



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

## WNFC Newsletter

Issue number 45

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2017

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Welcome to the March issue of WNFC newsletter.

### UPCOMING EVENTS

Please note that all lectures commence at 8pm in the Pumphouse unless otherwise stated - (note change of venue, date and time to the May Lecture & field trip).

**APRIL, Thursday, 6th "Monitoring and Conservation of Raised Bogs in South and Eastern Ireland"**, by Lorcán Scott, Peatlands District Conservation Officer, NPWS.

**Saturday 8th: Workshop on creating wild pollinator nesting habitat**, with Dr. Erin Jo Tiedeken, Pollinator Plan Officer, NBDC. 10am - 1pm at Jamestown Nature Reserve, Oylgate (S986315). Why not come along and help make some bee hotels and learn the best place to position them.

**MAY, Tuesday 2nd, 7pm at Wexford Town Library, Mallin St (T047219)** Wexford Library's Chris Wilson Memorial Lecture (in association with the WNFC) '**The Wolf in Ireland' mythology, ecology & society**' by Dr Kieran Hickey, University College, Cork. Parking available in Rowe St. Church grounds. Please note refreshments will be served at 7pm prior to the lecture.

**Saturday 13th: Please note change of venue for Field Trip, now to Abbeyleix Bog**, with Lorcán Scott, Peatlands District Conservation Officer. A coach (fares subsidised by the club) will cost €10pp, meeting place to be notified. To book a place contact the Club Secretary at April lecture or email [info@wexfordnaturalists.com](mailto:info@wexfordnaturalists.com).

**Sunday 14th: Dawn Chorus Event** with Dave Daly at the Irish National Heritage Park, Ferrycarrig. Meet 4.30am in the car park (T010228). Breakfast after the event in the Fulacht Fiadh Restaurant in the Park. Dawn Chorus is free, breakfast at own expense.

**JUNE Thursday 1st: 'The Recording of Ladybirds & Shieldbugs in Co. Wexford'** by Nicholas Egan and Mary Foley, WNFC members.

**Saturday 17th (note change of date) Bioblitz at Ballymore, Camolin** between 10am - 4pm (T090503). Come and join us at this beautiful and historic site and help record the wildlife on the estate.

[www.ballymorehistoricfeatures.com](http://www.ballymorehistoricfeatures.com). There will be more details on this event nearer the date.

Since events may change due to unforeseen circumstances, please check for last minute updates posted on the club website, by email or phone 076 1002660.

**Suitable clothing and footwear are recommended for outdoor events.**

### THE LADYBIRDS AND SHIELDBUGS OF COUNTY WEXFORD

Don't forget that we are still looking for your records for the Club's next publication, The Ladybirds and Shieldbugs of County Wexford. A number of sightings of these species have already been received in 2017. As the weather warms up do keep an eye out and submit your records as outlined above.

### IRISH BUTTERFLY ATLAS 2022

The National Biodiversity Data Centre has established a steering committee to oversee and co-ordinate recording efforts in support of a new all-Ireland Butterfly Atlas. The club was invited to be part of this committee and Janet Whelehan and Mary Foley are the club representatives.

Recording will commence this year with a view to having comprehensive data for all species by 2021 to enable distribution maps to be produced by 2022. Club members who want to be involved will have the opportunity to take part in this scheme in a number of ways. Further details will be available later this month and will be communicated to members by email, at lectures and in the next newsletter. Your records count so please submit your sightings of butterflies no matter how common you feel the species may be. All butterfly records submitted by club members will be included in this atlas.

### IRISH BUMBLEBEE MONITORING SCHEME

Last year those involved in the above scheme spent 712 hours and walked 1,215 km across 101 sites counting 15,436 bumblebees and 1,767 honeybees. There are currently two inactive sites in the county at Baldwinstown and Forth Mountain. If you live near these areas and would like to begin bumblebee monitoring, or indeed set up a new monitoring transect, please contact Dr. Tomás

Murray, NBDC, at (051)306240 or email [tmurray@biodiversityireland.ie](mailto:tmurray@biodiversityireland.ie)

Bumblebees are recorded along a walk once a month from March to October, butterflies once a week from 1<sup>st</sup> April to the end of September. More information on the Bumblebee and Butterfly Monitoring Schemes can be found at [www.biodiversityireland.ie/record-biodiversity/surveys/](http://www.biodiversityireland.ie/record-biodiversity/surveys/)

### IDENTIFICATION SWATCHES

To aid in the identification of a number of species The National Biodiversity Data Centre has produced a series of Identification Swatches which are available to purchase at club events, price €5.

### CLUB PUBLICATIONS

The Odonata of County Wexford (€4) and The Lepidoptera of County Wexford (€5) are available to purchase at club events

**WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS** - Margaret Kelly, Nick & Catherine Pollard, Leanne Roche, Barbara Sheppard Anne Stafford, Philomena Cahill, Mark Doyle and Eileen Lacey.

