



Wexford Naturalists' Field Club,
c/o Wexford Wildfowl Reserve, North Slob, Wexford, Ireland.

WNFC Newsletter

Issue Number 41

March

2016

Welcome to the March issue of WNFC newsletter.

UPCOMING CLUB EVENTS

(All lectures commence at 8pm in the Pump House.)

APRIL

Thursday 7th: “Working towards a Flora of Co. Wexford” by Paul Green, WNFC member.

Saturday 9th: Field trip to **The Burrow, Rosslare**, to look at plants with Paul Green & Paula O'Meara.

Meet at **2pm** opposite the Church in Rosslare.
(T 096 157)

MAY

Thursday 5th: “A Geologists Guide to the Building Stones of Wexford Town”

by Dr. Jonathan Derham, WNFC member.

Thursday 12th: (note change of day & time) **Walk to examine building stones in Wexford Town** with Jonathan Derham.

Meet at **7pm** in Rowe St. Church car park.
(T 046 218).

Saturday 28th: Ladybird & Shield Bug Identification Workshop with Dr. Brian Nelson, NPWS Invertebrate Ecologist, in conjunction with the National Biodiversity Data Centre.

10am – 4pm at Jamestown Nature Reserve, Oylegate (S 986 315).

Limited places available at €5, contact Marion Brady, Asst. Club Secretary.



Green Shieldbug (photo D. Daly)

JUNE

Thursday 2nd: “**All Ireland Pollinator Plan 2015-2020**” by Dr. Una Fitzpatrick, National Biodiversity Centre.

Saturday 11th: Butterfly Walk at the Raven Nature Reserve with Mary Foley & Jason Monaghan.

Meet at 1.30pm, at wood entrance barrier.
(T 111 267)

Saturday 25th: Mini Bio Blitz, Secret Valley Wildlife Park, Clonroche.

10am – 4pm (S 846 311).

NOTES TO MEMBERS

If you wish to receive emails with reminders of upcoming club events and details of other events which may be of interest, please ensure that Marion Brady, Membership Secretary has a current email address for you.

When attending field trips, please bring field guides, lenses binoculars plus pen and pad to record sightings. The club has spare binoculars, which can be pre-booked via the Club Secretary. Also members can avail of the growing library for field guides etc., now housed in a new mobile cupboard at the visitor centre and manned by John Kinsella and Mick O'Connor. For queries re the books, or check out titles on:- www.wexfordnaturalists.com/library

Your Book donations are always welcome.

NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY WORKSHOPS

The WNFC will sponsor members who wish to attend these workshops, on a 'First come, first served' basis. Check website for details of courses and contact Club Secretary for details of sponsorship. <http://www.biodiversityireland.ie/2016-workshop-programme/>

A SPECIAL WELCOME to the WNFC for new members:

Patrick Breen, Tony Cassidy, Anna Dillon, Cait Dillon, Lucy Dillon, Tom Gibbons, Grace Gillroy, Anne O'Hanlon, Marion Rattigan, and Avril Rothwell.

AGM REPORT

The AGM was held on the 5th February 2016 at the Pumphouse. The Chairman's report is available on the club's website: <http://www.wexfordnaturalists.com/fieldtrip-reports/event-reports-2015> or from the Club Secretary c/o Wexford Wildfowl Reserve or info@wexfordnaturalists.com

The Treasurer's report is available to members on application to the Secretary. The committee is as follows (with additional responsibilities in brackets):

Nicholas Egan – Chairman (email updates)

Dave Daly – Vice Chairman

John Kinsella – Secretary (PRO)
Marion Brady – Treasurer (Membership Secretary, Website)
Terry McNamee – (Facebook & Events)
Janet Whelehan – (Archivist, Photos)
Mick O'Connor - (Library)
Patricia Byrne
Lynn Cassidy – (Newsletter Editor)

Mary Foley has volunteered to take charge of records even though not on the committee.

IRISH NATIONAL HERITAGE PARK DISCOUNT

Club Members can gain admission to the Park for a discounted price of €3, on producing their current membership card. If you have not received or have lost your card please contact Marion Brady, Membership Secretary.

LOOKING FORWARD TO SPRING this charming poem, sent in by Eithne Scallan, may set the mood!

THE ORANGE TIP

Welcome, Bouncing Butterfly
 Flicking from flower to flower
 Another and another
 Charming the chasing children.

Bright Beacon, lingering at the Lady's Smock
 Calling at the Cuckoo Flower
 Pausing at the Periwinkle
 Hovering at the Hedge Mustard.

Oh the Wizard of the Wetlands
 You are the Tip of Spring
 The Tip of Summer -
 The *Orange Tip*.

Cullinstown Field Trip:



Well attended despite the bitterly cold weather. Picture showing past erosion to cliffs, with rocks put in situ in an attempt to halt further erosion.



