen reedbed and the Lighthouse garden.

I was ringing in Flommen reedbed during all of August and September. This involved putting up 21 nets an hour before sunrise every morning, extracting birds from nets every half hour and "processing" the birds which included the sexing, ageing, measurement of the wing length, weight, fat and moult scores of each bird. The main target species here were Reed, Sedge, Marsh, Willow Warblers, Reed Bunting and other typical reedbed specialties, which are missed at the Lighthouse garden. From 21st July to 30th September 2845 birds were caught at Flommen. Although the number of birds caught each day could be low (< 30 birds) we did manage to cross the hundred mark on a few occasions. Some highlights for myself included Spotted Crane, Kingfisher, Wryneck, Thrush Nightingale, Bluethroat (2), Great Reed Warbler (5), Wood Warbler, Penduline (29) and Bearded Tit, Red-backed Shrike (8) and Common Rosefinch. The Wryneck was an amazing bird in the hand. It was easy to see where they get their name from as the can twist and rotate the head and neck in a similar manner to a snake. Once the Flommen season had finished we moved up to the Lighthouse garden to help the other ringers who had been ringing there since July. Although this involved the

same early routine it was without doubt a far easier "gig". Unlike Flommen we didn't have to trudge through knee high water and muck on each round and had a cosy ringing hut with luxuries such as running water and electricity! The numbers of birds caught during the first two weeks here were sometimes staggering. 1277 and 1595 birds were caught on 3rd and 5th October alone. Some high day totals of common species included 417 Siskins, 947 Robins, 455 Goldcrests and 607 Blue Tits. During my three weeks in October we caught 9168 birds. It was quiet strange coming from an Irish perspective seeing the likes of Blue Tits, Wrens, Robins and Dunnocks in active migration. Some of the more interesting species here were Great and Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Ring Ouzel, Icterine Warblers (breeding in the garden), Barred Warbler, Firecrest, Red-breasted Flycatcher (5), Long-tailed Tits of the white headed *caudatus* race, Nuthatch (2), Serin and Great Grey Shrike. The woodpeckers, shrikes and Blue Tits could be rather uncooperative to say the least when they were being extracted from nets and ringed. The Blue Tit has long been associated Falsterbo and for good reason. On 28th September 2003 for example 30,600 were counted on migration while 1,954 of those were ringed alone in the garden. It was also the commonest species caught at this location during my time.

Dermot Breen

Note: Dermot's article included splendid graphs which unfortunately I could not include. His article with graphs will be put on the website. NS

BIRDS IN POETRY

The poet Charles Baudelaire was once described as "a demon-haunted dandy" but he still managed to secure his place as the major figure of 19th century French poetry. The poem featured is one of the few he wrote with a nature theme.

Pat Finnegan

OWLS

Under black yews that protect them
the owls perch in a row
like alien gods whose red eyes
glitter. They meditate.

Petrified, they will perch there till
the melancholy hour
when the slanting sun is ousted,
and darkness settles down.

From their posture, the wise
learn to shun, in this world at least,
motion and commotion;

impassioned by passing shadows,
man will always be scourged
for trying to change his place.

Charles Baudelaire

Translated by Richard Howard

(Acknowledgement Everyman – *On Wings of Song*)

THE LONG-EARED OWL

Among the most secretive of our native birds little is known about the status and distribution of the Long-eared Owl in Ireland. Population estimates vary from 500 – 1800 pairs

but numbers are probably less well known than any other species of raptor or owl in Ireland. They are known to breed throughout the county and have been recorded breeding as far west as Roundstone and as close to Galway city as Dangan in recent years. Though they are known to breed in both deciduous and coniferous woodland they appear to favour the latter in Ireland. Plantations of Sitka Spruce surrounded by farmland or rough grassland hold a particular attraction for Long-eared Owls and a large majority of our breeding pairs are probably located in such habitat. Smaller copses of Scots Pine, Birch and mixed woodland are also favoured nesting sites.

Being strictly nocturnal it does not easily lend itself to observation or study. March, however, presents an excellent opportunity to gain some insight into the breeding status of this secretive bird. March sees the pre-breeding call of the Long-eared Owl reach its climax with males advertising themselves and defending territories. The territorial song of the male consists of a series of deep hooting "oh" sounds repeated at 2-3 second intervals. The call of the female can best be compared to the noise of blowing through paper held over a comb. Between 30-40 hoots are usually given before the male engages in a display flight, often involving wing clapping, around its territory. Long-eared Owls tend to call from, or near to, the woodland edge and it is here they should be looked and listened for. In early March males may begin to call from dusk onwards. By positioning yourself near a suitable woodland edge you may be lucky enough to encounter this beautiful bird. Choose a still, dry night to give yourself the best chance and give yourself two to three hours at a particular site. Should anyone be lucky enough to locate any birds could I request that they please pass on any details to me in person or to any committee member as it is hoped to organise a survey for 2007 and any preliminary records would be most welcome

Anghus O'Donail

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Saturday 4 February: Short outing at Nimmo's Pier, Galway, 10.30am.

