

# North Bull Island

## Report on Birds

2011

Edited and compiled

by

Tom Cooney

This the first annual report summarising rare and scarce bird occurrences on the North Bull Island. Also included are sightings of birds in unusual numbers or out of season dates.

### **Summary of 2011**

A total of 131 species were reported.

A Desert Wheatear in November was the rarest passerine to have ever been recorded on the island. Also reported for the first time was a Yellow-legged Gull in July.

The islands second White-winged Black Tern and third Semipalmated Sandpiper were recorded in September. The only other American species in 2011 were two Buff-breasted Sandpipers and the returning female Blue-winged Teal.

Passage migrants were generally scarce but Grey Phalarope, Green Sandpiper, Whinchat and Whitethroat were each recorded for the first time in several years. A Wheatear remained on the island for several days in December.

The regular birds of prey in winter were joined from late October by a Short-eared Owl that remained into 2012.

## List of Contributors

Records for this report were received directly from observers listed below via email or text. Additional records were also sourced from websites including Irish Birding ([www.irishbirding.com](http://www.irishbirding.com)) and Tolka Branch Birdwatch Ireland ([www.dublinbirding.ie](http://www.dublinbirding.ie))

### Observers:

Keith Bennett  
Robert Busby  
Mark Carmody  
Fearon Cassidy  
Phil Clancy  
Tom Cooney  
Mick Derwin  
Tom Doyle  
Shane Farrell  
Ger Franck  
Edd Kealy  
Aidan G Kelly  
Niall T Keogh  
Paul Kelly  
Stephen Lawlor  
Gerry Lyons  
Ben Mullen  
Conn O' Brien  
Andrew Power  
Brian Power  
Paul Quigley  
Colm McConnell  
Siobhan McNamara  
Proinsias Mac an Bheatha  
Steve Millar  
Ben Mullen  
Paul Quigley  
Jan Rod  
Adrian Rooney  
Frank Turpin

# Systematic List

## **MUTE SWAN** *Cygnus olor*

Occasional throughout the year

Three on 8<sup>th</sup> September, two on 20<sup>th</sup> November and one on 16<sup>th</sup> December were the only birds reported.

## **WHOOOPER SWAN** *Cygnus cygnus*

Scarce visitor

Seven flew north over the saltmarshes on 6<sup>th</sup> November.

## **WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE** *Anser albifrons flavirostris*

Rare

Single birds were seen flying over the island on 6<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> November.

## **GREYLAG GOOSE** *Anser anser*

Rare

One from 26<sup>th</sup> August to at least 1<sup>st</sup> September was probably a feral bird.

## **BRENT GOOSE** *Branta bernicla hrota*

Common winter visitor

The first birds of autumn were a party of four on 28<sup>th</sup> August on the northern end of the island and by mid October 560 were present. The main arrival of wintering birds was in late October and early November.

### **Dark-bellied Brent** *B.b. bernicla*

Rare winter visitor

One was present on a number of dates from 5<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> November (F. Turpin *et. al.*)

## **SHELDUCK** *Tadorna tadorna*

Resident, common winter visitor

An early build up of numbers was noted on 16<sup>th</sup> October with 306 birds on the mudflats (S. McNamara).

## **BLUE-WINGED TEAL** *Anas discors*

Rare

A female from 2010 was last seen on 20<sup>th</sup> February. The female returned on 24<sup>th</sup> September and remained into 2012.

All records in recent winters are presumed to be the same bird returning to the island.

## **GADWALL** *Anas hyemalis*

Very scarce winter visitor

Male and female were present on the southern mudflats from 10<sup>th</sup> December (Niall T Keogh *et al*) to 17<sup>th</sup> with the female remaining into 2012.

Although still very scarce on the island Gadwall have become more frequent in recent years and are probably under-recorded.

**LONG-TAILED DUCK** *Clangula hyemalis*

Irregular and scarce winter visitor

A juvenile female, a first winter male and an adult female were present in Sutton Creek from 30<sup>th</sup> October to late November (S. Farrell *et. al.*). The adult female was present on 3<sup>rd</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> December (J. Rod, S. Farrell, P. Mac an Bheatha) and the first winter male was present again on 21<sup>st</sup> December (Niall Keogh, Andrew Power, Fearon Cassidy).



