



## CAIRDE EANLAITH ÉIREANN GALWAY

[www.birdwatchgalway.org](http://www.birdwatchgalway.org)  
QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER – EDITOR: NEIL SHARKEY  
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Issue No. 85 May 2014

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

### BRANCH AND OTHER MATTERS

There is not a whole lot to say on these matters. Galway remains, as I put it to HQ, a branch without a committee! Despite this undefined status, we still try to give Galway members of BirdWatch as much support at local level as is possible. Without a doubt, the monthly Nimmo's Pier outings, led by Tom Cuffe, are going very well. Attendance varies between 20 and 30 and, as well as getting us to see interesting birds, they do, as Tom put it recently, provide a platform for friendly and lively discussion and for keeping birdwatchers and their kind in touch. Brendan Dunne's list of sightings at these monthly outings is attached.

The *Newsletter* and Chris Peppiatt's quarterly *Galway Bird Report*, do, I feel, also add a bit of 'Galway' flavour to people's membership of BirdWatch. Finally, as part of the Irish Wetland-bird Survey, the Corrib and Inner Galway Bay winter counts continue, although Chris and Marianne find getting teams together quite a challenge at times. But they keep at it and more volunteers would be welcome.

The big loss is the lack of talks/lectures. If anyone would like to organise talks, or even a talk on a once-off basis, I'm sure HQ and certainly people in Galway would rally behind them and many branch members would very much appreciate the effort.

Going back to the *Newsletter* – as I keep saying, getting content is a never-ending task and, at times, I feel I am trying the patience of the people who so loyally rally around and make contributions.

Furthermore, can I say that I have a fairly large library of bird and other books and I would welcome ideas of how such material, and indeed that of others, could be used? Thanks.

NS

### SLATY-BACKED GULL – A FIRST FOR IRELAND.

Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> February started out in the usual manner and routine. I knew it would not be the same as most birding Saturdays, as there were, of course, the Six Nations Rugby matches to watch, with Ireland and Wales playing at 2.30pm. Full Irish breakfast was consumed as normal and then I dropped Mary off to work for 1.00pm. I would normally head straight for Nimmo's Pier and Claddagh Beach for about two hours, but not today: a quick scan at Waterside was about all I could manage with the time available.

Waterside always has a good selection of gulls, with notable sightings including Iceland, Ring-billed and, in May 2006, an adult Laughing Gull. The usual gulls and birds were present on my arrival, all roosting on the pontoons which prevent pleasure boats drifting down on to the weir. Black-headed, Common, Herring and a single Great Black-backed Gull were all present. A single Cormorant, in full breeding plumage, was preening and a couple of Moorhens loitered. Next in view was a Lesser Black-backed Gull; it is very unusual to see one in Galway at this time of year, although we have had a couple of first-winters at Nimmo's Pier lately. Then, an Iceland Gull appeared further along the pontoon.

Time to get the scope and cameras out to take a few shots. The pontoons are just a bit too far for DSLR photography, but digiscoping usually produces a few shots, although it was very dull on Saturday. Scanning the birds, there seemed something not quite right with the Lesser Black-backed Gull: it had pink legs, the mantle was very dark, and it was only slightly smaller than the Herring Gull. So I took a few shots, and a few shots of the second-winter Iceland Gull further along the pontoon. Back to the 'black-backed', and I rang Dermot Breen to give him a description: "it's a small Lesser Black-backed with pink legs and a very dark mantle". Dermot reiterated the need for flight shots and, on obtaining some; I headed home to watch the match.

On arriving home, I went straight for Olsen and Larsson's gull 'bible'. The only bird I could match my unusual 'black-backed' gull to was the Slaty-backed Gull, but it seemed so small and I talked myself out of it. I processed a few images to send to Dermot, who agreed it was strange looking for a LBbG. But it was now 2.30pm, match time - and it turned out to be a nice little victory.

I thought no more about the gull that day, but returned to Waterside on Sunday. There was no sign of the bird. Later on Sunday evening, I began processing the shots I had taken. I posted the shots of the perched bird on Facebook, and both Dan Brown and Ronan McLaughlin asked to see flight shots within minutes! So, I uploaded them, too, on Facebook: Dan's reaction was "Jesus!" and Ronan confirmed the 'string of pearls' which is one of the diagnostic features of the bird along with the 'bubble gum' pink legs. And that was that, the confirmation of a fourth-winter Slaty-backed Gull and the news of a first for Ireland. The Slaty-backed Gull was looked for extensively on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> February but has not been seen since.



