



CAIRDE EANLAITH NA GAILLIMHE
BIRDWATCH GALWAY
www.birdwatchgalway.org
QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER – EDITOR: NEIL SHARKEY
Telephone: 086 1680856 e-mail:neilsharkey@eircom.net
Issue No. 53 2/2006 1 May 2006

This is a local newsletter. To help us keep distribution costs down we ask that you agree to receive it by e-mail. Over 150 members and others are now doing so. Please send me your E-mail address if not done so already.

THOUGHT FROM THE CHAIR

Although the earlier migrants (e.g. Wheatear, Sand Martin and Sandwich Tern) begin to arrive in March, April is the month that sees the arrival of all but the latest species and May is the time by which the numbers have built up. Singing birds become apparent to most people in May. You can see the earliest dates of the migrants that have arrived in Galway on our web site at <http://www.birdwatchgalway.org/migrants.htm>.

Many people love to hear the easily recognisable call of the Cuckoo and the first in the county was seen on April the 15th this year. Connemara and the Aran Islands are strongholds of the Cuckoo, but I hear of them in other parts of Galway much less frequently. The biodiversity unit of Clare County Council is collecting records of all of the places in Clare that Cuckoos have been heard and it would be interesting if Galway members could send records of the times and places that they saw the Cuckoo in Galway this spring (chris.peppiatt@iol.ie). CP

ROUGH LEGGED HAWK

On a family visit to Wexford in early November, 2005, I managed to extricate myself for a day. It was Wednesday, 2 November.

I was on The North Slob before 11.30 a.m. – with not a single white-fronted goose to be seen! After an hour or so I was in the hide on the access road, viewing the main channel when a man came in. We got talking and he asked had I heard about the rough-legged hawk found in County Clare – I had and mentioned I had heard it was to be released on the North Slob that week. He looked at his watch and said 'In about 20 minutes, would you like to see it?' Do cows eat grass!!! Killian Mullarney, for it was he, offered me a lift back to the center. There I joined a group of about a dozen.

A few minutes later, some people walked towards us with screeching emanating from their midst – the hawk had arrived. One man sat down with the bird, took various measurements and ringed it. He held it where those watching could see, photographs were taken. All the while the bird was screeching. The man who had found the hawk was to actually release it. When he took hold of the hawk it immediately stopped screeching!

He and two others got into a 4x4 and headed for some trees about a quarter of a mile roughly north-east of the Observation Tower, everyone else was in the Tower. When they arrived, the man with the hawk held out his right arm and eased his grip. The hawk hopped onto his extended arm, stayed a while then flew to a gate pillar nearby for a few seconds. It took off, gaining height flew northwards, tracked by 'scopes and binoculars – and for a while, by two crows. Just before it was lost to view, it apparently veered eastwards.

I left the Slob as it got dark, after a very enjoyable, and unexpected, day – I still had not seen a single white-fronted goose, other than those on the pond in front on the center.

On the Friday morning, from my bedroom window in a farmhouse in south Wexford, I was treated to my first black redstarts – a pair on the roof of a shed, twenty-five feet from me, for about thirty seconds. Five minutes later a blackcap appeared in a bush nearby.

That afternoon, I went for a ramble around the farm, including a visit to the quarry. Someone on the Slob told me of a pair of Peregrines in a quarry in south Wexford. As he figured out how to direct me to it, I described it to him! My cousins own it. A couple of years ago I had the briefest glimpse of a bird of prey there, but couldn't identify it. This time I had a good view of the pair.

Brendan Dunne

BIRD RACE

On Sat April 8th we held another of our occasional Bird Race events. For those of you not familiar with the concept the idea is for teams to try and record the highest possible number of species within a defined 24 hour period – mostly dawn to dusk but for the super enthusiastic it can include hours for darkness for owls etc. In our case the area visited is confined to County Galway. We have held those intermittently over many years sometimes in winter but more usually in April or May.

In the recent event there were four teams – Team A (as in Aonghus) was Aonghus O Donnell and Padraic Reaney; Team B (as in Breen) was Dermot Breen and Chris Peppiatt; Team C (for Cate) was Mary Finnegan, Neil Sharkey, Pat Finnegan and Marianne ten Cate. Finally Team D (David) was a count for Inishbofin only by David O Keefe and Eoin Bresnihan

Team A covered themselves in glory with the magic total of 100 species seen between dawn and dusk on the day. Team B came a close second with a very creditable 95. – the second highest ever achieved in these events.