But this little Stonechat is blissfully unaware of any problems (pictures T. Cassidy)

CUTTING THE LAKE. Lady's Island Lake is a lagoon on the South Wexford Coast. Twelve small feeder streams flow into the lake but it has no outlet so water level rises over the winter months. To relieve flooding, the barrier separating the lake from the sea is breached each spring to release the pent-up waters. For hundreds of years, the annual breaching of the barrier has been referred to locally as 'cutting the lake'. This year, the lake was cut, or the barrier was breached, on Tuesday 2nd February as storm Imogen passed over. The water ran away quickly. Following the breaching, seawater entered the lake for a few days before the sea plugged the breach with sands and gravels thereby closing it until the next cut. The work is done by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) in consultation with members of the Lady's Island Lake Drainage Committee. The main interest the NPWS has in draining the lake is to free up nesting habitat for terns when they arrive later in the spring. Jim Hurley has produced a four-page leaflet detailing the annual breaching of the barrier and associated issues. A free copy of the leaflet is available from him as a PDF file by e-mailing swc@eircom.net.



RECORDING

Why Record?

As you are aware, one of the aims of the club is "to collect and record information regarding the natural history of County Wexford". One of the ways we can achieve this is for members to submit their sightings. All WNFC records are shared with the National Biodiversity Data Centre and, once checked and validated, are added to the Centre's database where they are available to assist in nature conservation and can be viewed on Biodiversity Maps <http://maps.biodiversityireland.ie/>
 A number of members already take part in local and national recording schemes. Even if you haven't kept records before why not give it a try? Many members are nervous about submitting records as they may not be 100% sure of the identity of a species. Don't feel you have to be an "expert" to record. Record the species that you DO know. Records of the common species can be just as important as the rare ones as who knows what the future holds. As long as you take a note of what species you see and where and when it was seen, then you have a valid record. Recording should be enjoyable and you should feel that you are making a contribution to nature conservation as a "citizen scientist". The more you record the more your confidence will grow. If you do see something that you cannot identify, if possible, take a photo and I will try to have it identified.

To encourage more members to record, over the coming months I plan to have a "Species (or two!) of the Month", something that most, if not all, members should be able to identify. To get things started the species for March is a spring favourite - Primrose. So, come on, submit all your sightings of primroses, or any other species, by one of the following methods – online at wexfordnaturalists.com/recording/records-submission, by email to records@wexfordnaturalists.com, by post to WNFC, c/o Wexford Wildfowl Reserve or to me, or any committee member, at club events.

If you have any queries or need help with the online form or obtaining grid references please talk to me.

Mary Foley



PRIMROSE (photo E. Delaney)

The Ladybirds and Shield Bugs of County Wexford

Work will continue this year to gather information on the distribution of the ladybirds and shield bugs in the county. This project is being coordinated by Nicholas Egan and Mary Foley. We have already received records for 2016 of sightings of 7-spot Ladybirds and Hawthorn and Hairy Shield Bugs. Keep your eyes open and pass on details to Nicholas or Mary or by any of the recording methods outlined above.

DON'T FORGET - LEAVE NO TRACE

This Outdoor Ethics Education Programme, which was adopted by the club in 2015, is based on seven principles which members are encouraged to promote and share when going out to enjoy our countryside:

- Plan Ahead and Prepare
- Be Considerate of Others
- Respect Farm Animals and Wildlife
- Travel and Camp on Durable Ground
- Leave What You Find
- Dispose of Waste Properly
- Minimise the Effects of Fire.

AN EVENT NOT TO BE MISSED

Come and see the thrilling spectacle of the Deer Rut in Kerry, combined with a great social weekend accompanying the WNFC club members on **Friday 7th to 9th October. Hear the mighty bellows and witness the clash of antlers as magnificent stags compete for control of a harem of does.** This impressive wildlife sight, possibly as ancient as 10,000 years, performed since the last ice-age, can be seen and experienced in hand with the beauty of the Kerry landscape. Glimpsing, if luck favours, rare raptors such as hen harriers and white tailed eagles. Don't miss the chance to relax, pint in hand, at the end of an action packed day, discussing with fellow wildlife enthusiasts, all the ecological wonders that Kerry has to offer. For further information contact Club Secretary or email info@wexfordnaturalists.com

AN EXTRA EVENT FOR SUNDAY MAY 15th THE DAWN CHORUS

An 'early rise', but well worth the effort to hear the birds welcome a new morn (and take heart, it's a fact that country birds rise later than their town cousins, due to lack of light pollution). The WNFC are proud to continue organising this event in memory of Chris Wilson, who initially introduced it to coincide with national Dawn Chorus day, which this year falls on 15th May. Further details will be sent by email and posted on Facebook.

COURTOWN WOODS FIELD TRIP



Group at Courtown Woods (photo T Cassidy)

An event well attended by members of the WNFC led by Janet Whelehan and Michael O'Donnell commenting on bird species. Niall O'Reilly of the Woodland Trust gave information on the species of trees in the wood. In all 19 species of birds were recorded including the Great Spotted Woodpecker, a recent addition to the Irish habitat. Unfortunately he did not pose for a photograph. The elusive Treecreeper was also seen (see photo below by Janet Whelehan). He has long toes and stiff tail feathers which enable him to climb vertically on the tree trunk, picking off insects beneath the bark with his curved beak as he goes.