Slaty-backed Gull

Photograph, Tom Cuffe

#### *Distribution and population*

The Slaty-backed Gull breeds in north-east Siberia (Russia) from Cape Navarin south to the northern tip of North Korea, including the Commander Islands, Russia and Hokkaido, Japan. Its winter distribution extends south to encompass Korea, the extreme northeast of China, much of Japan and Taiwan

#### *Previous records*

This bird represents the first for Ireland. It is the sixth record for the Western Palearctic, following birds

seen in Latvia/Lithuania, Finland, Belarus, Iceland and Britain. The British bird was seen in London and Essex on several dates in January and February 2011.

**Tom Cuffe**

If anything, Tom downplays the importance of this sighting. In the world of 'Premier League' birdwatching it is hard to overstate the achievement of finding a national 'first'. Added to this were Tom's superb photographs of the bird, to which this newsletter cannot do justice. However they can be better viewed on his blog site The bird and Tom's photographs were given a full-page feature on *Birdwatch*, a leading UK publication for birdwatchers.

Well done Tom.

NS

### BATTLE OF THE BANDITS

For a number of years Magpies have nested in a neighbour's sycamore tree. The tree and the nest are covered in ivy, making it difficult to see the nest. This year was no different. I noticed a pair bringing in nesting material for a while. Then I saw only one bird at a time and suspected the other was sitting on eggs. Later, the two were active together, visiting the nest regularly, suggesting nestling(s).

All seemed to be going well, until around 1pm on April 25<sup>th</sup> a Hooded Crow landed on top of the tree. The pair of Magpies went berserk and eventually drove it away. It was back within half-an-hour and managed to pull some of the side of the nest off with the Magpies attacking it and making a lot of noise. The noise attracted other Magpies - I managed to count seven in total - who all joined the attack. They knocked the 'hoodie' out of the tree a few times, but it came back each time. It then changed tack and went to the bottom of the nest, gripped it with its feet and, upside down, flapped its wings until a sizeable piece of the nest came away. The crow fell, let go and flew away, not carrying anything, chased by four Magpies. As the bit of the nest fell, I saw something black and white, probably a chick, falling as well.

Things calmed down, with the adult Magpies visiting two different parts of the ivy - which suggested two chicks survived the assault.

The next day, I saw the adults still visiting the ivy, but also bringing bits of the damaged nest to another tree, about 40 meters away. They seemed to be building a new nest. Later on, I saw one adult landing at the usual spot on the ivy, hopping around and looking into the ivy. It preened for a while, then flew off and didn't come back to that spot again. A cat, the local fox or even the Hooded Crow probably took the chick.

On May 3<sup>rd</sup>, a pair of Magpies, I have to assume the same ones, were pulling bits off an old rope in my garden and flying with them to the new nest.

**Brendan Dunne.**

### IN PRAISE OF TAKING NOTES

In November of last year, NUIG hosted an exhibition on the history and importance of note-taking. It was organised by Robin Jones and entitled



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### ***Taking Note or The Curious Eye***

The exhibition was held in the NUIG Gallery and featured the note-keeping or records of a wide range of people, many of national and, indeed, international significance. Prior to the exhibition, Robin contacted me about birdwatchers' note-taking and its role in ornithology. The up-shot was that a large bundle of my bird record notebooks, stretching back over many years, became part of the exhibition. Robin also asked me to write up a short narrative on the background to note-taking in the world of bird study and the following is what I wrote and became part of the exhibition.

### **THE USE OF FIELD NOTEBOOKS IN ORNITHOLOGY**

The study of birds is age-old but in many ways it reached a high point during the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. That period saw the emergence of the 'giants' of ornithology – Wilson, Franklin, Audubon and many more. The high point of achievement would be to have a bird species named after you – such as Sabine Gull or Bewick Swan.

In an era of no, or limited, photography and very poor optics note-taking was vital. Birdwatchers kept field notebooks for recording birds seen and, when the bird was unknown or difficult to identify, they would sketch in the salient features and later consult the literature of the day and engage in correspondence with fellow ornithologists. For a rare bird these notebook descriptions and submissions often took on a stylised form. A typical example would be:

*On May 3<sup>rd</sup> 1890 I was traversing a small wetland area just north of XXXX village in the company of AJR and PBR\* when I noticed a small bird of overall grey appearance at the edge of the water. It had the behaviour of the Wagtail species but differed in certain plumage characteristics. After observing the bird for a period I and AJR and PBR were of the opinion that it was a juvenile Citrine Wagtail.*

(\*The use of the initials of fellow birdwatchers was and is a common practice, as is the use of phrases such as *et al.*!)