**COMMON SCOTER** *Melanitta nigra*

Regular winter visitor in small numbers

Up to five were present daily in Sutton Creek from 21<sup>st</sup> November into 2012.



**GOLDENEYE** *Bucephala clangula*

Uncommon winter visitor

Two on 20<sup>th</sup> November in Sutton Creek were the first birds of the winter 2011/2012. One or two in Sutton Creek and off the Bull Bridge into 2012.

**RED-BREASTED MERGANSER** *Mergus serrator*

Regular visitor in small numbers

The highest number roosting on the northern saltmarshes was 16 on 2nd October. Smaller numbers were present off the beach and Bull Wall. The only other high count was of 26 off the point on 21<sup>st</sup> December. A pair was present regularly at high water at the River Santry outflow from late October.

**LITTLE EGRET** *Egretta garzetta*

Resident

Numbers have not fully recovered following the severe winter weather of 2009/2010 and 2010/2011. In autumn over 30 were present daily up to early December with a peak of 46 on 1st September. Fewer than normal were present in December with up to ten on most dates.

**GREY HERON** *Ardea cinerea*

Common resident

The highest count of the autumn was 37 on 1st September.

**SPARROWHAWK** *Accipiter nisus*

Regular visitor

Single birds were present daily from summer to late December. Two were present on 18th September and 30th October.

**COMMON BUZZARD** *Buteo buteo*

Rare

One flew over the point on 26<sup>th</sup> November.

**MERLIN** *Falco columbarius*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor

Single birds were seen on fifteen dates from 9<sup>th</sup> October into 2012. Two were present on 6<sup>th</sup> November and 22<sup>nd</sup> December.



**PEREGRINE** *Falco peregrinus*

Regular visitor

Single birds reported in January with two present on 10<sup>th</sup> January. In the latter part of the year birds were recorded from 26<sup>th</sup> August onwards with up to three hunting together from 8<sup>th</sup> September into 2012.

**SEMI-PALMATED SANDPIPER** *Calidris pusilla*

Rare

A juvenile was present on the northern end of the saltmarsh on 26<sup>th</sup> September (T. Cooney). This is the third record for the island

**LITTLE STINT** *Calidris minuta*

Regular autumn passage migrant, rare in spring

Autumn passage was below the average with single birds recorded on eight dates from 27<sup>th</sup> August to 29<sup>th</sup> September. Two were present on 28<sup>th</sup> and three on 4<sup>th</sup> September.

None were reported in 2010.

**CURLEW SANDPIPER** *Calidris ferruginea*

Autumn passage migrant, rare in winter and spring

Autumn passage was low with about half the annual average recorded on 22 dates from 27<sup>th</sup> July to 21<sup>st</sup> November. An adult in partial summer plumage on 27<sup>th</sup> July was very early. Autumn passage started with three on 18<sup>th</sup> August, increasing to seven on 12<sup>th</sup> and peaking with ten on 25<sup>th</sup> September. Up to three remained until 29<sup>th</sup>. In October two were present on 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> but singles birds were seen on several dates up to the 21<sup>st</sup> November.

In 2010 autumn passage ranged from two to a maximum of eight on four dates from 3<sup>rd</sup> September to 16<sup>th</sup> October.

**BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER** *Tryngites subruficollis*

Rare

One on 27<sup>th</sup> September was joined by another on 30<sup>th</sup> and both remained until 4<sup>th</sup> October (T. Cooney, S. Farrell *et. al.*). These are the first records since 2008.



**RUFF** *Philomachus pugnax*

Regular but scarce autumn passage migrant

Up to four were present daily from 14<sup>th</sup> August to 18<sup>th</sup> September (S. Farrell *et al.*).

None were reported in 2010.

**JACK SNIPE** *Lymnecryptes minimus*

Very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor

Two were flushed singly on the northern end of the island on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> December.

One was seen feeding on the open saltmarsh with Redshanks on 11<sup>th</sup> December. One flew over the causeway on 24<sup>th</sup> December.

In 2010 one was reported in December.

**WHIMBREL** *Numenius phaeopus*

Regular passage migrants, rare in winter

Migration was well below normal. One on 8<sup>th</sup> April was the only spring record. Up to four were reported on five dates between 1<sup>st</sup> September and 9<sup>th</sup> October.

