



**CAIRDE EANLAITH NA GAILLIMHE
BIRDWATCH GALWAY**

www.birdwatchgalway.org
QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER – EDITOR: NEIL SHARKEY
Telephone: 086 1680856 e-mail: neilsharkey@eircom.net
Issue No. 56/07 Feb 07

The purpose of this newsletter is to give BirdWatch Galway members and supporters news and information of a local and topical nature.

THOUGHT FROM THE CHAIR

I always look forward to this time of year. Although there is always the possibility that winter will have a sting in its tail, the days are getting noticeably longer and we can look to the clocks going forward and the bright evenings. The first of the migrants will not be with us until early March; Wheatear, Chiffchaff and Sandwich Tern (even though there are small numbers of the last two species that stay in Galway for the winter). However, the resident birds like Chaffinch and Dunnock can already be heard singing for all they are worth whenever the sun comes out and the early breeders- Grey Heron ('Crane'), Raven and Crossbill- are well into their breeding seasons.

The last of the Galway Bay counts takes place on the 3rd of March; if you would like to take part, please contact us. This count is part of I-WeBS, the winter waterbird survey, which ends in March. BirdWatch Ireland also runs surveys during the summer, the Countryside Bird survey records all types of birds in selected kilometre squares between april and July. Volunteers are needed to survey squares in Co. Galway this summer. If you are interested, contact the Galway branch, or Dick Coombes at (rcoombes@birdwatchireland.ie).

Finally, there has been an outbreak of the H5N1 avian 'flu at a turkey farm in England recently. However, it has been determined that this outbreak was caused by processed poultry imported from Hungary, and was not contracted from wild birds in England. There have not been any recent confirmed cases of this strain of avian 'flu in wild birds found close to Ireland. We can only hope that this remains to be the case and that the disease does not become easily transmissible to humans

AGM

BIRDS IN POETRY

The poems of the New England poet Mary Oliver have featured in this column before with their striking imagery and deep understanding of the beauty and cruelty of nature.

Pat Finnegan

HAWK

This morning
the hawk
rose up
out of the meadow's browse
and swung over the lake –
it settled
on the small black dome
of a dead pine,
alert as an admiral,
its profile
distinguished with sideburns
the color of smoke,
and I said: remember
this is not something
of the red fire, this is
heaven's fistful
of death and destruction,
and the hawk hooked
one exquisite foot
onto a last twig
to look deeper
into the yellow reeds
along the edges of the water
the tree, the cave,
the white lily of resurrection,
and that's when it simply lifted
its golden feet and floated
into the wind, belly-first,
and then it cruised along the lake –
all the time its eyes fastened
harder than love on some
unimportant rustling in the
yellow reeds – and then it
seemed to crouch high in the air, and then it
turned into a white blade, which fell.

Mary Oliver

Taken from *On Wings of Song, poems about birds*,
Everyman's Library Pocket Poets.

We held our AGM on Wed Jan 17. It was well attended and chairperson Chris Peppiatt presented a very comprehensive annual report for 2006. Deirdre Comerford gave the financial summary. The existing people agreed to continue their roles for another year. Thanks were offered to all involved in the past year – to Chris for keeping the show on the road – Pat Finnegan who organised our series of talks, Marianne for indefatigable work in so many ways and indeed all others concerned. If you are not named please do not feel that your involvement was not appreciated! Committee membership and active participation is not an exclusive calling – any and all interested in birds are earnestly asked to come along to committee meetings and get involved.

NS

STRAITS OF MESSINA
24th April – 4th May 2006

The 3.1km stretch of water between the Straits of Messina of Sicily and Calabria peninsula of mainland Italy is one of the main migration routes for many European birds of prey each year. Species that are unable to cross-large expanses of water because of the lack of thermals, will always stick as near to land as possible. The Tunisia – Sicily – Italy route. This offers the best option for these species wishing to migrate through centre of the Mediterranean Sea. Because of its location and "tradition", large numbers of birds of prey were shot every spring on Sicily. Thanks to the efforts of a few brave locals such as Anna Giordano and volunteers, no shooting of birds of prey has occurred in recent years. So along with two other Irish birders, I volunteered at migration



