



## CAIRDE EANLAITH NA GAILLIMHE BIRDWATCH GALWAY

[www.birdwatchgalway.org](http://www.birdwatchgalway.org)  
QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER – EDITOR: NEIL SHARKEY  
Telephone: 086 1680856 e-mail: [neilsharkey@eircom.net](mailto:neilsharkey@eircom.net)  
Issue No. 71 Nov 2010

This is a local forum newsletter –  
contributions and comments are  
most welcome.  
Distributed by e mail only

### BRANCH MATTERS

It is with a somewhat heavy heart I am writing this piece of Branch Matters as I intend it to be the last one I write as branch secretary. At our AGM in January the chairperson, secretary and treasurer will have served three years and are due to retire from office. Only the treasurer intends to stay on. As is the case in most voluntary organisations, it may be hard to find people to replace the present officers but anybody interested in doing so should feel free to make their intentions known to us before the AGM – which may speed up proceedings at the meeting a bit.

In the meantime, this seems a good time to take stock of the branch, which will soon be 40 years old! Our Annual Reports are testimony to the hard work so many volunteers have put into branch activities at every level and in a variety of capacities. And some of those who were there at the branch's inception are still very much involved! But, as one of our nestors recently put it gently, even BirdWatch branches suffer from the wear and tear of the passage of time.

Of course, no branch exists in isolation. We are all embedded in a society which has rapidly changed into a cyberspace world and, instead of getting all notifications sent in the post, we now extensively use the internet to communicate with our members, to remind them of forthcoming events, ask them for ideas, to take part in surveys or represent BirdWatch wherever and whenever this is requested. To a certain extent this has made our monthly branch meetings somewhat redundant.

We have always promoted the monthly meetings as a forum for those interested in birds and their conservation and particularly invited new members to attend these meetings to familiarise themselves with the issues that concern the branch and get to know other branch members over the drinks that inevitably follow the meetings. However, the meetings do not seem to have that broad an appeal to the general membership;

the turnout is limited to more or less the same people with the addition of the occasional newcomers who subsequently do not necessarily come again.

We have tried to remedy this by keeping the agendas as short as possible and limiting the duration of the meetings to an hour at most, but I guess that the very long-time involvement of most of the members present at the meetings and the set way in which we run them, inevitably gives newcomers a distinct feeling of being outsiders rather than them and their ideas being welcomed with open arms.

Therefore, a change of personnel, or possibly a change of format to a more sociable informal gathering or, maybe, even a discontinuation of the monthly meetings will provide an excellent opportunity to revive the branch and encourage others to become involved in their own chosen way.

So, there is a challenge to all of you and I would welcome any comment on this from any of you – anonymously or otherwise – so that we can take YOUR opinion on board at the AGM in January. In the meantime, all our activities are continuing as usual as you will note from the busy forthcoming programme. We are looking forward to seeing you at those events.

**Marianne ten Cate**  
[mariannetencate@gmail.com](mailto:mariannetencate@gmail.com)

### ON BEING FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO HAVE A BIRD NAMED AFTER YOU

*Introduction to a new series on this subject*

The number of people of various nationalities who have birds named after them is interesting. As the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in particular, was an era of exploration and scientific enquiry, and was also the age of empires, the citizens of the colonial powers (Great Britain, France, Germany and the Netherlands in particular) all had wonderful opportunities to visit their countries, overseas territories on the most favourable terms, so the numbers of bird names are a good reflection of the

sizes and spreads of the various European powers' areas of influence. The United States of America may not have been a colonial power but it occupies an area equivalent to an empire and had influence over adjoining areas. American ornithologists, botanists, entomologists and others had their work cut out keeping up with all the new species that were collected.