One bird was reported in 2010 and two on one date in 2009. This species is under reported.

**GREEN SANDPIPER** *Tringa ochropus*

Scarce passage migrant in autumn, rare in winter and spring

One was heard calling over the northern saltmarsh on 2<sup>nd</sup> September (T. Cooney).

**SPOTTED REDSHANK** *Tringa erythropus*

Scarce passage migrant, very scarce in winter.

One on the 11<sup>th</sup> January was the only record for the early part of the year. In autumn there were six records of single birds in 26<sup>th</sup> August, 8<sup>th</sup> September, 11th, 15th, 21st October and 21<sup>st</sup> November.

In 2010 there were single birds in August, September and November.

**GREY PHALAROPE** *Phalaropus fulicarius*

Rare passage migrant

Adult, Royal Dublin Golf Course on 18<sup>th</sup> September (Proinsias Mac an Bheatha).



© Proinsias Mac an Bheatha

**LITTLE GULL** *Larus minutus*

Scarce visitor

Adult at the point on 25<sup>th</sup> August (Tom Cooney, Shane Farrell) and a first year ear the causeway on 29<sup>th</sup> September (Shane Farrell).

**YELLOW-LEGGED GULL** *Larus michahellis*

Rare

One was seen near the causeway on 24 July 2011 was the first record for the island (R. Busby). This is the first record for the island.

**GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL** *Larus marinus*

Present throughout the year, common in autumn and winter

A roosting flock of 70 on the northern mudflats on 31st October was the only large count of the autumn.

**LITTLE TERN** *Sterna albifrons*

Scarce summer visitor, former breeder

The only records were of birds roosting at the in autumn as follows: two on 2nd and three on 31st August, two on 2nd September.

**BLACK TERN** *Chlidonias niger*

Irregular and scarce autumn migrant

An immature bird was present on 11th and 12th September (A.G. Kelly *et. al.*).

**WHITE-WINGED BLACK TERN** *Chlidonias leucopterus*

Vagrant

An adult in winter plumage was seen at the point on 24th September for several minutes before flying northwards across Sutton Creek (S. Farrell, T. Cooney).

This is the second island record.

**SANDWICH TERN** *Sterna sandvicensis*

Common passage migrant, occasional in summer

A peak of 147 birds roosted with other terns and gulls on the northern saltmarshes on 2nd September. Smaller numbers also roosted at the point on various dates.

**ROSEATE TERN** *Sterna dougallii*

Very scarce passage migrant, rare in summer

Two at the point on 31st August and one on 11th September were roosting with other terns and gulls.

**COMMON TERN** *Sterna hirundo*

Common in summer

Frequent around the island and off the Bull Wall in summer. In autumn small numbers roosted regularly with other terns at the point. The maximum was 12 on 31st August.

**ARCTIC TERN** *Sterna paradisaea*

Uncommon summer visitor

Occasional offshore in summer with only five reported roosting at the point on 31st August.

**STOCK DOVE** *Columba oenas*

Very scarce

One on 17th July and two on 28th May were the only records. On both occasions the birds were drinking water at the outflow of the River Naniken south of the causeway.

**CUCKOO** *Cuculus canorus*

Very scarce summer visitor

One on 11th May was the only spring record and a juvenile was present in the Alder Marsh area from 6th to 16th September.

**SHORT-EARED OWL** *Asio flammeus*

Scarce and irregular winter visitor

One on many dates from 20th October to late December (S. Farrell *et al.*).

This is the first record since April 2009.

**KINGFISHER** *Alcedo atthis*

Scarce but regular winter visitor

One was present occasionally at the River Santry outflow from 16th October to the end of the year.

**CARRION CROW** *Corvus corone*

Scarce resident

One on 9<sup>th</sup> January was the only report for the early part of the year. From 16<sup>th</sup> September onwards an adult was present occasionally and on some dates with a hybrid carrion x hooded crow. A hybrid was present from late summer into 2012 but two were seen on 9<sup>th</sup> October and 26<sup>th</sup> December.

**HOODED CROW** *Corvus corone cornix*

Resident and regular visitor

The largest gathering reported was a flock of 42 on 18th September.

**RAVEN** *Corvus corax*

Scarce but regular visitor

One on 3rd September (G. Franck) and two on 6<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> December.