Without such detailed notes, Rare Birds Committees and the general ornithological community would not accept the record of a rare bird's presence. Field notes were vital. So, notebooks were at the heart of birdwatching.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century birdwatching moved out of this specialist following and became a widespread – mainly male! – pursuit. Binoculars improved and young people were encouraged to take it up and to use field notebooks and make little drawings of birds seen by sketching two little oval circles for head and body and then making notes around of plumage etc. Over the years a birdwatcher would build up a whole collection of notebooks and this formed a valuable cumulative record of a life's bird-recording.

The past fifteen or twenty years have seen huge changes. Bird guides, including pocket and regional guides, have improved beyond recognition. Optics, including telescopes, are now of very high quality and digital photography has become the norm for recording

and identity confirmation. Nowadays, it is doubtful that field-notebook-recording alone would get a rare bird's presence accepted. The photo is the thing.

Today, records can be submitted and kept on-line at sites such as Birdtrack, and this can be integrated with your smart phone in ways the Victorian bird recorders could not possibly have imagined. Some web sites will hold all your records and provide site, annual and life lists of the birds you have seen. They are also automatically posted to regional and national bird records for census and conservation purposes. Beside, the Internet is full of sites of bird photographs of the very highest quality.

However, the keeping of written records still has a value and does continue; digital, Internet or not, the handwritten list of the birds you saw on that trip to Sicily or wherever is by far the best. Writing that bird down at the time of sighting still has a recollective value that the digital version cannot provide. Long may it be so.

### **CITY LIMITS**

How many species could you see within the city boundary in a calendar year? That was the challenge I set myself for 2014. The city boundary is available to view online here;

<http://www.water.galwaycity.ie/qccmapconnect/showDatasearchmax.aspx>

The rules were simple. Birds had to be observed within – and not from – the city boundary. The only exception was for birds offshore as it would be a bit nonsensical to not be able to include birds such as divers, auks and other seabirds in a city by the sea. A quick scan through the species list resulted in a total of 125 to 130 species which, with a bit of effort and not a small amount of luck, it should be possible to record within the city boundary. A lot of effort combined with an equal amount of good luck could see the total rise to 140 or above. While some species could be virtually guaranteed, others, though not uncommon, would be trickier. Whooper Swan, Merlin, Woodcock, Jack Snipe, Barn Owl, Long-eared Owl, Kingfisher, Dipper and Redpoll for example, are seen almost every year within the city boundary, but usually by chance. If you actively went to find one, or all, of these species, would it be possible to see them?

Weather would play a large part. Winter storms would greatly increase the chance of scarce and rare gulls. Onshore winds in May would greatly increase the chance of Pomarine and Long-tailed Skuas. Similar winds in late summer and autumn would do the same for seabirds on passage. A Leach's Petrel, a Sooty Shearwater or a Grey Phalarope would be huge bonus birds. Snow Bunting, Black Redstart, Brambling and Waxwing have all been recorded in autumn/winter in recent years but would any be seen in 2014?

January saw a total of 96 species recorded. Seven further species were recorded in February, bringing the total to 103. In March a further 5 species were added and April to date (21st) has seen 17 species added to the list to bring the total to 124 species. Highlights so far have been Ross's Gull, Barnacle Goose, Hen Harrier, Merlin, Barn Owl and a pair of Buzzards

soaring high in a blue sky over Newcastle. Lowlights were being a 5-minute drive away from a first for Ireland (the Slaty-backed Gull at Waterside) while I was trying (unsuccessfully!) to dig out a Reed Bunting nearby and my complete inability to find a Fieldfare. Six more species – Storm Petrel, Sanderling, Great Skua, Arctic Tern, Swift and Whitethroat - are as good as guaranteed to be seen over the coming months, which would bring the total to 130. From there on, luck and effort (Water Rail and Long-eared Owl have to be seen to be counted!) will really play their part. In recent years, an impressive list of scarcities and rarities has been recorded within the city boundary. Slavonian and Red-necked Grebes, Leach's Petrel, Sooty, Balearic and Great Shearwaters, Marsh Harrier, Osprey, White-tailed Eagle, Spotted Sandpiper, Long-billed Dowitcher, Grey Phalarope, Long-tailed Skua, American Herring Gull, Yellow-legged Gull, Laughing Gull, Little Auk, Rosy Starling and Red-rumped Swallow have all been recorded within the last 10 years so who knows what may end up on my list by the end of the year?

