



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

WNFC Newsletter

Issue Number 40

December

2015



Welcome to the December issue of WNFC newsletter. The WNFC committee wishes all members a Happy and Peaceful Christmas and New Year

UPCOMING CLUB EVENTS

Unless otherwise stated all lectures are held at 8pm in The Pumphouse at Wexford Wildfowl Reserve (T076 239).

January

Thursday 7th: "Exploring Right Relationships with Planet Earth" by Sr. Nellie McLaughlin, Author and Founder Member of Green Sod Ireland

Saturday 9th: Bird watching at Wexford Wildfowl Reserve with Dave Daly. Meet at 1.30pm in the Visitor Centre.

February

Thursday 4th: AGM at 7pm followed at **8pm** by "**Our Local Lime Kilns - where they are and why**" by Eithne Scallan and Jim Hurley, WNFC members.

Saturday 13th: Cullenstown: a case study in coastal erosion and protection with Jim Hurley. Meet at 2pm on Cullenstown Strand (S 874 079).

March

Thursday 3rd: Gerald Barrett-Hamilton Memorial Lecture "**Ireland's Ancient Red Deer**" by Dr. Ruth Carden, Wildlife Biologist.

Saturday 12th: Field trip to Courtown Woods to look for woodland birds (possibility of drumming Great Spotted Woodpecker) with Janet Whelehan and Marion Brady. Meet at 11am in the Leisure Centre car park in Courtown Harbour (T 199 567).

2016 PROGRAMME

A copy of the next year's Programme of Events is enclosed with this newsletter. Thanks to all members who submitted suggestions for lectures and field trips and to those that have offered to give a lecture or lead a field trip. We hope that there is something in the programme to suit all tastes. Included in our field trips is a visit to Cullenstown to look at coastal erosion and protection, a trip that was in the 2015 programme but was cancelled due to bad weather conditions. We are also delighted to welcome back Enda Mullen who will give us a follow up

presentation to her May 2013 lecture on the research work being carried out on badgers in Co. Wicklow.

When attending field trips, please bring field guides, lenses and binoculars where available and, most importantly, a notebook and pen/pencil to record what you see. The Club has purchased a pair of binoculars for use by members and these can be pre-booked for events by contacting the Club Secretary. There are a number of guide books in the Club Library. Check these out on www.wexfordnaturalists.com/library or find out more details from Margaret Scally or Will Warham.

Also, think of the environment and car pool if possible.

IDENTIFICATION WORKSHOP

The National Biodiversity Data Centre is holding a Ladybird and Shield Bug Identification Workshop at Jamestown Nature Reserve, 10am-4pm on Saturday 28th May 2016. This workshop is suitable for beginners and intermediates and will be led by Dr. Brian Nelson, National Parks and Wildlife Service Invertebrate Ecologist. A limited number of places have been set aside for WNFC members. To book a place contact Marion Brady, (086)8290163, or email Club Secretary, info@wexfordnaturalists.com after 1st January 2016. Latest date for bookings will be 14th January. Please note that €5 booking fee must be paid on or before this date. Participants should bring a packed lunch. Tea and coffee will be provided

AGM NOTICE

Under Section 4 of the Club Constitution, "Members who wish to stand for any position on the Committee, Officer or General member, should submit their names, plus that of a proposer and seconder, to the Club Secretary for receipt at least 21 days [this year that will be 14th Jan 2016] before the AGM [which is being held on Thursday 4th Feb 2016]. Officers are Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Secretary, and Treasurer, and there can be up to 6 General members. Nominations to WNFC, c/o Wexford Wildfowl Reserve, North Slob, Wexford. Email: info@wexfordnaturalists.com. Any nominee who is unopposed will be automatically elected at the AGM. Where there is no nominee for an Officer position, or the number of General members falls short of 6, the vacant positions may be filled by election at the AGM itself. Elections by secret ballot will only occur at the AGM, where there is more than one candidate for an Officer position or where the nominations for General member exceed 6." Items for inclusion on the agenda should also be submitted by 14th Jan 2016 (See section 5.2 of the constitution).

NOTE 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 Nicholas Egan, Membership Secretary, has an

up-to-date email address for you. Over the past few months there have been some small problems with emails. If you are not receiving emails, please let us know.

WELCOME

Special welcome to the following new members: Phil Callery and Adrian Wisdom.

LIBRARY

We would like to remind members that we have a well stocked library with titles covering many aspects of natural history. There may be more time to extend your knowledge over the long winter nights, so we encourage members to make use of the library, open for use in Reserve after monthly lecture. The full list of titles is available on our website, with some new titles added recently. Contact Will Warham or Margaret Scally if you would like them to put a hold on a book for you.

Also we would like to remind any members who may have borrowed a book more than three months ago to return it as soon as possible, thus removing the need for us having to issue reminders. If any members have any ideas on books that the library might acquire we would be delighted to hear your suggestions.

