

# Irish Rare Bird Report 2015

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## Introduction

This report adds three species to the Irish List, two from the current year (Black Scoter *Melanitta americana* and Hudsonian Godwit *Limosa haemastica*) and one from 2013 (Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii*). It also confirms the previously announced decision to reassign Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis* to Category A of the Irish List from Category D, following a review of one at North Slob, Wexford from October 1997 to March 1998 ([www.irbc.ie/announcements/announce79.php](http://www.irbc.ie/announcements/announce79.php)).

A Bulwer's Petrel off Galley Head, Cork on 1st August 2013 becomes the first record of this pan-oceanic petrel. This record took longer than usual to assess in order to allow time to seek the opinion of several seabird experts. Consequently, the committee would like to thank both Bob Flood and Steve

N.G. Howell for their considerable help and advice with this record.

In Kerry, a male Black Scoter was discovered in Dingle Bay off Rossbeigh in January. It remained until early April, returning the following October to Rossbeigh, and to Waterville for a couple of days in November. White-winged Scoter *Melanitta deglandi* was added to the Irish List at the same location in 2011 (*Irish Birds* 9: 453) and the same birder was involved in both discoveries.

Galway has added six species to the Irish List since 2007, and now adds Hudsonian Godwit. It was found in the west of the county at Inishdawros in July, where it remained for just

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**Plate 187.** Hudsonian Godwit *Limosa haemastica*, Ballyconnelly, Galway, July 2015 (Dermot Breen).

a single afternoon, disappointing all those hoping to add the species to their Irish list. Fortuitously and quite remarkably, the same individual reappeared the following September on the Aran Islands, where it remained for three days allowing many grateful birders twitch what had previously proved a lost cause.

These additions continue an unbroken sequence of new species added to the Irish List since 1976. In the main this involves new records, although others have been the result of new data emerging from time to time that elevates subspecies to full species status. The Irish List now stands at 478 species with another eleven placed in Category D and two in the 'At sea' category. A pdf copy of the Irish List is available for download through the IRBC's website at [www.irbc.ie/topbar/categories.php](http://www.irbc.ie/topbar/categories.php), where an explanation of the category system in use is outlined also.

Other notable records in this report include; the second Slaty-backed Gull *Larus schistisagus* (Donegal), third Cedar Waxwing *Bombycilla cedrorum* (Clare) and Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapilla* (Cork), fourth Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti* (Wicklow) and Dark-eyed Junco *Junco hyemalis* (Cork), fifth Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* (Cork) and Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera* (Mayo), fifth and sixth Hooded Mergansers *Lophodytes cucullatus* (Donegal) and sixth Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* (Mayo) and Elegant Tern *Sterna elegans* (Kerry).

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## 2015 Systematic List

The sequence and scientific nomenclature largely follows British Ornithologists' Union (2013), but also incorporates recommendations of the Taxonomic Advisory Committee of the AERC (Crochet *et al.* 2010, 2011, 2012, 2015) and the Taxonomic Sub-committee of the British Ornithologists' Union (Sangster *et al.* 2013, 2015, 2016). Further details of taxonomic changes adopted by the IRBC can be viewed by consulting the Announcements page on our website at [www.irbc.ie/announcements/announcements.php](http://www.irbc.ie/announcements/announcements.php).

The three numbers in parentheses after each species refer respectively to (a) the total number of birds up to 31st December 1949; (b) the total number of birds from 1st January 1950, up to, but excluding, the current year – where this total is enclosed in square brackets, totals are from 1st January 2010 only; (c) the total number of new individuals for the current year. Some totals are minimum figures due to lack of precise numbers in historical texts – where this is the case, the total is succeeded by a '+'. In addition to the species totals, the total number of individuals being added to the species total is included immediately following the county name. Please note that the finder's credits are placed in alphabetical order.

The backbone of the IRBC's system for recording occurrences of rare birds in the Republic of Ireland is the Provisional List, published online at [www.irbc.ie/provisional/provisional.php](http://www.irbc.ie/provisional/provisional.php), which is updated regularly. Most of the data in this report were taken directly from the 2015 Provisional List. The IRBC expresses its sincere gratitude to all those who provided information during 2015, either directly or indirectly. The committee also extends its grateful thanks to Kieran Fahy, Kieran Grace, Aidan G. Kelly and Killian Mullaney for their invaluable assistance.

**Rarity Description forms may be downloaded from the IRBC website:** [www.irbc.ie/records/records.php](http://www.irbc.ie/records/records.php).

**Submission of photographs:** We welcome photographs of rare and scarce birds, which can be sent to [photoArchive@irbc.ie](mailto:photoArchive@irbc.ie).

**Rarities:** The full list of taxa requiring substantiating documentation can be found at [www.irbc.ie/records/desclist.php](http://www.irbc.ie/records/desclist.php). For a full explanation of the background and purpose of the list, see *Irish Birds* 7: 413-418 or online at: [www.irbc.ie/announcements/announce1.php](http://www.irbc.ie/announcements/announce1.php).

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### Tundra Bean Goose *Anser fabalis rossicus* (0; 31; 1)

**Mayo** One: One, Roonagh Lough, Louisburgh, 30th to 31st May, photographed (P.Loneran).

It is possible this is one of two that were at the Mullet Peninsula from January to March 2012 (*Irish Birds* 10: 73), but is here treated as different in the statistics.

### Taiga/Tundra Bean Goose *Anser fabalis fabalis/rossicus* (0; 1; 1)

**Cork** One: One, Dursey Island, 29th October (P.Moore, D.O'Sullivan). This goose was observed in flight only and the views obtained precluded subspecific identification.

### Russian White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons albifrons* (51; 112; 0)

**Wexford** Zero: One, North Slob NNR, 22nd February (P.Kelly), presumed to be the same individual that was present in December 2014 (*Irish Birds* 10: 237).

In contrast to the Greenland race *flavirostris*, the smaller nominate form of White-fronted Goose is a rare winter visitor, mainly to Wexford, which accounts for 54 records or 33% of the total. Occurrences have consisted of small groups of up to

nine individuals, with the exception of a group of about 50 at Ballough and Rogerstown in north Dublin during a period of severe winter weather in January and February 1947 (Kennedy *et al.* 1954). There has been a steady decrease in numbers wintering in Britain, with a reduction of 71% from 1987/88 to 2012/13 and 38% from 2002/03 to 2012/13 (Hayhow *et al.* 2015), which presumably has a knock-on effect on numbers reaching Ireland.

### **Snow Goose** *Anser caerulescens* (70; 49; 1)

**Wexford** One: One, Cahore Marsh, 22nd April (R.Vaughan).

Following an absence of eight years from 1994 to 2001, Snow Goose has occurred annually since 2002, with birds in Donegal (two), Kerry (one), Londonderry (one) and Wexford (four); some of these are presumed to be regularly returning individuals over a number of years. Snow Geese often arrive in the company of Greenland White-fronted Geese *A.a. flavirostris*, which probably explains why Wexford and, in particular, the Slob Lands account for over half of the records.

### **Cackling Goose** *Branta hutchinsii* (0; 27; 1)

**Sligo** One: One, Lissadell, 23rd December to 19th March 2016, photographed (D.Skehan *et al.*).

**2014 Sligo** Zero: One, Lissadell, 30th October to 30th January 2015 (S.Feeney *et al.*), presumed returning.

The 2014 Lissadell individual is presumed to be one of three birds that were present in the same location in 2013 (*Irish Birds* 10: 74).

### **Canada Goose** *Branta canadensis* (0; 36; 1)

**Sligo** One: One, of the race *interior*, Lissadell, 17th November to 19th March 2016, photographed (M.Casey *et al.*).

**Wexford** Zero: One, North Slob NNR, from 29th October 2014 (*Irish Birds* 10: 238) remained to 20th March (A.Walsh *et al.*).

The IRBC undertook a review of Canada Goose records between 1969 and 2009, which identified five records (involving six birds) of *B.c. interior*, known as Todd's Canada Goose (IRBC 2013) and this is the first since then. This form can be separated from the nominate by its smaller size, overall darker mantle, back and underparts and the absence of an obvious whitish neck ring and can often show a dark gular stripe under the chin.

### **Cackling/Canada Goose**

*Branta hutchinsii* / *canadensis* (0; 61; 0)

**1985 Londonderry** Seven: Seven, Myroe Levels, Lough Foyle, 21st to 28th October (D.Allen).

This group was not assigned to a particular race and were recorded before Cackling Goose was split from Canada Goose ([www.irbc.ie/announcements/announce43.php](http://www.irbc.ie/announcements/announce43.php)). However, they were considered to be 'undoubtedly of wild origin' and

'all seven were small and dark' and they 'are best treated as small Canadas' (NIBA 1987), possibly indicating the record involved Cackling rather than Canada Geese.

### **Black Brant** *Branta bernicla nigricans* (0; 39; 0)

**Kerry** Zero: Adult, Castlegregory, from 21st December 2014 (*Irish Birds* 10: 238) remained to 25th February, photographed (S.Enright); One, Ventry, 10th to 22nd March, photographed (M.O'Clery *et al.*); Adult, The Spa, Tralee, 24th September to 14th October, photographed (D.A.O'Connor *et al.*); Adult, Castlegregory, 30th November (M.O'Clery). All presumed to relate to two returning and wandering individuals.

Kerry has recorded four since the first for that county at Castlegregory in 2001 (*Irish Birds* 7: 216). It is presumed that all of them have returned and wandered the county at various times in the intervening years. An analysis of Black Brant occurrences was presented for the first time in the 2012 IRBR (*Irish Birds* 9: 580 & 611).

### **Red-breasted Goose**

*Branta ruficollis* (0; 1; 0)

**1997 Wexford** One: Adult, North Slob NNR, 26th October to 16th March 1998.

As there was some doubt regarding the provenance of this bird it was originally consigned to Category D of the Irish List (*Irish Birds* 7: 107). Recently, new evidence provided by the finder to the IRBC prompted a reassessment. As a result, the committee has reassigned the record to Category A of the list, making it the first, and to date only Irish record of this Eurasian goose.

### **Ruddy Shelduck**

*Tadorna ferruginea* (75; 0; 0)

**1892 Down** One: One, near Comber, 21st or 22nd June, shot (Deane 1954).

A summer drought across southern and southeastern Europe in 1892 appears to have been the cause of a widespread northward movement of Ruddy Shelduck, with some even reaching as far as Iceland and Greenland (Ussher & Warren 1900). At least 51 were recorded across nine Irish counties that year during June, July and August with a single straggler remaining to October. The Comber bird was not published in the standard literature on Irish records (Ussher & Warren 1900, Kennedy *et al.* 1954, Ruttledge 1966), but its date of occurrence coincides with the invasion and the likely explanation is that it was overlooked rather than considered suspect. It was stated by Deane (1954) that the specimen was mounted by James Sheals, one of Belfast's best known 19th century taxidermists.

## American Wigeon *Anas americana*

(0; 137; 5)

**Cork** Zero: Male, Harper's Island, from 14th December 2014 (*Irish Birds* 10: 238) remained to 2nd March, photographed (T.Gittings *et al.*).

**Donegal** Zero: Male, seen at Culdaff Estuary and also at Malin Town, from 13th October 2014 (*Irish Birds* 10: 238) remained to 18th February, upon which date it was seen at Trawbreaga Bay, photographed (M.McLaughlin, R.McLaughlin *et al.*), then, presumed same, Culdaff Estuary, 24th October, Lough Swilly, 19th December and Malin Town, 28th December (T.Campbell, R.Murray, B.Robson), presumed returning.

**Galway** One: Male, Belclare Turlough, 24th January to 12th February, photographed (D.Breen).

**Kerry** One: Male, Inny Strand, Waterville, 13th to 29th December, photographed (P.McDaid *et al.*).

**Leitrim** Zero: Male, Tullaghan, from 17th October 2014 (*Irish Birds* 10: 238) remained to 18th March (F.Cross *et al.*), then, presumed same, Tullaghan, 24th October to 17th March 2016 (M.Davis, D.Skehan *et al.*), presumed returning.

**Wexford** Three: Male, Cahore Marsh, 30th January to 8th March, photographed (B.Power); Male, Tacumshin Lake, 11th to 30th April, photographed (P.Kelly *et al.*); Male, Tacumshin Lake, 6th September to 1st November, photographed (P.Kelly, K.Mullarney *et al.*).

The male found at Tacumshin Lake on 6th September by Paul Kelly was initially observed in eclipse plumage, before moulting to winter plumage by the end of September. The last year that failed to record this Nearctic duck was 1981 and it has occurred in 43 of the 61 years since the first in 1954. The largest congregation was of thirteen at Akeragh Lough, Kerry between 6th and 12th October 1968 (*IBR* 16: 18-19). One of these, shot on 12th October, had been ringed near Jemseg, New Brunswick, Canada on 29th August 1968. Another was observed on 9th October to arrive in an apparently exhausted state from high over the sea to the west, before alighting on the lake.

## Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* (0; 32; 5)

**Cavan** One: Male, Pharisee Lough, 19th February to 19th March, photographed (J.Donaldson *et al.*).

**Cork** One: Female, The Gearagh, 10th December (A.Duggan).

**Kerry** One: Male, Lough Gill, from 22nd October 2014 (*Irish Birds* 10: 238) remained to 19th February (D.Farrar *et al.*), then, presumed same, Lough Gill, 16th October to 21st December (D.Farrar, M.O'Clery *et al.*), photograph *Birdwatch* 274: 14, presumed returning; Female, Lough Gill, 2nd to 24th January (E.Carty *et al.*).

**Mayo** One: Male, Lough Doo, Achill Island, 18th to 19th October, photographed (M.O'Brian).

**Sligo** One: Male, Lough Gara, 8th March to 9th April (S.Feeney, D.Skehan).

The Lough Gill male, first recorded in 2011 (*Irish Birds* 10: 239), returns for the fifth time. Its first occurrence coincided with that of a female and it is possible the bird present through much of January is that female returning, but is here treated as different in the statistics.

## King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* (4; 21; 1)

**Mayo** One: First-winter male, Annagh Head, Mullet Peninsula, 20th September, photographed (D.Suddaby *et al.*).

This is the eighth record for Mayo. Not surprisingly, for a species that breeds on high-Arctic coasts and islands, the majority have been in the northern half of the island. The exceptions are two in Cork (1959 & 2014), two in Kerry (2001 & 2011) and a single Wexford record (2008). There has been a general increase in numbers since 2000, when just over half of all records have been recorded (fourteen out of 26). The same adult male is presumed to have occurred regularly off Rosbeg, Donegal between 1974 and 1982.

## Black Scoter *Melanitta americana* (0; 0; 1)

**Kerry** One: Male, Mountain Stage, near Rossbeigh, 8th January to 3rd April (D.Farrar, M.O'Clery *et al.*), then, presumed same, Rossbeigh, 10th to 30th October (D.Farrar, M.O'Clery), and, Waterville, 26th to 27th November (M.O'Clery), (O'Clery & Farrar 2015), photographs *Birdwatch* 273: 12, *Wings* 77: 26.

While scanning a small flock of Common Scoter *M. nigra* at some distance off Mountain Stage, near Rossbeigh on 8th January 2015, Davey Farrar picked up a scoter with what looked like a prominent yellow 'golf-ball' adorning the upper surface of the bill. He was aware of the existence of aberrant Common Scoters with more extensive yellow on the bill than usual having occasionally been mistaken for Black Scoter, but after watching this bird for some time he felt that it looked sufficiently promising to merit a phone-call to Killian Mullarney for some advice. Davey asked him what exactly he should be looking for to determine whether the bird was a Black Scoter, or an aberrant Common Scoter. Killian explained that the bill-shape should offer some clues and the yellow patch should extend squarely to the forehead, whereas in most aberrant Common Scoters the yellow patch gives way to the slightly swollen dark 'knob' at the base of the bill. Other details that could help the identification process were impossible to judge in the adverse weather conditions. However, after about another hour of scrutinising the bird for small clues Davey came away thinking that it almost certainly was a Black Scoter, but better views would be required to be absolutely certain.