NS

**Aongus O Donail**

### **COUNTY LIMITS**

I took up Aongus's suggestion but more or less on a County Galway basis and in, perhaps, a lower key fashion as the bulk of my records is probably within a 5-mile radius of Headford - with seabird records picked up during Nimmo's and Galway Bay Count excursions.

I use Birdtrack on my phone which, as you add sightings, updates your annual count and also produces a listing of birds seen by others but not yet by you – your 'targets'! My current total for the year to date is 98 – the actual total being 109 but 11 of these, e.g. Nuthatch, Red Kite, Smew, were recorded when I spent a good bit of February in England. I may, eventually, pick up some of the UK birds in County Galway, for instance Yellowhammer – alas so scarce in these parts nowadays.

In January, I ticked 77 species but only 1 in Feb. when I omit the UK records, 5 in March and 13 in April. Despite my 'low activity' birdwatching, I foresee seeing well over 100 species in 2014 – perhaps as high as 110 or, with great good fortune, 115.

Tom Cuffe also tells me that he has a total of 90 so far – but we're not halfway there yet, Tom!

I would greatly recommend taking it up – the great thing about it is that you can set up your own variable rules, confining your count to a particular place such as your garden or your holiday location; it makes spotting even an 'ordinary', but long sought, bird an exciting and satisfactory happening and brightens up your birdwatching day. Do take it up!

NS

### **CORNCRAKE**

Sam Birch reports the first Corncrake sightings especially in Inisbofin and other parts of west Mayo. Please reports any birds seen or calling to him at 087 2480629

**BirdWatch Ireland, Galway branch**  
**First Saturdays' - 'Winter' 2013/14**

Nimmo's Pier, 10.30, for 1 hour approx.

(Compiled by Brendan Dunne, who missed 3 of 9 outings)

Total Species : <b>49</b>		7 Sep.	5 Oct.	2 Nov.*	7 Dec.	4 Jan.	1 Feb.**	1 Mar.	5 Apr.	3 May	Days seen
People	per outing	8	18	n/a	20	16				20	
Nearest	Low tide to	1253	1152	0948	1357	1254	1153	1133	1533	1424	
Species	per outing	25	26	24	33	25		0	0	23	
14 1	<b>Great northern diver</b>			●	●	●				●	4
18 1	<b>Great crested grebe</b>				●	●					2
28 1	<b>Cormorant</b>	●	●	●	●	●				●	6
28 2	<b>Shag</b>	●	●		●	●				●	5
34 1	<b>Grey heron</b>	●	●	●	●	●					5
38 1	<b>Mute swan</b>	●	●	●	●	●				●	6
44 3	<b>Brent goose</b>				●	●					2
48 1	<b>Mallard</b>	●	●	●	●	●				●	6
50 2	<b>Wigeon</b>			●	●						2
68 2	<b>Red-breasted merganser</b>				●						1
124 1	<b>Oystercatcher</b>	●	●	●	●	●					5
129 2	<b>Ringed plover</b>	●			●	●				●	4
138 1	<b>Knot</b>					●					1
138 4	<b>Turnstone</b>	●	●	●	●	●					5
140 1	<b>Dunlin</b>				●	●				●	3
146 1	<b>Redshank</b>	●	●	●	●	●					5
146 3	<b>Greenshank</b>				●						1
148 2	<b>Bar-tailed godwit</b>	●	●	●	●	●					5
148 3	<b>Curlew</b>			●		●					2
148 4	<b>Whimbrel</b>									●	1
170 1	<b>Black-headed gull</b>	●	●	●	●	●				●	6
172 1	<b>Common gull</b>	●	●	●	●	●					5
172 3	<b>Mediterranean gull</b>		●								1
174 1	<b>Herring gull</b>	●	●	●	●	●				●	6
174 2	<b>Ring-billed gull</b>	●	●		●	●				●	5
176 1	<b>Lesser black-backed gull</b>									●	1
176 2	<b>Great black-backed gull</b>	●	●	●	●					●	5
180 2	<b>Iceland gull</b>	●									1
184 2	<b>Sandwich tern</b>		●		●						2
186 1	<b>Common tern</b>									●	1
200 1	<b>Rock dove</b>			●							1
200 2	<b>Feral pigeon</b>	●	●		●	●				●	5
200 3	<b>Woodpigeon</b>	●	●								2
220 2	<b>Kingfisher</b>	●			●						2
242 1	<b>Swallow</b>	●								●	2
242 3	<b>House martin</b>		●								1
246 2	<b>Rock pipit</b>			●						●	2
248 1	<b>Meadow pipit</b>			●	●						2
250 3	<b>Pied wagtail</b>	●		●	●						3
252 3	<b>Grey wagtail</b>		●								1
276 1	<b>Blackbird</b>									●	1
330 4	<b>Magpie</b>		●								1
334 1	<b>Jackdaw</b>	●	●	●	●	●				●	6
336 1	<b>Rook</b>	●	●	●	●	●				●	6
336 2	<b>Hooded crow</b>	●	●	●	●	●				●	6
340 1	<b>Starling</b>	●	●	●	●					●	5
342 1	<b>House sparrow</b>				●					●	2
348 1	<b>Linnet</b>		●	●							2
350 2	<b>Greenfinch</b>				●	●					2

