



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

WNFC Newsletter

Issue Number 43

September

2016

Welcome to the September issue of the WNFC newsletter.

UPCOMING CLUB EVENTS

OCTOBER

Thursday 6th: 'A Fishy Tale -Fish of County Wexford and their Conservation' by Dr. Fran Igoe, IRD Dunhallow LIFE Project

NOVEMBER

Thursday 3rd: "Birds of the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and the Antarctic Peninsula" by Jim Wilson, Ornithologist and Writer.

Saturday 12th: Wildlife Walk in the grounds of Johnstown Castle with Frankie Tennant and Dave Daly. Meet at 1.30pm in the car park at Johnstown Castle (T020 170) .

DECEMBER

Thursday 1st: "What have we learned from N11 Badger Project?" Enda Mullen, NPWS District Conservation Officer.

Saturday 10th: Visit to Jamestown Nature Reserve to identify trees and shrubs in winter with Will Warham. Meet at 1.30pm at Will's farmyard (S 986 315).

NOTES TO MEMBERS

If you have any suggestions for the 2017 Programme of Events, please contact Michael O'Connor or Marion Brady asap or drop a note into the 'Suggestion Box' at the Wexford Wildfowl reserve on lecture night.

Michael O'Connor is the new Events Organizer.

LIBRARY

We encourage members to make use of the library, which is open in the Reserve Visitor Centre after our lectures. If any member borrowed a book more than three months ago please return it as soon as possible. If the book is not

required by another member it can be taken out on loan again.

Don't forget that the Garden Bird survey begins in December for details see www.birdwatchireland.ie/gardenbirdsurvey

CLUB JACKETS in blue, green or black with the club logo embroidered are available to order from Blazing Embroidery & Logos, Custom House Quay, Wexford (beside South East Radio).

CLUB FIELD EQUIPMENT.

2 sweep nets have been purchased for the club. If you wish to use these please contact Mary Foley or Marion Brady.

FIELD TRIP TO LOUGH BOORA

The Lough Boora outing was enjoyed by the 20 members who attended. A call at Charleville Castle in Co Offaly, gave the chance to view an 800 year old oak tree, situated in Ireland's most ancient primordial oak woodland, which once resonated with the chants of Druids.

There are many walks around the lake at Lough Boora and the area provides various habitats for a wide variety of plant, bird, insect and small mammal life. The endangered Harrier is seen here and the beautiful Brimstone butterfly also the pigmy shrew.





Photos Janet Whelehan

CONSERVATION THEME

Bad weather was probably responsible for low attendance at our last lecture on conservation in the Slieve Bloom mountains. The area consists of a stable blanket bog, the peat being some 10 - 20 metres in thickness, but just as vulnerable as rainforests and as ecologically rare. It is the headwater of the Barrow river, with heather rich slopes and peat plateau. Problems in management of hydration, conservation and predation of birds arise from its narrowness in shape in places, hemming in by forest with conifers seeding on the reserve and old land drains a remnant of past forest planting. Conservation ensures pool creation and hydration monitoring, with access management. The area is home to the endangered Harrier with around 11 breeding pairs, but 4 out of 5 chicks do not survive beyond their first year. This is due to predation exacerbated by proximity of the forest edges, lack of food, the acidic bog providing poor nutrients for prey, forcing the harriers into forest margins. Disturbance through wildlife crime is a major issue. Other species resident are Merlin, Snipe, Pine Marten, Red Squirrels. Tagging is performed on some species and any sighting of tagged species should be reported to www.npws.ie

CONSERVATION TIPS



Peacock Butterflies - Janet Whelehan

You can help conserve these beautiful butterflies overwinter by providing hibernation habitats such as log piles, hollow logs or trees, cosy crevices or leaving

undisturbed in outbuildings. Allow a clump of nettles to grow in the garden to provide egg laying habitat from February onwards. Plant nectar rich flowers like lavender and verbena, which will later attract the adults. Help conserve other wildlife over the next three months by providing a hedgehog hibernation box, winter bird feeders, planting trees and shrubs for shelter, ones which bear berries will also provide food and leave some leaves beneath trees and shrubs, also begin a log pile for hibernation. Remember to carefully check piles of leaves / vegetation before having a bonfire, to evict any residents! (Taken from RSPB Handbook).

NEWS FROM NORTH OF THE COUNTY

by Janet Whelan.

Following a slow start to the year insect numbers increased at Barnland near Gorey. Bumble Bee numbers were good throughout but butterflies low till recently, following the national trend. Hoverflies engaged me, although they can be difficult to identify, requiring a microscope and patience. But even by identifying the commoner ones, we help record biodiversity. A late 2nd brood of House Martins fledged to hopefully make the hazardous journey to Africa. A trip to Ballycrystal, allowed sight of a 2nd brood of Peacock butterflies (see previous photo), many Hoverflies and 4 common lizards basking in the sun. (photos by Janet Whelehan).



House Martins



Common Lizards



Hoverfly

A WELCOME REAPPEARANCE

This Bladderwort was found by Frankie Tennant on the South Slobs, a species not seen since 1937.