### IDENTIFICATION WORKSHOPS

The National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) is offering a number of workshop programmes to assist in the recording of Ireland's Biodiversity. An "Insects for Beginners" workshop will be held, in conjunction with the Club, at Jamestown Nature Reserve on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> June. The full list of workshops is on the NBDC website [www.biodiversityireland.ie/events/](http://www.biodiversityireland.ie/events/) and is available from the Club Secretary.

Places are limited and advance booking is essential. If any member wishes to attend any workshop the Club committee has set aside a sum of money to cover a limited number of workshop fees. All other expenses will be borne by the member. Places should be booked directly with the NBDC and applications for refunds, which will be on a first come basis, can be made to the Club Secretary, email [info@wexfordnaturalists.com](mailto:info@wexfordnaturalists.com)

**CLUB LIBRARY** - A list of books can be obtained from the Secretary by email [www.wexfordnaturalists.com/library](http://www.wexfordnaturalists.com/library). Please remember to return any long outstanding books. The Library is open after club lectures and is situated in the Wexford Reserve Visitor Centre, where tea and biscuits are also served post lecture.

### RECORDING

Thanks to everyone who submitted records so far this year. Keep up the good work and help us build up the knowledge of biodiversity in the county by submitting records by email to [records@wexfordnaturalists.com](mailto:records@wexfordnaturalists.com) or preferably enter them online at [wexfordnaturalists.com/recording/records-submission](http://wexfordnaturalists.com/recording/records-submission). If you don't have internet access records can also be posted to the Club, given to the Records Officer or any member

of the committee or dropped into the Records/Suggestion Box on lecture nights. All records are shared with the National Biodiversity Data Centre and, once checked and are added to the national biodiversity database and can be viewed on Biodiversity Maps <http://maps.biodiversityireland.ie/>

If you have queries about any recording schemes or need help with the online recording form please talk to Mary Foley or email the above address.

### AGM REPORT

The AGM was held on Thursday 2nd February 2017. The Chairman's report is available on the club's website: [www.wexfordnaturalists.com/fieldtrip-reports/event-reports-2017](http://www.wexfordnaturalists.com/fieldtrip-reports/event-reports-2017) or from the Club Secretary c/o Wexford Wildfowl Reserve or [info@wexfordnaturalists.com](mailto: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):

**Chairman:** Nicholas Egan (Facebook & Members' email updates)

**Vice-Chairman:** Patricia Byrne

**Secretary:** Mary Foley (Records)

**Treasurer:** Marion Brady (Membership Secretary & Website)

**Committee Members:** Lynn Cassidy (Newsletter Editor), John Kinsella, Mick O'Connor (Events & PRO), Janet Whelehan (Archive), Patricia Wood (Library)

### BIRD RINGING - hosted by Janet Whelehan &

**Michael O'Donnell.** (Words & Photos by Lynn Cassidy).

I was able to witness this phenomenon for the first time in January, but must admit to being slightly squeamish about the birds being caught in the nets, but on observation none came to harm and all flew off happily to one of the many feeding stations, once they had been processed (one or two returning to be re-caught)! The event took place in Janet's large garden surrounded by trees. Two nets were erected, approximately 12' in length, 2-3 ft off the ground, about 6-7 ft in height. Imagine a very fine hairnet but with larger holes, which allows the birds to remain trapped without hurting or damaging them. A dull day is ideal, so birds don't spot the net.

On being freed from the nets the birds were popped into individual soft cotton bags, then in turn weighed, sexed and aged (when possible), wings measured and a numbered ring fitted for identification, under the British Museum system (the system used in Ireland). Aging could be tricky, usually classed as 5 for juveniles (ones hatched the previous year) and 6 for adults, by the state and colour of their feathers. For example, 'pointy' wing or tail feathers could denote juveniles as could any remaining juvenile plumage. But this is useless, for example in House Sparrows as they have a complete moult post-breeding and Blue Tits can only be sexed in the breeding season, when the females have a bare patch on the breast where it is in contact with the incubating eggs (seen by blowing gently on the feathers). The BTO (British Trust of Ornithology) supply a handbook with formulas for identifying, sexing and aging, but this is still a complex process and sometimes impossible to achieve.

**Why do Ringing** - Ringed birds provide information re breeding, feeding and migratory patterns, which can alert to declining or productively successful populations and species and therefore aid conservation policies. All the recorded data is processed by the BTO and they have produced a book of migratory patterns based on ringing information. Of course a bird can only be ringed if it can be identified. But millions of birds need to be ringed to collect data, patterns being derived from netting already ringed birds. One of our Blue Tits had been ringed as a juvenile on 5/1/13 making it 5 years old - a ripe age. In all 132 birds were trapped, 120 ringed and 12 retraps recorded (birds already ringed). Species ringed included 73 Goldfinches, 1 Treecreeper, 3 Redpolls, 19 Blue, 8 Coal, and 3 Great Tits, 2 Robins, 2 Dunnocks, 2 House Sparrows, 2 Green and 5 Chaffinches. All done by 2 people over a 4 1/2-hour time period. To collect this data was truly a 'labour of love', on behalf of Janet and Michael (Club Members), who finance this regular event themselves. My fingers, which had been stuffed into gloves were numb with cold - the ringers couldn't even have this luxury, having to be extremely dexterous to perform their duties with pecking cuts a part of the job. I was informed that this was an easy ring, being performed in the garden rather than out on the windswept marshes at the crack of dawn which, incidentally they have also done, but even so I think they deserve praise and support for this worthwhile service they perform. This recording will add to the grand total of 987,253 birds already ringed in Ireland. If anyone is interested in ringing please consult <https://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/ringing/taking-part>



Photos, Ringing Net (Top) Treecreeper ready for release, post ringing (Bottom).