\* Thanks Tom Cuffe for 2<sup>nd</sup> November records.

\*\* The 1<sup>st</sup> February outing was cancelled due to severe stormy conditions. I went, just in case anyone turned up, no-one did. The decision to cancel was absolutely correct.

## BirdWatch Galway (Branch of BirdWatch Ireland) 1st Quarter 2014

QUARTERLY BIRD REPORT COMPILED BY CHRIS PEPPIATT

DATE OF ISSUE: 16<sup>th</sup> August 2014

2nd January: Ad. Glaucous Gull, Nimmo's Pier, Galway city (Samuel Progin). (1)

3rd January: 2 (Ad. & 1st Win.) Ring-billed Gull, again present, Nimmo's Pier, Galway city.

3rd January: 2nd Win. Iceland Gull, Nimmo's Pier, Galway city (Samuel Progin). (2)

4th January: 1st Win. Iceland Gull, Rossaveal (Dermot Breen & Michael Davis).

4th January: Ad. Ross' Gull, Blackrock, Salthill, Galway city (Aonghus O'Donail).

5th January: 2 (Ad. & 1st Win.) Glaucous Gull, Ad. Iceland Gull, 3 (2-Ad. & 1st Win.) Ring-billed Gull, Ad. Mediterranean Gull & 3-1st Win. Little Gull, Nimmo's Pier to Salthill, Galway city (Dermot Breen). (3)

7th January: 2 (Ad. & 1st Win.) Glaucous Gull, Gurteen Bay (Dermot Breen).

7th January: Barnacle Goose (with Brent Goose flock), Grattan Road, Salthill, Galway city (Michael Davis). (4)

7th January: Ad. Glaucous Gull, Dog's Bay (Dermot Breen).

11th January: Merlin, Suckfield, Ballinasloe (Fiona Maguire).

11th January: Peregrine, Belclare turlough (Jon & Nuala Freestone).

13th January: 1st Win. Glaucous Gull, Omey Island (Dermot Breen).

13th January: Grey Phalarope, Rinvyle Point (Dermot Breen).

16th January: Ad. Glaucous Gull, Mweenish Island, Carna (Dermot Breen).

18th January: 6 Sandwich Tern, Nimmo's Pier, Galway city (Tom Cuffe).

18th January: 2nd Win. Iceland Gull, Rossaveal (Dermot Breen).

19th January: 2-1st Win. Little Gull, Salthill, Galway city (Tom Cuffe).

20th January: Drake Lesser Scaup, Angliham, Lough Corrib (Oliver Metcalf).

20th January: 2 (Ad. & 1st Win.) Glaucous Gull, Duach beach, Inishbofin (Dermot Breen).

20th January: 2 (1st & 2nd Win. Glaucous Gull & 13 Twite, old pier, Inishbofin (Dermot Breen).

23rd January: 1st Win. Glaucous Gull, Ballyconneely Bay (Dermot Breen & Ger O'Donnell).

31st January: Little Gull, Cahermore turlough (Paul Troake).

4th February: Ad. Glaucous Gull, Ardnagreevagh, Rinvyle (Dermot Breen).

