

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

WNFC Newsletter

Issue number 31

September 2013

Welcome to the September issue of WNFC newsletter.

UPCOMING CLUB EVENTS

October

Thursday 3rd: "Traditional Hedgerow Management and Conservation" by Eoin Donnelly, Woodsman.

Saturday 12th: Coach trip to Stradbally, Co. Laois to visit managed woodland with Eoin Donnelly. Depart Wexford at 9am. Bring a packed lunch. Coach fare €15. **Bookings are now being taken.** For further details contact Mary Foley at (053)9146573 or foleoconn@gmail.com

November

Thursday 7th: "The Irish Pine Marten: Past, Present and Future" by Dr. Aine Lynch, NPWS Conservation Ranger.

Saturday 9th: Field trip to see winter waterbirds at Bannow Bay with Liam Ryan. Meet at **12.30pm** in the car park at Barrystown, Wellingtonbridge (S849 123). Directions: Take R733 from Wexford to Wellingtonbridge. In Wellingtonbridge turn **left** onto the **R736** towards Bannow. Continue for approx. 1.5km and car park will be on your right.

December

Thursday 5th: "Surveying for Otters in South East Ireland" by David O'Neill, Waterford Institute of Technology.

Saturday 14th: Winter Wildlife Ramble with Will Warham. Meet at 1.30pm at Newtownbarry House, Bunclody

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. Since events may change due to unforeseen circumstances please check for last minute updates on our website, www.wexfordnaturalists.com or phone Wexford Wildfowl Reserve, (076) 1002660 (**Please note new phone number**).

Where available bring field guides, lenses, binoculars etc. to field events. Don't forget a notebook and pen/pencil to record all you see and hear! 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 Will Warham, Club Librarian.

WELCOME

Special welcome to new member Dr. Cara T. Daly, Gorey.

BIRDWATCH IRELAND EVENTS

Sunday October 20th – Autumn Passerines at Hook Head
A visit to the Hook Head area with help on identifying late Autumn passerine migrants. Meet at Slade Harbour (X 745 985) at 9am. Suitable for disabled members.

Sunday November 17th – Garden Birds in Central Wexford

A chance to practice garden bird identification, along with information on how to participate in Birdwatch Ireland's winter Garden Birdwatch. Meet at the house of Simon Collins at 10am. For directions, please email Simon at simoncollins65@yahoo.co.uk.

Sunday December 15th – Shorebirds at Rosslare Strand

A visit to Rosslare Strand with help on identifying shorebirds and waterfowl. Meet at the car park next to the children's playground in Rosslare village (T 095 159) at 10am. A telescope is advisable. Suitable for disabled members. Further details contact simoncollins65@yahoo.co.uk or 0876324097

2014 PROGRAMME

If you have any suggestions for lectures, speakers, outings to places of interest, or if you would be willing to lead a fieldtrip, please drop a note into the Suggestion Box or send details to WNFC Secretary, c/o Wexford Wildfowl Reserve, North Slob, Wexford or info@wexfordnaturalists.com
Suggestions which were not included in this year's programme have been noted and will also be considered

RECORDING

Update on Co. Wexford Dragonfly & Damselfly Survey 2013

The Co. Wexford 'Odonata Survey' (Dragonflies and Damselflies Survey) has been particularly successful over the past couple of months with numerous records coming in from all over the County. This year we have, to date, added 41 new species to 15 different 10km squares surveyed – almost twice the amount recorded during 2012. Interestingly, not only are we getting a lot more new records for 10km County Squares, but we are also getting a lot more quantitative species records for squares throughout the whole county.

Why are we doing this survey? Basically to benchmark this particular group of insects, and to complement the good work completed by the Wexford Naturalists' Field Club, who's Co. Wexford Lepidoptera Guide in 2009 laid down a benchmark for our butterflies and moths. There are plenty of other species waiting to be counted, but concentrating on a single group is the best use of our limited resources (people power and finance). Creating a benchmark for particular groups helps to highlight the richness of our County's biodiversity whilst laying down a factual record of what we know at a particular time. With the small number of Dragonfly and Damselfly species present in Ireland and the relative ease with which they can be identified, it makes sense to deal with the more straightforward groups first, before attempting some of the more complex wildlife groups in the future.