He also found the Foxtail Stonewort, by the lakeside at Our Lady's Island, which was last seen in 1999.



Bladderwort Photo Paul Green.



Photo taken by Frankie Tennant of the Lamprothamnium papulosum (Foxtail Stonewort) from Lady's Island Lake.

ALL IRELAND POLLINATOR PLAN 2015-2020 UPDATES

A set of Guidelines - "**Local Community's Actions to Help Pollinators**" and "**Gardens: Actions to Help Pollinators**" - and a series of "How to Guides", have recently been published by the National Biodiversity Data Centre. The Club is an **All-Ireland Pollinator Plan** partner and these publications are available to members from the club library. They are also available to download from the website

www.biodiversityireland.ie/projects/-plan

An A3 signage template that can be used anywhere that land is being managed for pollinators is also available to download.

LADYBIRD AND SHIELDBUG RECORDING PROJECT

Although numbers of Ladybirds and Shieldbugs recorded so far this year appear to be less than in 2015 this year we have received fifteen records for species, which were new for their respective 10km square. Orange Ladybird and 22 spot Ladybird, both of which feed on mildews, have been recorded from a number of locations in recent weeks so keep an eye out for these. Orange Ladybird in particular, can often be found on the underside of Sycamore leaves. Please submit all your sightings of ladybirds, shieldbugs or any 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 mWildfowl 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.

LADYS ISLAND TERN CONSERVATION PROJECT

The Tern Conservation project at Lady's Island Lake is in its 34th Year and the colony continues to thrive. A total of 6248 gull and tern nests were recorded this year.

Weather conditions were favourable, with mean temperatures at 13.3 degrees Celsius and mean rainfall 70.9mm for the survey period, May, June July.

Black-headed gull nests increased in numbers to 2429 and Mediterranean gulls also increased to 72, up 44 on that recorded in 2015.

Sandwich tern nest numbers fluctuate from year to year and showed a slight decrease this year to 1682, 117 less than 2015.

Common and arctic tern numbers increased slightly with 1012 common and 844 arctic tern nests recorded.

Roseate terns dropped slightly to 209 nests, six less than 2015.

A new colour-ringing scheme has been undertaken specifically targeting sandwich tern pulli (i.e. well grown chicks).

White or green darvic (plastic) rings have been fitted to the

left tarsus (leg), all beginning with the letter 'K'. So a typical ring sequence seen in the field through a telescope could read 'KZA', KZB' KZC KZD etc. (see photo below).

Unlike the normal metal rings, these darvics can be read from a distance, giving new information about the movements of Lady's Island sandwich terns post fledgling. In 2015, 209 pulli were fitted with darvic rings and this year a further 226 were ringed.

To date, re-sightings have been reported from, Waterford, Cork, Limerick, Galway, Mayo, Isle of Man, Portland Dorset, Loch Ryan Scotland and an amazing 20 on Merseyside.



Birds ringed last year were reported wintering in

Namibia (13), one in Guinea Bissau and one in South Africa.

It will be of great interest to see how this scheme evolves over the coming years as the database on re-sightings expands.

Article and photo by Dave Daly

BALLYTEIGUE BURROW AND FUNGI

This field trip was enjoyed by 19 members, much interesting flora was viewed thanks to Margaret Scally and Roy Watson. Finds included the Brown Mottlegill, Dapperling, Dewberry and Entoloma fungi. (see photos). Most of us perhaps only appreciate fungi as food, here are some interesting facts with you. Fungi have existed for some 1.5 billion years and perform similar functions to the human body! This is because on the evolutionary tree we only parted company some 10 million years ago and because of this affinity science has discovered and begun to harness the benefits that fungi can offer. 70 - 90% of plants on earth form a symbiotic relationship with fungi, without which, the plant world wouldn't thrive. Mycellium are produced (beneath ground) and form a network with roots of plants (a Mycorrhizae), this gives water, nitrogen and phosphorus to the plant whilst imbibing sugars from it. The network is akin to the human digestive system. There are millions of species of fungi, taking many forms, not just the cap and stalk type we are familiar with. Each mushroom has a spore print which, identifies it, like a fingerprint. They spread spores whilst above ground, their varied methods of ejection ensure that they are the most prolific life-form on the planet. But their network remains buried. Saprotrophic fungi, compost organic waste, a process vital in nature to prevent natural litter dumps! Oyster mushrooms secrete a toxin to attract the nematode worm, the offshoot of which is to break down logs. Fungi are now being trialled in the process of cleaning chemical pollution as they can breakdown hydrocarbons. Also due to the binding properties of mycellium an

alternative to plastic packaging is being manufactured, the end product being biodegradable which, will help solve a worldwide pollution problem. We owe the biggest medical breakthrough to fungi - the discovery of antibiotic properties and Corycepin a component of the toxin secreted from the Cordyceps, a fungi that grows within insects, may supply a treatment for cancer and inflammatory diseases. These facts gleaned from the BBC documentary 'The Magic of Fungi', with research confirmed by The Journal of Pharmacological Sciences., Vol. 127, Jan. 2015, certainly gave me food for thought (excuse the pun!).



Dapperling & Brown Mottlegill, photos Lynn Cassidy.

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