4th February: Black-necked Grebe, again present, Ballynakill Harbour. (5)

5th February: Common Buzzard, Clydagh, Nr. Headford (per Deirdre Comerford).

5th February: Ad. Glaucous Gull, Ballyconneely, golf course (Shane Farrell).

6th February: 3 Ad. Glaucous Gull & 1st. Win Iceland Gull, Gorteen Bay, Nr. Roundstone (Dermot Breen & Shane Farrell).

6th February: 5 (2-1st Win., 2nd Win. & 2 Ad.) Glaucous Gull & 1st Win. Iceland Gull, Murvey (Dermot Breen).

6th February: Ad. Glaucous Gull, Bunowen (Dermot Breen).

8th February: Ad. Win. Slaty-backed Gull & 2nd Win. Iceland Gull, Waterside, Galway city (Tom Cuffe). (6)

9th February: 5 Scaup, Lough Atalia, Galway city (Neil Ellis).

10th February: 2nd Win. Kumlien's Gull & 1st Win. Little Gull, Rossaveel (Dermot Breen). (7)

10th February: Ad. Yellow-legged Gull, 2 (2nd Win. & Ad.) Iceland Gull, 4 (1st Win. & 3 Ad.) Ring-billed Gull & 2 (1st Win. & Ad.) Mediterranean Gull, Nimmo's Pier and Waterside, Galway city (Vittorio Cashera *et al.*).

15th February: Ad. Forster's Tern & 5 (4 Ad. & 1st Win.) Ring-billed Gull, Nimmo's Pier, Galway city (Vittorio Cashera, Aidan Kelly & Jim Dowdall). (8)

15th February: 1st Win. Mediterranean Gull & Little Gull, Mutton Island, Galway city (Vittorio Cashera, Aidan Kelly & Jim Dowdall).

16th February: 2 Slavonian Grebe, Traught (Vittorio Cashera, Aidan Kelly & Jim Dowdall).

16th February: 23 Black-throated Diver, between Traught and Ballyvaghan, Co. Clare (Vittorio Cashera, Aidan Kelly & Jim Dowdall).

17th February: 1st Win. Iceland Gull & Ad. Glaucous Gull, old coastguard station, Baile na hAbhainn

(Aonghus O'Donaill). (9)
18th February: 1st Win. Glaucous Gull, Gorteen Bay, Nr. Roundstone (Dermot Breen).
18th February: Ad. Win. Glaucous Gull, Murvey beach, Nr. Roundstone (Dermot Breen).
18th February: Ad. Win. Glaucous Gull, Ballyconneely Bay (Dermot Breen).
21st February: 2 (Ad. & 2nd Win.) Kumlien's Gull & 1st Win. Little Gull, Rossaveal (Dermot Breen).
22nd February: 4 Ruff & 80 Dunlin, Kiltiernan turlough (Paul Troake).
22nd February: Puffin, Oranmore, released after rehabilitation (Martin O'Malley).
23rd February: 2-1st Win. Kumlien's Gull & 2 (1st & 2nd Win.) Iceland Gull, Ross beach, Ballynakill Harbour (Dermot Breen).
23rd February: 1st Win. Glaucous Gull, old coastguard station, Baile na hAbhainn (Dermot Breen).
25th February: Possible 'Eastern' Jackdaw, ( <i>Corvus m. monedula</i> or <i>soemmerringii</i> ), Claregalway (Dermot Cosgrove).
2nd March: 1st Win. Little Gull, again present, Nimmo's Pier, Galway city.
2nd March: 2nd Win. Glaucous Gull & 2nd Win. Iceland Gull, Rossaveal (Dermot Breen).
2nd March: White-tailed Eagle, Nr. Glassilaun Beach, Renvyle (Miryam & Michael Harris).
7th March: 3 (2 Ad. & 1st Win.) Ring-billed Gull, again present, Nimmo's Pier, Galway city.
7th March: 6 (5-1st Win. & Ad.) Iceland Gull & Glaucous Gull, Baile na hAbhainn (Aonghus O'Donaill).
7th March: Drake Scaup, Cahermore turlough (Paul Troake).
8th March: 2-1st Win. Kumlien's Gull & 1st win. Iceland Gull, Tra an Tobair, Baile na hAbhainn (Dermot Breen).
8th March: 2 Knot, Rusheen Bay, Galway city (Cathal Forkan).
8th March: Leucistic Black-headed Gull, Tawin (Frank Flanagan).
9th March: 1st Win. Kumlien's Gull & 2nd Win. Iceland Gull, again present, Ross beach, Ballynakill Harbour.
10th March: 6 Long-tailed Duck, Traught (Tom Murtagh).
12th March: Scandinavian ' <i>littoralis</i> ' Rock Pipit, Inverin (Martin O'Malley).
14th March: Wheatear, Murlach, Ballyconneely (Dermot Breen).
15th March: 2 (Ad. & 1st Win.) Ring-billed Gull, again present, Nimmo's Pier, Galway city.
21st March: Fulmar, Oranmore, picked up alive after being shot (Martin O'Malley).
24th March: 2 Sand Martin, Tuam (Jim Glennon).
24th March: 2 Common Buzzard, Claregalway (Jim Glennon).
26th March: 3 Common Buzzard, Nr. Headford (Aonghus O'Donaill).
28th March: 2nd Win. Glaucous Gull, Truska (Dermot Breen).
28th March: Manx Shearwater & Fem. Hen Harrier, Silver Strand, Galway city (Aonghus O'Donaill).
29th March: Common Buzzard, Esker (Pete Capsey).
30th March: 1st Win. Ring-billed Gull & 10 Sandwich Tern, again present, Nimmo's Pier, Galway city.
31st March: Pink-footed Goose, 51 Greenland White-fronted Goose, Great-crested Grebe, 45 Pintail, 7 Black-tailed Godwit & 2 Greenshank, Rahasane Turlough (Paul Troake).
31st March: Swallow, 2 Willow Warbler, 2 Chiffchaff & 3 Blackcap, Toureen (Paul Troake).
31st March: Fem. Gadwall, 46 Teal, 4 Shoveler & 20 Black-tailed Godwit, Kiltiernan Turlough (Paul Troake).