Sunday 12 February: BirdWatch walk in Coole Park, 11am. Children and adults welcome.

Wednesday 15 February: Committee/members meeting, Anno Santo Hotel, Threadneedle Road, Salthill, 8pm. All members are welcome to attend!

Friday 3 March: talk by Eric Dempsey on "Birding in the Andes of Ecuador", Anno Santo Hotel, 8pm.

Saturday 4 March: Outing at Nimmo's Pier, 10.30am. and Galway Bay count at 10am.

Wednesday 15 March: Committee/members meeting, Anno Santo Hotel, 8pm.

Saturday 1 April: Short outing at Nimmo's Pier, 10.30am.

Wednesday 19 April: Committee/members meeting, Anno Santo Hotel, 8pm.

Saturday 6 May: Short outing at Nimmo's Pier, 10.30am.

Sunday 14 May: National Dawn Chorus Day, meet at the car park of the NUIG Dangan Sports Grounds, 5am.

Weekend outings (Provisional only):

May - Wales (RSPB reserves, ospreys, kites, honey buzzards etc):

June - Inishbofin (omcrakes)

For details attend any of the above events nearer the time.

BirdWatch Galway (Branch of BirdWatch Ireland)

A QUARTERLY BIRD REPORT BY TIM GRIFFIN & CHRIS PEPPIATT

4th Quarter 2005

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

DATE OF ISSUE: 12th February 2006

Species	Location	No	Date	Observer	Species	Location	No	Date	Observer
Ruff	Rahasane Turlough		1 01.10.05	TG	Ring-billed Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway	4 (3 Ad. & 1-2nd W)	17.12.05	DB
Little Egret	Rahasane Turlough		1 01.10.05	MD & TG	Mediterranean Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway	1st W.	17.12.05	DB
Greenland White-fronted Goose	Rahasane Turlough	13	01.10.05	MD & TG	Blackcap	Luimnagh, Lough Corrib	1 pair	18.12.05	DC
Leach's Petrel	Dooraspark, Nr. Traught		1 01.10.05	TG	Crossbill	Canrawer, Oughterard		2 20.12.05	AO'D
Goldeneye	Menlo	2	02.10.05	TG	Peregrine	Curraghline, Lough Corrib	2	22.12.05	AO'D
Little Egret	Rossaveal	1	03.10.05	TG	Hen Harrier	Curraghline, Lough Corrib	Ringtail	22.12.05	AO'D
Crossbill	Cloosh Wood	8	07.10.05	TG	Little Gull	Menlo	1st W.	23.12.05	CP
Garden Warbler	Ringed Nr. Milltown, Tuam	1	08.10.05	CB	Blackcap	Newcastle, Galway	F	23.12.05	SB
Ruff	Rahasane Turlough	1	08.10.05	TG	Purple Sandpiper	Salthill Prom., Galway	2	25.12.05	CP (9)
Golden Plover	Rahasane Turlough	1,800	09.10.05	PC	Waxwing	Tirellan, Galway	4	27.12.05	TC
Black-tailed Godwit	Rahasane Turlough	51	09.10.05	PC	Siskin	Lough Cutra	12	27.12.05	CP
Peregrine	Rahasane Turlough	1	09.10.05	PC	Iceland Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway	Ad.	28.12.05	Many obs.
Ring-billed Gull	Waterside	2ndW	09.10.05	TG	American Herring Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway	3rd W	29.12.05	PL (10)
Whimbrel	Furbo	1	10.10.05	JG	Glaucous Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway	3rd W	29.12.05	PL
Merlin	Silver Strand	1	10.10.05	TG	Hen Harrier	Menlo	3 ringtail	30.12.05	CP
Crossbill	Cloosh Wood	10	11.10.05	TG	Glaucous Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway	2nd W	30.12.05	CP
Wheatear	Baile na hAbhann	1	11.10.05	TG	Kumlien's Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway	3rd W	31.12.05	DB
Swallow	Baile na hAbhann	3	11.10.05	TG	Iceland Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway	1st W.	31.12.05	DB
Redwing	Nr. Milltown, Tuam	21	12.10.05	CB	Glaucous Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway	2 (2ndW & 3rd W)	31.12.05	DB
Arctic Skua	Silver Strand	1	12.10.05	TG					
Jay	Silver Strand	1	13.10.05	TG					
Great Northern Diver	Silver Strand	17	13.10.05	TG					
Peregrine	Lough Coy, Peterswell	1	16.10.05	PC					
Barn Owl	Ardrahan	1	16.10.05	AO'D					
Greenland White-fronted Goose	Rahasane Turlough	74	18.10.05	TG	OTHER BEASTIES				
Ruff	Oranmore	1	19.10.05	AO'D	Otter	Nimmo's Pier, Galway	1	09.11.05	JG
Ruff	Rahasane Turlough	2	21.10.05	MD					
Hen Harrier	Nr. Milltown, Tuam	Ringtail	22.10.05	CB					