Full up to date survey chart on pack page of this newsletter.

We are looking forward to being able to publish the Co. Wexford Odonata Guide, with YOUR help, at the end of the recording season in 2014.



NEWLY EMERGED DAMSELFLY (photo Edno Delaney)



SEVEN-SPOT LADYBIRDS (photo Saoirse McDonnell)

Ladybirds

During the summer there were lots of ladybirds out and about, mainly seven-spot. But there were also sighting of orange, fourteen-spot, eleven-spot, twenty-two-spot and ten-spot ladybirds. Some smaller species are easily overlooked. We would like ladybird records as we are looking at potentially following up current knowledge to update their distribution in the County.

Your records, as usual please, to Records Officer at records@wexfordnaturalists.com. Postal records can be sent to Records Officer c/o Wexford Wildfowl Reserve, North Slob, Wexford or dropped into the suggestion box at any lecture.



COMMON BLUE BUTTERFLIES Taken at Jamestown Nature Reserve (photo Zoe Devlin)

FACEBOOK AND TWITTER UP AND RUNNING

The club's new Facebook and Twitter pages are proving to be a great success with many members already signed up. We're very pleased to have 97 people with us on Facebook! We update the page with all the latest wildlife news from the club and around the county. After all lectures and fieldtrips we post photographs so be sure to log on and take a look! Don't worry, you don't even have to be signed up to Facebook or Twitter to take a peek.

And don't forget you can also send us your photographs via Facebook if you need any help with identification. Similarly, if you have any identification skills, if you know your buzzard from your bumblebee, we would love to have you with us on Facebook to help identify the many photographs we receive.

The pages are moderated by Michael, Mark and Nicholas and they would be delighted to welcome more members to the page (see www.wexfordnaturalists.com for details)

CLUB LOGO

If anyone would like to have an item of clothing embroidered with the Club Logo, Blazing Embroidery in The Crescent (No. 3 The Quay), Wexford, have details of the Club Logo and colours.

CLUB JACKETS

Regatta jackets with the club logo embroidered are available to order in blue, green or black. Price €56. For more details contact Mary Foley at any club event.

THE LEPIDOPTERA OF COUNTY WEXFORD is for sale at all club events at a reduced price of €5

DISCOUNT

As WNFC is a member of Co. Wexford Community Forum, club members can avail of a discounted admission rate to The National Heritage Park in Ferrycarrig. The discount applies to the club member only and club membership cards must be presented. Prices are correct at time of publication of this Newsletter.

HEDGEROW SURVEY

The hedgerow survey is continuing, so please keep your survey results coming in to Michael O'Donnell. Report on this will be in the next newsletter.



CONSERVATION WORK BEING CARRIED OUT AT THE RAVEN (photo C.Wilson)

RAVEN CONSERVATION WORK

Following our very successful Field Event on 14th September, when members assisted National Parks and Wildlife Service staff clear regenerating pine trees in part of the Raven Nature Reserve, some people expressed an interest in doing similar work again. If you are interested in taking part in such a work party please give your name to Club Secretary, Marion Brady at any Club event or email info@wexfordnaturalists.com

MEADOW BROWN AND RINGLET - PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS

I first noticed large numbers of Meadow Browns and Ringlets as I went for walks through fields near Wexford Town with my dog Lara, with hundreds being dispersed into the air by the erratic antics performed by her as she moved through the grass.

For the last five summers, I have been undertaking counts in two of these fields. The habitat, covering nine acres approximately, is typical of these species and consists of abandoned meadow/unimproved grassland. This year I decided to compare my **June** records and the table below shows the results. It is interesting to note the variation in numbers involved, the dates on which the butterflies first appear, the highest number recorded in the month and how these may have been influenced by the weather.

