

Chairperson's Report for 2015

I am delighted to be able to report another very successful year for the club although it was a year tinged with sadness due to the passing of two members, Pat Hayes and Chris Wilson.

Pat was a long standing member who came quietly into the room to take up his seat in the front row. He enjoyed coming to lectures and meeting friends and having a chat over the after lecture "cuppa". Chris, one of the club's co founders, was a great naturalist who shared his knowledge freely with members. He was very proud of the club and continued to work on club projects until shortly before his death. Tributes were paid to both of them on lecture nights and in the Club Newsletter.

The committee met on nine occasions during the year. Once again committee responsibilities were shared thus giving everyone a chance to play an active role in the administration of the club. A number of committee members represented the club at various events during the year. As in previous years the club co sponsored, with the Environment Department of Wexford County Council, the annual Schools' Wildlife Art Competition. Members attended the prize giving in the County Hall and presented nest boxes to the winning schools. The club was also represented at Wexford County Council's Annual Environmental Awards where schools who had been awarded their first An Taisce Green-Schools flag were also presented with nest boxes. The club logo is engraved on these boxes and, as well as receiving information about positioning and cleaning the boxes, schools are given details about the club and encouraged to send us information if the boxes are used for nesting.

I mentioned in my report last year that the club had registered to be part of the Local Authority Public Participation Network (PPN). As many groups weren't fully aware at the time as to how the new system would work the committee felt it was better to have a representative in order that we would be in a position to find out further information. Deborah D'Arcy was the club's representative at some of these meetings. The PPN facilitates input by the public into Local Government through electing representatives to Strategic Policy Committees. These have a role in formulation of council policy and, as the Club is not a campaigning group, it was felt that membership of this body was outside the remit of the club.

Unfortunately during the year we had to cancel two field trips due to bad weather. In the lead up to all events committee members check weather forecasts and warnings so a decision as to whether to go ahead or cancel can be made as early as possible in order to inform members. All cancellations are notified to members by email and an alert put on the club website. A message is also left at Wexford Wildfowl Reserve. It is not always possible to rearrange an event.

As many of you know the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2015-2020, a call to action to address pollinator decline, was launched last September. The club has signed up to support this plan which it hopes to achieve by raising awareness among members of the importance of pollinators through lectures and fieldtrips. Copies of the plan are available in the club library. It is an easy to read book and I encourage those who have not read it to do so.

Laptop

While some of our lecturers bring their own laptops for their presentations most bring a memory stick and use the laptop which is kindly provided by Wexford Wildfowl Reserve. Towards the end of the year the club bought its own laptop primarily so that we always have a backup available. This can be used not only at the Pumphouse but also at other locations throughout the county where our lectures and workshops take place.

Federation of Irish Field Clubs (FIFC)

The Federation of Irish Field Clubs held a number of committee meetings in Dublin and Belfast during the year. Marion Brady represented the club at these meetings. A very successful four day Field Meeting hosted by Dublin Naturalists' Field Club took place in Wexford in May. A number of our members attended events while others were involved in providing lectures and leading field trips. Special thanks to Marion for not only attending Federation meetings but also for all her work arranging events in Wexford and liaising with Dublin Naturalists' Field Club and for advertising and taking bookings for the Field Meeting.

Odonata and Lepidoptera Books

One of the highlights of 2015 was the launch in April of the club's second publication, "The Odonata of County Wexford". Written by Nicholas Egan and the late Chris Wilson the book covers the records and distribution of all known dragonflies and damselflies in the county up to the end of 2014. Thanks to everyone who contributed records or sponsored a species and the Environment Section of Wexford County Council who helped finance the project. Thanks also to all those involved on the night, Alan McGuire for launching the book, Annie Wilson who provided the food, members who helped with the catering and the staff at Wexford Library who hosted the event. The book is for sale at club lectures and at a number of bookshops and visitor centres throughout the county. 750 copies were printed and complimentary copies were given to sponsors. Thanks to sponsorship and the sales to date the cost of production, €1469, is almost covered.

The Lepidoptera of County Wexford continues to be on sale at club events and in local bookshops also.

Pop-up Poster

The pop-up poster is used to promote the club at Wexford Wildfowl Reserve and at events at other locations in the county. The present poster, printed in 2006, has a number of spelling mistakes which have been commented on and the poster has become a source of embarrassment. The committee decided to have a new poster printed which will now include the club's website address and links to social media. The preparatory work is almost completed and it is hoped to have the poster in a couple of months. Thanks to everyone who has allowed us to use their photos and to Marion Brady, Dave Daly, Margaret Scally and Janet Whelehan for their work on this project.