#### NOTES:

- (1) An adult Glaucous Gull was present in the Nimmo's Pier area until the 7<sup>th</sup> of March at least.
- (2) A second winter Iceland Gull was also present in the Nimmo's Pier area on the 13<sup>th</sup> of January, the 10<sup>th</sup> of February and the 15<sup>th</sup> of February.
- (3) An adult Iceland Gull was present in the Nimmo's Pier area on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> of January and on the 10<sup>th</sup> of February, when the second winter bird (see 2, above) was also present.
- (4) A Barnacle Goose (presumably the same bird) as also seen with Brent geese at South park, near Nimmo's Pier, on the 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of February.
- (5) This Black-necked Grebe, presumably the same bird that had been present in November and December 2013, was also recorded on the 7<sup>th</sup> of March.

(6) The Slaty-backed gull was a true 'mega', being the first Irish record. Despite extensive searching by hopeful members of the Irish birding community, it was not relocated.

(7) A second Winter Kumlien's Gull was seen at Rossaveal and at Nimmo's Pier in the fourth quarter of 2013 and this may be the same bird. A second winter Kulmien's Gull was also seen on the 21<sup>st</sup> of February (Rossaveal), 23<sup>rd</sup> February (Rossaveal), 26<sup>th</sup> February (Nimmo's) and the 8<sup>th</sup> of March (Rossaveal).

(8) The long-staying Forster's Tern (eleventh winter) from the fourth quarter of 2013 was present into the second quarter of 2014 and was also specifically reported on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and the 30<sup>th</sup> of March at Grattan Road, Salthill.

(9) An adult Glaucous Gull was also recorded at Baile na hAbhainn on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March.

#### **OTHER BEASTIES:**

15th February: Otter, Nimmo's Pier, Galway city (Dermot Breen).

18th February: Long-finned Pilot Whale, beached dead near Mutton Island, Galway city (Cathal Forkan).

23rd March: 2 Otter, Mannin Bay, Ballyconneely (Miriam & Michael Harris).

#### **HIGHLIGHTS:**

Slaty-backed Gull was a first for both the county and Ireland, first Ross' Gull for some years, Black-necked Grebe, 2 Slavonian Grebe, Lesser Scaup, Grey Phalarope, Yellow-legged Gull, min. 4 Kumlien's Gull, min. 7 Iceland Gull, min. 5 Ring-billed Gull.

First Spring migrants: Wheatear (14<sup>th</sup> March); Sand Martin (24<sup>th</sup> March); Manx Shearwater (28<sup>th</sup> March); Swallow (31<sup>st</sup> March); Willow Warbler (31<sup>st</sup> March).