



CAIRDE EANLAITH ÉIREANN GALWAY

www.birdwatchgalway.org

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER – EDITOR: NEIL SHARKEY

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Issue No. 89 - May 2015

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

LOCAL AND BRANCH NEWS

Galway birdwatching carries on – our efforts may be a good bit short of the ideal but ‘that which we are we are’. Spring is with us, and so are the returning migrants, including, for me at least, the ever-welcome Whimbrel. Their haunting call is something special and their high-flying formations heading north are some of the best birdwatching sights in these parts – look up for them during May.

I’m writing this just back from the final Nimmo’s Pier (May) outing. As always, it turned up an interesting ‘tick’ of birds, including – Sanderling, Knot and a possible Caspian Gull! On behalf of all those who so enjoyed the past season of outings, can I express thanks and huge appreciation to Tom Cuffe for leading this monthly event – without which Galway birdwatching would be so much the poorer. Great, too, to acknowledge the presence of others – Brendan Dunne for the recording and the enthusiastic young people - Cathal, Freddy, Ruairi and others. Look up the past year on www.facebook.com/BirdWatchGalway run and maintained by Tom. See you all in September.

CONNEMARA RAVEN STUDY

I’ve been monitoring Raven nests in Galway, mostly Connemara, for the last few years. There usually isn’t a whole lot happening in the Twelve Bens and Maumturk Mountains over the winter/early spring period. I can remember doing a two-hour Time Tetrad Visit for the Bird Atlas up in the Twelve Bens not that long ago and the only bird I saw in the entire two hours was a single fly-over Raven! Ravens are one of the few large bird species that have managed to hang on in there in the uplands after years of overgrazing which has caused untold damage to the uplands of West Galway (you will hear some now delusionally stating that the Connemara hills are now under grazed!).

There is a high density of breeding Ravens within the Twelve Bens and the Maumturks, in particular due to two main factors. The first is the large number of sheep still on the hills. The terrain is rough and dangerous which means there’s always a handy food source for scavengers like Ravens. Second, there is a good source of suitable nesting sites, *i.e.* cliffs/crags. The huge majority of Raven nests are located on these. No doubt, some of these Raven nests were probably originally Peregrine and even Golden Eagle eyries in the past. Of the 60 or so nests that I monitor, fifty are found on cliffs/crags/quarries, six are on old buildings and only four are in trees. Raven pairs will move nests from year to year if there is a choice of possible nest sites. These moves can vary from distances of just single figure metres to up to 1.29km away. Generally, territorial pairs are spaced three kilometres from each other, although this can vary as I had two active nests one season that were only 800 metres apart; but this hasn’t been repeated since. Unlike Hooded Crows, which are generally despised by farmers, Ravens don’t have a bad reputation for damaging livestock. While Hooded Crows are listed on the Third Schedule of the Wildlife Act (generally considered the “pest list”), Ravens are fully protected under Irish Law.

Ravens are one of the earliest breeders among the Irish avifauna. Some chicks will probably be on the wing within the next week or two. Last year, we managed to ring a total of 29 chicks from eight different nests visited which gave an average of 3.6 chicks per nest. While this was an extremely small sample set, the ratio was very high. Although we’re not yet finished ringing chicks this season, it would appear to be a poorer year as many sites occupied earlier on have failed to produce any chicks for unknown reasons.

The chicks are ringed as part of a ringing project run by a colleague of mine – Irene O’Brien. As well as the standard metal BTO rings, a blue-coloured two-digit ring is also used. We have had a few recoveries so far. I found a dead bird at Renvyle which had come from near Westport. Another was found dead in Bundoran, Co. Donegal, having been ringed near Cleggan. I have recorded a few colour-ringed birds on

a trail camera set up on sheep carrion. The quality of the footage was, unfortunately, only good enough to read one of the rings. At least two others could not be read.