ATLAS OF MAMMALS IN IRELAND

The recording period for this atlas ends at the end of this year. Please make a special effort to record details of any mammals seen. These records can be entered on the online recording form on the Club website or sent to the Club Records Officer who will forward them to the National Biodiversity Data Centre. The Centre is still particularly interested in receiving sightings of species such as the wood and house mouse and brown rat. If you have any information of old sightings these would also be of interest. To view the latest distribution maps see <http://mammals.biodiversityireland.ie>.

WNFC's SPECIAL WEXFORD FESTIVAL OPERA LECTURE

"It shouldn't happen to a TV wildlife presenter" by Nigel Marven on Sun. 25th Oct. 2015. Nigel is a Wildlife Presenter, Producer and Author. He has worked for BBC on "Walking with Dinosaurs" and "Incredible Journeys" and he also worked with Sir David Attenborough.



NIGEL MARVEN (photo T McNamee)

SLIEVE BLOOM WING-TAGGED HEN HARRIERS

Carrying on from work in 2013 and 2014, three more juvenile Hen Harriers were wing tagged in the Slieve Bloom Mountains in 2015. The colour combination is **left wing-green, right wing-white**. Any information you can provide is most appreciated and important in helping to gather vital data on the dispersal and survival of Slieve Bloom Hen Harriers. As a result of information submitted so far we have learned that Slieve Bloom Hen Harriers have been recorded as wintering in Counties Antrim, Cork, Kildare, Dublin, Laois, Offaly and Wexford as well as breeding in County Clare.

For the safety of the birds, the exact location of sightings should only be passed on to Jason Monaghan, NPWS Conservation Officer (email: jason.monaghan@ahg.gov.ie; by post: Jason Monaghan, NPWS Regional Office, 2 Conway Estates, Station Road, Kildare or submitted on the Slieve Bloom Wing-tagged Juvenile Hen Harrier Re-sighting form see <http://www.npws.ie/nature-reserves/slieve-bloom-mountains>).

THE LADYBIRDS AND SHIELDBUGS OF COUNTY WEXFORD

Following the success of the Odonata and Lepidoptera publications by WNFC, the club decided to survey the ladybird and shield bug status of Co.Wexford. There are 19 species of ladybirds and 17 species of shield bugs known to be present in Ireland. Since the beginning of the WNFC survey on the 11th June 2015, eleven species of ladybirds and eleven species of shield bugs have been recorded.

Ladybirds

The 19 species of ladybirds in Ireland are: 2-spot, 7-spot, 10-spot, 11-spot, 13-spot, 14-spot, 16-spot, 18-spot, 22-spot, 24-spot, Harlequin, Cream-spot, Orange-spot, Eyed, Larch, Striped, Heather, Hieroglyphic, and Water ladybird.

Of the 19 species of ladybirds listed in Ireland, eleven have been recorded in 27 squares in the county. Cream spot was recorded for the first time since 2007 in three squares. A single larch ladybird was also recorded in square T02. However, **no** 7-spot, one of the commonest ladybird species, was recorded in T27 in the north of the county. They must be there!!

Shield bugs

There are 17 species of shield bugs in Ireland: Birch, Bronze, Forest, Gorse, Green, Hairy, Hawthorn, Heather, Parent, Scarab, Juniper, Blue, Dock, Forget-me-not, Spiked, Tortoise and Western Conifer Seed Bug, (the latter a native of North America and first recorded in 2009 in Wexford by S. Foley in wood imported to Chadwick's Building Supplies).

Our survey to date has recorded twelve species of shield bugs in 23 squares in the county. Green shield bugs should be present in all squares, but has only been recorded in half of those. Please look in your garden vegetation in the summer/autumn months and send us your sightings! For example, on five days between the 28th August and the 1st September, five species were recorded in one garden in square T02. They were Parent shield bug, Hairy, Green, Birch and Forest shield bug.

How you can help

We need more contributions from members especially from anyone living in squares: S61, S62, S70, S71, S73, S74, S80, S96, T04, T06, T07, T10, T11, T14, T27, X79.

Also, any sightings of ladybirds and shield bugs from the Saltee Islands (X99) would be valuable and should be borne in mind by anyone visiting there in the coming season.

The national bio-diversity centre have produced a set of excellent identification swatches which are available from the club secretary at a minimal cost of €5. These are a must when studying both ladybirds and shield bugs. Another invaluable guide is 'Insects of Ireland' Collins Press is also available through the club library.



INSECT IDENTIFICATION GUIDES (photo D Daly)

Your records, as usual please, to Records Officer at records@wexfordnaturalists.com or through our online recording form at <http://www.wexfordnaturalists.com/recording/records-submission>. Postal records can be sent to WNFC Records Officer, c/o Wexford Wildfowl Reserve, North Slob, Wexford or dropped into the suggestion box at any lecture.