The actual numbers of people per nationality are as follows:

**1** person: Armenia, Cuba, Estonia, Finland, Luxembourg, Norway, Peru, Samoa, Trinidad, Turkey, Venezuela, and Vietnam; **2** Ecuador and Kenya; **3** Czech Republic; **4** Canada, Costa Rica, Hungary and Japan; **5** Ireland, Mexico and Spain; **6** Colombia; **7** Argentina, Denmark and Portugal; **8** Belgium; **9** Brazil; **10** Poland; **11** Switzerland; **12** South Africa; **14** Austria; **15** Sweden; **16** New Zealand and Russia; **21** Australia; **29** Italy; **45** the Netherlands; **137** Germany; **161** France; **201** United States of America and, with **331** persons, Great Britain

**NS**

### BIRDS IN POETRY

Thinking of Russian literature I can almost feel the weight in my lap of a hefty tome written by one of the great authors of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, many of them made their name and particularly excelled with their short stories and poetry. Ivan Turgenev wrote a collection of poems in prose which have a lovely rhythm to them and capture a sentiment in a few sentences or paragraphs. The following poem, written in 1879, not only features birds – as one would expect in our branch *Newsletter* – but it also puts into words the uplifting qualities of birdwatching.

I dedicate this offering to our Editor who can now proudly say he edited over 70 (!!) issues of the *Newsletter* – and who also mapped the distribution of sparrows in Galway city.

**Marianne ten Cate**



**CAIRDE EANLAITH NA GAILLIMHE  
BIRDWATCH GALWAY**

**www.birdwatchgalway.org**  
QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER – EDITOR: NEIL SHARKEY  
Telephone: 086 1680856 e-mail: neilsharkey@eircom.net  
Issue No. 71 Nov 2010

This is a local forum newsletter –  
contributions and comments are  
most welcome.  
Distributed by e mail only

**WE'VE STILL GOT FIGHT IN US!**

To think how insignificant a trifle can sometimes effect a complete change of heart in a man!

Deep in thought, I was walking along a wide road.

An evil presentiment weighed heavily upon my spirit, and I was losing heart.

I looked up. The road ran away into the distance, straight as an arrow and lined with tall poplars on both sides.

And there, across the road, not ten paces in front of me a whole family of sparrows, gilded by the brilliant mid-summer sunlight, came hopping briskly in single file with a funny cockiness.

One of them looked especially conceited as he pranced sideways puffing out his crop and twittering cheekily as if he ruled the roost! A conqueror, no other word for it!

Circling high up in the sky was a hawk who was, perhaps, destined to gobble up this very conqueror.

I took another look at the sparrow, laughed, pulled myself together, and instantly my sad thoughts evaporate, I felt brave, daring and keen on living.

Let my hawk circle over me.

We've still got fight in us, dammit!

Ivan Turgenev

**HALCYON DAYS**

The 'reading' time of this newsletter - say between now and Christmas - includes the period known as the Halcyon Days. Halcyon is the name for a bird of Greek legend which is commonly associated with the Kingfisher. Most species in the Kingfisher family have 'halcyon' in their Latin name.

The phrase comes from the ancient belief that fourteen days of calm weather were to be expected around the winter solstice – usually the 21<sup>st</sup> or 22<sup>nd</sup> of December in the Northern Hemisphere – as that was when the Halcyon calmed the

surface of the sea in order to brood her eggs on a floating nest. The Halcyon Days are generally taken to begin on the 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> of December.

Halcyon means calm or tranquil, or 'happy or carefree'. It is rarely used nowadays apart from the expression halcyon days. The name of the legendary bird was actually alcyon; the 'h' was added in regard to the supposed association with the sea ('hals' in Greek).

The source of the belief in the bird's power to calm the seas originated in a myth recorded by Ovid. The story goes that Aeolus, the ruler of the winds, had a daughter named Alycone, who was married to Ceyx, the king of Thessaly. Ceyx drowned at sea and Alycone threw herself into the sea in grief. Instead of drowning she was carried to her husband by the wind. The rest of the story is, in translation of Ovid:

*The gods their shapes to winter-birds translate,  
But both obnoxious to their former fate.  
Their conjugal affection still is ty'd,  
And still the mournful race is multiplied:  
They bill, they tread; Alcyone compressed,  
Sev'n days sits brooding on her floating nest:  
A wintry queen: her sire at length is kind,  
Calms ev'ry storm and hushes every wind;  
Prepares her empire for his daughter's ease,  
And for his hatching nephews smooths the seas.*

There is more to this story but it must await a further issue. In the meantime, put a note in your diary for about Dec 14<sup>th</sup> and enjoy the tranquil weather of the Halcyon Days as well as Christmas.