**GOLDCREST** *Regulus regulus*

Scarce passage migrant mainly in autumn

Only three records for the latter part of the year. Single birds were present in the Alder Marsh on 13th September and 3rd October with two there on 4th October.

**SAND MARTIN** *Riparia riparia*

Regular passage migrant, occasional in summer

Autumn passage was about average with up to 50 per day in mid September.

**SWALLOW** *Hirundo rustica* / **HOUSE MARTIN** *Delichon urbica*

Regular passage migrants

From mid September to early October several thousand Hirundines were observed moving south across the island daily. Swallows were more common than House Martin with a ratio of 2:1.

**CHIFFCHAFF** *Phylloscopus collybita*

Scarce but regular passage migrant

Small numbers were seen in the scrub near the causeway and in the Alder Marsh between 13th and 24th September with a peak of four on 24th September.

**WILLOW WARBLER** *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Scarce but regular passage migrant

A very poor year with only three reported in autumn. Single birds were reported on 29th and 31st August and 5th September.

**BLACKCAP** *Sylvia atricapilla*

Scarce migrant

One heard on 24th September on the mainland end of the causeway. A male was present in the Alder Marsh on 3rd and 4th October. A male and female were in the Sea Buckthorn near the Interpretative Centre on 4th December. These were joined by another male from 6<sup>th</sup> December. Both males remained into 2012. A female was seen in the Buckthorn near Bull Wall on 5<sup>th</sup> December.

Six is the highest number reported in any one year.

**WHITETHROAT** *Sylvia communis*

Rare passage migrant

One on 26th September near the Interpretative Centre is the first record for several years.

**GRASSHOPPER WARBLER** *Locustella naevia*

Rare passage migrant

One was flushed from the dunes near the Alder Marsh on 13th and 16th September. It is assumed the both records refer to the same bird.

**SEDGE WARBLER** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Scarce passage migrant

Single birds were seen in the Alder Marsh area on 8th and 12th September.

**FIELDFARE** *Turdus pilaris*

Passage migrant and winter visitor, occasionally in large numbers

During the extreme cold weather of late 2010 and early 2011 flocks of 100 to 200 were seen in various parts of the island.

**SONG THRUSH** *Turdus philomelos*

Passage migrant and winter visitor

Small numbers were present during the severe cold winter of 2011/2012. Single birds present frequently in the vicinity of the Interpretative Centre from December into 2012.

**REDWING** *Turdus iliacus*

Passage migrant and winter visitor

Over one hundred were present in January after heavy snowfalls. The only reports in the latter part of the year were of single birds were present on 10<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> December.

**WHINCHAT** *Saxicola rubetra*

Scarce and irregular passage migrant

A female or immature on 12th and 16th September near the Alder Marsh.

**STONECHAT** *Saxicola torquata*

Uncommon resident

Numbers appear to have decreased considerably since the two recent cold winters. Two near Royal Dublin Golf Course in November and December and on near the causeway on several dates in December.

**WHEATEAR** *Oenanthe oenanthe*

Common passage migrant, occasionally breeds

Passage between 26th August and 30th October peaked with 30 on the northern saltmarsh on 11th September. The total on the island during peak migration was probably over 50 birds

A first winter female was present at the causeway from 11<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> December. This is the second overwintering in recent years.

**DESERT WHEATEAR** *Oenanthe deserti*

Rare

A male was present at the point on 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> November (S. Farrell).

This is the first record for County Dublin and the 6th for Ireland.



**PIED WAGTAIL** *Motacilla alba yarrellii*

Resident and passage migrant.

**White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba alba*

Scarce passage migrant

Five on 11th September and two on 16th, 25th and 29th may have involved the same birds (A.G Kelly, S. Lawlor, T. Cooney).

**ROCK PIPIT** *Anthus petrosus*

Scarce resident and uncommon winter visitor

The largest number reported was 20 near the point on 11<sup>th</sup> December (S. Farrell). Single birds occasionally near the Causeway and Bull Wall in winter.

**GREENFINCH** *Carduelis chloris*

Scarce resident and common winter visitor

The largest flock was 50 near the Interpretative Centre on 4<sup>th</sup> December but small flocks of 20 were present throughout the autumn and winter 2011.

**GOLDFINCH** *Carduelis carduelis*

Scarce resident, common passage migrant and winter visitor

The largest flock reported was 200 near the causeway on 16th October.