Red-throated Diver	Traught	3	22.10.05	TG					
Common Scoter	Glenivegh	46	22.10.05	TG					
Long-tailed Duck	Lough Atalia	M	23.10.05	TG					
Hen Harrier	Curraghline, Lough Corrib	F	23.10.05	TG					
Sandwich Tern	Silver Strand	1	23.10.05	TG					
Merlin	Luimnagh, Lough Corrib	1	26.10.05	DC					
Red Grouse	Between Spiddal and Oughterard	1	26.10.05	AO'D					
Jack Snipe	Leam West Nature Reserve, Maam Cross	2	27.10.05	AO'D					
Hen Harrier	Balindiff Bay, Luimnagh, Lough Corrib	F	28.10.05	JGa					
Merlin	Curraghline, Lough Corrib	F	29.10.05	AO'D					
Hen Harrier	Curraghline, Lough Corrib	2 (A F & Juv. M)	29.10.05	AO'D	ABBREVIATIONS				
Brambling	Nr. Milltown, Tuam	1	30.10.05	CB					
Hen Harrier	Luimnagh, Lough Corrib	F	31.10.05	DC	Juv. = Juvenile; Imm. = Immature; A = Adult; W = Winter; M = male; F = female.				
Whooper Swan	Lough Rea	6	31.10.05	PC					
Snow Bunting	Nr. golf course, Salthill, Galway	1	02.11.05	SC					
Twite	Salthill Prom., Galway	3	04.11.05	AO'D	NOTES				
Greenland White-fronted Goose	Rostaff Lake	16	05.11.05	CK					
Franklin's Gull	Rossaveal	1stW	10.11.05	AO'D (1)	(1) This bird was present in the area until 20.11.05 at least.				
Little Egret	Rossaveal	4	10.11.05	CoB	(2) This bird was again present on 18.11.05.				
Brambling	Rossaveal	F	12.11.05	DB	(3) This bird, an individual different from that at Nimmo's Pier, was present in the area until 10.12.05.				
Ring-billed Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway	A	12.11.05	DB	(4) This bird was present until 29.11.04.				
Laughing Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway	AW	12.11.05	DCh (2)	(5) This bird was present at Westside, Galway on 28.11.05 (MD).				
Greenland White-fronted Goose	Rostaff Lake	29	15.11.05	CK	(6) This bird was still present on 31.12.05.				
Common Sandpiper	Mount Ross, Lough Corrib	1	15.11.05	NS & RT	(7) This bird was still present on 31.12.05.				
Jay	Cloosh Wood	2	17.11.05	AO'D	(8) This bird was still present on 31.12.05.				
Goshawk	Lough Corrib	1	17.11.05	AO'D	(9) These birds were again present on 30.12.05.				
Jay	Lough Corrib	5	17.11.05	AO'D	(10) This bird was present until 31.12.05.				
Hen Harrier	Menlo	2(A & Imm. F)	18.11.05	CP					
Laughing Gull	Waterside, Galway	A W	18.11.05	DB (3)					
Waxwing	Tirellan, Galway	1	19.11.05	TC (4)					
Laughing Gull	Oranmore Bay	1st W.	19.11.05	DB (5)					
Red-necked Grebe	Dooraspark, Nr. Traught	1	19.11.05	TG					
Greenland White-fronted Goose	Rostaff Lake	39	19.11.05	CK					
Ring-billed Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway	A	20.11.05	CP					
Greenland White-fronted Goose	Rahasane Turlough	100	20.11.05	PC					
Whooper Swan	Rahasane Turlough	75	20.11.05	PC					
Balckcap	Rahasane Turlough	1 pair	20.11.05	PC					
Peregrine	Rahasane Turlough	1	20.11.05	PC	CONTRIBUTORS				
Ferruginous Duck	Coole Lough	M	24.11.05	SG & JGe (6)					
Forster's Tern	Nimmo's Pier, Galway	A W	26.11.05	PL (7)	BINS = Birds of Ireland News Service; CB = Chris Benson; TG = Tim Griffin;				
Hen Harrier	Oughterard	M	26.11.05	ROB	MD = Michael Davis; PD = Pam Davis; DC = Deirdre Comerford;				
Laughing Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway	2nd W	03.12.05	DB (8)	DB = Dermot Breen; BD = Brendan Dunne; SC = Seamus Cuddy;				
Ring Ouzel	Carragh Hill, Salthill	1	03.12.05	PD	JGa = John Gallagher; JG = Jo Gordon; NS = Neil Sharkey; TC = Tom Cuffe;				
Waxwing	Rahasane Turlough	20	03.12.05	per BINS	AO'D = Aonghus O'Donail; CP = Chris Peppiatt; CK = Christian Kubernat;				
Brambling	Glenard Crescent, Salthill	1	14.12.05	BD	CoB = Con Breen; DCh = Derek Charles; PL = Pat Lonergan;				
Merlin	Menlo	1	16.12.05	CP	PC = Pete Capsey; RT = Roger Taylor; ROB = Ruaidhrí Ó Béarra				
Sandwich Tern	Nimmo's Pier, Galway	6	17.12.05	DB	SG = Sean Geraghty; JGe = Joe Geraghty; SB = Stephen Burke.				