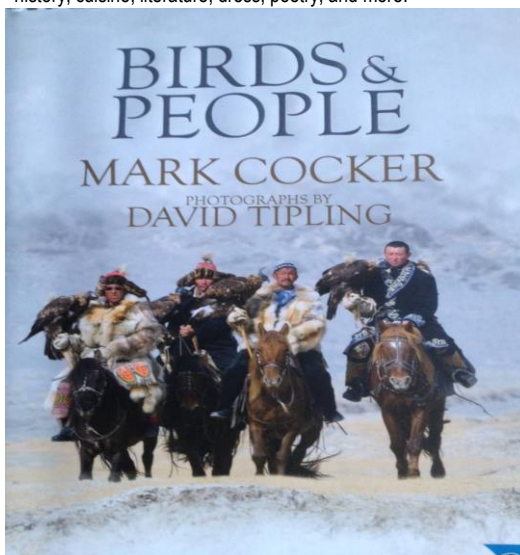
As part of the monitoring, I also try to record clutch sizes of the few accessible nests - which are usually on sea cliffs. Most Raven nests are located directly beneath a rocky overhang for shelter and are usually hidden from above. I use a telescopic pole with a camera/phone clamped onto its end to inspect the nest. This is all done under license from NPWS under Section 22 (9) (f) of the Wildlife Act, 1976 (as amended). It is an offence to photograph nesting birds without a license under the Wildlife Act.

If anyone is aware of any nesting Ravens in Galway you might drop me a line sometime - Breen.dermot@gmail.com

Dermot Breen

BIRDS & PEOPLE – A REVIEW

This book is a large and impressive volume by Mark Cocker and is not your usual bird book. It is as much about humans as it is about birds and mostly about the interactions between the two. We watch and admire birds. They are part of the culture, impacting on religion, art, history, cuisine, literature, dress, poetry, and more.



There are 10,500 species of bird worldwide and this book samples about 150 families. With fascinating detail and splendid photography by David Tipling, we can read about the kiwi of New Zealand, “one of the world’s most extraordinary birds”, but also threatened with extinction. We hear of the hunters of Mongolia, who train golden eagles to catch foxes for food and clothing. Romulus chose the Palatine Hill to found Rome when he saw 12 vultures flying above it, but vultures developed such a bad reputation that Oliver Goldsmith claimed that “the sloth, the filth and the voraciousness of these birds almost exceeds credibility”. Native people use the feathers of many birds to adorn headdresses and costumes. Birds are captured to be sold to the pet trade (parrots in particular, with an estimated 50-60 million in captivity as pets), whilst others are sold for their feathers or medicinal powers. Birds are even symbolic of a country or people: again we have the Kiwi of New Zealand, the Laughing Kookaburra of Australia; eagles were emblazoned on the imperial standards of ancient Rome and also were symbols in Nazi Germany; the Bald Eagle is an American emblem.

One species of bird, the Red Junglefowl, with its myriad domesticated forms, is the biggest source of human protein on earth (the humble ‘chicken’). Indeed, birds have provided a seemingly inexhaustible supply of meat for human consumption... not to mention their eggs. Culturally, we are very familiar with Easter eggs – thankfully we eat

mostly the chocolate variety. Ostrich eggs were carved, decorated and exchanged at funeral ceremonies by the Sumerians 5000 years ago.

Birds are ubiquitous on the earth’s surface, both on land and at sea. They are “fellow travellers of the human spirit and have colonised our imaginations”. Birds walk on earth just as we do, but when they perform something we never do, rising up and flying, they seem more intensely alive than we are.

Then there is the strange and the fascinating: the dangerous Southern Casowary of Australia; the fabulous display of the peacock’s tail; the bizarre shape of the South American Hoatzin; the Greater Roadrunners of California; the Resplendent Quetzal with its shimmering tail; the Birds of Paradise of New Guinea; pelicans and cranes and many more, interact with humans and influence in differing ways how we think and act.