Treecreeper (photo J Whelehan)

The woods, once part of a Victorian estate belonging to the earls of Courtown, were planted in 1870, and originally contained mainly Oak and Beech with Ash, Holly, Lime, Spanish Chestnut and Sycamore introduced. A magnificent Cedar of Lebanon,

between 100 and 200 years old, still stands on the bank of the Owenavora river (see below). The wood, approx. 25 hectares, was acquired by the state in the 1950's.



Cedar of Lebanon (photo J Whelehan)

BUMBLING, BUTTERFLYING AND MONITORING 2.0: THE RISE OF THE CITIZEN SCIENTIST

The services provided by our invertebrates are apparent, such as bees, where the pollination services of plants we consume and the maintenance of those we don't are intuitively beneficial to our society. Farmers and gardeners also appreciate the contribution of earthworms and other soil invertebrates in the provision of aerated and fertile soils. Many of the other services provided are less obvious but equally critical. For example, larva of stoneflies and mayflies in our rivers and lakes underpin the decomposition of plant and other waste material with the resulting benefit of clean and healthy freshwater habitats. Overall, evidence supporting the fundamental role of invertebrates in our land- and seascapes continues to accumulate and makes monitoring changes in their populations all the more important if we are to protect Ireland's nature and the services it provides.

Given the increasing need for national-scale monitoring of wildlife and, in parallel, a growing interest in Irish society in nature and environmental protection, 'citizen science' is becoming an increasingly popular approach to undertaking monitoring and other scientific research. Citizen science is described as the involvement of volunteers in science, where the volunteers themselves are typically not scientists by profession. Therefore, it has the dual benefit of making a contribution to 'real' science and expanding our knowledge of the natural environment, whilst also engaging many people with science and conservation in general.

For those unfamiliar with citizen science, it can be tempting to think that it is a cheap way of fulfilling large-scale monitoring needs. However, this could not be further from the truth as resources are needed to: train volunteers (or 'recorders' as we prefer to call them) through workshops and field meetings;

maintain and support the network of recorders; provide an online platform for data collection; manage, validate and analyse the data once collected; report results back to the recorder network and the public. However, despite the cost, citizen science-driven monitoring can still be the most cost-effective way of collecting data over long periods of time and large spatial scales with the key benefit of directly engaging the wider public with science and conservation.

The Data Centre co-ordinates two citizen science-driven monitoring schemes: the Irish Butterfly Monitoring Scheme and the Bumblebee Monitoring Schemes. The Irish Butterfly Monitoring Scheme was established in 2007 with its first full field season in 2008 and now boasts 120 recorders across 120 sites, recording over 64,000 butterflies across 33 species per year. The scheme itself has now matured to the point where we can provide statistical analysis of annual changes each year. We also pool our data with 3,700 other recorders across 22 countries in Europe to produce the European Grassland Butterfly Index, one of the EU biodiversity indicators of the European Environment Agency. So not only are the efforts of our recorders directly informing butterfly conservation status at a national level, but directly contribute to butterfly conservation and policy at a European level too.

Although there have been longer running bumblebee schemes in some nature reserves across eastern Europe, the establishment of the Bumblebee Monitoring Scheme in 2011 as part of the Irish Pollinator Initiative meant that is the world's first national bumblebee monitoring scheme! Now running in collaboration with the Bumblebee Conservation Trust in Northern Ireland, the scheme has grown rapidly and represents a network of 75 recorders monitoring 92 sites. In 2014, over 13,500 bumblebees across 18 different species were recorded, along with the rediscovery of a species not seen in Ireland for 88 years, the Southern cuckoo bee *Bombus vestalis*.

Tell us about your route. You can register your walk with us online at <http://monitoring.biodiversityireland.ie/> with 'how-to' guides available on both the pollinator and butterfly websites. If you've any problems or prefer we set-up your account for you, just email/post on a detailed map of where you'll walk and we'll do the rest.

Get out there and start recording bumblebees and butterflies! Check our pollinator and butterfly websites for more details on how to record, but never hesitate to email us photographs to double-check identifications. Particularly for those new to the scheme, having a camera or smartphone ready is a great way to rapidly upskill your species identification as you can look back at the photo afterwards and send it on to us to check.

This is an extract from an article written by Thomás Murray of the National Biodiversity Data Center and the full article is available at <http://www.wexfordnaturalists.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Bumbling-Butterflying-and-Monitoring.pdf>

ARTICLES FOR NEWSLETTER

Compiled and edited by Lynn Cassidy. Thanks to all who contributed. The next newsletter will be published in June. Items for inclusion may be passed onto me at any club event or via email newsletter.wnfc@gmail.com.