He returned the following day with Michael O'Clery and despite the continuing bad weather they managed to relocate the 'yellow-billed' scoter in a flock of about 65 Common Scoter. Viewing conditions were atrocious, with rain and mist and a heavy sea-swell running, which meant that observations were intermittent and often frustrating. They persevered for about three hours, at which point they felt they had seen enough to conclude that it was indeed a Black Scoter, a first for Ireland. Their concerns that it might have been a hybrid or an aberrant Common Scoter were assuaged by a combination of features including the extent and shape of the yellow on the bill and the bird's subtly different jizz compared to





**Plate 188.** Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*, with Tufted Ducks *A. fuligula*, Achill Island, Mayo, October 2015 (Micheal O'Briain).



**Plate 189.** Black Scoter *Melanitta americana*, with Common Scoter *M. nigra*, Rossbeigh, Kerry, January 2015 (Tom Shevlin).

Common Scoters alongside. This gave them the confidence to release news of the bird as 'showing all the characteristics of Black Scoter and none of the characters of a hybrid/aberrant bird'. The bird attracted a lot of interest over the subsequent days and weeks, while improved weather conditions permitted much better views and even good photographs. These established beyond doubt that it was an adult male Black Scoter. It remained until 3rd April, and then returned the following October to the same location, as well as off Waterville Golf Links for at least two days in November.

Black Scoter breeds in Siberia from east of the River Yana to the Bering Sea, in Alaska and parts of central and eastern

Canada. It is a vagrant to the Western Palearctic but has occurred in most countries of north and west Europe, from Spain to Poland, with several countries accumulating multiple records. The distribution of records in the Western Palearctic, in particular, the fact that it has never been recorded in Iceland, suggests that birds occurring in Europe might arrive from the east, rather than from across the Atlantic. Black Scoter winters on north Pacific coasts, the Great Lakes, Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic coast of North America. Previously regarded as a race of Common Scoter, it was recognised as a full species by the IRBC in October 2005 ([www.irbc.ie/announcements/announce38.php](http://www.irbc.ie/announcements/announce38.php)).

### **Surf Scoter** *Melanitta perspicillata* (6; 212; 4)

**Kerry** One: Female or immature, Rossbeigh, 10th to 11th October (M.O'Clery *et al.*).

**Louth** One: Adult male, The Hermitage, from 12th October 2014 (*Irish Birds* 10: 239) remained to 26th March, photographed (G.O'Neill *et al.*), also seen in Meath; Female, Clogher Head, 25th to 31st January (P.Kelly).

**Meath** Zero: Adult male, Ben Head, 12th to 21st March (A.G.Kelly, E.O'Donnell *et al.*), also seen in Louth.

**Wexford** Two: First-winter male, Rosslare Harbour, 17th January to 17th March, photographed (P.Kelly *et al.*); First-winter female, Rosslare Harbour, 24th January to 7th February (A.G.Kelly *et al.*).

It is possible that the female off Clogher Head in late January is the same as one that had been present off The Hermitage, Louth on 22nd November 2014 (*Irish Birds* 10: 239) but is here treated as a new bird. Surf Scoter has occurred in all months and off all counties with a coastline except Leitrim and Limerick. It has also occurred inland in Armagh (Oxford Island, Lough Neagh) and Fermanagh (Lough Erne). These are typical dates as 199 of the previous 218 occurred from October to April. Of the remaining nineteen, six were in May, four each in June, August and September and just a single July record of a female off Inch Strand, Kerry in 2013 (*Irish Birds* 10: 76).

### **Hooded Merganser**

*Lophodytes cucullatus* (3; 1; 2)

**Donegal** Two: Pair, South Lake, near East Town, Tory Island, 19th to 23rd May (A.Meenan *et al.*), (Meenan 2015), photographs *Birdwatch* 277: 11, *Wings* 78: 29.

In the days prior to their discovery, a series of westerly gales had swept across Tory Island, strong enough to prevent the ferry sailing on 18th May. On the following day Anton Meenan noticed an unfamiliar duck with a white head on South Lake near East Town. Fortunately he was in the habit of taking pictures of unusual birds he encountered and when he later checked his *Collins Bird Guide* (Svensson *et al.* 2009) realised it was a Hooded Merganser. In fact, it turned out there was a pair, and over the next few days, a series of pictures by visiting birders revealed that neither was carrying rings and clearly showed their wings to be in perfect condition. Other factors in favour of genuine vagrancy include:

- A considerable increase in the species population. BirdLife International reports an extraordinary 1100% expansion in the 40 years to 2007, equating to an increase of 85.9% per decade (BirdLife International 2016).
- Their arrival coincided with an influx of Nearctic vagrants in late spring and early summer of 2015. This report includes Grey-cheeked Thrush *Catbarus minimus* in May, Cedar Waxwing *Bombycilla cedrorum* and Dark-eyed Junco *Junco hyemalis* in June and Hudsonian Godwit *Limosa baemastica* in July. In Britain, there were records of Veery *Catbarus fuscescens* and Dark-eyed Junco in May, Hudsonian Whimbrel *Numenius budsonicus*, three Cedar Waxwings and two Swainson's Thrushes *Catbarus ustulatus* in June and a Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla* in July (Hudson & the Rarities Committee 2016).
- The pair was short-staying in a predictable geographic location for spring Nearctic vagrants. In addition, later in the



**Plate 190.** Hooded Mergansers *Lophodytes cucullatus*, Tory Island, Donegal, May 2015 (Aidan G. Kelly).

autumn there were claims of the same species from Azores (two), Iceland and Faroe Islands.

- The pair was extremely wary, even more so than Tufted Ducks *Aythya fuligula* present on the same lake.

This is the second time a pair has arrived on our shores. The first Irish and Western Palearctic record involved two that were shot at East Ferry, Cork Harbour in December 1878. Just over two years later in January 1881 a female was shot off Ballylongford, Kerry (Ussher & Warren 1900). The only 20th century record was a female or immature at Acton Lake, Armagh on 21st December 1957 (*IBR* 5: 8). In addition to these, there have been some sightings of presumed escapes carrying colour leg-rings.

### Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis* (0; [6]; 0)

**Dublin** Zero: Female, Swords, Knock Lake and Balrothery, from 29th December 2014 (*Irish Birds* 10: 239) was at Swords, 29th December 2014, Knock Lake, 30th December 2014 to 8th January and Balrothery, 12th January (P.Kelly *et al.*).

More details of this previously published record are presented here. Historically, three pairs of this Nearctic duck were imported to the WWT Reserve at Slimbridge, Gloucestershire in 1948 (Hudson 1976). Many subsequent generations remained full-winged and managed to escape, establishing feral breeding populations across much of lowland Britain (Parkin & Knox 2010). In Ireland, breeding was confirmed at Oxford Island, Lough Neagh, Armagh in 1973 (Culbert & Furphy 1978). Prior to being removed from the rarity list in 1989 it was recorded annually from 1979 to 1988 in Irish Bird Reports. In those years numbers were generally small (seven or fewer), although sixteen were at Portmore Lough, Antrim in November 1987 and 30 at Lady Bay, Lough Neagh, Antrim the following month (*Irish Birds* 3: 619). By the mid 1990s, overall numbers had peaked at about 200 and a tentative estimate at the breeding population during the years 1995 to 1998 was about 50 pairs (Perry *et al.* 1998). It has now become very scarce, probably as a result of an eradication program in Britain designed to remove the possibility of hybridisation with the globally threatened White-headed Duck *O. leucocephala*. Statistics are given from 1st January 2010 only, when it was reinstated to the rarity list ([www.irbc.ie/announcements/announce47.php](http://www.irbc.ie/announcements/announce47.php)).

### Fea's/Zino's Petrel

*Pterodroma feae/madeira* (0; 101; 6)

**Cork** Five: One, Galley Head, 2nd August (P.Connaughton); One, Toe Head, 2nd August (A.Duggan); One, Ballycotton, 2nd August (D.O'Sullivan); One, Galley Head, 3rd August (N.T.Keogh, B.Porter *et al.*); One, one mile south of Galley Head, 9th August (P.Connaughton, H.Hale *et al.*), photograph *Wings* 79: 29.

**Mayo** One: One, Kilcummin Head, 23rd August (J.Donaldson).

Included is the tenth record for Mayo and the sixth off

Kilcummin Head. The possibility that some of these involve the same individual cannot be entirely discounted, however in the absence of multiple sightings of a distinctive bird they are treated here as separate records.

### Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii* (0; 0; 1)

**2013 Cork** One: One, Galley Head, 1st August (A.Jeffery, P.Moore, D.O'Sullivan).

If the forecast of strong southwesterly winds were not enough to tempt seawatchers to Galley Head on 1st August 2013, then news of three Fea's type Petrels *Pterodroma feae/madeira* there the previous day would surely do it? In recent years, the first big blow of the autumn tends to produce these gadfly petrels off west Cork, but on this occasion the best bird was a Bulwer's Petrel that was watched by three stunned birders as it passed below them at a range of about 300 metres.

The summer of 2013 produced the warmest July on record and, more significantly, the sea temperature reached a record high of twenty degrees in the second half of the month off the south and west coasts (Met Éireann monthly summary). Some indication of the effect these abnormal temperatures had can be illustrated by reports from Dingle fisherman who had difficulties preserving catches in their vessel's holds due to the warming effect of sea temperatures. There seems little doubt these conditions influenced a warm water species like Bulwer's Petrel to venture much further north than usual.

Other seabirds from more southern parts recorded as close as Britain in 2013 were a Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus* off Cornwall in August, an Ascension Frigatebird *Fregata aquila* in Argyle in July and a Bridled Tern *Omychoprion anaethetus* in various locations throughout July and August (Hudson & the Rarities Committee 2014).

The IRBC undertook a review of the four previous claims of Bulwer's Petrel in 2015, and concluded that none could be considered proven and the species was removed from the Irish List (Moore 2015). Thankfully that short absence is over and this becomes the first Irish record.

### Macaronesian Shearwater

*Puffinus baroli* (1; 22; 1)

**Cork** One: One, Toe Head, 12th August (A.Duggan).

The sixth record for Cork but the first there since 1993. Although August has by far the most records with nineteen, this record is the earliest in that month and there are just two others before the 21st.

In the 1990s the IRBC undertook a review of existing Macaronesian Shearwater records (then known as Little Shearwater), which concluded that only eight of the 42 records remained acceptable. The full review can be found on the IRBC's website ([www.irbc.ie/announcements/announce7.php](http://www.irbc.ie/announcements/announce7.php)).



## Wilson's Storm-petrel

*Oceanites oceanicus* (2; 265; 8)

**At sea** Zero: One, approximately 60 nautical miles west-southwest of Slyne Head, Galway, 21st April (A.Bennison, N.T.Keogh); One, eighteen nautical miles southwest of Galley Head, Cork, 15th August (P.Connaughton).

**Cork** Eight: One, Mizen Head, 8th August (D.Ballard); One, south of the Stag Rocks, 9th August (P.Connaughton *et al.*); One, Toe Head, 9th August, photographed (P.Connaughton *et al.*); One, Mizen Head, 12th August (D.Ballard); One, eight nautical miles southwest of Galley Head, 15th August (P.Connaughton); One, five nautical miles southeast of the Baltimore Beacon, 16th August (E.A.MacLachlaimn *et al.*); Two, six nautical miles southeast of Sherkin Island, 29th August (S.Enright, C.Foley *et al.*).

The April 'at sea' observation was made from the *RV Celtic Explorer* during its 2015 transatlantic research cruise and is the first for that month in Ireland. All previous records occurred between late June and early October. This sighting suggests that Wilson's Storm-petrel may possibly be present off Ireland during more of the year than previously suspected.



**Plate 191.** Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*, six nautical miles southeast of Sherkin Island, Cork, August 2015 (Seamus Enright).

## Continental Cormorant

*Phalacrocorax carbo sinensis* (0; 39; 11)

**Cork** One: Second calendar-year, Lough Aderry, 24th November, photographed (H.Hussey, K.O'Driscoll).

**Kerry** Two: Second calendar-year, Cromane Harbour, 10th January, photographed (M.O'Clery); A different second calendar-year, Cromane Harbour, 7th March, photographed (S.Enright).

**Limerick** Two: Two, Merchant's Quay, Limerick City, 22nd February, photographed (T.Tarpey).

**Wexford** Three: Adult, Rosslare Harbour, 18th January to 15th March, photographed (P.Kelly), presumed returning; First-winter, Rosslare Harbour, 8th February to 15th March, photographed (P.Kelly); Immature, Wexford Harbour, 4th April, photographed (C.Cardiff, T.Cardiff); One, Churchtown, 17th October, photographed (B.McCloskey).

**Wicklow** Three: Second calendar-year, Broad Lough, 22nd June to 10th July, photographed (C.Cardiff); Adult, Broad Lough, 20th September to 21st November, photographed (C.Cardiff, T.Cardiff), and, presumed same, Webb's Field, Kilcoole, 9th November (C.Cardiff); Second-winter, Broad Lough, 21st October, photographed (C.Cardiff).

## Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* (161+; 44; 2)

**Kerry** One: One, Lough Gill, 19th to 20th February (M.Boyle, A.McMillan *et al.*).

**Wexford** One: One, South Slob, 12th January (F.Tennant).

Nowadays Bittern is predominantly a rare winter visitor. Of the nineteen recorded since the new millennium only three were not during the months from October to March and these two continue that pattern. In the distant past it was a common resident, to such an extent that several place names are called after it (D'Arcy 1999). It appears that a combination of hunting and habitat destruction, especially widespread drainage of bogs and marshes, ensured its demise as a breeding species. Ussher & Warren (1900) note there is no record of the species nesting after about 1840. Hutchinson (1989) reports that although 'booming' was heard in Offaly (a few years before 1940), Clare (1945) and Wicklow (1962), there is no recent record of breeding. It has yet to feature in the report of the Irish Rare Breeding Birds Panel (annual since 2002), although one was heard booming and was sound recorded in Tacumshin Lake, Wexford early in 2011 by Killian Mullarney (*Irish Birds* 10: 289).

## American Bittern *Botaurus lentiginosus* (18; 4; 1)

**Cork** One: Juvenile or first-winter, Castlefrefre, near Owenahincha, 25th November to 14th December (L.deBeer, T.deBeer, P.Wolstenholme *et al.*), (de Beer & Wolstenholme 2016), photographs *Birdwatch* 283: 10-11 & 15 and 284: 13, *British Birds* 109: 67, *Dutch Birding* 38: 107, *Wings* 80: 28.

A prime candidate for bird of the year coming almost 26 years after the previous occurrence at Killag, Wexford in January 1990 (*Irish Birds* 4: 429). It was first observed on a small ornamental lake in the shadow of the 18th century Castlefrefre from a moving car by Lynne de Beer. She told her husband Ted to pull over and using a telescope they had good views of it as it moved and fed around the lake and grassy bank. Lynne alerted Peter Wolstenholme who was able to join them and they were all happy it was a bittern. Peter began to phone the news to some local birders and it was suggested that American Bittern should be considered. A field guide was consulted, a definitive identification as American Bittern was reached and the news went nationwide. It remained faithful to the lake and its environs for almost three weeks and was twitched and photographed by many during its stay. This is the twenty-third record, but the first to survive the experience as all others met their demise on the day of discovery either 'shot', 'obtained', 'killed', 'found dying' or, in the case of the 1990 individual referred to earlier, 'killed by a dog'.