Team C were very much down the field. Taking their cue from the 'have a nice day' motto they commenced with coffee at 10.30am in front parlour luxury then an hour or so of hard recording before being unable to resist 'calling (on) a friend' as they passed within hailing distance. From there it was more or less time to head for the lunch break again in drawing room comfort. After all of that they came up with a creditable 65 total and were easily the winners of the 'most birds per hours of searching' category!

Team D did Inishbofin proud with an excellent total of 33 species for the island.

The 'bird of the day' was the Red Grouse for which Padraic Reaney must get an individual best credit. The high totals beat previous years' figures of 90 in 1995 and 88 in 2003. On the day a total of 118 species were recorded overall. This shows that there is potential for higher totals and 105 must be the next target at least for the more enthusiastic. Team C will plan how they can increase house visits!

Well done everybody

NS

BIRDS IN POETRY

The American poet Theodore Roethke was featured in this column some years ago with his poem *Siskins*. He visited Ireland on several occasions and once spent a holiday on Inishbofin. That visit is commemorated by a fine bronze sculpture of John Behan's in Day's pub. *The Heron* is a finely constructed poem of precise description and, unusually for modern poetry, it rhymes or near rhymes.

Pat Finnegan

THE HERON

The heron stands in water where the swamp
Has deepened to the blackness of a pool,
Or balances with one leg on a hump
Of marsh grass heaped above a musk-rat hole.

He walks the shallow with an antic grace.
The great feet break the ridges of the sand,
The long eye notes the minnow's hiding place.
His beak is quicker than a human hand.

He jerks a frog across his bony lip,
Then points his heavy bill above the wood.
The wide wings flap but once to lift him up.
A single ripple starts from where he stood.

Theodore Roethke - Collected Poems
published by Faber & Faber

GALWAY BREEDING BIRDS SURVEY 2004/06

The spring of 2006 saw the third year of the survey of the breeding birds of Galway City. For the purposes of the survey the city has been divided up into 24 tetrads. A tetrad is a square with sides two kilometres long (i.e. a group of four one kilometre by one kilometre squares). In each tetrad that is surveyed, a volunteer (or volunteers) visits the tetrad at least once in April-May and at least once in June-July. Birds are recorded as being present, probable breeders, or confirmed breeders in each tetrad.

Some of the species recorded during the April to July period probably have not bred (e.g. some late staying winter waders in spring and some waders that begin their return migration July) and seabirds are taken to have bred if their nests or chicks are seen. This list includes birds like Black-tailed Godwit, Turnstone, Dunlin, Pomarine Skua, Storm Petrel and Black Guillemot. However, a total of 94 species have been recorded during the first two years, with 87 recorded in 2004 and 80 in 2005. During the two years work so far, a total of 55 species have been confirmed as breeding in the city. Interesting breeders include Dipper, Raven, Whinchat, Common Tern, Grey Heron, Herring Gull, Lapwing and Wheatear.

Other birds that probably did breed during the last two summers, but that are difficult to confirm include Barn Owl, Grasshopper Warbler, Chiffchaff, Cuckoo, Yellowhammer and Spotted Flycatcher. Among the birds that have not been recorded at all, but may have been overlooked, Woodcock and Long-eared Owl (bred in 2000) stand out as strong possibilities from the patches of woodland that still exist at the fringes of town. The most productive tetrads, predictably, were at the fringes of the city and there was considerable overlap with the 'Areas of High Biodiversity value' mentioned in the Galway City Habitat Inventory that was compiled in 2004.

Some of the 24 tetrads are mainly taken up by parts of Galway Bay and, as one might expect, less species are found in these areas than in tetrads that contain a wider variety of habitats. All 24 tetrads were fully recorded during 2004, but only 16 during 2005 (although there were some casual observations from some of the other eight tetrads). Even though it is now late in the season, there are still some tetrads for which there are no volunteers this year, so if you are interested, please contact chris.peppiatt@iol.ie. Casual records are also welcomed, so your records of the Long-eared Owl down the lane, the Spotted Flycatcher in the nestbox you put up, or of any nests that you have seen in your garden will all be gratefully received.

FORTHCOMING PROGRAMME

Sunday 30 April: outing to Belclare Woodland. Meet at 12noon at Belclare school.

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

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

Wednesday 17 May, committee/members meeting, Anno Santo Hotel, 8pm.

9-11 June: outing to Inishbofin. For booking and details contact Marianne at 091-552519, 087-2378051 or mariannetencate@eircom.net.

Wednesday 21 June: committee/members meeting. Phone for venue details.