“Birds make us all feel more human”, one of the 650 contributors to this book remarks. “We humans are admirers. We behold the beauty in the world. Despite all our faults, human nature brings so much joy to the world, as much as it does grief”.

This is an immense and engrossing book, not one to read cover to cover, but to dip into, in order to savour its delights, reflect and come back for more. The downsides are its cost, but it is now available on Amazon for about half the original price (£26, €35), and also the font size of the text - it is small for reading. Published in 2013 by Jonathan Cape.

Aidan O’Colmain

EVER-FAITHFUL COLLARED DOVES

In early 2014, I started approaching a pair of collared doves that were regulars on my bird table, which is roughly at head-height. Over the course of a few weeks they began to fly to the table when I opened the back door. Shortly afterward I could get within about 40/50 cm of the table while the pair was on it. I was feeding them chopped peanuts, which was a bit of a chore, so I tempted them with mixed seed – BINGO, no more chopping! I started ‘talking’ to them all the time! One of the pair was a little wary and edgy when I was close; the other didn’t seem too bothered – staying on the opposite side of the table, although with wings open, as I added more food. After a while the feral pigeons started to barge in, brazen as usual, no matter how close I was to the table, so something had to change! I then enticed the doves to the balcony (aka the garage roof) – the ferals weren’t long in trying to dominate that as well. My next strategy was to get the doves to the front door. It was not a challenge – by now they knew me as a ‘Purveyor of Fast Food.’

One particular incident sticks in my mind. My front garden is about 25 metres long and sloping away from the house. One morning I went to open the gate – there was no sign of the doves as I left the house. When I turned around after opening the gate, there they were, running down the driveway toward me. I walked slowly toward the house and they trotted ahead of me. I went inside, got the bird seed and they were at the door, waiting. In the meantime, spring had arrived and the pair had other things to occupy them. They started building their ‘nest’ in a neighbour’s tree and I think they had one egg when a magpie raided it. I saw it happen, nothing I could do, even if I’d wanted to – nature They tried again in another tree and managed to raise one, possibly two chicks. All the while they were coming to me for food. Later in the summer, I arrived home from a shopping trip to be greeted by screeching magpies. Looking around, I could see some feathers in a neighbouring garden – collared dove coloured! – thinking a Sparrowhawk had been at work. It must have been one of ‘my’ doves because from then on I was met by a single one at the door. It was the less nervous one.



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Sometime in the autumn, a pair from 'across the road' tried to muscle in and I thought for a while they had driven 'my' dove away. Whenever I saw a dove near the house, on wires or the balcony railing, I would get some seed and go to the front door. The dove would land about 3 meters away, walk back and forth, but not come close, so I reckoned it was one of the interlopers.

My garage roof has a conservatory on about a third of it, the rest is railed balcony – it is a fantastic 'hide'. In early 2015, I was in the 'hide' when a dove landed on the railing, looked inside, hopped onto the balcony and came right up to the glass looking in, then walked around to a back (floor to ceiling) window. This is where I perch watching the back garden and its multiple feeders. The dove stared in, I thought 'this is looking good' and stood up slowly. The dove flew around to the front, landed on the railing, watched me leave and was on the ground at the front door by the time I got to the bottom of the stairs. I picked up my cushion (the doorstep can get very cold after half an hour) and the bottle of seeds I keep close and opened the door slowly – the dove hopped a bit further away. I perched on my cushion, I showed the bottle and the dove came closer, recognising the bottle! I poured some seed on the ground between my feet and the dove came right in – it was my 'old buddy' - ever faithful!

Brendan Dunne

BIRD COUNTING BY THE MOON!

That so many diurnal birds should migrate at night has always been puzzling. Nocturnal migration may allow them to avoid predators like hawks, or free up daylight hours for feeding and rest. But the most powerful reason may be that the night sky is a more forgiving medium through which to fly. A warbler, flapping its wings at a constant twenty beats per second, generates tremendous amounts of muscular heat, [seriously] raising its body temperature; this the chilly night air wicks away. Nor is the atmosphere as turbulent as in the day; the winds tend to be less chaotic, with fewer jarring updrafts.