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camp to act as deterrent to poachers and to monitor numbers of raptors and storks moving through during our ten-day stay. The daily routine involved heading up into one of the many hills or occasionally to the coast. We would remain there from about ten in the morning until six or so in the evening, counting everything that passed our position. It was often quite cold and usually very windy in the mountains, not what one would expect for the middle of the Mediterranean Sea. Along with a fair number of Italians there were also Spanish, English, Maltese (they still have a serious shooting problem), Swedish and Finnish volunteers also present at the camp. It was a great experience to get to grips with some of the more southerly species of raptors, which I hadn't seen in Sweden the previous autumn.

The most numerous raptors were of course the Honey Buzzards. On one particular day we had 3,000 moving through in two hours, an amazing sight. Some of the birds were extremely low on some occasions as they battled up the mountainsides. It was easy to see how poachers could pick them off with ease from their concrete bunkers (very macho). Other common species moving through were Marsh Harriers, Black Kites, Eurasian Kestrels and Red-footed Falcons, the last species being new for me. Some of the scarcer species included Egyptian & Griffon Vulture, Short-toed, Booted & Golden Eagle, Pallid Harrier, "Steppe" & Long-legged Buzzard, Lesser Kestrel and Eleonora's Falcon.

While out each day local breeding and migrant species were of course seen. Cetti's, Fan-tailed and Sardinian Warblers and Serins seem to be absolutely everywhere we went. Some other more notable species (mostly ticks for me) were Cory's, Levantine's Shearwater, Rock Partridge (of the endemic *whitakeri* race), Kentish Plover, Audouin's Gulls (couldn't forget the gulls!), Gull-billed Tern, Scops Owl (heard only), Alpine & Pallid Swifts, Bee-eaters, Eurasian Hoopoe, Short-toed & Crested Lark, Tawny & Red-throated Pipit, Black-eared Wheatear, Dartford

Warbler, Short-toed Treecreeper, Spotless Starling, Cirl & Rock Bunting.

On 28th April we had a day trip out to Vulcano Island, which still has an active volcano. When we arrived out there the place was alive with passerine migrants especially Whinchats. Highlights of the day were Temminck's and Little Stints together, Nightjar (flushed in broad daylight), Black-headed Wagtail, Blue Rock Thrush, Great Reed, Wood & Subalpine Warblers, Pied Flycatchers, Golden Oriole and Woodchat Shrike.

I struggled with the food at times, as I am not a great fan of cheese. Most dishes had at least one type of cheese in there somewhere of course! Most of the locals were friendly, although we did get a few strange looks from passing local ex-poachers!

Dermot Breen

[BWI GARDEN BIRD SURVEY](#)

A final reminder to those Galway members, taking part in the BirdWatch Ireland Garden Bird survey, to send me a photocopy of the completed form (front and back). With your co-operation I hope to attempt to carry out a mini survey of Co. Galway garden birds. Send to Neil Sharkey, Ellagh, Headford, Co. Galway. Thanks.

NS

[BIRDS GALWAY AND MORE](#)

Finally the web site is up and running. Birds Galway and More is the result of 2 years of photographs totalling over 900 photos and over 72 video clips. Why 2 years? Well since getting a Digital SLR camera for Christmas 2005, I made a commitment to my self to produce a web site to display my photos. The photos I had taken had a limited audience of my family and there is a limit to their participation in viewing the shots of birds. Now I have a world wide audience through the World Wide Web.

The equipment I use is a Konica-Minolta 7D DSLR with a 170-500mm and a 70-300 lens. Some of the photos and most of the video clips are taken with a Nikon Coolpix 880 attached to the Nikon Field Scope, which is known as digiscoping. I have now upgraded the Coolpix 880 to a Nikon CP4, which has improved some of the digiscoping shots and video clips. The Minolta DLSR has now taken over 6,000 photos and only about 500 of those are worth keeping. The advantage of have a digital camera is there is now no expense for film or processing and I now take photos of almost everything that moves some good and some not so good.

I have used four different software programmes to produce the web site.

1. Photoshop Elements 3 for editing the photos.
2. Serif Webplus 10 to create the web site and structure. This programme is a drag and drop programme and no knowledge of web code required. Although some knowledge of web code is a help.
3. JAlbum 6.5 this programme reduces the photo file sizes and forms the album structure as seen on the web site.
4. Coffeecup web video. This software converts the very large video files about 11mb from the Coolpix camera down to less than a mega-bit. Therefore easier to download and view on a home computer.

My intention is to update the web site with recent photos and video clips on a weekly basis. Since going on line I have updated on 4 occasions, usually on Sunday night after the weekend roaming Galway. So make sure you revisit the site from time to time.

To finish this article, which Neil Sharkey persuaded me to write; I would like to thank Marianne ten Cate, Joe Doolan and Killian Mullarney for pointing out both typing and ID errors. If anyone else comes across any errors or something not working correctly please send me an email through the link on the web site. Thank



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you to everyone in advance who view Birds Galway and More.

Tom Cuffe

www.iol.ie/~birdsgalway

SOME RECENT BOOKS

Currently I'm reading Tim Robinson's latest book *Connemara – listening to the wind* (Penguin Ireland). This is written in the same style as his wonderful two volume *Stones of Aran*. It covers the Connemara region centered on Roundstone. In Robinson's faultless prose it ranges seamlessly from scientific information to history to anecdote. Turning every page is an exciting thrill. It is the first of a projected trilogy on Connemara This book is a superb addition to the literature of the area.

During 2006 I was kindly given a copy of *Birds Britannica* by Mark Cocker and Richard Maybury (Chatto and Windus) – for some service rendered so to speak. This is a weighty and expensive volume - certainly not one to bring on a holiday unless you want to incur an excess baggage charge! That said it is a wonderful setting out of bird lore and the kind of fascinating information not available in your ordinary bird guide. The birds are dealt with in the usual scientific order and needless to say the book is illustrated with magnificent photographs and other illustrations. An ideal book choice for a landmark birthday, anniversary or some other notable occasion.

Much more modest in price but equally worthy is William Fiennes *The Snow Geese* (Picador). The writer follows this great bird's annual migration from Texas to the tundra wilderness of Canada. To quote one review – '*The Snow Geese* is studded with constant, small perpetual triumphs' – with which I heartily agree.

NS

Would anyone else like to write of or review some favourite bird or nature book or books?

NEWS

During December and January members of BirdWatch Galway and staff of the National Parks and Wildlife Service repeated the Non-estuarine Waterbird Survey we did during the winter of 1997-98. At the time 21 people took part, this time we relied on 17 people to cover the same 63 stretches of coast between Tully in north Connemara and Spiddle in the south-east. As the weather was extremely inclement during most of December and the earlier part of January it was hard to find the right conditions, both weather-wise and tide-wise, to get the counts done. As a result we had to call in help from two counters working for the national co-ordinator of the project, Helen Boland, to cover four stretches we didn't manage to get to. Their input is, of course, gratefully acknowledged. As is the tremendous effort of the hardy core of branch members who got out there in mostly wet, windy and cold conditions to do what had to be done. Hopefully, the final tally will show the kind of results which make such an exercise worthwhile. The most obvious springing to mind would be the status of the Little Egret. We saw only one of these during the earlier survey while this time the numbers may well be in double figures. But, as not all forms have come back yet, a further analysis of the results will have to wait till the next Newsletter.

Marianne ten Cate

FORTHCOMING PROGRAMME

Wednesday 14 February, committee/members meeting, Anno Santo Hotel, Threadneedle Road, Salthill, 8pm. All members of the Branch are welcome to attend!

Friday 16 February, talk by Dr Kendrew Colhoun, Senior Research Officer ECHA Light-bellied Brent Goose Research Programme WWT, on *Irish Brent Geese* -

International Research Programme. Anno Santo Hotel, 8pm

Friday-Sunday 23-25 February, outing to Northern Ireland (Belfast Lough, Lough Neagh, Strangford Lough) visiting several RSPB and WWT reserves. For booking contact Marianne at 091 552519.

Saturday 3 March, short outing on Nimmo's Pier with Tim Griffin *et al.*, 10.30am.