**Plate 192.** American Bittern *Botaurus lentiginosus*, Castlefcreke, Cork, December 2015 (David Monticelli).

**Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* (27; 52; 1)

**Cork** One: Juvenile, Slob Bank, Youghal, 8th January to 4th February, photographed (B.Rock *et al.*).

These are exceptional dates for this species as it mainly occurs as an overshooting spring migrant between March and May. Previously there was just a single January record and that was as far back as 1855. In Britain, some arriving in late autumn have over-wintered (Cottridge & Vinicombe 1996) but none have yet done so in Ireland.

**Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* (11; 8; 1)

**Cork** One: One, Ballycotton, 22nd May, photographed (P.Moore).

Found late in the evening at Allen's Pool before flying off towards Shanagarry Marsh and not seen again. This is the first record since two in 2007 (*Irish Birds* 8: 588). South coast occurrences during May are fairly typical, with five previously and south coast counties account for fourteen of the total.

**Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* (0; 255; 1)

**Wexford** One: One, Tacumshin Lake, 30th October to 26th September 2016, photographed (P.Cutler, F.MacGinley, A.Power *et al.*).

Numbers have returned to single figures following the heady years from 2007 to 2009 when a remarkable influx of 233 took



**Plate 193.** Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*, Youghal, Cork, February 2015 (Jim Bowman).



**Plate 194.** Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*, Tacumshin, Wexford, November 2015 (Paul & Andrea Kelly).

place across ten counties. There were no new birds in 2010, followed by four in 2011, five in 2012, eight in 2013 and five in 2014.

### **Great White Egret** *Ardea alba* (0; 65; 11)

**Cork** Two: One, Kinsale Marsh, 20th April, photographed (R.O'Driscoll *et al.*); One, Lissagriffin, 10th October (N.Linehan).

**Dublin** One: Adult summer, Malahide Estuary, 17th June, photographed (M.Stewart *et al.*).

**Galway** One: One, Muckrush and Angliham, Lough Corrib, from 30th November 2014 (*Irish Birds* 10: 241) remained to 4th July (N.Ellis *et al.*), then, presumed same, Muckrush, Lough Corrib, 15th October to 16th December (A.O'Donaill); One, Rahasane Turlough, 4th October to 2nd November, photographed (P.Capsey *et al.*).

**Kerry** One: One, Baile an Reannaigh, Dingle Peninsula, 31st October to 12th November, photographed (J.Crosher *et al.*), and, presumed same, Ventry, 14th November (J.Crosher).

**Kildare** One: One, Crookstown, 11th January (M.Bolger, S.Bolger).

**Mayo** One: Adult summer, Annagh Marsh, Cross Lough and Termoncarragh Lake, Mullet Peninsula, 7th to 11th April, photographed (M.Reilly *et al.*).

**Monaghan** One: Ballybay Wetlands, 7th to 11th November, photographed (D.Nesbitt *et al.*).

**Waterford** Two: One, Tramore Back Strand, 4th April (E.A.MacLachlainn, F.O'Connell, J.A.Power *et al.*); One, The Cunnigar, Dungarvan, 7th to 16th October, photographed (C.Flynn *et al.*).

**Wexford** One: One, Tacumshin Lake, 26th April (M.Stewart).

Included here is the first for Kildare and the second for Monaghan, the latter at the same location as the first for that county in December 2009 (*Irish Birds* 10: 241).

### **Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* (1; 23; 1)

**Cork** One: One, Lough Beg, Cork Harbour, 1st October 2015 (B.O'Mahony).

This is just the third October record of this secretive heron, which is primarily an overshooting spring migrant. Of the other 22, there were three in March, five in April, eight in May, four in June, one in August and one 'month not known'.

### **Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* (103; 205; 53)

**Cork** Seventeen: One, Middleton, 2nd to 6th October, photographed (B.Power *et al.*); One, Youghal, 14th October to 2nd November, photographed (B.Rock *et al.*); One, Oysterhaven, 2nd November (R.O'Driscoll); Two, White's Marsh, near Clonakilty, 18th to 24th December, photographed (C.O'Sullivan *et al.*); One, The Gearagh, 27th December (A.Duggan); One, Blarney, 28th to 30th December (D.Lysaght *et al.*); Five, Barleycove, two from 28th to 30th December, joined by three others, 29th to 30th December, photographed (N.Linehan, J.Mitchell, N.Mitchell *et al.*); Four, Kilheangul, between Durrus and Goleen, 30th December, photographed (R.Hynes); One, Kilmichael, 31st December (A.Duggan).

**Kerry** Eleven: One, Carrahane Strand, 10th October (P.McDermott); At least four, Lough Naparka, Castlegregory, 14th to 25th October,





**Plate 195.** Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*, Clonakilty, Cork, December 2015 (Richard T. Mills).

photographed (R.Bennett *et al.*); Six, Baile an Reannaigh, Dingle Peninsula, 19th October, and, presumed same, Ballyferriter, 20th October (S.Redican *et al.*); Two, Lough Gill, 2nd to 5th November, photographed (D.Farrar *et al.*), presumed to be two of those at Lough Naparka in October.

**Meath** One: One, Ashbourne, 24th November (D.Foley).

**Waterford** Nineteen: One, Tramore Back Strand, from 20th September 2014 (*Irish Birds* 10: 242) remained to 30th December, photographed (A.Allen *et al.*); One, Tramore Back Strand, 26th February, photographed (I.Stevenson), this in addition to the long staying individual present since 20th September 2014; Eighteen, Tramore Back Strand, 29th December, photographed (J.Roche), these in addition to the long staying individual present since 20th September 2014.

**Wexford** Five: One, Ferns, 18th February to 8th March (K.Grace, A.Savisky-McLaren); One, Ring Marsh, 17th to 24th October, photographed (P.Kelly); One, Tacumshin Lake, 24th to 31st October (L.Benson *et al.*); One, Tacumshin Lake, 31st October (P.Kelly), in addition to the individual found on 24th October; One, South Slob, 28th December (C.Murphy).

For the fourth year in a row, a new record is set, with twenty more than in 2014. Ever increasing records mean it is difficult to keep an accurate account of numbers involved and duplication cannot be completely ruled out. Of note, this series includes just the second record for Meath following two observed flying east at Ardcath on 5th August 2008 (*Irish Birds* 9: 87). One of the individuals at Lough Naparka, Kerry was carrying a Spanish ring.

### **Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia* (92; 152; 10)

**Cork** Two: Juvenile, Rosscarbery, 16th to 19th October (T.Mullaney *et al.*), and, presumed same, White's Marsh, near Clonakilty, 17th October (R.H.Coombes, T.Culley), and, Courtmacsherry, 17th October (P.Wolstenholme), and Clonakilty, 19th October (R.T.Mills),



**Plate 196.** Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*, Clonakilty, Cork, October 2015 (Richard T. Mills).



photographed; One, Kinsale Marsh, 20th October (R.O'Driscoll).

**Kerry** One: Adult, Cromane Harbour, from 20th September 2014 (*Irish Birds* 10: 242) remained to 7th March, photographed (M.O'Clery *et al.*), then, presumed same, Cromane Harbour, 29th September to 29th December, photographed (S.Enright), presumed returning; Adult, Ballylongford, 24th July (G.Hunt).

**Louth** One: One, Clogher Head, 12th April (G.O'Neill).

**Waterford** Three: Adult and juvenile, Dungarvan, from 26th November 2014 (*Irish Birds* 10: 242) remained to 12th February, photographed (F.O'Connell *et al.*), and, presumed same juvenile, Tramore Back Strand, 28th February to 16th March (M.Cowming *et al.*), then, presumed same adult, The Cunnigar, Dungarvan, 16th August to 30th December, photographed (M.Cowming *et al.*), and presumed same juvenile, now as second-winter, Dungarvan, 23rd November to 23rd December, photographed (N.Tierney *et al.*), both also seen in Wexford; Three juveniles, The Cunnigar, Dungarvan, 10th October to 30th December, photographed (F.O'Connell, J.A.Power, B.Sheridan *et al.*).

**Wexford** Three: Adult, Rosslare Back Strand, 13th to 19th February (J.F.Dowdall, K.Grace, K.Mullarney *et al.*), then, presumed same, Rosslare Back Strand, 2nd to 3rd August (D.Brannagh, N.Hatch, D.Storey-Brannagh *et al.*), and, Tacumshin Lake, 3rd August (P.Kelly), also seen in Waterford; Juvenile, Tacumshin Lake, 21st February (A.G.Kelly, P.Kelly, T.Shevlin) and flying west at Killag, 21st February (P.McMahaon), and, presumed same, Tacumshin Lake, 22nd March (P.Kelly), and, Our Lady's Island Lake, 23rd March (P.Kelly), and, Tacumshin Lake, 3rd April to 13th June (K.Grace, P.Kelly, I.Stevenson *et al.*), then, presumed same as a second-winter, Tacumshin Lake, 14th October to 15th November, photographed (P.Kelly *et al.*), also seen in Waterford; Two juveniles and a second-winter, Tacumshin Lake, 23rd October, photographed (P.Kelly).

For the second year in a row a bird occurred in Louth, bringing the total for that county to five. Spoonbill has been annual since 2001, including a flock of ten juveniles at Westport Quay, Mayo in October 2005 (*Irish Birds* 8: 377). Two of that group were colour-ringed at separate sites in the Netherlands. The Cromane Harbour adult was first observed in November 2005 as a juvenile (*Irish Birds* 8: 377) and has been back there every year since, as well as at Bunaclogga Bay and Blennerville (Kerry) and across the Shannon Estuary to Rineanna Point and Shannon Airport Lagoon (Clare) in 2010. Its first visit to Cromane lasted almost seventeen months from 10th November 2005 to 8th April 2007. Thereafter it reverted to spending winter months in the southwest and the rest of the year at a place or places unknown.

### **Northern Harrier** *Circus hudsonius* (0; 7; 1)

**Wicklow** One: Juvenile, Kilcoole, Newcastle and Broad Lough, 19th November to 5th December (J.deBrito, N.T.Keogh, A.Lauder *et al.*), photograph *Birdwatch* 283: 16.

This bird ranged widely along the network of coastal wetlands in north Wicklow, echoing the only previous county record in the same area from 13th November 2010 to 27th March 2011 (*Irish Birds* 9: 292 & 458). Previously regarded as a race of Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*, Northern Harrier was raised to a full monotypic species in 2016

([www.irbc.ie/announcements/announce80.php](http://www.irbc.ie/announcements/announce80.php)). At that time there had been seven Irish records of this Nearctic raptor.

### **Pallid Harrier** *Circus macrourus* (0; 5; 1)

**Mayo** One: Juvenile female, Annagh Marsh and Termoncarragh, Mullet Peninsula, 19th to 30th October, photographed and videoed (D.Suddaby *et al.*).

Looking through his car windscreen at about 14:00 on 19th October Dave Suddaby noticed a harrier gliding towards Annagh Marsh. He quickly ascertained it was not the juvenile Hen Harrier *C. cyaneus* that had previously been seen in the area, but a rather interesting juvenile 'orange' type. It eventually landed on a fence post within the marsh where Dave was able to obtain good clear views through his telescope. He noted a very striking facial pattern with a dark brown 'bat mask', relatively small white eye crescents, dark iris and black lores/eye stripe surrounded neatly and evenly by a pale collar extending from the nape to the chin, all strongly suggesting juvenile female Pallid Harrier. Anxious to eliminate the possibility of a hybrid he needed to get details of the underwing and was assisted by two Hooded Crows *Corvus cornix* that harassed the harrier sufficiently to make it take flight enabling Dave to capture the underwing on video. Details noted ruled out a hybrid and confirmed the identification as Pallid Harrier. This is the sixth record, with all previous records occurring during a mini-influx in 2011.

### **Spotted Crake** *Porzana porzana*

(Unknown; 53; 0)

**At sea** Zero: One, approximately 70 nautical miles south-southeast of Old Head of Kinsale, Cork, 25th September, photographed (M.McAuliffe).

**2014 Tipperary** One: Calling male, near Thurles, 14th June (Observer name withheld).

The 'at sea' individual alighted on board the fishing vessel *Atlantic Rose* while it was trawling for Prawns *Nephrops norvegicus* over the Labadie Bank in the Celtic Sea. Staff from the Marine Institute onboard were first to notice it. The bird did not appear to be under any stress and was easily caught and photographed. It was given water and breadcrumbs, allowed to rest up undisturbed before it departed the boat of its own accord later.

### **American Coot** *Fulica americana* (0; 4; 0)

**Kerry** Zero: One, Lough Gill, from 5th November 2014 (*Irish Birds* 10: 244) remained to 5th March (D.Farrar *et al.*), photograph *Birdwatch* 274: 14.

There was a long gap of almost 30 years between the first in 1981 at Ballycotton (*Irish Birds* 2: 209) and the second in Mayo in 2010. Since then, three long-staying individuals have been present in consecutive years; at Termoncarragh Lake, Mayo in 2010 and 2011 (*Irish Birds* 9: 294 & 460), at

Ballyconneely, Galway in 2012 and 2013 (*Irish Birds* 9: 588 and 10: 80) and the Lough Gill bird in 2014 and 2015.

### **Crane** *Grus grus* (29; 164; 4)

**Kerry** Four: Three, Ardferf, 7th August (G.Hunt); One, Inny Strand, Waterville, 12th to 13th October, photographed (P.McDaid).

Numbers have returned to single figures following the mini-influx of 2011 and 2012 (77 and twelve respectively), with four in each of the past three years.

### **American Golden Plover**

*Pluvialis dominica* (1; 274; 13)

**Clare** Two: Two adults, 16th September, with one remaining to 23rd September, Loop Head, photographed (K.Bennet, T.Kjelsson *et al.*).

**Cork** Five: One, Dursey Island, 17th September (A.A.K.Lancaster); Juvenile, Ballycotton, 25th September to 7th November, photographed (B.Power *et al.*); Juvenile, Rosscarbery, 14th to 19th October (P.Connaughton *et al.*); Juvenile, The Gearagh, 18th to 26th October (A.Duggan *et al.*); Adult, Rosscarbery, 31st October to 4th November (T.C.Kelly *et al.*).

**Donegal** One: Juvenile, Tready Hide, Inch Lough, Lough Swilly, 25th to 28th September, photographed (R.Sheppard *et al.*).

**Galway** One: Adult, Inishmore, Aran Islands, 3rd October, photographed (A.A.Kelly, P.Kelly).

**Kerry** One: Adult, Carrahane Strand, 18th September (D.A.O'Connor), and, presumed same, Black Rock Strand, 29th September (E.Carty), photograph *Wings* 79: 29.

**Louth** One: One, Lurgangreen, 11th to 20th October (P.Kelly, G.O'Neill *et al.*).

**Mayo** Two: One, Termoncarragh, Mullet Peninsula, 16th September (R.Innes, C.Jones); Adult, Keel, Achill Island, 25th to 26th September, photographed (M.O'Briain).

Temporally, these are entirely typical as those arriving in September and October number 224 or 78% of the total. Of the counties involved, six of the top seven having the biggest totals are represented here (only Wexford with 49 is missing). Cork has recorded 65, Mayo has 48, Kerry has 39, Clare has nineteen, Galway has eighteen and Donegal eleven with Louth some way behind with five. The only slight anomaly is that thirteen is short of the annual average of just over sixteen recorded since 2000.