NS

**NIMMO'S PIER OUTINGS AND  
DAWN CHORUS DAY RECORDS**

Branch member Brendan Dunne has prepared spreadsheets detailing the

species recorded on the monthly outings and comparing them with past years. If anyone would like a copy of these interesting lists just let me know and I will endeavour to forward copies.

NS

**FORTHCOMING PROGRAMME**

**Wednesday 17 November:** branch meeting, Anno Santo Hotel, Threadneedle Road, Salthill, 8pm. All branch members are welcome to attend these monthly meetings.

**Friday 26 November, Pelagic Magic,** an illustrated talk about seabirds by Anthony McGeehan, Anno Santo Hotel, 8pm.

**Saturday 4 December:** short outing at Nimmo's Pier, Tim Griffin *et al.*, 10.30am.

**Sunday 5 December:** Atlas Roving event; gather in the public car park behind the Galway Cathedral at 9.30am; bring lunch for this day-long outing.

**Friday 10 December:** pre-Christmas gathering, Anno Santo Hotel, 8pm. Tom Cuffe will present some of his highlights, followed by a festive glass and nibble.

**Wednesday 15 December:** branch meeting, Anno Santo Hotel, 8pm.

**Saturday 1 January:** short outing at Nimmo's Pier, Tim Griffin *et al.*, 10.30am.

**Saturday 8 January:** Galway Bay count; contact [chris.peppiatt@iol.ie](mailto:chris.peppiatt@iol.ie).

**Wednesday 19 January:** Branch Annual General Meeting, Anno Santo Hotel, 8pm. Please, attend and have your say!

**Friday 4 February:** *Places for nature – developing our nature reserves:* an illustrated presentation by Dave

Suddaby, Reserves Manager with BirdWatch Ireland. Anno Santo 8pm.