Saturday 3 March, Galway Bay count. Volunteers, please contact Chris

Wednesday 14 March, committee/members meeting, Anno Santo Hotel, 8pm. Do come!

Friday 23 March, talk by Helen Boland, national co-coordinator of I-WeBS and NEWS counts, "*Out for the Count – Galway's birds and how we count them*". Anno Santo, 8pm.

Saturday 7 April, short outing on Nimmo's Pier with Tim Griffin *et al.*, 10.30am.

Wednesday 18 April, committee/members meeting, Anno Santo Hotel, 8pm.

Saturday 5 May, short outing on Nimmo's Pier with Tim Griffin *et al.*, 10.30am.

BirdWatch Galway (Branch of BirdWatch Ireland)

A QUARTERLY BIRD REPORT BY TIM GRIFFIN & CHRIS PEPPIATT

4th Quarter 2006

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

DATE OF ISSUE: 18th February 2006

Species	Location	No	Date	Observer	Species	Location	No	Date	Observer
American Golden Plover	Ballyconneely		1 Juv. 01.10.06	MD, CP (1)	Marsh Harrier	Luimnagh Bay, Lough Corrib	M	26.11.06	DC
Redwing	over Salthill, Galway City		Several 01.10.06	CP	Yellowhammer	Frenchfort, Oranmore	6	26.11.06	WL
Ring-billed Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City		1 01.10.06	TG	Blackcap	Lower Newcastle, Galway City	3	26.11.06	TB
'Greenland' Wheatear	Grattan Road, Salthill, Galway		1 01.10.06	TG	Hen Harrier	Curraghline, Lough Corrib	5 ringtail	28.11.06	AO'D
Little Egret	Kilcaimin		4 01.10.06	TG	'argentatus' Herring Gull	Rossaveal	2	28.11.06	TG
Spotted Redshank	Kilcaimin		1 01.10.06	TG	Iceland Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City	4	30.11.06	TG
Black Tern	Angliham, Lough Corrib		3 01.10.06	TG	Kingfisher	O'Brien's Bridge, Galway City	1	01.12.06	TC
Arctic Skua	Silver Strand, Galway City		2 02.10.06	TG	Little Gull	Spiddal	1	01.12.06	TG
Crossbill	Cloosh		18 03.10.06	TG	Leach's Petrel	Rossaveal	1	01.12.06	TG
Siskin	Cloosh		37 03.10.06	TG	Leach's Petrel	Blackrock, Salthill, Galway City	1	02.12.06	BD
Black-headed Gull	Grattan Road, Salthill, Galway City		Leuc. 03.10.06	TG	Leach's Petrel	Newtownlynch Pier	4	02.12.06	TG
Little Egret	Traught		3 04.10.06	TG	Iceland Gull	Rossaveal	3-1stW	02.12.06	MD
Arctic Skua	Baile na hAbhainn		6 06.10.06	TG	Glaucous Gull	Rossaveal	2-1stW	02.12.06	MD
Great Skua	Baile na hAbhainn		1 06.10.06	TG	Little Gull	Ballyloughaun, Galway City	Juv.	02.12.06	FF
Little Egret	Tawin		2 07.10.06	NB	Great Skua	Renville, Oranmore	1	02.12.06	FF
Red-throated Diver	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City		2 07.10.06	TG & TC	Leach's Petrel	Renville, Oranmore	5	02.12.06	FF
Marsh Harrier	Curraghline, Lough Corrib		F 07.10.06	TG (2)	Leach's Petrel	Baile na hAbhainn	5	03.12.06	AO'D & MD
Long-eared Owl	Derrydonnell		Dead on road 08.10.06	MO'M	Little Auk	Spiddal Pier	1	03.12.06	AO'D
Glaucous Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City		3rdW 08.10.06	TG	Leach's Petrel	Canragh Hill, Salthill, Galway City	1	03.12.06	MD
'Greenland' Wheatear	Baile na hAbhainn		2 09.10.06	TG	Leach's Petrel	Lough Atalia, Galway City	1	03.12.06	JF & PTR