The IRBC recently published a review of 20th century records of Lesser Golden Plover *P.d. dominica/fulva* (Hussey 2015).



**Plate 197.** American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*, Achill Island, Mayo, September 2015 (Micheal O'Briain).

**Dotterel** *Charadrius morinellus* (146; 162; 18)

**Clare** One: Juvenile, Fodry, Loop Head, 23rd to 24th September, photographed (J.N.Murphy, G.Pearson).

**Cork** One: Juvenile, Ballycotton, 11th October, photographed (R.McLaughlin *et al.*).

**Galway** Ten: Up to eight adult summer, Aillebrack and Truska, Slyne Head, 23rd to 29th April, photographed (D.Breen, A.O'Donaill, R.Vaughan *et al.*); Two juveniles, Truska, Slyne Head, 18th to 21st September, photographed (D.Breen).

**Waterford** Two: Two, off Ram Head, 15th September (F.O'Connell).

**Wexford** One: Juvenile, Tacumshin Lake, 20th to 26th September, photographed (N.Keogh, N.T.Keogh *et al.*).

**Wicklow** Three: Three juveniles, Lugnaquilla Mountain, 6th September, photographed (H.Lawless).

**2014 Waterford** One: One, Brownstown Head, 11th September (D.Weldon).

Spring and autumn passage normally involves single birds or occasionally small groups of four or fewer, with just six exceptions of spring trips numbering between eighteen and 30; making the eight at Slyne Head notable but not record breaking. It is not unusual for spring migrants to turn up in suitable nesting habitat, but to date the only instance of breeding was at Nephin More, Mayo in 1975 (*IBR* 23: 13).



**Plate 198.** Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*, Slyne Head, Galway, April 2015 (Dermot Breen).

**Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius*

(0; 138; 10)

**Tipperary** One: One, Ashton's Callow, 22nd May (P.Brennan).

**Waterford** One: Juvenile, Lisselan, Tramore Back Strand, 15th to 21st August, photographed (M.Cowming *et al.*).

**Wexford** Four: Adult summer, Tacumshin Lake, 6th April (P.Kelly);

One, The Cut at Our Lady's Island Lake, 20th April (K.Fahy); Adult, Tacumshin Lake, 11th July, photographed (P.Kelly); Juvenile, Our Lady's Island Lake, 30th August (P.Kelly).

**Wicklow** Four: Female and three males, Poulaphouca, spring (*per* IRBBP).

The average since the turn of the century of just over seven is exceeded. Of the four in Wicklow, a pair produced eggs, but the nest was flooded following heavy rain and did not survive (Newton 2015). Breeding was first confirmed to have taken place in a Tipperary gravel pit in 2008 (Collins 2008) followed in 2010 and 2011 at unspecified locations in Leinster (Hillis 2011 & 2012). In addition, breeding was suspected to have taken place in 2004 and 2007 on the basis of fledged young seen in the company of adults (Perry 2013). It is far from certain whether these few breeding and possible breeding records give rise to the prospect of future colonisation by this summer migrant.

**Hudsonian Godwit**

*Limosa haemastica* (0; 0; 1)

**Galway** One: Adult male, Inishdawros, Ballyconnelly, 22nd July (D.Breen), (Breen 2015), then, presumed same, Kilmurvey, Inishmore, Aran Islands, 15th to 17th September (A.Lees, S.Mahood, R.Moores *et al.*), (Punkbirder team 2015), photographs *Birdwatch* 279: 9 and 281: 12, *Dutch Birding* 37: 341, *Wings* 79: 28.

Historically, Inishdawros had not proven an especially productive wader site for Dermot Breen, with a Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* in 2014 his previous best. However, a chance drop-in on his way to Ballyconnelly during the afternoon of 22nd July would change that considerably. Taking his camera he headed towards an area where some terns had been feeding, but his attention was soon distracted by a godwit that flew from his left, banking twice, then passing as close as 30 metres before landing out of sight behind a large rock. Despite these brief views Dermot managed to note (with the naked eye) a combination of black underwing coverts, clean white rump, black tail and rusty underparts. Incredibly, it could only be a Hudsonian Godwit, a first for Ireland! Hoping it was still around he cautiously peeped over the rock, dangerously spooking some Redshank *Tringa totanus* and Greenshank *T. nebularia* in the process, before experiencing the huge relief of relocating the bird standing at the water's edge. Over the next hour or so, this beautiful wader was on show often enough to allow Dermot take a series of pictures, both on the deck and in flight. Unfortunately, the distances involved in getting to west Galway meant that no other birders managed to arrive before the bird was last seen around 17:25. That really should have been the end of it.

Almost two months later, the 'Punkbirder' team of Dan Brown, Simon Mahood, Rob Martin, Rich Moores, Alex Lees, James Gilroy, Rich Addison, Jez Bird and Dave Smith were in Ireland for a 'stag-do' and some birding. They spent time around Galway City before heading to Inishmore, where, on





**Plate 199.** Hudsonian Godwit *Limosa haemastica*, Inishmore, Galway, September 2015 (David Monticelli).

arrival, they encountered 36 hours of more-or-less continuous rain. When it finally cleared on the morning of their last day they headed out, anxious to make up for lost time. From sand dunes near Kilmurvey, Simon Mahood noticed a wader in the distance that was soon realised to be a godwit. They moved closer until Rich Moores announced that it looked like a 'Hudwit'! Panic ensued, exacerbated by the fact that no one had brought a telescope and moving closer for better views could easily scare off the bird. An anxious hour passed until the rest of the team arrived bringing telescopes thereby allowing identification as a Hudsonian Godwit to be confirmed.

Since its brief appearance in Inishdawros in July it had begun to moult, but on balance it was concluded that it was the same individual. We will probably never know where it frequented during those intervening weeks, but the west Galway area is most likely. The bird remained for two further days allowing many that dipped its first appearance to catch up.

Hudsonian Godwit breeds in disjunct locations on arctic tundra from Alaska east through Canada to the southern shore of Hudson Bay and is a long-distance migrant wintering on pampas marshes and coastal mud flats in South America (mainly in Argentina). It is an extremely rare vagrant in the

Western Palearctic with just six previous occurrences. There are three British records; the first for Britain and the Western Palearctic was an adult at Blacktoft Sands, Humberside on 10th September 1981 (Grieve 1987) that returned to Devon in 1982 and again to Blacktoft Sands in 1983, the second was near Collieston, Grampian on 26th September 1988 and the most recent was at Meare Heath, Somerset in May 2015. Elsewhere in the Western Palearctic there are single records in Denmark (1986), Sweden (2003), Azores (2007) and Norway (2008).

### **Baird's Sandpiper** *Calidris bairdii* (0; 149; 0)

**2014 Mayo** Zero: Juvenile, Cross Lough, Mullet Peninsula, 26th to 27th September (*Irish Birds* 10: 246) – Correction: location should read Cross Lough, Killadoon.

### **White-rumped Sandpiper**

*Calidris fuscicollis* (0; 327; 7)

**Cork** Three: One, The Gearagh, 1st October (A.Duggan); Two juveniles, Ballycotton, 7th to 8th November, photographed (D.Fitzpatrick, G.Gordon *et al.*).

**Dublin** One: Adult, North Bull Island, 20th August, photographed (T.Cooney, P.McMahon).

**Kerry** Two: One, Blennerville, 18th October (E.Carty). Juvenile, Carrahane Strand, 22nd October, photographed (M.O'Clery).



**Plate 200.** White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis*, Tacumshin Lake, Wexford, July 2015 (Tom Shevlin).

**Wexford** One: Adult summer, Tacumshin Lake, 19th to 21st July (P.Kelly *et al.*), photograph *Birdwatch* 279: 18.

White-rumped Sandpiper has become a regular and welcome vagrant to Ireland since the first in 1956, only failing to appear in three subsequent years (1962, 1963 & 1972). In addition to occurring in most coastal counties it has also turned up inland at Derrytrasna, Lough Neagh, Armagh on 24th October 2006 (*Irish Birds* 8: 594) and at Lough Boora Parklands, Offaly in September 2011 (*Irish Birds* 9: 466).

## Semipalmated Sandpiper

*Callidris pusilla* (0; 193; 2)

**Kerry** Two: Juvenile, Inny Strand, Waterville, 19th August, photographed (P.McDaid); Juvenile, Inny Strand, Waterville, 28th September to 1st October (M.O'Clery *et al.*).

After the blank year of 2014 (the first since 1994), two juveniles occurred in Kerry on typical dates. This little gem tends to turn up in single figures following periods of westerly gales in autumn; although there have been a few bumper years, most notably in 2011 when 63 were recorded. The months of August, September and October account for 182 of the 195 records or just over 93%. Of those, 170 individuals were aged as 140 juveniles and 30 adults. There is a good spread of counties involved with Kerry (47), Wexford (41) and Cork (38) the main contenders, followed by Mayo (seventeen), Dublin (eight), Clare and Donegal (six each), Down and Galway (five each), Waterford (four), Londonderry (two) and Louth, Sligo and Wicklow (one each). In addition to autumn records there are three in April (the earliest ever was at Belfast Harbour on 9th), one in June, eight in July (all adults) and a single November record at Ballycotton on the 21st. This *Calidris* breeds from western Alaska across Arctic Canada to the

Atlantic. It seems likely that birds arriving on these shores in autumn originate from the eastern Canadian population as they undertake a transoceanic migration route to Caribbean and South American wintering grounds, thus making them vulnerable to eastward displacement by fast moving North Atlantic depressions (Paulson 2005). A migrating bird that was fitted with a geolocator on Coats Island, Nunavut, Canada in June 2013, undertook a six day non-stop flight from James Bay, Nunavut directly to the Orinoco River Delta, Venezuela, a journey that was mostly over the Atlantic Ocean.

## Red-necked Phalarope

*Phalaropus lobatus* (3; 46; 3)

**Donegal** Two: Two, off Rossan Point, 18th July (S.Pierce).

**Wicklow** One: Adult female, Broad Lough, 7th June, photographed (C.Cardiff, T.Cardiff *et al.*).

The two off Rossan Point were observed flying south during a seawatch. Since 2013 these reports only publish records of non-breeding birds (*Irish Birds* 10: 84).

## Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularius*

(1; 44; 1)

**Cork** One: First-winter, Pilmore, near Youghal, 22nd November remaining to 23rd February 2016, photographed (K.Kelly *et al.*).

This is the second to over-winter and there are just four later arrivals. During its stay it often proved very confiding and remained largely faithful to the beach area in the vicinity of St. Ita's GAA pitch at Pilmore. This Nearctic wader more usually arrives as an autumn vagrant with over half of all records occurring during September and October (28, or 61%).

## Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* (0; 152; 2)

**Cork** Two: One, Skibbereen, 4th February (J.Wyllie); Juvenile, Clogheen Marsh, Clonakilty, 30th September to 15th October, photographed (C.O'Sullivan *et al.*).

**Dublin** Zero: Juvenile, Rogerstown Estuary, from 1st October 2014 (*Irish Birds* 10: 247) remained to 14th April, photographed (R.Vaughan *et al.*).

Although birds have been recorded in winter months, the Rogerstown bird is just the sixth to have over-wintered, with four of the previous five in Cork and the other at Dundalk Docks, Louth. The first Lesser Yellowlegs (hereafter Lesser) for Ireland was at Our Lady's Island Lake in 1955 (*IBR* 1: 15) and the first Greater Yellowlegs (hereafter Greater) *T. melanoleuca* was near Skibereen in 1940 (Kennedy *et al.* 1954). Despite the fifteen year head-start, numbers of Lesser soon overtook Greater. By the end of 1965 there were eight Lesser compared to six Greater, by the end of 1970 it was 23 to seven in favour of Lesser and by 1975 it was 32 to eight. Since then the gap has continued to grow to the point that the current tally is 154 Lesser and thirteen Greater. On the





**Plate 201.** Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularius*, Pilmore, Cork, December 2015 (Rachel Hynes).

face of it, this does not seem plausible as Greater is the more easterly breeder of the two. A possible explanation is the amount of fat reserves each accumulates prior to migration, which suggest Greater is less capable of achieving non-stop Atlantic crossings. Studies in the Gulf of St. Lawrence found adult Greater with low fat deposits sufficient for average flights of 860 miles, with the heaviest managing between 1,650 and 1,800 miles (Cramp & Simmons 1983). Similar studies with Lessers discovered some with moderate deposits sufficient for average flights of 1,300 miles and some heavier adults capable of flights between 1,865 and 2,110 miles (Cramp & Simmons 1983). Cottridge & Vinicombe (1996) suggest that those Greater reaching these shores are exceptionally heavy individuals or have arrived by a different route.

### Long-billed Dowitcher

*Limnodromus scolopaceus* (2; 122; 6)

**Cork** One: One, The Gearagh, 29th September (A.Duggan).

**Dublin** One: Juvenile, Rogerstown Estuary, 8th to 10th November, photographed (A.G.Kelly *et al.*).

**Kerry** One: One, Killorglin, 11th November (R.Moores, M.Owen).



**Plate 202.** Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus*, with Redshank *Tringa totanus*, The Cull, Wexford, June 2015 (Killian Mullarney).

**Wexford Three:** One, Tacumshin Lake, 2nd January (P.Kelly); Adult summer, Seafield, The Cull, 12th and 28th June, photographed (K.Grace, M.Maddock *et al.*); Juvenile, Tacumshin Lake, 22nd to 26th September (J.M.Murphy), and, presumed same, Rosslare Back Strand, 25th September, photographed (P.Kelly).

More than half of all records have occurred since the year 2000 (69 or 53%) and Wexford (with 30) and Cork (with 27) are the counties with the most records.



## Gull-billed Tern

*Gelochelidon nilotica* (0; 19; 1)

**Kerry** One: Adult, Blennerville and environs, 17th October to 27th November (M.Hanafin *et al.*), and, presumed same, Rough Point, near Castlegregory, 28th October (M.O'Clery), photographs *Birdwatch* 283: 16, *Wings* 80: 29.

Found by Maurice Hanafin east of Annagh Island, Tralee Bay. Apart from an excursion further out the bay to Rough Point, the bird remained faithful to the general area of Blennerville for almost seven weeks, by far the longest ever stay for a Gull-billed Tern. It also sets records for latest arrival and departure dates as previously they stood at 5th and 10th October respectively.



**Plate 203.** Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*, Blennerville, Kerry, November 2015 (David O'Connor).



**Plate 204.** Elegant Tern *Sterna elegans*, with Sandwich Terns *S. sandvicensis*, Beale Strand, Kerry, September 2013 (David O'Connor).

## White-winged Black Tern

*Chlidonias leucopterus* (9; 94; 1)

**Dublin** One: Juvenile, North Bull Island and Dublin Bay, 23rd August (A.G.Kelly).

An influx of about 70 Black Terns *C. niger* to Dublin Bay were gathered between Sandymount Strand and North Bull Island. At 20:00 Aidan G. Kelly noticed a juvenile White-winged Black Tern in a group of eight Black Terns flying just offshore of Dollymount Strand, North Bull Island. It landed on rocks below the *Realt na Mara* statue on the North Bull Wall, where Aidan was able to view it in his telescope. More Black Terns joined it on the rocks until they numbered about twenty. Just before dusk, the whole flock got up and flew south across the bay towards Sandymount.

## Elegant Tern *Sterna elegans* (0; 6; 0)

**2013 Kerry** One: Adult, Beale Strand, 13th to 24th September (D.Farrar *et al.*), (Farrar 2013), photographs *Birdwatch* 257: 61, *Wings* 71: 26.