One way that scientists know this is by doing what I was doing – moon-watching, one of the oldest techniques for studying nocturnal migration. It was not a major flight that evening; my counts averaged four birds per ten-minute block of time. Of course, the moon's disk is only a fractional part of the sky, but it represents the cornerstone of science, a random sample. If you were to draw a line from horizon to horizon, the full moon covers about half a degree of the night sky along it – 1/695 of a circle, or 1/347.45 of the visible sky, to be more precise. To estimate the number of birds passing during my count session, I simply multiply my average of four birds passing the face of the moon by six for the hour, then multiplied these twenty-four songbirds by 347.45. According to my observations, about 8,340 birds should have passed within view of my twenty-power scope – a span about a mile and a half wide – during that one hour. That sounds like a lot, but along the Gulf Coast, the launching point for many species that winter in Central America, researchers have documented as many as a million songbirds per mile passing during a five-hour period at the peak of the autumn migration. And on one exceptional night off Cape Cod some years ago, radar showed an estimated 12 million songbirds pouring south.

From: *Living on the Wind* by Scott Weidensaul, 1999, North Point Press, New York

This wonderful book deals with bird migration from a North American perspective. It is a 'big' read but well worth it. It would be interesting to try this 'moon' counting technique in the context of birds using the west of Ireland flyway on migration north. I am grateful to Mr Weidensaul for permission to quote this extract.

NS

BIRDING INFORMATION – OLD AND NEW

During the more than twenty years since this newsletter was launched much has changed. Back then, internet and mobile phones were, at best, in their infancy - it was 1999 before I included an e-mail address in the newsletter heading and 2005 when a mobile phone number followed. Since then, we have had Facebook, Twitter and other technological advances which, so far, this newsletter has declined to embrace!

In those past times, it was always a challenge for birdwatchers, especially for beginners, to find out where to actually see birds. Word of mouth was helpful to a degree but it often lacked direction and permanence. Nowadays, the use of internet, e-mail and mobile phones has changed all of this. Information, identification, locations, bird song and photographs are available at the press of a few buttons! A feature of the early *Galway Newsletters* was a regular column of **Where to Watch Birds** by Tim Griffin. Tim's articles helped fill the huge information gap that then existed in birding information on Galway sites and enabled many of us to extend our knowledge and enjoyment of the birds of Galway city and county, including Galway Bay.

As a tribute to Tim and to acknowledge all he did and does for Galway birdwatching, I reprint one of his articles.

NS

GALWAY BIRD SITES – BISHOP'S QUARTER

Following on from my previous birding guide to sites, the next area I would recommend is Bishop's Quarter beach. The area is signposted right just before you come to Ballyvaughan. It is relatively easy to watch and a winter's walk along the beach is very productive with several varieties of ducks and divers about. A good spread of wading birds and passerines are also generally about and these attract the smaller raptors. Merlin and Kestrel are regular in winter.

Bishop's Quarter has a good mix of habitat comprising an estuarine bay, intertidal mudflats and a small sandy dune complex. A telescope is a must for scanning the bay. Good numbers of Mergansers and Great Northern Divers can usually be seen with smaller numbers of Long-tailed Duck. Black-throated Divers can frequently be observed at close range. In recent winters I have seen Velvet Scoter and the rare Red-necked Grebe in this bay. Last winter a female Eider Duck remained for several months. A sizeable number of Brent Geese are also present throughout the winter and can be seen feeding on the foreshore. Small numbers of seals can be seen bobbing in the water. The intertidal mudflat sustains a good mix of dabbling ducks and waders – Wigeon, Greenshank, Turnstone, Redshank and Dunlin. A walk along the beach can bring fresh wonders, especially after a winter storm. The purse-shaped 'shells' strung together are not shells at all but the egg cases of the Common Wink. The black leathery rectangles with a set of hooks at each end are the egg cases of the Skate, a relative of the shark! These are just some of the delights the naturalists may observe on a visit to this compact but varied site.