Chris Wilson Tribute

Following Chris's death there were enquires as to whether the club proposed to do something in his memory. Having discussed the idea the committee felt that whatever was to be done should be educational and promote recording as this ties in with the club's objectives and Chris's own beliefs. It was decided that it would be based on his Butterfly Monitoring Walk in the Raven Nature Reserve. Members of the "Friends of the Raven" Coastcare group offered financial support towards the project. The National Parks and Wildlife Service, Environment Section of Wexford Co. Co. and the National Biodiversity Data Centre also came on board. Following a meeting of representatives of all the groups involved it was decided that a brochure, highlighting the butterfly species found in the Raven and information on recording, would be produced. This is now in the planning stages and is due to be launched in the early summer. In the long term it is hoped that there may be an opportunity to map the route but this would have to tie in with an overall plan for the nature reserve. Thanks to Dave Daly and John Kinsella for attending the meetings with me.

The club's annual bio blitz will also be dedicated to Chris's memory as these were events that he always enjoyed and regarded them as among his highlights of the year.

Membership Report (Nicholas)

2015 saw 131 members in the club, comprising of 84 individual adult memberships and 22 family memberships (with 47 members). We had 13 new members during the year. The membership is down from 141 in 2014 and this year we are going to have to promote the club as much as possible to try boosting our membership a bit.

Newsletter Report (Nicholas)

During the past year there were 4 issues of WNFC newsletter produced. 32 members receive the newsletter by post and the remainder receive it by email. I would like to thank everyone who provided articles and photographs for the newsletter. There had been some technical problems during the year with members who had requested correspondence by email not receiving newsletters. This appears to have happened due to "spam" filters when multiple emails were sent. The problem now appears to have been resolved. If members feel they aren't receiving newsletters or updates please contact the Newsletter Editor or the Club Secretary. Anyone with ideas, articles or photographs can pass them onto the Newsletter Editor and they will be very welcome.

Website Report (Marion)

Our website is going from strength to strength and we hope that as many members of the club as possible will contribute to it this coming year. We have a "Latest News Page" which is updated, as and when there is news. We would appreciate if the members would contribute to this, any interesting sightings or events which might be of interest. We use the "Home" page to describe the club. On this page there are photos, shown as slideshows, which have been sent in by members, but we would also like new photos from members, especially those who have not yet contributed.

Any changes to venues, dates or lecture titles, are highlighted under "Announcements" on the "Home" page, so please, if possible, check this regularly, especially if weather conditions might prevent outdoor events from taking place. Under the "Events" menu, you will find the calendar for the year, the list of events which are planned for the year and reports of past events. The "Library" menu is divided into different sections, making it easy for you to see which books are available to borrow from our library. The Gallery would be much more interesting if members would send in their photos of either, club events or any wildlife photos they may have. The Newsletter page has newsletters dating back to September 2013, older newsletters are available, if requested, but the page gets cluttered if we keep all of them on it. The member's page is self explanatory, with rates of membership and how to pay. It also has a PDF copy of the programme available to download.

The "Records" page has become very important to the club, as there is now an online "Records Submission" form which, when you click on it, opens a form which can be completed there and then. This form is connected to the National Biodiversity Data Centre in Waterford and it is an easy way to record your sightings. If, however, you don't wish to use this, there is also a PDF form which can be downloaded, filled out and given to the records officer. Our "Constitution" and "Social Media Policy" are under the "About" menu, and there are links to various other relevant websites on the "Links" page.

We are now able to analyse the traffic on the site and for the twelve months from Jan 1st to December 31st 2015 there were 2725 visits to it, 2003 of them were first time visitors and quite a few of them were from overseas. It is your website so it is important that you help to keep it interesting.

Social Media (Terry)

Our Facebook page has continued to be enjoyed by many and has seen a growth in numbers up to 337 from 198 in 2014. I have been monitoring this site over the last year and I have been posting daily, bringing relevant news articles, topics of interest, lecture news and photos. Twitter has also proved successful and with a huge leap in numbers, currently at 489 a rise of 288 on the previous year's figure, the appetite and interest in these areas is huge and is a massive bonus to the club for sharing information and enticing new members.

Events (Terry)

2015 was a year packed with many great lectures and events. Numbers at lectures remained exceptionally good, reaching well above the sixty mark at the summer lectures. Good numbers of people turned out for our field trips and there was a great turnout at the BioBlitz and our trip to The White Hole. Lectures continue to attract great interest among the general public and it was a year where many non members attended.

A very informative Ladybird Identification Workshop took place in April. Gorey library was our destination for our May lecture "The Work of the Native Woodland Trust" by Niall O'Reilly. Thanks to the staff in Gorey Library for welcoming us. In June there was a change to the lecture due to unforeseen circumstances. The advertised lecture was replaced by "The Tern Colony at Lady's Island Lake" by Dave Daly. This turned out to be an incredible lecture and a huge thanks to Dave for giving of his time and expertise. A great BioBlitz took place at Newtownbarry House, Bunclody. We had many records and one important and rare record came out of a beautiful Saturday.

The club barbecue took place in August and was a great success as it was a time to gather as friends and most certainly was enjoyed by all.

In October we also held a special Wexford Festival Opera Lecture. This was held on Sunday 25th in Wexford Wildfowl Reserve Visitor Centre. Thanks to Dave Daly for arranging and giving us the opportunity for this incredible lecture "It Shouldn't Happen to a TV Wildlife Presenter...." by Nigel Marven, wildlife presenter, producer and author who has worked for the BBC with Sir David Attenborough and now presents and produces wildlife programmes for the Eden TV channel. Due to the number of storms that had taken place, and high water levels, our Enniscorthy River Walk was cancelled following on from the cancellation of our November field trip.