A great find by Davey Farrar of the second county record, following one at Dingle Harbour in October 2002 (*Irish Birds* 7: 403). The first Irish and second Western Palearctic record was at Carlingford Lough, Down, and, presumed same individual, at Ballymacoda, Cork during the summer of 1982 (*Irish Birds* 3: 632). The other records comprise an adult at Our Lady's Island Lake, Wexford in July 1999 (*Irish Birds* 6: 562), a third calendar-year at Mulranny, Mayo in October 2001 (*Irish Birds* 7: 231 and 8: 387) and a second-summer or adult at Gormanstown, Meath in July 2005 (*Irish Birds* 8: 387).

Some time has been spent assessing this 2013 record due to the need to eliminate the possibility of a Sandwich *S. sandvicensis* or Lesser Crested Tern *S. bengalensis* first generation hybrid or backcross. This process has been greatly assisted by the recent publication of Dufour *et al.* (2016), which, among other findings, has confirmed through DNA sequencing that genetically pure Elegant Terns are occurring in western Europe.

## Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri* (0; 39; 0)

**Clare** Zero: Adult winter, New Quay, 29th November (P.Troake), also seen in Galway.

**Dublin** Zero: Adult winter, Rush and Rogerstown Estuary, 6th to 27th September (A.G.Kelly *et al.*), photograph *Dutch Birding* 37: 343, also seen in Louth.

**Galway** Zero: Adult winter, Galway Bay, from 23rd November 2014 (*Irish Birds* 10: 248) remained to 5th June, when also at Fiddaun Island, photographed (C.Peppiatt *et al.*), then, presumed same, Nimmo's Pier, 24th October to 27th December, photographed (G.Hunt), presumed returning, also seen in Clare.

**Louth** Zero: Adult winter, Soldier's Point, 22nd to 26th August (E.Larresey *et al.*), photograph *Birdwatch* 280: 16, presumed returning, also seen in Dublin.



**Plate 205.** Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri*, Rush, Dublin, September 2015 (Aidan G. Kelly).

It is not unusual for this Nearctic tern to be observed at the same locations over successive years, when it is often presumed to be returning, as both these are. The Dublin and Louth individual was first recorded in 2006 (*Irish Birds* 8: 404) and apart from 2010 has returned every year. The Galway and Clare individual has an even longer history of returning. It was first recorded in 2004 (*Irish Birds* 8: 117) and has been present every year since.

## Bonaparte's Gull

*Chroicocephalus philadelphia* (1; 75; 1)

**Waterford** One: First-winter, Tramore, 15th March to 7th April, photographed (A.Jacques *et al.*).

The first Irish and Western Palearctic record was an adult in winter plumage, shot on the River Lagan, near Belfast on 1st February 1848 (Thompson 1851). Over 130 years would elapse before another arrived on our shores when one frequented Bangor Harbour, Down intermittently from July 1979 to February 1980 (*Irish Birds* 1: 572). Thereafter, numbers changed dramatically with eight in the 1980s, twelve in the 1990s, 39 in the 2000s and so far this decade there have been sixteen. This is the fifth Waterford record and the second at Tramore following an adult there in November 2014 (*Irish Birds* 10: 248).

## Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* (0; 43; 0)

**Cork** Zero: Second calendar-year, Ballycotton, from 27th June 2014 (*Irish Birds* 10: 249) remained to 30th April, by which time it was moulting to second-summer plumage (D.O'Sullivan *et al.*), photograph *Birdwatch* 274: 16.

Although this bird wandered throughout Ballycotton Bay it was most often found at the harbour pier, where it was originally discovered. Some photographers realised it could occasionally be tempted to fly closer by throwing it titbits and were rewarded with some excellent images. It was generally observed on its own and as it came to the end of its protracted stay, it gradually became more and more elusive.

### **Franklin's Gull** *Larus pipixcan* (0; 17; 1)

**Galway** One: Adult summer, Rusheen Bay, 13th June (M.Davis).

This gull was seen briefly on the large tidal back strand at Rusheen Bay before it was observed flying off to the northeast in the direction of Lough Corrib.

### **Atlantic Gull** *Larus michahellis atlantis* (0; 14; 1)

**Cork** One: Adult, River Lee at Blackrock Castle, 8th to 27th September, photographed (B.Power *et al.*).

This is a bird showing characters of the Atlantic island form, in particular, the somewhat more distinctive Azorean population.

### **American Herring Gull**

*Larus smithsonianus* (0; 96; 1)

**Cork** One: First-winter, Black Ball Harbour, West Beara, 15th March to 19th April (F.Moore), photograph *Birdwatch* 275: 15.

Cork City and county account for just over one-third of all records of this Nearctic gull with 34 (or 35% of the total). The city, Cobh and eastern parts of the county, where 24 have occurred, tend to do better than west Cork and this is only the second for the Beara Peninsula – the previous record was at Castletownbere on 8th March 2009 (*Irish Birds* 9: 267). The first Irish and second Western Palearctic record was a first-winter found by Jim Wilson at Cobh on 16th November 1986 (*Irish Birds* 4: 246, [www.irbc.ie/notes/ahg/ahg.php](http://www.irbc.ie/notes/ahg/ahg.php)). At that time and until 2004 it was treated as a race of Herring Gull *L. argentatus* by the IRBC. The second record did not occur until February 1990 and between then and the end of the decade there were 37; with annual totals of ten (1990), two (1991), two (1992), zero (1993-1995), four (1996), three (1997), seven (1998) and nine (1999). The decade following the new millennium was even more productive with an overall total of 50; with annual figures of five (2000), three (2001), five (2002), nine (2003), twelve (2004), five (2005), one (2006), five (2007), three (2008) and two (2009). Since then numbers have dwindled with just one in 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 and again this year; 2014 was the exception with four. In Britain, where it is much rarer (30 to 2015 since the first in 1994), there were records every year from 2002 to 2009, then it was absent for the next four, followed by singles in 2014 and 2015 (BBRC reports). This decline, here and in Britain, is something of a puzzle. The North American population does not appear to be a factor as BirdLife International (2016) report a 'small or

statistically insignificant decrease over the last 40 years' and birders' appreciation of its identification appears to be well developed drawing on their own field experiences and referencing a variety of identification articles, e.g. Adriaens & Mactavish (2004), Dubois (1997) and Lonergan & Mullarney (2004).

### **Slaty-backed Gull** *Larus schistisagus* (0; 1; 1)

**Donegal** One: Adult winter, Killybegs, 17th to 18th January (M.Callaghan, D.Charles *et al.*), (Charles 2015), photographs *Birdwatch* 273: 8-9, *Wings* 77: 27.

A second Irish record hot on the heels of the first in Galway during February 2013 (*Irish Birds* 10: 250). This great find was just reward for Donegal regulars Derek Charles and Majella Callaghan, who took a chance that a series of early January northwesterly storms would carry northern gulls to the fishing port of Killybegs. Slaty-backed Gull has been recorded as a vagrant on the east coast of North America (Sibley 2014), so it is not inconceivable this Eastern Palearctic gull arrived from the west rather than the east. Fortunately it remained close-by long enough to allow confirmation of the salient features, including the outer five primaries 'string of pearls', white trailing edge to the secondaries, bubble-gum pink legs and dark mantle.

### **Kumlien's Gull** *Larus glaucooides kumlieni* (0; 297; 11)

**Cork** Three: Adult-winter, Baltimore, 6th to 7th April, photographed (M.Ameels); Second-winter, Mizen Head, 9th August to 12th October, photographed (K.Mullarney, B.J.Pinchen *et al.*); Second-winter, Owenahincha, 27th November, photographed (D.Charles, P.Moore *et al.*).

**Donegal** Seven: Second-winter, Greencastle, from 31st December 2014 (*Irish Birds* 10: 250) remained to 2nd January (R.McLaughlin); First-winter, Ballyliffin, Malin Head, 22nd January (R.McLaughlin); First-winter, Killybegs, 7th February (M.Boyle, A.McMillan); First-winter, Fanad Head, 28th February to 1st March (W.Farrelly); Second-winter, Fanad Head, 1st March (W.Farrelly); First-winter, Malin Head, 11th to 13th March (R.McLaughlin); First-summer, West Town Harbour, Tory Island, 6th to 7th June (J.Adamson); Fourth-winter, Killybegs, 22nd November, photographed (M.Callaghan, D.Charles *et al.*).

**Kerry** One: Juvenile, Cashen Estuary, 30th November, photographed (D.Farrar).

The average since the new millennium is just over seventeen, but that figure is skewed by the incredible record total of 84 in 2014 and the very poor return of none in 2001. When both these extremes are discounted the average is just under thirteen, much more in sync with this year's figure. Cork, Donegal and Kerry account for 188 (or 61%) of the overall total. Donegal has the most with 92, followed by Cork with 44 and Kerry with 42. The Tory Island bird is the first in June and the Mizen Head bird the first in August leaving May and July as the only months without a record.





**Plate 206.** Atlantic Gull *Larus michahellis atlantis*, Blackrock Castle, Cork, September 2015 (John Coveney).



**Plate 207.** Slaty-backed Gull *Larus schistisagus*, Killybegs, Donegal, January 2015 (Derek Charles).

### Scops Owl *Otus scops* (10; 5; 1)

**Wexford** One: One, Great Saltee Island, 11th April (K.Grace *et al.*), photograph *Birdwatch* 276: 16.

After a couple of hours birding on Great Saltee Island, Kieran Grace made his way towards the main garden where a Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* had been reported. As the Wryneck was avoiding detection and conscious that the boat off the island was imminent, Kieran decided to check the perimeter of the garden one last time. Just as he was about to complete his circuit, a bird, which he immediately realised was a small owl, flew from low down on his right hand side. He shouted a warning to those present; panic quickly ensued as birders ran towards the main house where it had flown and it was eventually relocated perched in a tree beside the main garden. At this point, most got good views and Tom Shevlin managed to get some superb photographs of the bird before it took off, never to be seen again despite much searching.

This is the sixteenth record but only the sixth since a calling bird was sound recorded on 18th June 1974 at Lisnarick, Fermanagh (*Irish Birds* 1: 88). Of the other four; one was found freshly dead on Brownstown Head, Waterford (1998), two were found injured (neither survived) at Inchydoney, Cork (1993) and at Crookhaven, Cork (2005), and one was in Cotter's Garden, Cape Clear Island, Cork (1999) where it was trapped. Despite two November records over a century apart (1883 and 2005), the pattern of occurrences strongly suggest it is an overshooting spring migrant, with four in April, five in May, one in June and two in July.

### Snowy Owl *Bubo scandiacus* (55; 26; 2)

**Clare** One: Female or immature, Gleninagh Mountains and Cappanawalla Hill, near Ballyvaughan, 6th to 20th April, photographed (J.N.Murphy *et al.*).



**Plate 208.** Scops Owl *Otus scops*, Great Saltee Island, Wexford, April 2015 (Tom Shevlin).

**Donegal** Zero: One, Arranmore Island, 19th July (S.Bonner), presumed returning.

**Mayo** One: Adult male, Tarmon Hill, Mullet Peninsula, 26th April, photographed (D.Suddaby).

Hearing news that Dotterels *Charadrius morinellus* had been observed in Galway, Dave Suddaby set out for a walk around Tarmon Hill with that species in mind. Around 16:00 he was scanning a likely area when he noticed a white rock about 300 metres off. As he approached the rock it suddenly became alert and took flight before landing on a fencepost a short distance off – it was an adult male Snowy Owl! The bird then made another short flight to some rocks close to the road where it settled and remained until 19:00, when it was last seen.

### Alpine Swift *Apus melba* (7; 71; 1)

**Mayo** One: One, Aughleam, Mullet Peninsula, 12th May (D.Suddaby). Around noon on 12th May, Dave Suddaby was in the BirdWatch Ireland office in Aughleam. Through the window he noticed what looked like a swift flying outside and on further investigation realised it was an Alpine Swift. Over the following twenty minutes, he was able to get excellent views until it made off southwards towards Blacksod Point, then gaining height and continuing towards Achill Island.

### Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* (21; 41; 2)

**Galway** One: One, Errisbeg, 25th May (S.Baker).

**Mayo** One: One, Tarmon and environs, Mullet Peninsula, 14th to 20th May, photographed (D.Suddaby *et al.*).

Sprained knee ligaments kept Dave Suddaby house-bound for a period from 13th May. The following morning at about 09:00 he was sitting in his kitchen feeling disgruntled and down on his luck, which was about to change. As he looked through his rain splattered window a Bee-eater suddenly appeared on



**Plate 209.** Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*, Mullet Peninsula, Mayo, May 2015 (Séamus Feeney).



over-head wires just outside. Unable to get up and head out, he did at least manage to grab a record shot before the bird flew off. Two days later, he saw it again through the same window, but once again was unable to follow. However, over the following four days visiting birders were able to keep track of its movements around Tarmon until it was last seen on 20th May. The bird at Errisbeg was observed at 17:30 flying east just south of the R341 along the coast, before turning and heading northeast towards Roundstone.

### **Wryneck** *Jynx torquilla* (9; 309; 15)

**Clare** One: One, Shannon Airport, 30th September, photographed (S.Mahon).

**Cork** Eight: Two, Mizen Head, 9th April (P.Connaughton *et al.*); One, Dursey Island, 10th April, photographed (F.Moore); One, Ballinglanna, 12th April (C.Barton); One, Toe Head, 22nd August (J.Earley); One, Mizen Head, 10th to 12th September (C.Foley, D.Foley *et al.*); One, Knockadoon Head, 13th to 21st September (D.O'Sullivan *et al.*); One, Mizen Head, 11th October (W.Farrelly).



**Plate 210.** Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*, Fethard-on-Sea, Wexford, September 2015 (Liam Ryan).

**Galway** One: One, Inishmore, Aran Islands, 5th October, photographed (H.Delaney, A.A.Kelly, P.Kelly).

**Mayo** One: One, Blacksod, Mullet Peninsula, 1st September (D.Suddaby).

**Wexford** Four: One, Great Saltee Island, 10th to 11th April (M.Boyle, A.A.Kelly, P.Kelly *et al.*); One, Great Saltee Island, 17th to 18th April (K.Grace, T.Murray, A.Walsh *et al.*); One, Great Saltee Island, 29th August, photographed (L.Benson, M.Boyle, A.McMillan *et al.*); One, Fethard-on-Sea, 15th to 22nd September, photographed (L.Ryan *et al.*). Six in spring and nine in autumn does not reflect the usual seasonal division of records, which is heavily biased towards autumn passage. Of the 333 to date, only 29 have been in spring (seventeen in April and twelve in May) with the remainder in autumn (21 in August, 187 in September, 91 in October and five in November). This year's records include the fourth for both Clare and Mayo and the fifth for Galway.

### **Red-footed Falcon**

*Falco vespertinus* (1; 31; 1)

**Waterford** One: First-summer male, Kilmurrin Cove, 5th June (F.O'Connell, J.A.Power, B.Sheridan).

This is the second for Waterford following a female at Helwick Head on 5th May 1994 (*Irish Birds* 5: 335). Red-footed Falcon is a very long-distant migrant with the core population breeding from eastern Europe east to north-central Asia and wintering in southern parts of Africa. Spring migration follows a predominantly westerly route taking many north across western and central parts of the Mediterranean (Ferguson-Lees & Christie 2001). It would appear that those arriving on our shores are part of this movement that are getting caught up in anticyclonic systems centred over Europe. Of the 32 previous records, eighteen have been in May and the Waterford bird is the fifth for June. Most records are of single birds, however three (two first-summer male and a first-summer female) were at Tacumshin Lake, Wexford in late May 2010 (*Irish Birds* 9: 292) and five (three males and two females) were at Ballyconneely, Galway on 28th and 29th April 1992 (*Irish Birds* 5: 88).