Meadow Brown

Year	First Recorded	Highest Count	Date of Count
2009	12 th	391	23 rd
2010	11 th	377	26 th
2011	11 th	105	30 th
2012	17 th	7	25 th
2013	17 th	71	29 th

Ringlet

Year	First Recorded	Highest Count	Date of Count
2009	16 th	265	30 th
2010	5 th	267	26 th
2011	8 th	457	30 th
2012	17 th	27	25 th
2013	27 th	72	29 th

The apparent effect of the weather is particularly noticeable from 2012's findings – a bad summer itself but the numbers not helped by the previous year's not too dissimilar weather. The influence of 2011 presumably had a knock-on effect for 2012's first sightings, which in turn affected those for this year.

These sorts of records can provide a fascinating picture of how our butterfly populations are constantly changing year by year and can be replicated by anyone with suitable habitat at their disposal. (Brian O'Connor)

SLIEVE BLOOM WING-TAGGED JUVENILE HEN HARRIER

In the summer of 2013, 10 juvenile Hen harriers were wing-tagged in the Slieve Bloom Mountains in Counties Laois and Offaly. Each has a blue wing tag on the right wing (denoting the Slieve Blooms) and a white tag on the left wing (denoting 2013 as year of tagging). The juveniles carry different symbols on the tags to demarcate them as individuals. Any information you can provide is most appreciated and important in helping us to gather vital data on the dispersal and survival of Slieve Bloom hen harriers. If you see a juvenile hen harrier with blue and white wing-tags please contact Jason Monaghan (Jason.monaghan@ahg.gov.ie). Further information can be found on www.slievebloommountainsnaturereserve.ie. You can also follow the latest research on Irish Hen Harriers, one of Ireland's and Europe's most spectacular yet rarest and most threatened birds of prey, on the blog <http://henharrierireland.blogspot.ie/p/hen-harrier.html>.

WEXFORD WILDFOWL RESERVE

As a follow up to our article on the canal in the North Slob in the March Newsletter, we are continuing with articles on the North Slob and other areas of interest in the county.

Situated on the North Slob, Ireland's premier wildfowl reserve, covers 520 acres, and is located at the western end of the 2,400 acres of 'polder land' claimed from the sea in 1847. At that time a high sea wall was built across the north side of Wexford Harbour, make full use of islands situated in the northern half of the bay. From Wexford Town, towering above the long, low sea-wall, the tall chimney stack of the North Slob Pumphouse (built to control and maintain water levels on the slob), clearly marks the location of the Reserve Centre's main entrance.

The Wexford Slobs and Harbour are, by their very nature, immensely attractive to wildfowl and waders and are internationally famous for the wintering flock of 8,000+ Greenland White-fronted Geese and the wintering flocks of Brent Geese, Wigeon, Black-tailed and Bar-tailed Godwits. A further five species of duck and ten species of wader are also recorded in nationally important numbers during the winter. To date in excess of 270 species have been recorded in the locality. The attraction of the site is not just for the wide diversity of species but more for the sheer quantities of birds present throughout the winter.

The original 270 acres of reserve lands were purchased by the Department of Lands and The Irish Wildbird Conservancy (BirdWatch Ireland), with additional funding provided by the World Wildlife Fund (now Worldwide Fund for Nature) and Messrs. Arthur Guinness. On 20th October, 1968, work on the Wexford Wildfowl Reserve commenced with the Reserve being officially opened by Mr. Tom Fitzpatrick T.D., Minister for Lands, on 15th February, 1974. In 1990 and 2003 additional land purchases were made, bringing the size up to its present 520 acres. During 2002/3 a new larger, more visitor friendly, Centre with much improved displays, was added. This new facility was officially opened by Mr. Martin Cullen T.D., Minister for Environment, Heritage and Local Government, on 12th September, 2003.

The Reserve was acquired primarily for the purpose of feeding and protecting the Greenland White-fronted Geese during the winter months and to provide increased awareness of this species by creating public facilities for their observation.

The management of good grassland for the feeding of the geese is essential and early shooting rye grasses are grown for this purpose. Fertiliser is also used to force an early flush of grass for geese that need to be in good condition when they leave the slob at the end of April to return, via Iceland, to Greenland to breed. Fodder Beet is also grown on the Reserve to supplement the diet of the geese during the shorter days of winter.

Currently the Reserve is visited by approximately 23,000 visitors annually and caters for groups as well as individuals. Staff are always willing to help, and the education officers run a variety of in-house classes relating to natural history subjects for schools and interested groups. During the year lectures and exhibitions take place in the Pumphouse. In addition to the new Visitor Centre there are excellent facilities to view birds from The Observation Tower and other well-equipped Bird Hides. Prime time to visit the reserve is from October, when birds are arriving from the north, right through to the end of March when birds are leaving to return to breeding grounds.

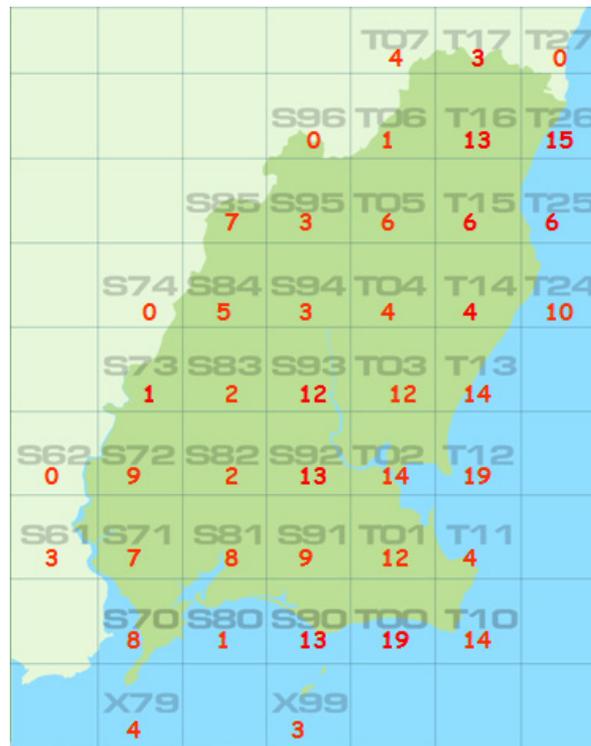
The Reserve was declared a Nature Reserve under the 1976 Wildlife Act on 3rd June, 1981(SI No. 205 of 1981). Other more recent statutory protections include the area being a ‘Special Protection Area’ (SPA), a ‘National Heritage Area’ (NHA), a ‘Ramsar Site’ and a ‘Statutory Hare Reserve’. This last protection – The Hare Reserve – includes the entire North Slob and the Raven Wood Nature Reserve.

“The call of the wild geese is synonymous with the Wexford Slob. May it always remain that way and may we never become too complacent with the factors around us that could, so easily, affect this situation.” (C.Wilson)

ARTICLES FOR NEWSLETTER

The next newsletter will be published Mid December. This is your newsletter, and natural history articles are always welcome. Items for inclusion may be passed on to me, Nicholas Egan, at newsletter.wnfc@gmail.com; or 086 0757976.

If you would like to save paper and help reduce the club’s carbon footprint, please contact Nicholas as above to receive your newsletter by email.



	S61	S62	S70	S71	S72	S73	S74	S80	S81	S82	S83	S84	S85	S90	S91	S92	S93	S94	S95	S96	T00	T01	T02	T03	T04	T05	T06	T07	T10	T11	T12	T13	T14	T15	T16	T17	T24	T25	T26	T27	X79	X99										
Number of Species in Square	3	0	8	7	9	1	0	1	8	2	2	5	7	13	9	13	12	3	3	0	19	12	14	12	4	6	1	4	14	3	19	14	4	6	13	3	10	6	15	0	4	3										
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