Hen Harrier	Curraghline, Lough Corrib		F 10.10.06	TG	Kumliens Gull	Rossaveal	1	04.12.06	TG
Arctic Skua	Silver Strand, Galway City		7 10.10.06	TG	Hen Harrier	Luimnagh Bay, Lough Corrib	Ringtail	05.12.06	DC
Common Tern	Angliham, Lough Corrib		3 10.10.06	TG	Leach's Petrel	Baile na hAbhainn	111	05.12.06	AO'D
Peregrine	Wellpark, Galway City		1 12.10.06	NE	Storm Petrel	Baile na hAbhainn	1	05.12.06	AO'D
Mediterranean Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City		A 14.10.06	TG	Iceland Gull	Rossaveal	6	05.12.06	AO'D
Whooper Swan	Rahasane Turlough		4 15.10.06	TG	Leach's Petrel	Blackrock, Salthill, Galway City	4	06.12.06	AO'D
Little Egret	Middle Third, Oranmore		7 17.10.06	NB	Leach's Petrel	Spiddal	3	06.12.06	AO'D
Greenland White-fronted Goose	Rahasane Turlough		4 19.10.06	TG	Hen Harrier	Curraghline, Lough Corrib	4 ringtail	06.12.06	AO'D
Fieldfare	over Salthill, Galway City		Several 19.10.06	JFo	Glaucous Gull	Rossaveal	3-1stW	10.12.06	MD
Long-tailed Duck	Silver Strand, Galway City		2 20.10.06	TG	Glaucous Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City	2-3rdW	10.12.06	MD
Greenland White-fronted Goose	Rahasane Turlough		26 21.10.06	TG	Iceland Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City	4	10.12.06	MD
Hen Harrier	Pollboy Bog, Nr. Ballinasloe		Ringtail 21.10.06	JL	Hen Harrier	Curraghline, Lough Corrib	8	11.12.06	AO'D
Pink-footed Goose	Rahasane Turlough		1 21.10.06	TG	Merlin	Curraghline, Lough Corrib	2	11.12.06	AO'D
Whooper Swan	Rahasane Turlough		14 22.10.06	MIC	Kittiwake	Curraghline, Lough Corrib	Juv.	11.12.06	AO'D
Hen Harrier	Angliham, Lough Corrib		F 22.10.06	TG	Glaucous Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City	A	14.12.06	DB
Chiffchaff	Angliham, Lough Corrib		1 22.10.06	TG	Iceland Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City	4-1stW	14.12.06	DB
Pink-footed Goose	Rahasane Turlough		6 23.10.06	TC	'argentatus' Herring Gull	Rossaveal	1stW	14.12.06	DB
Greenland White-fronted Goose	Rahasane Turlough		40 23.10.06	TC	Hen Harrier	Curraghline, Lough Corrib	5	15.12.06	AO'D
Red Grouse	Knockagarraun, Spiddal		Pair 24.10.06	AO'D	Scaup	Lough Atalia, Galway City	4	17.12.06	TC
Greenland White-fronted Goose	Rahasane Turlough		61 26.10.06	PC	Lapwing	Curraghline, Lough Corrib	5,000	21.12.06	AO'D
Whooper Swan	Rahasane Turlough		30 26.10.06	PC	Smew	Angliham, Lough Corrib	Redhead	21.12.06	AO'D (4)
Gadwall	Rahasane Turlough		2 26.10.06	PC	Kumliens Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City	1	21.12.06	TG
Black-tailed Godwit	Rahasane Turlough		1,200 26.10.06	PC	Glaucous X Herring Gull Hyb.	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City	1-2ndW	21.12.06	TG (5)
Greenshank	Rahasane Turlough		1 26.10.06	PC	Sandwich Tern	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City	4	22.12.06	TG
Peregrine	Rahasane Turlough		2 26.10.06	PC	Red-necked Grebe	Traught	1	23.12.06	TG (6)
Dipper	Barrack Street, Loughrea		1 28.10.06	PC	Long-tailed Duck	Traught	10	23.12.06	TG
Common Rosefinch	Inishbofin		1 29.10.06	per BINS	Mediterranean Gull	Newtownlynch Pier	A	23.12.06	TG
Ring-billed Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City		Ad. 29.10.06	MD	Scaup X Tufted Duck Hyb.	Lough Atalia, Galway City	1	25.12.06	TG
Hen Harrier	Curraghline, Lough Corrib		M 02.11.06	PT	Black-tailed Godwit	Oranmore	80	26.12.06	MD
Purple Sandpiper	Mutton Island, Galway City		1 02.11.06	MD	Red-necked grebe	Traught	1	27.12.06	DB
Hen Harrier	Knockagarraun, Spiddal		Ringtail 02.11.06	AO'D	Slavonian Grebe	Angliham, Lough Corrib	1	27.12.06	TG
Brent Goose	Silver Strand, Galway City		6 04.11.06	TG	Pochard	Angliham, Lough Corrib	Leuc.	27.12.06	TG
Hen Harrier	Menlo		1 04.11.06	TG	Crossbill	Cloosh	3	28.12.06	TG
Little Egret	Traught		10 05.11.06	TG	Black-throated Diver	Newtownlynch Pier	4	29.12.06	TG
Ruff	Rahasane Turlough		1 06.11.06	MD	Hen Harrier	Curraghline, Lough Corrib	5	30.12.06	AO'D
Red Grouse	Keeraunduff Hill, Spiddal		1 08.11.06	AO'D	Mediterranean Gull	Rossaveal	A	31.12.06	TG
Kingfisher	Owenriff R., Oughterard		1 09.11.06	AO'D					
Brent Goose	Tawin		12 09.11.06	NB	ABBREVIATIONS				
Little Egret	Rossaveal		2 09.11.06	CB	Juv. = Juvenile; A = Adult; W = Winter; M = male; F = female; Hyb. = Hybrid; Leuc. = Leucistic.				
Purple Sandpiper	Spiddal Pier		3 10.11.06	AO'D					
Mediterranean Gull	Rossaveal		A 17.11.06	TG	NOTES				
Kittiwake	Rahasane Turlough		1 18.11.06	BP	1 = This bird was first seen in the previous quarter.				
Spotted Redshank	Kilcaimin		3 18.11.06	MD	2 = This bird was present until 10.10.06 at least.				
Common Sandpiper	Lough Atalia, Galway City		1 18.11.06	TG (3)	3 = This bird was present until 17.12.06 at least.				
Hen Harrier	Curraghline, Lough Corrib		6 (3 ringtail; 2M; 2ndW) 19.11.06	AO'D	4 = This bird was seen again on 23.12.06.				
Gadwall	Rostaff Lake, Galway/Mayo border		4 21.11.06	MD	5 = This bird was present again on 27.12.06.				
Long-eared Owl	Kilreekil		1 23.11.06	AO'D	6 = This bird was present until 27.12.06 at least.				
Glaucous Gull	Mutton Island, Galway City		1stW 23.11.06	MD					
Iceland Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City		2-1stW 23.11.06	TG	CONTRIBUTORS				
Barnacle Goose	west over Mutton Island, Galway City		7 24.11.06	MD	MD = Michael Davis; TG = Tim Griffin; CP = Chris Peppiatt; NE = Neil Ellis;				
Glaucous Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City		1stW 24.11.06	MD	PC = Pete Capsey; DB = Dermot Breen; MO'M = Mark O'Mahoney;				
Ring-billed Gull	Nimmo's Pier, Galway City		2ndW 24.11.06	MD	BD = Brendan Dunne; AO'D = Aonghus O'Donail; TC = Tom Cuffe.				
Iceland Gull	Ballyloughaun, Galway City		1stW 25.11.06	MD	BP = Bill Principe; NB = Neil Butterfield; JL = Justin Lohan; JFo = Joe Foley				
Greenland White-fronted Goose	Curraghline, Lough Corrib		30 26.11.06	AO'D	JF = Jen Fisher; PTR = Paul Troake; CB = Con Breen; DC = Deirdre Comerford;				
					TB = Tomas Burke; PT = Pete Tyndall; WL = Warren Lawless;				
					MIC = Marianne ten Cate; BINS = Birds of Ireland News.				