



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

## WNFC Newsletter

Issue number 52

December 2018

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Welcome to the December issue of the WNFC newsletter. A special welcome to the following new members Nicola Rawle; Lyle Davies; Mark Doyle; Ronan, Dervla, Sadbh, Ailbhe, Killian & Aengus Tierney; Celia Ryan; Oliver Murphy; Milly Frances; Paula Fitzpatrick; David, Mary, Oran & Mia Whitley.

### CLUB BROCHURE

Our brochure for 2019 containing the Programme of Events is enclosed with this newsletter. Thank you to all members who submitted suggestions for lectures and field trips and we hope we have something for everybody. When attending field trips bring field guides, lenses and binoculars, where available, and a notebook and pen/pencil to record what you see. There are a number of guide books in the Club Library which members can take out on loan.

### UPCOMING CLUB EVENTS

All lectures will be held at 8pm in The Pumphouse, Wexford Wildfowl Reserve. Since events may change due to unforeseen circumstances please check for last minute updates sent by email and posted on the Club website. Details are also available by telephoning Wexford Wildfowl Reserve (076)1002660.

#### January

**Thursday 3rd:** “*Cottonweed*” by Jim Hurley, WNFC member. Cottonweed is a native Irish wild flower. Outside of the gravel barrier separating Lady’s Island Lake from the Celtic Sea, it grows nowhere else in Ireland. Only 12 plants of the native stock remain so it is rated ‘critically endangered’. In this lecture Jim will introduce us to the species, chart its history and decline to date and outline the measures that are being taken to save this Wexford speciality from extinction.



Cottonweed (Photo: Jim Hurley)

**Saturday 12th:** Field trip to Secret Valley Wildlife Park, Clonroche to see farmland birds with Simon Collins. Meet at 11am in the car park (S846 313).

#### February

**Thursday 7th:** AGM at 7pm followed at 8pm by “*Walking the Barrow Way*” by Dr Liam Lysaght, National Biodiversity Data Centre.

**Saturday 9th:** Nature walk along the Barrow. Meet at 11am at the Motte and Bailey near the monastic site in St. Mullins, Co. Carlow (S726 381). We will leave some cars here, car pool and travel to Graiguenamanagh and walk from there back to St. Mullins (approx. 6.4km). For those who would prefer a shorter walk they are welcome to come along and stroll at their own pace along the Barrow towpath from St. Mullins towards Graiguenamanagh to meet up with the group and we will walk back together. Please note that this path can be wet and muddy in places.

#### March

**Thursday 7th:** Gerald Barrett–Hamilton Memorial Lecture “*100 Years of Bat Research in Ireland*” by Dr Caroline Shiel, Ecologist.

**Saturday 9th:** Field trip to identify wetland birds at Tacumshin Lake with Dave Daly. Meet at 2pm in the car park at Sigginstown (T061 063).



### DECEASED MEMBER

We were sorry to hear of the death, on 28<sup>th</sup> November, of Alice Collie. Our deepest sympathies go out to her husband Keith, who is also a Club member, their relatives and friends. May she

rest in peace.

### MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Members are reminded that the annual subscription is due on 1st January. Membership rates remain the same for 2019 - €25 for an adult member, €10 for a junior member and €40 for family membership. Cheques may be posted to WNFC Treasurer, c/o Wexford Wildfowl Reserve, North Slob, Wexford or payments may be made at any club event. Please note that because of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) rules our membership form will have to be filled out by each member or family every year. We can no longer hold data indefinitely. **Please ensure that all relevant sections of the form are completed fully and indicate if**

**you wish to receive correspondence by email OR post.** By opting for email you will receive, in addition to newsletters, reminders about upcoming Club events, event cancellations or postponements and, occasionally, notices relating to natural history which may be of interest to you. You can change your correspondence preference at any time by contacting the Club Secretary by letter or email. If any of your contact details change during the year please inform the Club Secretary also.

If you don't renew at the beginning of the year you are of course welcome to join at any time during the year provided that you fill in the form and pay the appropriate amount. Membership covers January to December each year. Members who joined on or after 1st October 2018 are fully paid up until the end of 2019. Under 18's must be accompanied by an adult at all club events.

#### **AGM**

Our AGM will take place at 7.00pm on Thursday 7th February 2019 in The Pumphouse at Wexford Wildfowl Reserve. Nominations for positions as committee members should be received, in writing, from the candidate by the Club Secretary on or before 17th January 2019, noting a proposer and seconder from the membership. Candidates may propose themselves. The Committee shall have a maximum of ten members made up of Officers and up to six additional members. The Officers of the Club shall comprise the Chair, the Vice Chair, the Secretary and Treasurer. Where there is more than one nominee as an Officer on the committee election shall be by secret ballot of the members present and entitled to vote. Election to the other positions on the committee shall be by means of a single secret ballot in which the candidates receiving the highest number of votes will be elected. (See section 4 of the Club constitution). Nomination forms are available by email from the Club Secretary at [info@wexfordnaturalists.com](mailto:info@wexfordnaturalists.com) or at Club meetings. Items for inclusion on the agenda should also be submitted on or before 17th January (see section 5.2).