BirdWatch Galway (Branch of BirdWatch Ireland)

A QUARTERLY BIRD REPORT BY TIM GRIFFIN & CHRIS PEPPIATT

1st Quarter 2006

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

DATE OF ISSUE: 24th May 2006

Species	Location	No	Date	Observer	Species	Location	No	Date	Observer
Ferruginous Duck	Coole Lough		M 01.01.06	Many obs. (1)	Little Gull	Rusheen Bay, Galway	3AW	04.03.06	AOD & CP
Forster's Tern	Nimmo's Pier, Galway		AW 01.01.06	Many obs. (2)	Glaucous Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway	1	04.03.06	Many Obs.
Laughing Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway		2ndW 01.01.06	Many obs. (3)	Iceland Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway	1	04.03.06	Many Obs.
Kumlien's Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway		3rdW 01.01.06	Many obs. (4)	Ring-billed Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway	2A	04.03.06	Many Obs.
Sandwich Tern	Nimmo's Pier, Galway		1 01.01.06	Many obs. (5)	Little Egret	Inner Galway Bay SPA	5	04.03.06	Many Obs.
American Herring Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway		3rdW 02.01.06	Many obs. (6)	Hen Harrier	Formoyle, Connemara	2M	05.03.06	PR
Ring-billed Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway		2ndW 02.01.06	MD	Jack Snipe	Mutton Island, Galway	1	06.03.06	MD
Iceland Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway		1 02.01.06	TG	Little Gull	Mutton Island, Galway	4	06.03.06	TG
Glaucous Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway		1 02.01.06	TG	Siskin	Knocknacarra	9	07.03.06	TG
Mediterranean Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway		AW 04.01.06	TG	Siskin	Moycullen	29	09.03.06	PR
Little Egret	Rossaveal		2 05.01.06	TG	Purple Sandpiper	Inverin	25	10.03.06	TG
Little Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway		A 06.01.06	TG	Crossbill	Cloosh	11	10.03.06	TG
Siskin	Knocknacarra		5 06.01.06	TG	Little Gull	Galway Docks	1	11.03.06	TG
Little Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway		2(AW & 1stW) 07.01.06	TG	Crossbill	Cloosh	12	14.03.06	TG
Red-necked Grebe	Traught		1 07.01.06	TG (7)	Scaup	Angliham, Lough Corrib	70+	15.03.06	TG
Brambling	Glenard Cres., Salthill, Galway		2 07.01.06	BD	Twite	Nimmo's Pier, Galway	3	16.03.06	TC (11)
Long-tailed Duck	Traught		2 07.01.06	TG	Common Sandpiper	Ballynakill Lough, Nr. Gort	1	17.03.06	CP
Whooper Swan	Moylough		29 10.01.06	TB	Wheatear	Nimmo's Pier, Galway	1	18.03.06	TG
Greenland White-fronted Goose	Rahasane Turlough		100 11.01.06	PC	Mediterranean Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway	A	19.03.06	TG
Golden Plover	Rahasane Turlough		5,000 11.01.06	PC	Manx Shearwater	Baile na hAbhann	26	27.03.06	TG
Black-tailed Godwit	Rahasane Turlough		94 11.01.06	PC	Twite	Nimmo's Pier, Galway	4	28.03.06	TC
Peregrine	Rahasane Turlough		2 11.01.06	PC	Sand Martin	Angliham, Lough Corrib	5	28.03.06	TG
Chiffchaff	Rahasane Turlough		1 11.01.06	PC	Swallow	Moycullen	2	29.03.06	AOD
Little Egret	Rusheen Bay, Galway		1 13.01.06	KO'L					
Dipper	Cappagh, Galway		1 13.01.06	KO'L					
Little Egret	Dunkellin River		1 14.01.06	TG					
Waxwing	Tudor Lawn, Galway		4 15.01.06	PG					
Barn Owl	Kiniska, Claregalway		1 15.01.06	TMcC					
Common Buzzard	Nr. Claregalway		1 16.01.06	TMcC					
Red Grouse	between Spiddal and Moycullen		Pair 17.01.06	PRo					
Common Buzzard	Nr. Moycullen		1 17.01.06	PRo					
Great Northern Diver	Nr. Inchiquin Is., Lough Corrib		1 17.01.06	DC & NS					
Ring-billed Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway		A 17.01.06	TG					
Jack Snipe	Lough Bofin		1 18.01.06	AOD					
Woodcock	Nr. Oughterard		1 19.01.06	AOD					
Siskin	Lough Cútra		15 21.01.06	CP					