**Saturday 5 February:** short outing at Nimmo's Pier, Tim Griffin *et al.*, 10.30am.

MtC

## BirdWatch Galway (Branch of BirdWatch Ireland) 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2010

QUARTERLY BIRD REPORT COMPILED BY CHRIS PEPIATT

DATE OF ISSUE: 9<sup>th</sup> November 2010

1st July: Pair Barn Owl, Rinville, Nr. Oranmore (Jerry Godsell).
4th July: 4 (3 Juv.) Whinchat, Milltown, Nr. Tuam (Chris Benson).
4th July: 4 Chough, Doonloughan, Nr. Ballyconneely (Miryam & Michael Harris).
9th July: Ad. Spotted Redshank, Kilcaimin (Michael Davis).
10th July: Ad. Ring-billed Gull, Nimmo's Pier, Galway City (Michael Davis). (1)
13th July: 2nd Sum. Ring-billed Gull, Nimmo's Pier, Galway City (Michael Davis).
13th July: Darvic-ringed 1st Sum. Herring Gull (cannon netted 1st April 2010 at Quilty, Co. Clare), Long Walk, Galway City (Michael Davis).
15th July: Ad. Mediterranean Gull & 2nd Sum. Glaucous Gull, Nimmo's Pier, Galway City (Tom Cuffe). (2)
16th July: Female Red-breasted Merganser with 8 chicks & 2 Spotted Flycatcher, Nr. Ballinahinch Castle (Miryam & Michael Harris).
18th July: Juv. Hobby & Fem. Marsh Harrier, Angliham, Lough Corrib (Tim Griffin). (3)
20th July: Female Red-breasted Merganser with 8 chicks, Rossroe, Cashel (Miryam & Michael Harris).
24th July: Sooty Shearwater, Great Skua, 22 Puffin, 21 Common Scoter, 49 Storm Petrel & 835 Manx Shearwater, 4 hours-Rossadillask (Dermot Breen).
30th July: 1st Sum. Mediterranean Gull, Long Walk, Galway City (Michael Davis).
1st August: Gadwall, c. 250 Mallard, Wigeon, 3 Teal, Shoveler, c. 160 Curlew, Greenshank, 51 Lapwing, 2 Common Sandpiper, c. 40 Black-headed Gull, 10 Lesser Black-backed Gull, 6 Common Gull & 2 Raven, Rahasane Turlough (Pete Capsey).
2nd August: 2 Ad. Spotted Redshank, Kilcaimin (Michael Davis).
4th August: 2 Whimbrel, Nr. Milltown, Tuam (Chris Benson).
7th August: 8 Storm Petrel, Galway Bay (Tim Griffin).
7th August: 2 (Ad. & 2nd Sum.) Mediterranean Gull, Nimmo's Pier, Galway City (Tom Cuffe).
8th August: 4 Little Grebe, 19 Grey Heron, 4 Little Egret, c. 400 Mallard, Wigeon, 10 Teal, 8 Shoveler, 126 Curlew, Greenshank, 75 Lapwing, Snipe, 2 Black-tailed Godwit, 43 Black-headed Gull, 14 Lesser Black-backed Gull, Common Gull & Sparrowhawk, Rahasane Turlough (Pete Capsey).
8th August: 2 Whooper Swan, Inishmore (Michael Reilly).
11th August: Ad. <i>intermedius</i> race Lesser Black-backed Gull, South Park, Galway City (Michael Davis).
12th August: Wilson's Petrel, Slyne Head (John Brittain).
14th August: 5 Ruff, Rahasane Turlough (Michael Davis).
14th August: Juv. Bar-tailed Godwit, Kilcaimin (Michael Davis).
15th August: Wood Sandpiper & Juv. female Peregrine, Muckrush, Lough Corrib (Dermot Breen).
17th August: 3 Ruff, 1 Little Egret, c. 400 Mallard, 2 Wigeon, 17 Shoveler, 6 Black-tailed Godwit & Juv. Fem. Peregrine, Rahasane Turlough (Pete Capsey).
17th August: 145 Little Grebe, 45 Grey Heron, 17 Ringed Plover, 6 Dunlin, 3 Ruff, Greenshank & Turnstone, Glenamaddy Turlough (Pat Brennan).
18th August: Juv. Ruff, Juv. Bar-tailed Godwit & Curlew, Truska (Dermot Breen).
19th August: Common Buzzard, Tuam (Jim Glennon).
20th August: Cuckoo, Nr. Milltown (Chris Benson).
20th August: Sanderling, 3 Turnstone, 10 Dunlin & 30 Ringed Plover, Glenamaddy Turlough (Pat Brennan).
21st August: 3 Ruff & 2 Greenshank, Rahasane Turlough (Dermot Breen).
21st August: 143 Little Grebe, 83 Ringed Plover, 43 Dunlin, Juv. Knot, 7 Ruff, & Turnstone, Glenamaddy Turlough (Dermot Breen).
21st August: Juv. Ruff & Juv. Knot, Rossadillask (Dermot Breen).
22nd August: 4 Ruff & 2 Greenshank, Rahasane Turlough (Michael Davis, Dermot Breen & Chris Peppiatt).
22nd August: Corncrake, Spiddal (Martan O Ciardha).
23rd August: Ad. Golden Eagle, Lough Bofin, Connemara (Joe Proudfoot).