Tim Griffin

Reprinted from Issue No. 20 - Jan 1998 *BirdWatch Galway Newsletter* and as interesting today as it was then. Why not take a detour at the 'Bishops Quarter' sign on your next trip to the Burren!

NS

BIRD NAMES – TO CAPITALISE OR NOT?

In a note in his book on bird migration – mentioned earlier – Scott Weidensaul says that

There is a testy little debate in ornithological circles about whether or not to capitalise the proper names of birds. Generally, those writing for scientific works tend to capitalise, arguing that it reduces confusion (which it does), while those pursuing a more literary style of writing do not, considering the practice pretentious and visually awkward (which it is).

These viewpoints both have merit but, for what it is worth, I favour capitals. It makes for greater clarity and avoids inconsistency when, for example, appearing side by side, some species are named after specific people or places while others are not, such as whooper swan and Bewick's swan. What do you think?

NS

BLOGS AND BIRD BLOGS

Blogs are one of the technological advances I mentioned before in this issue. For those who have only a vague idea of them, which included myself until recently, my definition would be that they are a vehicle for a person to have an internet-based electronic diary or platform on any subject of their choice. This can be political, environmental, financial etc. You have an individual blogspot address and your blog is available to the general public, friends or people with a common interest as you choose. For birdwatchers, it is a particularly good platform: as well as relating your birding sightings and activities, you can include bird and habitat photographs which, invariably, are of a very high standard.

I am aware of two such bird blogs in Galway but I'm sure there are others. Dermot Breen's is a really comprehensive blog full of brilliant bird photos from Ireland and afar and links to other fascinating ornithological blogs. Do look it up on dermotbreen.blogspot.ie.

Another blog is that of Cathal Forkan with an address of barnabirder.blogspot.ie. With Cathal's permission I am including a narrative piece from one of his recent blogs. Unfortunately, I cannot include the superb photographs that go with it and for one of which he recently won a national first place award. But do look them up and read much more at his blog web address as this extract conveys only the merest glimpse his site.

EXONERATION FROM EDUCATION

I finished my mocks last Friday and now am on my mid-term break. I am delighted to have a week off and will spend nearly all of it working the local patch. This year I am taking part in a competition called the patchwork challenge, originally a British competition but there are now a few patches in Ireland too. It operates by awarding points for different species, the rarer the bird the more points you get. My patch extends from Bama pier all the way to Lough Atalia, and hopefully I'll see some good birds. The blog for the Irish league is at <http://patchbirdingireland.blogspot.ie/>. I was very pleased to see the returning Forster's tern at Nimmo's Pier at a recent outing with the Galway branch of BirdWatch Ireland. I first saw this bird back in 2012, but I hadn't seen it for over two years until two weeks back. I was even happier to see the bird because I had been looking at Nimmo's for many weeks but I was always there at the wrong time. This bird is at least 12 years old. The first records of this American species were in 2003 as far as I know, but there was a record of a Forster's tern at Nimmo's for a few months in the late nineties. This bird spends time on both sides of Galway Bay, at Nimmo's Pier and at Doorus near Kinvara. Many birders think this could also be the bird that is seen annually at Lough, Wexford and Dublin, although this cannot be verified. I managed to phone-scope a rubbish photo of the bird, but it gives the general impression so I'll post a link [here](#)

Generally, birding is quite quiet in the county at the minute, especially compared to this time last year. For example, I have yet to see a white winger this year, and was at Waterside for the anniversary of last year's Slaty-backed Gull. Unfortunately, it was a no-show. The only decent bird around is an American Wigeon in the north of the county found by Dermot Breen. Here's hoping that the rest of the month is better!