INSECT DIARY FROM BARNLAND, near GOREY Nth. WEXFORD - Janet Whelehan

Following a cold spring in 2015 insect numbers were low in the garden. When summer finally arrived numbers of Wasps, Solitary bees, Bumblebees and Hoverflies started to build up. The previous year I had drilled holes in a pile of logs to make an insect hotel but as none of the holes were occupied it was obviously not to their liking. For this year I put up a small bought box with bamboo tubes inside. I was delighted when six of these tubes were used by Leaf Cutter Bees, a species of Solitary Bee which are very useful as pollinators. It is fascinating to watch the bees flying into the tube with a piece of a leaf (they usually favour rose leaves). When the tube is about half full the bee backs in to lay an egg then seals the tube with more pieces of leaf. Later in the year I noticed another insect showing an interest in the box. It was a Ruby Tailed wasp, a species of solitary wasp that lays its eggs in the nests of usually Mason Bees. It is a very beautiful insect, one of three similar species which can only be told apart by microscopic examination. The wasp must have been disappointed in my box as it was only occupied by Leaf Cutter Bees.



RUBY TAILED WASP (photo J Whelehan)

Another new insect to the garden this year was a species of Hoverfly, a Bumblebee mimic *Arctophila superbiens*. I have seen other Bumblebee mimics in the garden before but never this one. In fact it was a new record for Co. Wexford. These Hoverflies infiltrate into a Bumblebee nest by looking like their hosts. When the larvae hatch out they help to keep the nest clean and in that way perform a function to help the bee nest to thrive.

A Humming Bird Hawk Moth put in a brief appearance in September and I was lucky to be able to photograph it. It is certainly a very spectacular species to watch



HUMMING-BIRD HAWK-MOTH (photo J Whelehan)

WILDLIFE FRIENDLY NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS – SOME SUGGESTIONS - Will Warham

Nest Boxes

This is a good time to get up some nest boxes. Even though spring is still some time off, boxes can be used as shelter at this time of year. Think about placement and get advice if you are not sure. Full sun is bad. Often north-east facing is good.

- Owl boxes are still needed. Old barns are a very good place or even a quiet more modern building.
- Kestrels are in decline and a kestrel box or two would be an excellent New Year project.
- Cameras installed in or near boxes will greatly add interest when the boxes are occupied. Obviously the cameras must be installed prior to the boxes being used. Wired or wireless can be used. My owl refuge has wireless cameras at about 100 metres from the house

Wildlife in the Garden

- If boxes are not for you, even a small garden can be greatly improved for wildlife. Could your garden be the birds' most popular wild spot?
- Less grass is less work and less pollution from a lawnmower.
- Choose trees with care, as they can grow with remarkable speed.
- Add shrubs that will attract wildlife. A healthy garden is one that has a balance of trees and shrubs – both deciduous and evergreen – as well as a diversity of plant material. Try to include plants that produce nectar, berries, nuts and cones – good for all kinds of wildlife. Your garden will attract birds and butterflies that will give you hours of enjoyment and wonder as you watch them in action.
- How about a small wildflower meadow? You will need good advice here, but it is possible to just stop mowing an area and see what appears. Plugs of wildflowers are available. One source is Future Forests in Co. Cork. They will post.

- Most people know that nettles are the host plant for the caterpillars of some of our most beautiful butterflies. But be sure to have them in the sun, otherwise you are wasting time and space. Wouldn't it be interesting to see a host of butterflies such as Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell and Red Admiral in your garden with their beautiful patterned wings catching the sunlight?

Any of these suggestions will give you lots of interest in the year to come.

CLUB BINOCULARS

The Club has purchased binoculars for use by members on fieldtrips. These can be booked by contacting Janet Whelehan at any club event or email the Club Secretary.

THANK YOU

Ann Wilson would like to thank all those who sent cards and letters and who sympathised with her following Chris's death. Thanks also to everyone who attended the scattering of Chris's ashes on the North Slob and to those that helped with the catering afterwards at Wexford Wildfowl Reserve.

ARTICLES FOR NEWSLETTER

Compiled and edited by Dave Daly & Nicholas Egan. Thanks to all those who contributed.

The next newsletter will be published in March. This is your newsletter, and natural history articles are always welcome. Items for inclusion may be passed on to us at any club event or via newsletter.wnfc@gmail.com.

THE YEAR IN PICTURES



RAVEN CONSERVATION WORKS, October (photo M O'Connor)



TACUMSHIN LAKE TRIP, September (photo M O'Connor)



TACUMSHIN LAKE TRIP, September (photo M O'Connor)



CHRISTMAS PARTY (photo M O'Connor)



CABRAGH WETLANDS TRIP, March (photo M O'Connor)



LEAVE NO TRACE, February (photo M O'Connor)