**LINNET** *Carduelis cannabina*

Resident and very common winter visitor

In autumn several flocks of more than 100 birds were present on the northern saltmarshes. Up to 100 fed on the shoreline and dunes near the point and Bull Wall from mid-November onwards.

**REDPOLL** *Carduelis flammea cabaret*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor

Three near the causeway and two in the Alder Marsh on 24th September. Two were in the Alder Marsh on 3rd October and two in scrub near the Interpretative Centre on 4th December. Six on 9<sup>th</sup> December in scrub near the Bull Wall.

**SNOW BUNTING** *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Irregular winter visitors

Two on 20th November on the northern end of the island were the only records. These are the first records since December 2010.

## List of species recorded in 2011

- 1 Mute Swan
- 2 Whooper Swan
- 3 White-fronted Goose
- 4 Greylag Goose
- 5 Brent Goose  
    dark-bellied Brent Goose
- 6 Shelduck
- 7 Wigeon
- 8 Teal
- 9 Mallard
- 10 Gadwall
- 11 Pintail
- 12 Blue-winged Teal
- 13 Shoveler
- 14 Pochard
- 15 Long-tailed Duck
- 16 Common Scoter
- 17 Goldeneye
- 18 Red-breasted Merganser
- 19 Red-throated Diver
- 20 Great Northern Diver
- 21 Manx Shearwater
- 22 Cormorant
- 23 Shag
- 24 Little Egret
- 25 Grey Heron
- 26 Little Grebe
- 27 Great Crested Grebe
- 28 Common Buzzard
- 29 Sparrowhawk
- 30 Kestrel
- 31 Merlin
- 32 Peregrine
- 33 Water Rail
- 34 Moorhen
- 35 Oystercatcher
- 36 Ringed Plover
- 37 Golden Plover
- 38 Grey Plover
- 39 Lapwing
- 40 Knot
- 41 Sanderling
- 42 Semipalmated Sandpiper
- 43 Little Stint

- 44 Curlew Sandpiper
- 45 Purple Sandpiper
- 46 Dunlin
- 47 Buff-breasted Sandpiper
- 48 Ruff
- 49 Jack Snipe
- 50 Snipe
- 51 Woodcock
- 52 Black-tailed Godwit
- 53 Bar-tailed Godwit
- 54 Whimbrel
- 55 Curlew
- 56 Common Sandpiper
- 57 Green Sandpiper
- 58 Spotted Redshank
- 59 Greenshank
- 60 Redshank
- 61 Turnstone
- 62 Grey Phalarope
- 63 Black-headed Gull
- 64 Little Gull
- 65 Mediterranean Gull
- 66 Common Gull
- 67 Ring-billed Gull
- 68 Lesser Black-backed Gull
- 69 Herring Gull
- 70 Yellow-legged Gull
- 71 Iceland Gull
- 72 Great Black-backed Gull
- 73 Little Tern
- 74 Black Tern
- 75 White-winged Black Tern
- 76 Sandwich Tern
- 77 Roseate Tern
- 78 Common Tern
- 79 Arctic Tern
- 80 Guillemot
- 81 Razorbill
- 82 Black Guillemot
- 83 Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon
- 84 Stock Dove
- 85 Woodpigeon
- 86 Cuckoo
- 87 Short-eared Owl
- 88 Swift
- 89 Kingfisher

90	Magpie
91	Jackdaw
92	Rook
93	Carrion Crow
94	Hooded Crow
95	Raven
96	Goldcrest
97	Skylark
98	Sand Martin
99	Swallow
100	House Martin
101	Chiffchaff
102	Willow Warbler
103	Blackcap
104	Whitethroat
105	Grasshopper Warbler
106	Sedge Warbler
107	Wren
108	Starling
109	Blackbird
110	Fieldfare
111	Song Thrush
112	Redwing
113	Robin
114	Whinchat
115	Stonechat
116	Wheatear
117	Desert Wheatear
118	Dunnock
119	Grey Wagtail
120	Pied Wagtail
	White Wagtail
121	Meadow Pipit
122	Rock Pipit
123	Chaffinch
124	Greenfinch
125	Goldfinch
126	Siskin
127	Linnet
128	Twite
129	Redpoll
130	Snow Bunting
131	Reed Bunting