### **Hobby** *Falco subbuteo* (14; 329; 19)

**Carlow** Two: One, Mount Leinster, 11th June (T.Moore); One, Kilbrannish, 8th August, photographed (F.Willis *et al.*).

**Clare** Two: One, Caherhurlly, 9th June (P.Troake); Adult, Kilbaha, 3rd to 9th October (J.N.Murphy *et al.*).

**Cork** Four: One, Ballyvergan Marsh, 24th May (R.McLaughlin); Adult, The Gearagh, 29th September (A.Duggan); One, Dursey Island, 5th October (K.Grace); One, Mizen Head, 24th October (S.Pierce).

**Dublin** One: Probably an adult, Turvey Parklands, Rogerstown Estuary, 28th June (E.Quinn).

**Galway** One: First-summer, Inishbofin, 28th to 29th June, when found dead, photographed (J.Jefferson).

**Waterford** One: First-summer, Carriganantry, 4th to 11th June, photographed (A.Jacques *et al.*).

**Wexford** Six: First-summer, Cahore Marsh, 21st May, photographed





**Plate 211.** Juvenile Hobby *Falco subbuteo*, Tacumshin Lake, Wexford, October 2015 (Richard H. Coombes).

(M.Stewart); One, Oldtown, Tomhaggard, 22nd May, observed at 17:50 flying east towards Tacumshin Lake (K.Grace), where it was observed at 18:15 (P.Kelly); Two, Tacumshin Lake, 23rd May (P.Kelly), presumed to include the Tomhaggard / Tacumshin Lake individual of 22nd May; One, Our Lady's Island Lake, 24th May, photographed (P.Kelly), presumed to be one of those at Tacumshin Lake on 23rd May; Juvenile, Tacumshin Lake, 5th September (P.Kelly); Juvenile, Tacumshin Lake, 30th September to 2nd October, photographed (C.Foley, D.Foley *et al.*); Juvenile, Hook Head, 6th to 7th October (B.Haslam, St.Prouse, Su.Prouse *et al.*).

**Wicklow** Two: First-summer, Five-Mile-Point, 21st to 25th May, photographed (C.Cardiff *et al.*); First-summer, Five-Mile-Point, 24th May, photographed (C.Cardiff, T.Cardiff), in addition to the individual found on 21st May.

With just one previous Carlow record at Leighlinbridge on 22nd May 2009 (*Irish Birds* 9: 260), two in that southeastern county is notable.

### **Gyr Falcon** *Falco rusticolus* (87; 39; 2)

**Galway** One: Juvenile white morph, Inishbofin, 5th February and 7th April, photographed (E.McGloin *et al.*).

**Mayo** One: Juvenile, Inishkea South, 4th February to 17th March, photographed (D.Cabot, A.Walsh).

Gyr Falcon occurs mainly in western counties during winter and spring and these two reflect that trend.



**Plate 212.** Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*, Ballycotton, Cork, May 2015 (Rachel Hynes).

### **Golden Oriole** *Oriolus oriolus* (62; 154; 2)

**Cork** One: Female, Cotter's Garden, Cape Clear Island, 18th May (S.Wing).

**Wexford** One: Male, Ballyhiho, Tacumshane Village, 24th to 25th April (K.Fahy *et al.*).

Golden Oriole is a classic overshooting spring migrant, almost unheard of in autumn. The earliest that can be dated precisely is 15th April, but the main arrival happens in May, which accounts for 133 (or 42%) of the total.

### **Red-backed Shrike** *Lanius collurio* (7; 176; 6)

**Cork** Five: Adult male, Dursey Island, 10th June, photographed (D.O'Sullivan, M.Stewart *et al.*); First-winter, Mizen Head, 9th September (D.Ballard *et al.*); First-winter, Old Head of Kinsale, 16th to 17th September, photographed (R.O'Driscoll *et al.*); First-winter, Mizen Head, 22nd to 25th September (D.Ballard, C.O'Sullivan *et al.*); First-winter, Mizen Head, 11th to 22nd October (D.Ballard *et al.*).

**Waterford** One: First-winter, Brownstown Head, 12th to 16th September, photographed (M.Cowming *et al.*).

Included here is the second record at Brownstown Head, thus making it the third for Waterford and the Dursey Island bird is only the fifth in June.

**Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator* (2; 98; 4)

**Cork** Three: Male, Coosadouglas, Cape Clear Island, 13th April (S.Wing); Adult male, Ardnahinch, 5th May (A.Jeffery), and, presumed same, Ballynamona and Ballycotton, 6th to 13th May, photographed (M.Cowming, N.Hatch, R.Hynes *et al.*); Juvenile, Garinish, West Beara, 29th September (A.A.K.Lancaster).

**Wexford** One: Adult, Great Saltee Island, 17th to 19th April, photographed (T.Murray *et al.*).

This shrike is predominantly an overshooting spring migrant with a secondary peak in autumn, mainly of wandering juveniles, which is reflected in these records. The statistics exclude both occurrences of the Balearic form *L.s. badius*.

**Bearded Tit** *Panurus biarmicus* (0; 123; 4)

**Wexford** Four: The group of up to 30 at Tacumshin Lake from 3rd July 2011 (*Irish Birds* 9: 478, 598; 10: 93, 252) remained to 1st November, photographed (K.Grace *et al.*); The group of up to 22 at Ring Marsh from 19th February 2012 (*Irish Birds* 9: 598 and 10: 93 & 252) remained to 4th April, photographed (P.Kelly *et al.*); The group of up to six, including males and females at Cahore Marsh from 16th November 2014 (*Irish Birds* 10: 253) remained to 8th February, photographed (T.Kilbane *et al.*); Three males and a female, The Cull, 13th October, photographed (P.Kelly).

The Wexford enclave continues to maintain its foothold. Evidence of recent breeding at Tacumshin Lake includes two females carrying nesting material on 25th May 2014, a male and a fledged juvenile on 2nd June 2014 and a pair carrying food on 2nd June 2015 (Newton 2015).

**Short-toed Lark**

*Calandrella brachydactyla* (1; 77; 1)

**Wexford** One: One, Tacumshin Lake, 25th September (P.Kelly).

Although Short-toed Lark has occurred in all months from April to October there are clear peaks during periods of spring and autumn migration. Spring arrivals are concentrated during May (twenty) and autumn arrivals concentrated in October (twenty nine) and to a lesser extent in September (seventeen). This is the twenty-ninth record for Wexford and the sixth for Tacumshin Lake including one that was observed while in full song-flight in 2006 (*Irish Birds* 8: 407).

**Red-rumped Swallow** *Cecropis daurica* (0; 50; 3)

**Cork** Two: One, Mizen Head, 9th April (M.Cobley); One, Mizen Head, 12th June (P.Moore).

**Galway** One: One, High Island, 6th August (A.Bennison).

You need a slice of luck to see Red-rumped Swallow in Ireland as, generally speaking, they do not hang around. Only fourteen of the 53 records were present for more than one day. The longest to remain was one for nine days on Tory Island, Donegal from 27th October to 4th November 2007 (*Irish Birds* 8: 602), followed by another that was present for seven days at Tacumshin Lake, Wexford from 17th to 23rd May

2012 (*Irish Birds* 9: 600), but these were very much exceptions to the rule. Four remained for three days, eight were present for two and the remaining 39 were all recorded on just a single date. Apart from December and January they have occurred in all months although there is a clear peak in April and May with fifteen each suggesting spring overshoots and a smaller peak in October and November with nine and five respectively. The Mizen Head bird is the third June record and the High Island individual is the first for August.

**Cetti's Warbler** *Cettia cetti* (0; 4; 0)

**2013 Wicklow** One: Probably a female, trapped, East Coast Nature Reserve, Blackditch, Newcastle, 3rd November (D.Moran, N.Tierney). Niall Tierney had set up a 60-foot mist net in BirdWatch Ireland's East Coast Nature Reserve with the intention of trapping Goldfinches *Carduelis carduelis*. At 11:30 he approached the net during one of his rounds and noticed a bird trapped in it showing warm brown upperparts, grey underside and a prominent eye-ring and supercilium. He immediately recognised it as a Cetti's Warbler, a species he had handled previously in Britain and Belgium. In the hand he found wing length and formula to be consistent with Svensson (1992). The measured wing length of 57 millimetres suggested a female, however sample sizes in Svensson are small and there appears to be some regional variation. Following release the bird exhibited its characteristic tail-cocking behaviour as it hopped off through nearby vegetation and was not seen again.

**Arctic Warbler** *Phylloscopus borealis* (0; 11; 3)

**Galway** Two: One, Inishbofin, 13th to 14th September (A.McGeehan *et al.*), photograph *Wings* 79: 29; One, Inishmore, Aran Islands, 11th October, photographed (D.Breen).

**Mayo** One: One, Glenlara, Mullet Peninsula, 22nd to 28th October, photographed (M.Reilly, D.Suddaby *et al.*).

**2014 Cork** One: One, Mizen Head, 21st to 22nd September (R.T.Mills *et al.*), photograph *Wings* 75: 28.

For the first time in an Irish bird report multiple records of this mainly northern Palearctic warbler. The bird on Mizen Head is the eighth for Cork in contrast to the Mayo and Galway records, which are the first for those counties.

About 12:30 on 21st September 2014 Richard Mills was on the road from Lissagriffin to Mizen Head, by the main Mizen garden. He was hoping to photograph a Yellow-browed Warbler *P. inornatus*, which was one of his bogey birds to photograph. His attention was drawn to a rather loud and unusual call that appeared to be coming from a *Phylloscopus* warbler high in a tree. Fortunately he was able to fire off some pictures before it flew across the road, where it proved difficult to see and impossible to photograph. Suspecting it was an Arctic Warbler, Richard emailed the pictures to Killian Mullaney who confirmed the identification. It was still present the following morning when better views were obtained.



**Plate 213.** Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis*, Inishmore, Galway, October 2015 (Dermot Breen).

In the early afternoon of 22nd October, Michael Reilly found a warbler in a vegetated garden in Glenlara that he considered 'a very good shout for an Arctic Warbler'. He texted the news to Dave Suddaby, then raced back to his car to check details in his *Collins Bird Guide* (Svensson *et al.* 2009), but on his return could not locate the bird and had to leave without seeing it again that day. Dave arrived shortly after and soon relocated it calling from within a small patch of Willows *Salix* sp., and he was able to note all the important features required to confirm Michael's earlier suspicion. In the coming days the bird was seen well by several visiting birders until last observed on the 28th October.

### Radde's Warbler

*Phylloscopus schwarzi* (0; 16; 1)

**Galway** One: One, Inishbofin, 6th October, photographed (A.McGeehan *et al.*).

This is the first for Galway and the second for the northwest coast following one at Achill Island, Mayo in 2001 (*Irish Birds* 7: 236). All seventeen records have arrived between 2nd and 30th October.

### Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* (0; 10; 1)

**Cork** One: One, Knockadoon Head, 28th to 31st October, photographed (R.McLaughlin *et al.*).

The three east Cork headlands of Knockadoon, Ballycotton and Power Head have all now recorded a Dusky Warbler. This bird was found on a short stretch of laneway that has previously hosted Hume's *P. humei*, Pallas's *P. proregulus* and Yellow-browed *P. inornatus* Warblers. It was observed to move inland on its final day.

### Western Bonelli's Warbler

*Phylloscopus bonelli* (0; 14; 1)

**Cork** One: One, Galley Head, 8th September, photographed (C.Barton *et al.*).

After birding for an hour at Galley Head, all Colin Barton had to show for his efforts were a couple of Northern Wheatears *Oenanthe oenanthe* and a late Swift *Apus apus*. Arriving at some Sycamores *Acer* sp., he heard a 'weird *Phylloscopus*-type' call, not unlike Willow Warbler *P. trochilus* but a higher pitched and thinner 'hoo-eet'. He had no difficulty in locating the bird as it perched in the open close by. It showed a pale grey head, wide supercilium, greenish fringes to the primaries,





**Plate 214.** Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus*, Knockadoon Head, Cork, October 2015 (Norma Gleeson).



**Plate 215.** Siberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita tristis*, Cape Clear Island, Cork, October 2015 (Richard H. Coombes).

darkish legs and really clean pale grey/white underparts. Then, a Willow Warbler *P. trochilus* hopped up beside it and the Willow Warbler was clearly larger. Colin realised it was a Bonelli's Warbler and based on the call heard, a Western Bonelli's Warbler. He texted and called some others but unfortunately by the time they arrived the bird had moved high into a Pine tree *Pinus* sp. and was proving difficult to see. Later that afternoon it was observed briefly, when some record shots were taken.

Western Bonelli's Warbler has never occurred outside of August, September and October and has never been recorded in any county other than Cork, Waterford and Wexford. This is the eighth in September and ninth in Cork, although perhaps surprisingly the first at Galley Head.

### Western/Eastern Bonelli's Warbler

*Phylloscopus bonelli/orientalis* (0; 1; 0)

**2014 Cork** One: One, Cotter's Garden, Cape Clear Island, 10th September, photographed (R.H.Coombes).

In the critical absence of a call being heard and despite an exemplary written description submitted by the observer, regrettably the specific identity of this bird as either a Western or Eastern Bonelli's Warbler cannot be confirmed.

### Siberian Chiffchaff

*Phylloscopus collybita tristis* (2; 39; 27)

**Cork** Twelve: Up to four, Rossmore Quarry, Carrigtwohill, 23rd February to 6th April, photographed (S.Ronayne *et al.*); One, Tramore River, near Ballyphehane, Cork City, 25th March, photographed

(D.McGrath), then, presumed same, Tramore River, near Ballyphehane, Cork City, 27th December (D.McGrath); One, Dursey Island, 10th October (K.Grace, D.A.Scott); One, Cotter's Garden, Cape Clear Island, 10th to 17th October, photographed (R.H.Coombes, S.Enright, M.Hanafin *et al.*); One, Firkeel Glen, West Beara, 11th October (K.Grace); One, Galley Head, 15th to 19th October (C.Barton); One, Firkeel Glen, West Beara, 18th October to 1st November (K.Grace, A.A.K.Lancaster, F.Moore *et al.*); One, Dursey Island, 21st October to 1st November (D.A.Scott *et al.*); One, Knockadoon Head, 28th to 31st October, photographed (R.McLaughlin, P.Moore *et al.*).

**Dublin** One: One, Ballymun, 9th February, photographed (Mi.Keating).

**Galway** Two: One, Inishbofin, 1st to 3rd November, photographed (A.McGeehan); One, Slyne Head, 2nd November, photographed (D.Breen).

**Kerry** Nine: At least six, Ross Castle, Killarney, 23rd January to 17th February, trapped and ringed (D.Farrar *et al.*), photograph *Irish Birds* 10: 269; One, Bolus Head, Iveragh Peninsula, 9th to 19th October, photographed (E.Dempsey, M.O'Clery *et al.*); A second individual, Bolus Head, Iveragh Peninsula, 17th October, photographed (P.McDaid); One, Ballyseedy Wood, Tralee, 8th November (E.Carty).