25th August: 3 White-tailed Eagle, Lettercraffroe (Aonghus O'Donail).
25th August: Juv. Montagu's Harrier, Inishbofin (Joe Proudfoot).
26th August: Green Sandpiper, Nr. Milltown (Chris Benson).
27th August: White Wagtail, Mutton Island, Galway City (Michael Davis).
28th August: 63 Grey Heron, 65 Ringed Plover, 43 Dunlin, 52 Black-tailed Godwit, 25 Golden Plover, 5 Ruff, 2 Greenshank, Knot, Turnstone & Whimbrel, Glenamaddy Turlough (Dermot Breen).
28th August: Whooper Swan, 6 Golden Plover, 2 Ruff, 15 Knot, & Dunlin, Kiltullagh Lough (Dermot Breen).
28th August: 2 Ruff, Rahasane Turlough (Michael Davis).
28th August: White Wagtail, Tawin (Michael Davis).
28th August: 21 Pale-bellied Brent Goose, Ballinacourty (Michael Davis).
29th August: 10 Curlew Sandpiper, Muckrush, Lough Corrib (Aonghus O'Donail).
29th August: 2 Lapland Bunting, Inishbofin (Anthony McGeehan).
30th August: 7 Lapland Bunting, Inishbofin (Anthony McGeehan).
30th August: 1st Sum. Mediterranean Gull, Long Walk, Galway City (Michael Davis).
1st September: Spotted Redshank, 3 Ruff & Juv. Male Hen Harrier, Rahasane Turlough (Paul Troake).
1st September: 34 White Wagtail, Mweenish Island, Ballinacourty (Paul Troake).
2nd September: Juv. Curlew Sandpiper, Rossadillask (Dermot Breen).
3rd September: 2 Pectoral Sandpiper, 16 Curlew Sandpiper & Juv. Spotted Redshank, Muckrush, Lough Corrib (Dermot Breen & Aonghus O'Donail).
3rd September: Imm. White Stork & Pied Flycatcher, Inishbofin (Anthony McGeehan). (4)
4th September: Pied Flycatcher, Slyne Head (Dermot Breen).
4th September: ringtail Hen Harrier, Muckrush, Lough Corrib (John Keogh).
4th September: Merlin, Curraghline, Lough Corrib (John Keogh).
5th September: 2 Little Grebe, 11 Grey Heron, 3 Little Egret, Cormorant, 2 Mute Swan, c. 140 Mallard, 22 Wigeon, c. 160 Teal, Shoveler, 46 Lapwing, Snipe, Black-tailed Godwit, 2 Lesser Black-backed Gull, 2 Common Gull, Kestrel, Wheatear & 30 Linnet, Rahasane Turlough (Pete Capsey).
5th September: 3 Pectoral Sandpiper, Rahasane Turlough (James Hayes & Clodagh Glasgow, one also reported Michael Davis).
5th September: Juv. Curlew Sandpiper, Kilcaimin (Michael Davis).
6th September: Whinchat, Inishbofin (Aonghus O'Donail).
7th September: Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Murvey, Roundstone (Dermot Breen).
7th September: 2 Greenland Wheatear, Mutton Island, Galway City (Michael Davis).
8th September: Ad. Ring-billed Gull (this bird first seen 21st September 2003), Nimmo's Pier, Galway City (Michael Davis).
10th September: Leach's Petrel, (John Brittain).
10th September: 2 Greenland Wheatear & White Wagtail, Mutton Island, Galway City (Michael Davis).
11th September: Wood Sandpiper, Muckrush, Lough Corrib (Tom Cuffe).
12th September: Little Stint, Curlew Sandpiper & Greenland Wheatear, Inishmore (Dermot Breen).
12th September: Manx Shearwater, stranded in garden, Tullyvoheen, Clifden (Miryam & Michael Harris).
14th September: Dowitcher <i>sp.</i> , in flight, Nr. Ballyconneely (Aonghus O'Donail). (5)
17th September: Juv. Long-billed Dowitcher, Pectoral Sandpiper, Water Rail & 3 Lapland Bunting, Truska Marsh, Nr. Ballyconneely (Dermot Breen). (6)
18th September: Manx Shearwater, stranded at Coral Strand, Ballyconneely (Dermot Breen).
18th September: 1st. Win Male Blue-winged Teal & Jack Snipe, Truska Marsh, Nr. Ballyconneely (Dermot Breen). (7)
19th September: 6 Curlew Sandpiper & Spotted Redshank, Kilcaimin (Michael Davis & Chris Peppiatt).
19th September: 2 Arctic Tern & 21 Grey Plover, Mweenish Island & Loughnahulla Bay (Michael Davis & Chris Peppiatt).
19th September: 2 Black Tern, 1st Win. Little Gull, Curlew Sandpiper & Ruff, Rahasane Turlough (Paul Troake).
19th September: Drake Ring-necked Duck, Emlagh Lake, Nr. Ballyconneely (Miryam & Michael Harris).
22nd September: 2 Blue-winged Teal, 2 Pectoral Sandpiper & 3 Ruff, Rahasane Turlough (John Murphy).
23rd September: 8 Chough, Doonloughan, Nr. Ballyconneely (Miryam & Michael Harris).