## EDITOR'S TIDBITS

**Blackbirds** eat up to 33 different types of berries. But Waxwings are the only bird that thrive on a berry only diet. They favour the Rowan berry and can eat up to a 1,000 berries each per day.

**Waders** who feed in the mud, tend not to get their feathers dirty due to the watery mud forming a type of meniscus or air bubble around the bird. Of course they still preen using their oil gland to keep their feathers in good order.

## A POEM TO MAKE YOU SMILE

- contributed by Eithne Scallan, WNFC member.

The birds were singing over the Dublin street.  
 'I love the burds' the lady at the Bus Stop said.  
 'LOVE the burds. I have a seagull'.  
 'A SEAGULL???' I said.  
 'He comes to the window sill' she said.  
 'Sebastian, I call him.  
 I do give him sausages.  
 And then some days, I do say "No,  
 Sebastian, you're not gettin' any".  
 And then I do relent....'

## SPRING FLOWERS - By Zoe Devlin

Spring is here! It is official. And in spite of the cold winds that have swept our island, lots of brave wildflowers have poked their noses above the earth and this year they seem to be particularly early. It is such a great time of the year – one of optimism for all who love nature especially. There's always the chance of seeing something new.

But, don't forget the many commonly found species which grow in springtime in Co Wexford. Look out for early members of the Speedwell family. **Common Field-speedwell** flowers all year round but just now, the bright blue flowers of **Germander Speedwell** are beginning to dot the hedgerows. Then there are our two Strawberries – the first to flower is **Barren Strawberry**, in March, and it is followed in April by **Wild Strawberry**. They can be told apart by their flowers, Barren Strawberry's petals being well separated, the points of the calyx showing clearly between the petals, whereas those of Wild Strawberry are much closer to one another. Their leaves also give a clue to their identification. Those of Wild Strawberry terminate with a point which is longer than the adjacent teeth; in Barren Strawberry, the point is shorter. We have two common members of the Primula family which are well known and loved. **Primrose** comes out first – in fact it has been out for a couple of months in parts of Co Wexford – and it is followed by a firm favourite, the **Cowslip**.

If you really want to find a quite uncommon species this spring, look for **Toothwort**. It has been found in Co Wexford, near Courtown. It is a parasitic species which grows on the roots of trees and is most unusual in that it has no chlorophyll and gets its nutritional needs by drawing on these roots. Happy hunting!



Germander Speedwell



Barren Strawberry



Common Speedwell



Toothwort



Wild Strawberry  
Photos by Zoe Devlin.



Cowslip

**A SHORT HISTORY OF J3CL a Colour ringed Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* (commonly known as Jim)**



I first saw this bird on the 25th December 2013. It was perched on a wall beside the river Vartry in

Wicklow Town. This Black-headed Gull was in winter plumage. I made a note of the ring number and recorded it online. The results I got back from the Stavanger Museum ringing scheme in Norway gave details of its history. The bird was first ringed with a metal ring on the right leg as a newly hatched bird, sex unknown on the 14th June 1995 in Randaberg, Rogaland Norway. It was first recorded as being seen in Wicklow on the 29th October 1999.

On the 22nd June 2012 it returned back to Norway for the summer, was re-caught and fitted with a white plastic ring with black lettering on the left leg.

In July 2012 it decided it had had enough of Norway for a while and went to Porthmadog harbour, Gwynedd, Wales and was seen there on 27th July 2012 and 1st August 2012.

In June 2013 it was back in Norway and was then seen by me for the first time in the winter of 2013.

I saw it again in the same place at the river in Wicklow Town and I was delighted to see the bird again on the 24th January 2017 making this Gull to be in its 22nd year and having travelled an awful lot of kilometres.

These plastic rings on large birds are easily read in the field and I have seen other Black-headed Gulls with them in Wicklow and Arklow but none of such a good age as Jim.

These sightings prove the value of bird ringing to plot migration patterns and also prove that this bird has been very faithful to its wintering site in Wicklow Town while going back to Norway for the summer apart from a trip to Wales in the summer of 2012.



Article & Photos by Janet Whelehan.

**The next newsletter will be published in June. This is your newsletter, and natural history articles are always welcome. Items for inclusion may be passed on to Lynn Cassidy at lectures or via email to [newsletter.wnfc@gmail.com](mailto:newsletter.wnfc@gmail.com)**