From Cathal Forkan's blog barnabirder.blogspot.ie, 15 Feb 2015. If there are any other Galway bird blogs out there, would those involved let me know and I will include a mention in the next issue.

NS

BirdWatch Galway (Branch of BirdWatch Ireland) 1st Quarter 2015

QUARTERLY BIRD REPORT COMPILED BY CHRIS PEPIATT

DATE OF ISSUE: 7th November 2015

2nd January: 55-60 Greenland White-fronted Goose, Belclare turlough (Ted Little).
2nd January: 3 Ring-billed Gull, again present, Nimmo's Pier, Galway city.
2nd January: Ad. Win. Foster's Tern, again present, Mutton Island, Galway city. (1)
3rd January: Common Buzzard, Cahermorris, Corrandulla (Peter Tyndall). (2)
3rd January: Great White Egret, again present, Muckrush, Lough Corrib. (3)
3rd January: Fem./Imm. Lesser Scaup, 20 Pintail, 60 Shoveler & 2 Peregrine, Rahasane turlough (Marcin Pisula).
4th January: White-tailed Eagle, Angliham, Lough Corrib (Ted Little).
10th January: 54 Whooper Swan, Raford River, Kiltullagh (Peter Capsey).
12th January: Peregrine, Claregalway (Jim Glennon).
13th January: 2nd Win. Glaucous Gull, Kinvara (John N. Murphy).
13th January: White-tailed Eagle, Killary Bay (Danny Coyne).
15th January: 3 Shag, Lough Nahillion, Cregg, Nr. Letterfrack (Dermot Breen).
17th January: Merlin & 11 Greenshank, Ballinderreen Turlough (Paul Troake).
18th January: Hen Harrier, Coolanillaun, Lough Corrib (Neil Ellis).
24th January: Male American Wigeon & Male probable Wigeon X Baikal Teal hybrid, Belclare Turlough (Dermot Breen).
24th January: Golden Eagle, Nr. Lough Corria, NW of Oughterard (Neil Ellis).
25th January: 4 (1st Win., 2nd Win. & 2-Ad. Win.) Ring-billed Gull & Iceland Gull, again present, Nimmo's Pier, Galway city.
27th January: 2 Common Buzzard, Cloghballymore (Paul Troake).
30th January: 2 Peregrine, Kilcolgan (Martin O'Malley).
6th February: 2 Great Northern Diver, Rusheen Bay, Galway city (Neil Ellis).
11th February: 18 Stock Dove & 2 Common Buzzard, Lisbeg, Clonfert (Chris Peppiatt).
13th February: Ad. Little Gull, Cahermore turlough (Paul Troake).
14th February: Peregrine, cathedral, Galway city (Tom Cuffe). (4)
14th February: Black-headed Gull, ringed JOY8 in Norway, Nimmo's Pier, Galway city (Tom Cuffe).
16th February: Yellowhammer, Cloghboley (Paul Troake).
17th February: Peregrine, Claregalway (Jim Glennon).
19th February: Spotted Redshank & 1st Win. Iceland Gull, Mutton Island, Galway city (Cathal Forkan).
19th February: 5 (1st Win., 2-2nd Win. & 2-Ad. Win.) Ring-billed Gull, Nimmo's Pier, Galway city (Cathal Forkan).
20th February: White-tailed Eagle, Angliham, Lough Corrib (Tim Griffin).
21st February: White-phase Gyr Falcon, Westquarter, Inishbofin (Emmet McGloin).
21st February: 43 Greylag Goose, Knockferry, Lough Corrib (Neil Ellis).
21st February: Hen Harrier, Muckrush, Lough Corrib (Neil Ellis).
24th February: Bittern, Coolagh Fen, Nr. Menlo, Galway City. (Chris Peppiatt)
26th February: Large murmuration of Starling (estimates vary between 60 & 200 thousand individuals), Athenry (Peter Brennan). (5)
28th February: 8 Sandwich Tern, Newtownlynch Pier, Nr. Kinvara (Paul Troake).
28th February: Iceland Gull, Grattan Beach, Salthill, Galway city (Josh Baryia).
6th March: 5 (3-1st Win., 2nd Win. & 3rd Win.) Iceland Gull, Rossaveal (Dermot Breen).
6th March: 4 (1st Win., 2nd Win. & 2-Ad. Win.) Ring-billed Gull & 1st Win. Iceland Gull, again present, Nimmo's Pier, Galway city.
7th March: 1st Win. Ring-billed Gull, Ad. Win. Iceland Gull & 2nd Win. Glaucous Gull, between Nimmo's Pier and Mutton Island, Galway city (Cathal Forkan).

7th March: 5 (3-1st Win., 2nd Win. & Ad. Win.) Iceland Gull, 1st Win. Glaucous Gull & 2nd Win. Little Gull, Rossaveal (Shaun Harvey).
8th March: 2-1st Win. Iceland Gull, Mutton Island, Galway city (Tom Cuffe).
8th March: Ad. Win. Ring-billed Gull, Waterside, Galway city (Tom Cuffe).
12th March: 7 (5-1st Win., 3rd Win. & Ad.) Iceland Gull & 1st Win. Glaucous Gull, Rossaveal (Dermot Breen).
15th March: 2-1st Win. Iceland Gull, 3 (2-Ad. Win & 1st Win.) Ring-billed Gull, again present between Nimmo's Pier and Mutton Island, Galway city.
16th March: Wheatear, Little Killary (Dermot Breen).
20th March: 6 Long-tailed Duck, Tawin (Paul Troake).
21st March: 9 Crossbill, Cloosh forestry plantation (Neil Ellis).
19th March: Sand Martin, Knockferry, Lough Corrib (Dermot Breen).
22nd March: 2-1st Win. Iceland Gull & 2 (Ad. Win & 1st Win.) Ring-billed Gull, again present, Nimmo's Pier, Galway city.
24th March: 2 Common Buzzard, Dunsandle Estate, Kiltullagh (Peter Capsey).
26th March: Common Buzzard, Merlin Park Woods, Galway city (Peter Tyndall).
27th March: 1st Win. Iceland Gull & 4 (2-Ad. Win, 2nd Win. & 1st Win.) Ring-billed Gull, again present, Nimmo's Pier, Galway city.
27th March: Swallow, Milltown, Nr. Tuam (Chris Benson).
28th March: 1st Win. Iceland Gull, again present, Nimmo's Pier, Galway city.

NOTES:

- (1) The adult Foster's Tern was recorded during most of the quarter, with sightings in the Nimmo's Pier/Mutton Island area on the 1st and 7th of February and the 15th and 19th of March and in the Kinvara/Newtownlynch pier area on the 25th and 28th of February and the 6th of March.
- (2) The Common Buzzard was also seen at the same place on the 4th of January.
- (3) The Great White Egret was recorded throughout the quarter, with sightings in the Muckrush/Angliham area of Lough Corrib on the 18th and 26th of January, 20th, 21st and 27th of February and the 19th and 22nd of March.
- (4) A Peregrine was later seen at Galway Cathedral on the 21st and the 22nd of March.
- (5) The Starling murmuration at Athenry was still occurring up until the 8th of March at least.

OTHER BEASTIES:

- 24th January: 2 Otter, Kilcolgan River, Nr. Morans at the Weir (Jo Gordon, Aoife Boyd & Marianne ten Cate).
24th February: Otter, River Corrib, Nr. Glenlo Abbey, Galway City (Chris Peppiatt).

HIGHLIGHTS:

Lesser Scaup, American Wigeon, Gyr Falcon and (Eurasian) Bittern, as well as the long-staying Foster's Tern and Great White Egret, otherwise rather quiet.

First Spring migrants: Wheatear (16th March); Sand Martin (19th March); Swallow (27th March).