#### **CRUISE AROUND THE SALTEE ISLANDS**

Our June field event is a guided cruise around the Saltee Islands with Jim Hurlley. The boat, which carries twelve passengers, departs from the marina at Kilmore Quay. If there is sufficient interest, two trips will be booked. Each trip lasts about 1¼ hours. Departure times will be confirmed in late spring. Bookings must be made with the Club Secretary and the boat fare, €25, must be paid when booking. The fare will only be refunded if the trip has to be cancelled due to bad weather/sea conditions or the cancelled place can be resold. In the event that the trip is cancelled it will not be rescheduled and there will be a nature walk (weather permitting) on Ballyteigue Burrow.



Puffins on Great Saltee (Photo: Marion Brady)

#### **RECORDS**

If you have records for any species in 2018, and have not yet submitted them, then please pass on the details to our Records Officer, Mary Foley, at any Club event, email [records@wexfordnaturalists.com](mailto:records@wexfordnaturalists.com) or submit online at [records.biodiversityireland.ie/record/wexford-naturalists](http://records.biodiversityireland.ie/record/wexford-naturalists)

#### **USED POSTAGE STAMPS APPEAL**

Save your stamps and help save albatrosses! Used stamps from your Christmas cards and other post can be left into Wexford Wildfowl Reserve from where they will be forwarded to the Save the Albatross Stamp Appeal. Please cut or tear the stamp from the envelope leaving about a quarter of an inch (6mm) border of paper.

#### **WICKLOW MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK**

A group from the Club visited WMNP recently where they visited the Liffey Head Bog - an important area of blanket bog and a significant ecological site, Lough Brea and the Coronation Plantation where they planted an Oak tree with NPWS Conservation Ranger Jason Monaghan who acted as guide for the group. Travelling along the Military Road and in the area around Lough Brea, evidence of the summer's devastating fires could still be seen.



Photo: Mary Foley

#### **CLUB LIBRARY**

We have over 150 books, journals and pamphlets in the club library, which is open after the lecture each month, if any member wishes to borrow a book. The complete list of titles is available to view on our website.

We wish all our members a Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year



#### **ARTICLES FOR NEWSLETTER**

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 me, Nicholas Egan at any club event, by post or by email to [newsletter.wnfc@gmail.com](mailto:newsletter.wnfc@gmail.com)

## FOCUS ON...

### Winter Thrushes

This time of year provides one of the best opportunities to see two birds which only come to Ireland for the winter – Redwing and Fieldfare. Together with our resident Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush and Blackbird, and the scarce summer visitor the Ring Ouzel, they complete Ireland's thrush family.

Redwing (*Turdus iliacus*) is similar in size to Song Thrush with grey-brown upperparts and off-white underparts streaked with brown. At close range, the rusty red which gives the bird its name can be seen on its flanks, or revealed as a flash if the bird opens its wings. However, the species' most obvious feature is its striking facial pattern which consists of a bold pale supercilium – the stripe that runs over the eye – and submoustachial stripe. In flight, Redwing somewhat resembles a Starling, with a short-tailed, rather triangular look.

Fieldfare (*Turdus pilaris*) is quite a large thrush, bigger than a Blackbird. It has a somewhat elongated look and a noticeably upright posture. The contrasting grey head and rump, brown upperwing and black tail, combined with cream-coloured upper breast on otherwise pale, streaked underparts, give it a handsome appearance. When flying, it has a noticeably long-tailed look, in shape resembling a small Mistle Thrush or a large Blackbird.

The majority of the Redwings and Fieldfares that winter in Ireland come from breeding grounds in Scandinavia and further to the east. A smaller number of Redwings come from Iceland, though these are difficult to discern from their Scandinavian counterparts in the field. Both species begin returning to Ireland in earnest in October, with birds pouring in at the end of the month and in early November. As the birds often migrate by night, one of the best ways to experience them at this time is to stand outside after dark and listen for their call. Redwing has a high-pitched, short, single-syllable “tzeep!”, while Fieldfare's call is a several-syllable, slightly fruity chatter. On “good” migration nights, it is possible to listen to hundreds of Redwings and many Fieldfares too passing overhead.

Both species are mainly found in flocks, although Fieldfare has a tendency to occur singly more than Redwing. The best place to see either is on farmland, where they are often seen foraging for invertebrates on short pasture or on stubble. They may also be seen in hedgerows feeding on berries such as haws, especially earlier in the season before the crop is depleted. A single Fieldfare may occasionally “adopt” a berry producing tree as its territory and defend it as such until it has eaten its fill! In very harsh, cold weather, both Redwings and Fieldfares stray into gardens, where they feed on apples or seek food among leaf litter. You may remember Redwings in particular behaving like this during the snow of 2010, when they turned up in unusual places and were often very tame.

These attractive thrushes depart Ireland in March so there is plenty of time to try and see them over the coming months. If you do, please submit the records to [records.biodiversityireland.ie/record/wexford-naturalists](http://records.biodiversityireland.ie/record/wexford-naturalists)



Drawings: Dave Daly