Long-eared Owl	Bushypark, Galway		1 21.01.06	AOD					
Hen Harrier	Island Eddy, Galway Bay		F 21.01.06	TG					
Black-headed Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway		Leucistic 21.01.06	TG (8)	ABBREVIATIONS				
Glaucous X Herring Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway		Hybrid 21.01.06	TG					
Merlin	Nimmo's Pier, Galway		1 25.01.06	TG	Juv. = Juvenile; A = Adult; W = Winter; M = male; F = female.				
Crossbill	Oughterard		3 26.01.06	AOD					
Scaup	Lough Atalia, Galway		14 28.01.06	NE					
Common Sandpiper	Lough Atalia, Galway		1 28.01.06	NE	NOTES				
Ruff	Rahasane Turlough		3 28.01.06	JM					
Greylag Goose	Traught		1 28.01.06	TG & JM	1 = The bird from 2005 was present until at least 28.02.06.				
Little Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway		1 28.01.06	TG	2 = The bird from 2005 was present until at least 27.03.06.				
Little Egret	Island Eddy, Galway Bay		1 28.01.06	TG	3 = The bird from 2005 was present until at least 26.02.06.				
Snowy Owl	Nr. Spiddal		Juv.F 31.01.06	AOD	4 = The bird from 2005 was present until at least 19.02.06.				
Blackcap	Tirellan, Galway		2(M&F) 01.02.06	TC	5 = 1-5 birds in the Nimmo's Pier area all winter.				
Chiffchaff	Tirellan, Galway		1 01.02.06	TC	6 = The bird from 2005 was also seen on 25.02.06; 07.03.06 & 27.03.06.				
Purple Sandpiper	Blackrock, Salthill, Galway		3 01.02.06	TG	7 = The bird from 2005 was also seen on 27.02.06 & 04.03.06				
Little Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway		1 02.02.06	TG	8 = In Traught/Dooruspark area, same obs.				
Crossbill	Canrawer, Oughterard		7 03.02.06	AOD	9 = Long staying bird, also seen 02.02.06.				
Ruff	Rahasane Turlough		1 04.02.06	JM	10 = This bird was present until at least 04.03.06.				
Hen Harrier	Curraghline, Lough Corrib		Ringtail 05.02.06	AOD	11 = This bird was present until the end of the quarter.				
Hen Harrier	Nr. Kilchreest		M 11.02.06	PC					
Ring-necked Duck	Nr. Portumna		1 11.02.06	PKe & AK					
Long-tailed Duck	Traught		12 11.02.06	TG					
Mediterranean Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway		A 12.02.06	TG					
Little Egret	Renville		9 13.02.06	TF					
Greylag Goose	Lough Inagh		15 16.02.06	JK					
Iceland Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway		2(A&1stW) 19.02.06	Many Obs.					
Ring-billed Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway		3(2A&2ndW) 19.02.06	Many Obs.					
Black Redstart	Mutton Island causeway, Galway		1 19.02.06	HD (9)					
Red Grouse	Maumtrasna, Galway/Mayo border		1 26.02.06	PK	CONTRIBUTORS				
Iceland Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway		A 26.02.06	Many Obs.					
Ring-billed Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway		3AW 26.02.06	Many Obs.	MD = Michael Davis; TG = Tim Griffin; BD = Brendan Dunne; TB = Tomás Burke;				
Blackbird	Parkmore Ind. Est., Galway		Newly fledged bird 27.02.06	PK	PC = Pete Capsey; KO'L = Karen O'Leary; PG = Paddy Grealley; TMcC = Tommy McCarthy;				
Yellowhammer	Ballagh, Galway		1 27.02.06	PK	PRo = Pat Roberts; DC = Deirdre Comerford; NS = Neil Sharkey; AOD = Aonghus O'Donail;				
Mediterranean Gull	Rossaveal		A 27.02.06	TG	CP = Chris Peppiatt; NE = Neil Ellis; JM = John Murphy; TC = Tom Cuffe;				
Purple Sandpiper	Inverin		8 28.02.06	TG	PKe = Paul Kelly; AK = Andrea Kelly; TF = Tom Flanagan; JK = Joe Kavanagh;				
Marsh Harrier	Curraghline, Lough Corrib		F 02.03.06	AOD (10)	HD = Hugh Delaney; PK = Pádraig Keirns; JGa = John Gallagher; PR = Pádraic Reaney.				
Pochard	Menlo		Leucistic 02.03.06	TG					
Hen Harrier	Angliham, Lough Corrib		Juv. 03.03.06	JGa & TG					