**Limerick** One: One, Coonagh Nature Reserve, 24th January (T.Tarpey).

**Waterford** One: One, Ardmore, 17th January, photographed (A.Malcolm).

**Wexford** One: One, Hook Head, 31st October (K.Grace).

The January and February birds at Ross Castle were recorded during survey work undertaken to determine the origins of the many Chiffchaffs wintering there (O'Mahony *et al.* 2015). In addition to those trapped there were other unringed birds present which were considered to be *tristis*, making six the minimum total. Feathers dropped by birds during processing



**Plate 216.** Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans*, Brownstown Head, Waterford, April 2015 (Séamus Feeney).

were saved and a total of eight samples were sent to the University of Aberdeen for DNA sequencing. The results showed the samples included three nominate Chiffchaff, four *tristis* and a single Scandinavian Chiffchaff *abietinus*.

### **Barred Warbler** *Sylvia nisoria* (6; 197; 7)

**Cork** Five: First-winter, Old Head of Kinsale, 15th September (R.O'Driscoll); First-winter, Firkeel, West Beara, 30th September to 18th October (A.A.K.Lancaster *et al.*); First-winter, Ballinacarraige, West Beara, 1st October (K.Grace, A.A.K.Lancaster); First-winter, Mizen Head, 11th October (D.Ballard); First-winter, Mizen Head, 28th to 31st October (C.O'Sullivan *et al.*).

**Mayo** One: First-winter, Erris Head, 14th September, photographed (R.Innes, C.Jones).

**Wexford** One: First-winter, Hook Head, 31st October (K.Grace).

This is the fourteenth consecutive autumn that Barred Warbler has occurred with an average of just over eight during that time. Perhaps surprisingly it has never been recorded in spring.

### **Subalpine Warbler** *Sylvia cantillans* (2; 51; 1)

**Waterford** One: First-summer male, Brownstown Head, 11th to 17th April (M.Cowming *et al.*), photographs *Birdwatch* 276: 20, *Wings* 78: 28.

This is the second record for both Waterford and Brownstown Head following a male there in May 2008 (*Irish Birds* 9: 98). The statistics exclude the single occurrence of the southeastern European form *S.c. albitriata*.

### **Icterine Warbler** *Hippolais icterina* (2; 219; 1)

**Cork** One: One, Garinish, West Beara, 19th September (A.A.K.Lancaster).

Found in hillside scrub near Garinish Cross by long-time West Beara regular Tony Lancaster. European populations of this long-distance migrant have decreased over recent decades, showing a loss of 42% from 1980 to 2011 and 12% from 1990 to 2011 (PECBMS 2013). Prior to 1960 there were just twelve Irish records but in the four decades to the end of the century numbers increased considerably producing an average of 48. The largest total was in the 1960s (50) and the smallest in the 1970s (41). Since 2000 numbers here reflect the general decline, with just eighteen in the 2000s, including three blank years (2000, 2001 and 2004). In 2010 there was a return to historic numbers with seven, which proved all too brief however, as it was then followed by three blank years until a single record in 2014 and again this year.

## Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta* (2; 203; 4)

**Cork** Two: One, Mizen Head, 22nd September (D.Ballard, C.O'Sullivan); A different individual, Mizen Head, 25th September (D.Ballard *et al.*).

**Galway** One: One, Inishmore, Aran Islands, 5th October (A.A.Kelly, P.Kelly).

**Wexford** One: One, Great Saltee Island, 12th September, photographed (K.Grace *et al.*).

The Inishmore bird is the first Galway record. In contrast, Cork and Wexford have accumulated the most with 129 and 54 respectively.

## Blyth's Reed Warbler

*Acrocephalus dumetorum* (0; 11; 1)

**Cork** One: One, Garinish, West Beara, 5th to 6th October, photographed (K.Grace, A.A.K.Lancaster).

**2011 Cork** One: One, Cotter's Garden, Cape Clear Island, 3rd to 5th October (A.Dalton, S.Wing).

Early on 3rd October 2011 in Cotter's Garden, Steve Wing found an unstreaked *Acrocephalus* warbler that showed an extremely short primary projection. He beckoned to Alan Dalton, who was nearby, to join him and as they watched the bird it uttered a short, slightly grating 'teck'. Despite its skulking behaviour, they managed to get brief views of it over the next few hours as it toured Cotter's, calling frequently, until it finally settled in an *Escalonia* thicket at the top of the garden and became silent. From what they had observed they were beginning to suspect it was a Blyth's Reed Warbler. Later that afternoon it was heard again and seen briefly the following day but it wasn't until the morning of the 5th that Alan Dalton eventually managed to get clear and close views allowing him to check for all the key features needed to confirm the identification as Blyth's Reed Warbler.

The Garinish bird proved to be an equally frustrating individual that required much time and patience, before finally giving itself up to Tony Lancaster. It had first come to his attention when he heard it calling a persistent 'tuk' or 'tut'. Despite its close proximity he could not get on to it, something he badly wanted to do as he was coming to the conclusion it was very likely a Blyth's Reed Warbler. Eventually he managed brief but clear views revealing the bunched primaries, overall pallid appearance (especially on the underparts), a supercilium that was brightest in front of the eye and the overall bronze upperparts of a Blyth's Reed Warbler. He was later joined by Kieran Grace, and despite it never being on show for any length of time they managed to keep track of it, mainly by following the call. The weather the following morning was dreadful, with strong winds and persistent rain, but it cleared in the afternoon when the bird again proved elusive and was observed only briefly.

## Cedar Waxwing *Bombycilla cedrorum* (0; 2; 1)

**Clare** One: One, Kilrush, 3rd to 4th June, photographed (Ma.Keating, J.N.Murphy).

This bird was seen in a Kilrush garden feeding on *Cotoneaster* buds and recognised as a waxwing, however it took a few phone calls and a picture before identification as a Cedar Waxwing was realised.

There have been twelve records in the Western Palearctic where, in addition to two previous Irish there are six British (including an influx of three in 2015), two Icelandic and one Azorean. The two previous Irish were a first-winter on Inishbofin, Galway on 14th October 2009 (*Irish Birds* 9: 275, McGeehan & Nash 2009) and a first-winter at Tarmon on the Mullet Peninsula, Mayo on 10th November 2012 (*Irish Birds* 9: 603).

## Rose-coloured Starling *Pastor roseus*

(41; 106; 2)

**Cork** One: Juvenile, Mizen Head, 11th to 21st October, photographed (D.Ballard *et al.*).

**Dublin** One: Juvenile, Balscadden, Howth, 17th to 23rd November (M.Stewart *et al.*), photographs *Birdwatch* 283: 20, *Wings* 80: 29.

Rose-coloured Starlings tend to arrive in one of two distinct waves, i.e. adults and, to a lesser extent, first-years in summer and juveniles in autumn and this year's birds fall squarely in the latter group. Cork has hosted the majority of autumn juveniles and the Mizen Head bird becomes its twenty-sixth, whereas the bird in Howth is only the second autumn juvenile in Dublin.



**Plate 217.** Rose-coloured Starling *Pastor roseus*, Howth, Dublin, November 2015 (Tom Shevlin).



**Grey-cheeked Thrush** *Catharus minimus* (0; 8; 1)

**Mayo** One: One, Termoncarragh, Mullet Peninsula, 25th May (D.Suddaby *et al.*), (Suddaby 2015), photographs *Birdwatch* 277: 8-9. This is the first for Mayo and the first spring record. All previous records have occurred during October, with seven in Cork (four at Cape Clear Island, two at Dursey Island and one at Old Head of Kinsale) and a single Clare record at Loop Head.

**Nightingale** *Luscinia megarhynchos* (0; 34; 2)

**Wexford** Two: One, Great Saltee Island, 10th April (K.Mullarney *et al.*), photograph *Wings* 78: 28; A different individual, Great Saltee Island, 17th April (T.Murray).

The bird on the 10th April was found around the landing area and the second was in brambles near the Airfield and was part of a large fall of migrants that day. These are the fifteenth and sixteenth records for Great Saltee Island and the fourth time it hosted two in the same month.

**Bluethroat** *Luscinia svecica* (0; 42; 2)

**Clare** One: First-winter female, Loop Head, 6th October, photographed (K.Mullarney, J.N.Murphy).

**Wicklow** One: Adult male, Wicklow Head, 30th May, photographed (M.Hogan).

This is the first county record for Wicklow and the second county record for Clare, coincidentally found on the same date as the first in Shannon in 1982 (*Irish Birds* 2: 570).



**Plate 218.** Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*, Loop Head, Clare, October 2015 (Killian Mullarney).



**Plate 219.** Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*, Great Saltee Island, Wexford, April 2015, the first of two there that month (Killian Mullarney).

**Red-flanked Bluetail** *Tarsiger cyanurus*

(0; 4; 1)

**Cork** One: First-winter, Caher West, Mizen Head, 20th October (D.Ballard *per* IRBC).

While birding near a garden on Mizen Head, Dan Ballard noticed a bird about the size of a Robin *Erithacus rubecula* fly in to a Pine tree *Pinus* sp. Expecting a flycatcher, he was rather taken aback by the dirty white underparts and orange flanks that he observed on the partly obscured bird. It then shifted position revealing a gleaming white throat, and he immediately realised it was a Red-flanked Bluetail, a bird he had long hoped to see on Mizen Head. It remained on view, moving about the garden for fifteen minutes, occasionally flycatching. At times, the cobalt blue tail was very obvious when it perched on lower branches.

**Blue-headed Wagtail***Motacilla flava flava* (0; 69; 3)**Cork** Two: Male, Ballycotton, 31st May, photographed (P.Moore); One, Mizen Head, 22nd September (D.Ballard, C.O'Sullivan).**Wexford** One: Male, Tacumshin Lake, 11th September (P.Kelly).

These are classic dates and locations for this spring and autumn migrant. The Cork records are the seventh for May (third at Ballycotton) and eighth for September (with this the first record away from Cape Clear Island). In Wexford, it is the fifth for September and the second at Tacumshin Lake.

Yellow Wagtail taxonomy is complex, with at least thirteen subspecies described, and some authorities treat the eastern and western forms as distinct species. There are six forms on the Irish List; *flavissima* (Yellow Wagtail), *flava* (Blue-headed Wagtail), *cinereocapilla* (Ashy-headed Wagtail), *thunbergi* (Grey-headed Wagtail), *feldegg* (Black-headed Wagtail) and either *plexa* or *tschutschensis* (North-eastern Wagtail). Of these, *flavissima* is the only form not reported in Irish Rare Bird Reports, being the most common. In addition, it has a history of regular breeding up to the mid 1940s and irregular breeding since (Hillis 2007 & 2009, Hutchinson 1989, Newton 2015). Of the others, both Blue-headed and Ashy-headed Wagtails have bred but are better regarded as a rare passage migrant and a vagrant respectively. Grey-headed Wagtail is a very rare vagrant with seven records. Finally, there are single records of both Black-headed (*Irish Birds* 8: 604) and North-eastern Wagtails (*Irish Birds* 10: 256).

**Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* (0; 30; 2)**Cork** One: First-winter, Ballycotton, 3rd October, photographed (R.McLaughlin *et al.*).**Wexford** One: Juvenile, Tacumshin Lake, 29th August, photographed (P.Kelly, T.Kilbane *et al.*).

All nine Wexford records have been at Tacumshin Lake. Of the eight in Cork, this is the sixth for Ballycotton and the other two were at Lissagriffin.

**Richard's Pipit** *Anthus richardi* (2; 106; 14)**At sea** Zero: One, 40 nautical miles southeast of Hook Head, Wexford, 9th October (N.T.Keogh, M.O'Donovan, D.Reidy).**Clare** Two: Two, Loop Head, one from 13th to 16th October (J.N.Murphy *et al.*), with a second present 15th October, photographed (M.Gibson, F.MacGabhann, J.N.Murphy).**Cork** Two: One, Galley Head, 11th October (C.Barton); One, Killough, West Beara, 18th October (F.Moore).**Donegal** Four: Four, Tory Island, three from 1st to 6th October, photographed (R.Vaughan *et al.*), with a fourth present 4th October, photographed (S.Feeney *et al.*).**Galway** One: One, Claddagh, 29th October (C.Cronin).**Kerry** Two: One, Bolus Head, Iveragh Peninsula, 8th October (K.Cronin); One, Bolus Head, Iveragh Peninsula, 3rd November (M.O'Clery).**Mayo** One: One, Annagh Marsh, Mullet Peninsula, 28th September (D.Suddaby *et al.*).**Wexford** Two: One, Ballyteige, 16th September (T.Murray); One, Tacumshin Lake, 1st November (K.Grace, P.Kelly, A.Walsh).

These include the first records for the west coast counties of Galway and Mayo and the second for Kerry. Dates could not be more typical as October dominates this species statistics with September and November best supporting months. There are 86 (just over 70%) of the overall total in October, followed by eighteen in November and eleven in September. Other months with records are December (three), February (two) and April and August (one each).

The 'at sea' record was observed from the *RV Celtic Explorer* during offshore seabird surveys. It circled the ship once calling loudly while pursued by a Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*, before departing to the west. Coincidentally, another was observed the previous day in the



**Plate 220.** Richard's Pipit *Anthus richardi*, Tory Island, Donegal, October 2015 (Séamus Feeney).

English Channel from the *RV Cefas Endeavour* in a position 35 nautical miles south of Prawle Point, Devon (*per* Mike Bailey/MARINELife).

### **Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni* (0; 8; 1)

**Kerry** One: One, Bolus Head, Iveragh Peninsula, 30th September, photographed (M.O'Clery).

Found by Michael O'Clery at a relatively unwatched but potentially rewarding Kerry headland. This is the first for Kerry and the third away from Cork; the others being the first Irish record at Great Saltee Island, Wexford in 1978 (*Irish Birds* 1: 582) and another at Inishmore, Galway in 2012 (*Irish Birds* 9: 606). Seven of the previous records were in October and this was only one day short of adding to that total.

### **Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus* (0; 52; 2)

**Donegal** One: One, Tory Island, 30th September (R.Vaughan).

**Kerry** One: One, Carrahane Strand, 8th to 9th October (E.Dempsey, M.O'Clery *et al.*).

This is the first record for Donegal and only the fifth away from the southern counties of Kerry, Cork and Wexford. October is the prime month of occurrence with 30 or 56% of the total.

### **Scandinavian Rock Pipit**

*Anthus petrosus littoralis* (0; 84; 14)

**Cork** Three: One, Pallas Strand, Eyeries, West Beara, 15th March (F.Moore); Two, Roche's Point, Cork Harbour, 29th March (T.Gittings).

**Donegal** One: One, Malin Head, 13th March (R.McLaughlin).

**Dublin** One: One, West Pier, Dun Laoghaire Harbour, 13th to 28th November (N.Keogh, J.Proudfoot *et al.*).

**Kerry** Seven: One, Black Rock Strand, 5th to 31st March, photographed (D.A.O'Connor *et al.*); Two, Kilshannig, Magharees, 6th March to 1st April (D.Farrar *et al.*), with a third present 1st April (D.Farrar); One, Carrig Island, near Ballylongford, 13th to 22nd March (D.Farrar *et al.*) and a second from 20th to 22nd March, photographed (D.Farrar *et al.*); One, Castlegregory, 18th March, photographed (D.A.O'Connor).

**Wexford** One: One, Nethertown, 17th March (K.Grace).

**Wicklow** One: One, Broad Lough, 29th November (C.Cardiff).

Equals the fourteen in 2014 and falls just two short of the best ever total in 2013 (*Irish Birds* 10: 96). As is normally the case, the majority were recorded in March and April, a time when identification becomes more straightforward as they begin to acquire summer plumage, when, among other features, they can often show a conspicuous pink-wash to the breast. The November birds are just the second and third for that month following an adult, which was trapped while at Groomsport, Down from 11th October to 11th November 1996. It had been ringed as a first-year at Randaberg, Norway on 10th November 1995 (*Irish Birds* 7: 102).