25th September: 8 Ruff & Curlew Sandpiper, Rahasane Turlough (Dermot Breen).
25th September: 3 Curlew Sandpiper & Spotted Redshank, Kilcaimin (Dermot Breen).
25th September: Juv. Rose-coloured Starling, Inishbofin (Anthony McGeehan).
26th September: 55 Mute Swan, 99 Mallard, 700 Wigeon, 124 Teal, 55 Shoveler, 6 Pintail, 3 Ruff, 260 Lapwing, 66 Curlew, Greenshank, 60 Golden Plover, 25 Dunlin, 290 Black-tailed Godwit, Common Sandpiper, 110 Black-headed Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Common Gull & Peregrine, Rahasane Turlough (Pete Capsey).
29th September: Barn Owl, Moycullen (John Carey).
30th September: Ad. Iceland Gull, Silver Strand, Galway City (Tim Griffin).
30th September: Male Hen Harrier, Menlo, Lough Corrib (Tim Griffin).

#### NOTES:

- (1) Single adult Ring-billed gulls were recorded in the Nimmo's Pier/Long Walk area during the whole quarter.
- (2) This second year Glaucous Gull was presumably the same bird that was present in the area through the second quarter. It was recorded several times at Nimmo's Pier until the end of the quarter.
- (3) A female Marsh Harrier was present in the south-eastern part of Lough Corrib (Menlo/Angliham/Muckrush) until the end of the quarter (reported 7<sup>th</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup> of August; 4<sup>th</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup> of September).
- (4) The White Stork was again present on the 4<sup>th</sup> of September.
- (5) The Dowitcher sp. seen near Ballyconneely on the 14<sup>th</sup> of September was probably the same bird as the Long-billed Dowitcher found at Truska Marsh on the 17<sup>th</sup> of September.
- (6) The Pectoral Sandpiper was present at Truska Marsh until the 20<sup>th</sup> of September.
- (7) This Blue-winged Teal was present at Truska Marsh until the 21<sup>st</sup> of September.

#### OTHER BEASTS:

- 24<sup>th</sup> July: 15 Common Dolphin, Rossadillask (Dermot Breen).  
 19<sup>th</sup> September: 3 Otter, Rahasane turlough (Paul Troake).  
 23<sup>rd</sup> September: Otter, Murlach, Ballyconneely (Miryam & Michael Harris).

#### HIGHLIGHTS:

Wilson's Petrel, Leach's Petrel, White Stork, 3 Blue-winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck, Long-billed Dowitcher, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, 6-8 Pectoral Sandpiper, Wood Sandpiper (probably two), Green Sandpiper, 2 Black Tern, Hobby, Montagu's Harrier, Golden Eagle, 3 White-tailed Eagle, Rose-coloured Starling, 2 Pied Flycatcher & 10 Lapland Bunting. Long stayers/returning birds included Ring-billed Gull, Glaucous Gull and Marsh Harrier. Breeding birds included Red-breasted Merganser, Corncrake, Barn Owl, Chough and 2 Whinchat.

Late Summer visitors: Whimbrel (28<sup>th</sup> August), Arctic Tern (19<sup>th</sup> September), Cuckoo (20<sup>th</sup> August), White Wagtail (1<sup>st</sup> September), Greenland Wheatear (10<sup>th</sup> September). Early winter visitors: Whooper Swan (8<sup>th</sup> August), Brent Goose (28<sup>th</sup> August), Ring-billed Gull (10<sup>th</sup> July), Jack Snipe (18<sup>th</sup> September), Iceland Gull (30<sup>th</sup> September).