The last year was truly a great success from the club point of view and as we enter into a new year we have many great lectures and events ahead. Wexford Naturalists' Field Club will most certainly be growing enormously on the huge success of last year. Thanks to all lecturers and event leaders for sharing their knowledge with us.

Library (Will)

The library is going well. Members have been borrowing more books recently however the library is still very much underutilised. We have added some very interesting new titles during the year, so please do have a browse after lectures and bring home a book. A new cabinet is being made to house the books and to give more display room.

PRO (John)

As Public Relations Officer, I distributed our leaflets throughout libraries, Tourism Ireland Offices, hotels, local business and Visitor Centres around the county. I advertised the monthly talks in the local People and Echo newspapers and put up posters in the Wexford Wildfowl Reserve Visitor Centre and on the Pumphouse door. I also distributed the club's Lepidoptera and Odonata Books to a number of outlets and brought the pop-up poster to various events. For some of the year I worked as Education Officer in the Reserve combining my job there with my PRO role.

Archive (Janet)

After a busy year for the club with meetings and outings every month I wanted to keep the archives up to date as much as possible. Financial reports, correspondence, reports on meetings and outings, minutes of committee meetings and hedgerow survey reports all go into the archive in the form of albums and folders and on to a hard drive.

Thank you to all members who have contributed material for the archive for 2015. Especially welcome are newspaper cuttings relating to the club and photographs of meetings and outings.

Records

Over one thousand records, from members and non members, were submitted via the online recording form in 2015. This was an increase of over six hundred on the 2014 figure. Records were also communicated verbally, by email and through Facebook. Plant records received were passed on to Paul Green for the "Flora of County Wexford" project. When validated all records will be added to the Biodiversity Centre's database and a full list of validated records for the county will be given to the club.

Gathering records of Ladybirds and Shield Bugs began in earnest in June. Nicholas Egan and I are coordinating this project and we are delighted with the response to date. The shield bugs especially seem to have caught people's imagination and we have received records from a number of 10km squares where no species had previously been recorded.

Seven people are continuing to take part in the Hedgerow Survey which commenced in 2013. Due to work commitments our Records Officer, Deborah D'Arcy was unable to devote the time needed to produce the updates that had been a regular feature of this recording scheme.

A list of those who recorded in 2015 is attached. If you have contributed records and your name is not on this list please let me know.

I want to thank the staff of the National Parks and Wildlife Service for their help and for the use of the Reserve facilities, especially Dominic Berridge, Reserve Warden, and also Nicky Walsh, George Lett, Andrew Butler and John Kinsella who prepare the room for meetings and set out the table for our after lecture refreshments. Thanks also, and best wishes in his new post, to Lorcán Scott, NPWS District Conservation Officer and welcome, and thanks, to District Conservation Officer Ciara Flynn. I wish to thank Cliona Connolly, Environment Awareness Officer with Wexford County Council, for helping to promote the Club through her work with schools and community groups, Alan McGuire for promoting the Club on his radio programme on South East Radio and to The Echo and People Newspaper Groups for publicising our events. Thank you to the staff of the National Biodiversity Data Centre who give tremendous support to the club. Thanks also to Bruce Walker, who audited the accounts, Carol and John Gibbon for allowing us use their house and garden for the barbeque and to everyone who helped with the refreshments during the year.

Last, but my no means least, I thank my fellow committee members for their contributions, help, support and the fun and to all members for your continued loyalty.

As I am not seeking re election to the committee this year I want to say that I have thoroughly enjoyed my years on it and I wish the incoming committee my best wishes and continued support.

Thank You.

Mary Foley, Chairperson
4th February 2016

Known Recorders in 2015

Aidan Murphy *	John Kinsella
Alan O'Sullivan *	Kitty Kelly *
Ann Wilson	Lynn Cassidy
Brian O'Connor	Máire Gately
Bryan Hennessy	Margaret O'Morchoe
Bryan Pask *	Margaret Scally
Catherine Kelly *	Marion Brady
Catherine O'Donovan *	Mary Foley
Chris Kelly *	Mary Mahon
Chris Wilson	Mary Redmond *
Ciaran Byrne *	Michael Clancy
Clare O'Morchoe *	Michael O'Donnell
Dave Daly	Mick O'Connor
David Murphy *	Nicholas Egan
Deborah D'Arcy	Pat Somers *
Dominic Berridge	Patricia Byrne
Eithne Scallan	Patricia Wood
Frankie Tennant	Paul Green
Gavin O'Se *	Paula O'Meara
Harm Deenen	Ruth Allen
Jacqueline McCann	Seamus O'Brien
Janet Whelehan	Terry McNamee
Jim Hurley	Zoë Devlin
Jimmy Taylor *	
Jo Foley *	*Non members
Joanna Hodgton *	