### **Water Pipit** *Anthus spinoletta* (1; 149; 6)

**Cork** Two: One, Ballybrannagan Strand, 17th March (T.Gittings); One, Lough Beg, Cork Harbour, 9th November (C.Cronin).



**Plate 221.** Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta*, Tacumshin Lake, Wexford, November 2015 (Paul & Andrea Kelly).

**Kerry** One: One, Carrahane Strand, from 2nd December 2014 (*Irish Birds* 10: 257) remained to 5th February; Adult winter, Kilshannig, 2nd January to 21st February (E.Carty).

**Wexford** Three: One, Tacumshin Lake, from 29th November 2014 (*Irish Birds* 10: 257) remained to 28th March; Two, Tacumshin Lake, 1st November with one remaining to 11th December, photographed (P.Kelly); One, South Slob, 30th to 31st December, photographed (P.Kelly, M.Noonan).

Water Pipit is a rare, though regular, winter visitor, presumably from alpine regions of central and southern Europe. Three in Wexford continue a pattern of birds there every year (apart from 2009) since 2003. The two largest gatherings ever recorded in Ireland were during that time at Tacumshin Lake with eight on 19th November 2005 (*Irish Birds* 8: 389) and eleven from 26th to 30th December 2007 (*Irish Birds* 8: 602).

### **Hawfinch** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* (Unknown; 215; 3)

**Cork** One: One, Ballinacarraige, West Beara, 17th April (D.Durrell, P.Durrell).

**Kildare** One: One, Sallins, 28th February (P.Kelly).

**Limerick** One: One, Curraghchase Forest Park, 17th March, photographed (A.G.Kelly).

For the fifth year in succession, Curraghchase Forest Park has hosted this attractive finch. It is possible that it is the same individual that was present there on 30th December 2014 (*Irish Birds* 10: 258), but is here treated as new. The bird at Sallins is the first for Kildare in 113 years. During each breeding season from 1896 to 1902 Hawfinches were observed



at Straffan, Kildare (about six miles from Sallins), and in 1902 an adult was observed to feed young there (Kennedy *et al.* 1954).

Curraghchase Forest Park recorded an exceptional influx of Hawfinches in the late 1980s. About 35 were present from October 1988 (*Irish Birds* 4: 110) remaining to 1989 and increasing in number to about 95 until they departed in early March (*Irish Birds* 4: 225). More recently, two adults were observed tending a juvenile in Ballyvaughan, Clare on 3rd and 4th September 1991, raising the possibility that breeding had taken place somewhere in 1991, perhaps involving birds that were part of the large influx of 1988/1989 remaining unnoticed in the general area (*Irish Birds* 4: 606).

### Common Rosefinch *Erythrina erythrina* (0; 228; 8)

**Cork** Two: Juvenile, Galley Head, 11th September (C.Barton); Juvenile, Ballinacarraige, West Beara, 15th October (K.Grace, A.A.K.Lancaster).

**Donegal** Two: Juvenile, Tory Island, 6th to 10th September (M.Meegan *et al.*); Juvenile, Tory Island, 17th to 19th September (T.Campbell, C.Ingram *et al.*).

**Galway** Three: Adult male, Inishbofin, 12th June (A.McGeehan); Two juveniles, Inishbofin, 14th September (D.Breen, A.McGeehan, A.O'Donail).

**Wexford** One: First-summer male, Great Saltee Island, 7th June, photographed (B.Power).

These records fall within the range of expected arrival dates of this predominantly autumn vagrant that also shows a secondary peak in June. The geographic spread is also typical as these are the four counties with the highest totals. Cork is well out in front with 134 followed by Donegal (32), Wexford (21) and Galway (twenty).

### Greenland Redpoll

*Acanthis flammea rostrata* (13; 39; 1)

**Cork** One: One, Dursey Island, 19th October (K.Grace).

This bird was found along the track at Kilmichael village associating with ten Lesser Redpolls *A.f. cabaret* and was part of a small arrival on Dursey Island that day that included two Yellow-browed Warblers *Phylloscopus inornatus* and single Jack Snipe *Lymnocyptes minimus*, Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus* and Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*.

### Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera* (4; 0; 1)

**Mayo** One: Male, Tarmon, Mullet Peninsula, 15th October (D.Suddaby).

From his kitchen window at breakfast time on 15th October Dave Suddaby could see that birds were on the move, including small parties of Crossbills *Loxia curvirostra* and winter thrushes. Encouraged, he left the house about 09:00 and made his way to a favourite migration observation point

nearby. Within 30 minutes he had counted 36 Crossbills in small groups heading south. Instead of carrying on, the next group landed in the tops of some conifers about 25 metres distant. While scanning this group Dave was immediately struck by an obviously wing-barred individual, initially side on and then back on – it was clearly a male Two-barred Crossbill, a species he had previously observed on numerous occasions in Shetland. Fortunately, it remained in full view long enough for all the salient features to be noted, before it dropped out of sight in the conifer. Thereafter his views were largely obscured and after a short while, the group began to give ‘excited’ calls before exploding from the conifer and landing in another group of conifers further off. Some of this group, including the male Two-barred Crossbill, then made a short flight before re-joining the rest, allowing Dave to clearly see its two broad white wing-bars. The flock remained in the vicinity for the next twenty minutes or so feeding among the conifers, but never gave great views. Then, apparently unprovoked, they all got up and headed off purposefully to the southwest. Unfortunately, and despite extensive searching around the Tarmon and Blacksod areas of the Mullet Peninsula, the Two-barred Crossbill was not seen again.

Although the fifth Irish record, this is its first appearance in an Irish Bird Report as all others occurred long before the first report for 1953. The first three were in the 19th century and all were shot; a female was in Grenville near Belfast on 11th January 1802, another female in Templepatrick, Antrim in 1867, and a male in Tempo Manor Estate, near Edenmore, Fermanagh on 17th February 1895 (Ussher & Warren 1900). The fourth, a male, was shot near Crumlin, Antrim on 2nd August 1927 (Kennedy *et al.* 1954). This record moves Two-barred Crossbill from Category B of the Irish List to Category A.

### Dark-eyed Junco *Junco hyemalis* (1; 2; 1)

**Cork** One: Adult male, Tillickafinna, Dursey Island, 9th June (D.A.Scott, J.E.Scott *et al.*), (Scott 2015), photographs *Birdwatch* 277: 14 and 278: 12, *Wings* 78: 28.

While stocking the bird table in his famed garden on Dursey Island, Derek Scott heard an unfamiliar song. To his great surprise he discovered it was coming from a Dark-eyed Junco sitting in full view in a nearby conifer. He immediately went inside to alert his wife Joanna and fetch his camera and on their return found it feeding on the bird table. It remained until just after 21:00 and was successfully twitched by seventeen birders. This report also includes a record of Little Bunting in the same garden, adding to its long list of rarities that includes Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* (2014), Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis* (2013), Wilson's Warbler *Cardellina pusilla* (2013), Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* (2010), Blackpoll Warbler *Setophaga striata* (2006) and Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata* (1999).



**Plate 222.** Dark-eyed Junco *Junco hyemalis*, Dursley Island, Cork, June 2015 (Victor Caschera).

The three previous records were; Loop Head, Clare on 30th May 1905 (*IBR* 3: 25 and 8: 3-4), which was also the first Western Palearctic record, followed by a male at Ballygannon, Wicklow on 10th August 2000 (*Irish Birds* 7: 573) and a female or first-year male at Whitehead, Antrim on 30th May 2004 (*Irish Birds* 8: 392). Since the first British record in 1960 there have been 39 to 2015 and about 55 Western Palearctic records overall.

**Ortolan Bunting** *Emberiza hortulana* (0; 124; 4)

**Cork** Three: One, Galley Head, 12th September (C.Cronin); A different individual, Galley Head, 13th September (C.Barton *et al.*); One, Mizen Head, 29th September (D.Ballard).

**Dublin** One: Female, Rockabill Island, 26th May (B.Burke, A.Power), photograph *Birdwatch* 277: 19.

Rockabill lies just off Skerries in north Dublin and consists of two granite islands, the Rock and the Bill that are separated by a 20 metre channel. Best known for its breeding terns, including Europe's largest Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii* colony, Rockabill has also recorded some significant rarities, including first Irish records of Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta*, Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella cerbiola* and Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* and now adds Ortolan Bunting to the Dublin list. This female was briefly observed feeding on the more northerly and less vegetated Bill in the early afternoon. The last week of May is an early record, although

there are ten earlier including the first Irish record (a pair) near the old Newcastle Train Station, Wicklow on 18th April 1953 (Kennedy *et al.* 1954). In contrast the three Cork records could not be more typical. Out of 128 records, 91 have been in Cork and of those 59 were in September.

**Little Bunting** *Emberiza pusilla* (3; 38; 3)

**Cork** Two: One, Mizen Head, 10th October (M.Shorten, P.Wolstenholme); One, Dursley Island, 17th to 19th October (D.A.Scott *et al.*).

**Donegal** One: One, Tory Island, 5th November, photographed (T.Campbell, C.Ingram).

The two Cork records neatly fit the expected arrival dates of this mainly autumn vagrant that shows a distinct October peak. Of the 44 to date, 27 were in October with seventeen of these in Cork. The bird on Dursley Island was first noticed by Derek Scott as it flew from the southwest into his garden uttering a thin 'seep' as it landed in a patch of Willows *Salix* sp. It showed well for about one minute before departing with a small flock of Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*. Looked for but not seen on the 18th, it was relocated by Tony Lancaster near the 'Ovenbird Hedge' shortly after mid-day on the 19th and again later that same afternoon by Kieran Grace. This is the seventh Little Bunting for Dursley Island and all have occurred between 3rd and 23rd October. The bird on Tory Island is the third there in November and the seventh overall for Donegal.





**Plate 223.** Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*, Rockabill, Dublin, 26th May 2015 (Andrew Power).



**Plate 224.** Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica*, Cape Clear Island, Cork, October 2015 (Tom Shevlin).



## Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* (0; 19; 1)

**Cork** One: One, Central Bog, Cape Clear Island, 5th October, photographed (T.Shevlin).

This is the first since one on nearby Sherkin Island on 18th October 2005 (*Irish Birds* 8: 392). While checking Central Bog for migrants early on 5th October, Tom Shevlin noticed a bird in wet grass about 10 metres off. He initially thought it was a Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*, however, something did not quite fit, so he moved closer to get a clearer view and take some photos. Still not completely certain of its identity he quickly shot off some pictures. As he viewed them in the camera's LCD screen he noticed a combination of stripy head pattern, creamy supercilium, crown stripe and rusty flanks confirming that it was a Rustic Bunting. It continued to feed in the wet grass allowing Tom to take some more pictures before it moved further off to a muddy area where it associated with Dunnocks *Prunella modularis*. As the bird seemed to be well settled Tom left to alert others, but it was not present on their return, nor was it subsequently found despite much searching. The first Irish record was a male in the Post Office Garden at Cape Clear Island on 9th October 1959 (*IBR* 7: 23) and this is the tenth record for the island, comprising eight October birds and singles in April and June.

## Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapilla* (0; 3; 0)

**2014 Cork** One: One, Mizen Head, 27th September (A.Duggan).

With hardly a migrant in sight on Mizen Head, Aidan Duggan considered giving up on the headland and heading off through the sand dunes towards Lissagriffin in the hope of finding a good wader. Fortunately, he gave it a few more minutes and that decision made the world of difference to the day's outcome. He had checked the main Mizen garden on the road that leads to the lighthouse without success but as he

emerged back on the road a small bird flew from low down on the opposite ditch and continued around the corner of the track that led to the side of the lower garden. It was roughly finch sized and his initial thought was that it was probably a Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* or similar. Nevertheless, he decided to follow and arriving at the entrance to the track he flushed the same bird from just a metre away only to see it bury itself in some freshly fallen Japanese Knotweed *Fallopia japonica* leaves. Now it was only a matter of waiting for the bird to reveal itself, which it did, but in a peculiar reverse movement and then, frustratingly, it stopped while still only half-way out! He could see brilliant white underparts with bold black streaking and spots and olive toned upperparts, making Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* a possibility. With his heart thumping hard, he waited for the bird to show fully and when it did he immediately checked the head expecting an Olive-backed Pipit type supercilium, instead he saw a plain face with a large dark eye and a massive white eye-ring; it looked like an Ovenbird! The bird then looked straight at Aidan and erected its orange crown feathers; it was an Ovenbird! It remained close by picking amongst the leaf litter with a cocked tail and head bobbing back and forth, all the while walking with a bizarre hen-like gait. A few birders managed to get to the Mizen that afternoon but the bird was not relocated.

There are two previous records; the first Irish and second Western Palearctic record was found dead at Derrinrush Forest, Lough Carra, Mayo on 8th December 1977 (*Irish Birds* 2: 118, Wilson 1980) and the second Irish and fourth Western Palearctic was near Tillickafinna, Dursey Island, Cork on 24th and 25th September 1990 (Grace & Lancaster 1990, *Irish Birds* 4: 459).

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Irish Rare Breeding Birds Panel (IRBBP)

## Appendix 2: List of records not proven

This list includes all records of taxa set out in *Irish Birds* 7: 416-418 (and subsequent updates online at [www.irbc.ie/records/desclist.php](http://www.irbc.ie/records/desclist.php) and [www.irbc.ie/records/desclist1.php](http://www.irbc.ie/records/desclist1.php)) which, after circulation to the Irish Rare Birds Committee were considered to be not proven. Records of birds not attributed to any definite species by the observers are not included, nor are birds considered to have been escapes from captivity.

### 2015 records not proven

#### Continental Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo sinensis*

Adult, Ferrybank, Wexford, 28th March.

Adult, Greystones, Wicklow, 23rd November.

#### Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

One, Ladysbridge, Cork, 6th January.

One, Lullymore West, Kildare, 6th December.

#### Baltic Gull *Larus fuscus fuscus*

First calendar-year, Grange Castle Business Park, Dublin, 25th October.

#### Siberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita tristis*

One, Pollardstown Fen, Kildare, 28th March.

### 2014 records not proven

#### Violet Green Swallow *Tachycineta thalassina*

One, Turvey, Rogerstown, Dublin, mid-June.

### 2013 records not proven

#### Atlantic Gull *Larus michabellis atlantis*

One, Baltimore, Cork, 5th December.

## Appendix 3: List of anonymous records not accepted

The following reports concern Appendix 2 rarities that were entered in the Provisional List of Rare Bird Sightings during 2015 but where the observers have to date remained unknown. Some or all of these reports may yet qualify for publication in a future IRBR, should the observers become known to the IRBC and be prepared to validate the report.

#### Black Brant *Branta bernicla nigricans*

One, Blennerville, Kerry, 25th February.

#### Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*

One, Castletownshend, Cork, 10th October.

#### American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*

One, Tory Island, Donegal, 4th October.

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#### Abbreviations used

- AERC: Association of European Rarities Committees.  
BBRC: British Birds Rarity Committee.  
GAA: Gaelic Athletic Association.  
IBR: Irish Bird Report, annual from 1953 to 2003.  
IRBBP: Irish Rare Breeding Birds Panel.  
IRBR: Irish Rare Bird Report, annual from 2004.  
LCD: Liquid Crystal Display.  
NIBA: Northern Ireland Birdwatchers' Association.  
WP: Western Palearctic.  
WWR: Wexford Wildfowl Reserve.  
WWT: Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust.