North Bull Island Bird Report

2015

Edited and compiled

by

Tom Cooney

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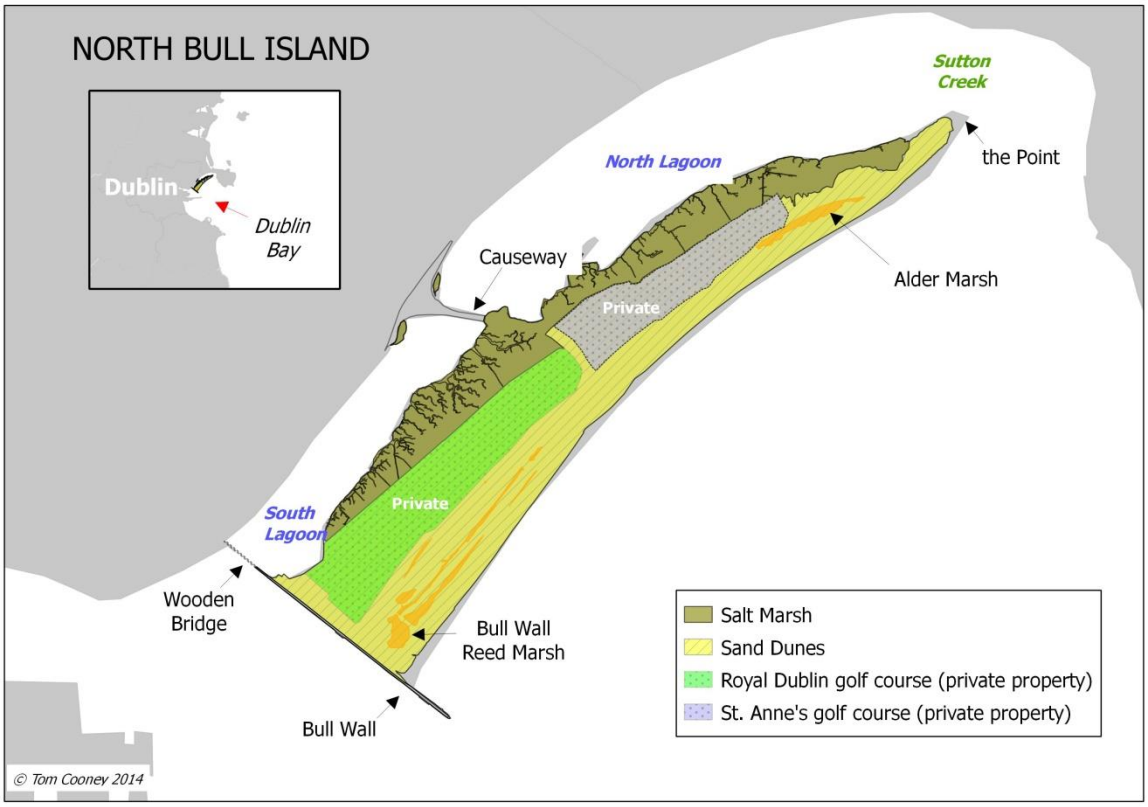

North Bull Island with birdwatching locations of interest.

Editorial

This is the fifth annual bird report for North Bull Island in Dublin Bay. This report summarises observations of common and rare species during the calendar year.

A total of 133 species were reported between 1st January 2015 and 31st December 2015.

Garden Warbler was added to the island list in 2015. Other rarities included White-winged Black Tern, White-rumped Sandpiper and Osprey. Reed Warbler put in an appearance again in spring and record numbers of Black Terns were recorded in autumn. Locally scarce species in 2015 were spotted redshank, green sandpiper, Iceland gull, ring-billed gull and long-eared owl.

In addition to the regular passage migrant passerines grasshopper warblers were present again during spring migration continuing the trend of recent years. Other passerines of interest were whinchat and cuckoo. Single short-eared owls were reported in the winter months.

No Little Terns or Ringed Plovers were recorded at the former nesting site.

There were many reports in 2015 of incidents when habitats and wildlife in the National Nature Reserve were either disturbed or damaged by leisure and amenity activities.

Acknowledgements

This is a privately produced bird report and is not affiliated to any of the bird or nature organisations in Ireland. As such it is largely dependent on the cooperation of individual birdwatchers. I wish to thank all birdwatchers and members of the public for contributing their observations and photographs during 2015.

Contribute sightings (login required): www.bullislandbirds.com
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Gerry Power
Joe Proudfoot
Mark Stewart
Frank Turpin

Cover photo: Short-eared Owl *Asio flammea.* An annual winter visitor in small numbers.

Systematic List

The sequence and scientific nomenclature largely follows The British List (7th Edition) (Dudley *et al*. 2006) including subsequent recommendations of the Taxonomic Advisory Committee of the AERC (Crochet *et al*. 2010) and the Taxonomic Sub-committee of the British Ornithologists Union (Sangster *et al*. 2007, Knox *et al*. 2008, Sangster *et al*. 2009).

MUTE SWAN *Cygnus olor*
Resident in small numbers
One or two birds were present in both lagoons in the early part of the year. Five from 15th June onwards with seven or eight adults daily up early October (Ger Franck, Ciaran Dunne, Tom Cooney).

Mute Swan (Mark Collins)

WHOOPER SWAN *Cygnus cygnus*
Scarce visitor
Four flew south across the island just after dawn on 28th October (Tom Cooney).

It is likely that the same four birds were reported at Kilcoole later the same day (www.irishbirding.com).

BRENT GOOSE *Branta bernicla hrota*
Common winter visitor

Count:	280 on 19th April at the causeway (Sandra Murphy).
Late date:	May: four on 1st and one on 8th (Sandra Murphy, Tom Cooney).
Autumn arrivals:	September: One in Sutton Creek on 7th (Sean A O'Laoire) but the first flock of nine birds did not arrive until the 12th (Ger Franck, John Fox, Tom Cooney).

Brent Geese (Michael Keating)

Dark-bellied Brent Goose *B.b. bernicla*
Scarce winter visitor
One on the north mudflats on 7th February (John Fox).

SHELDUCK *Tadorna tadorna*
Resident, common winter visitor

Summer:	Breeding birds recorded holding territory. Up to 48 on mudflats in June (Paul McMahon, Sandra Murphy).
Autumn arrivals:	200 on 2nd October increasing to 255 on 10th and 470 on 30th (Tom Carroll, Tom Doyle, Ciaran Dunne).

WIGEON *Anas penelope*
Common winter visitor

Summer/Autumn:	Male in eclipse plumage on 10th July (Ger Franck).
Autumn arrivals:	Less than ten in late august increased to 40 on 18th September (Tom Carroll *et al*.).
Count:	625 on 10th October north of causeway (Tom Doyle).

GADWALL *Anas hyemalis*
Very scarce autumn migrant and winter visitor
Two on 10th and 19th January (Gerry Power, Tom Cooney).

TEAL *Anas crecca*
Common winter visitor

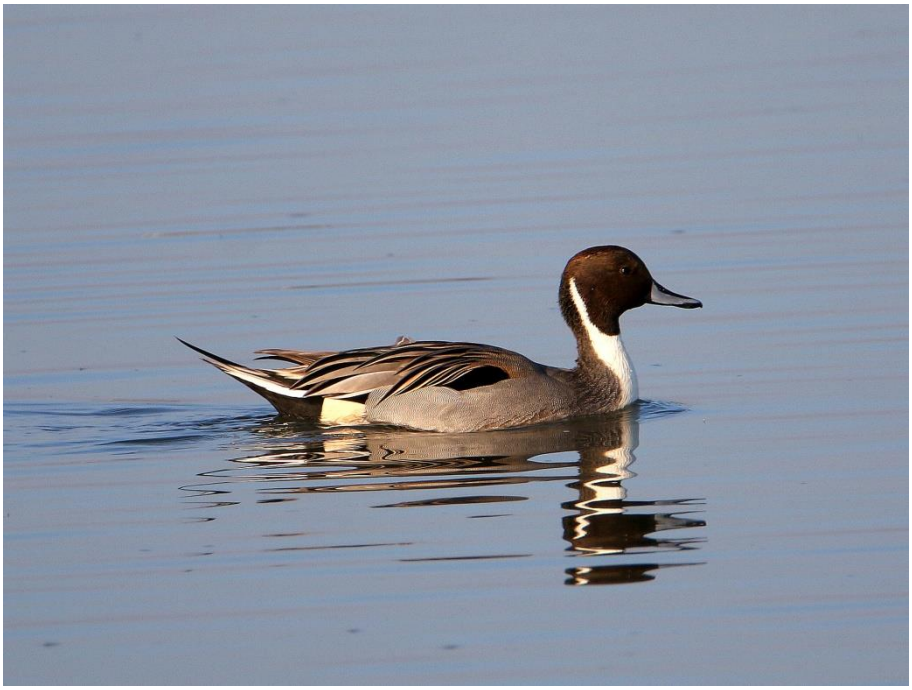
Late spring dates:	Several birds (<10) present in first week April (Tom Cooney).
Autumn arrivals:	26 on 25th August (Ger Franck).

PINTAIL *Anas acuta*
Common but decreasing winter visitor

Autumn arrivals:	One on 31st August (Ger Franck). Seven on 15th September

(Ciaran Dunne) increasing to a minimum of 30 by the end of the month (Niall Griffin, Ger Franck, Tom Carroll, John Fields, Mark Collins).

Count: 124 on 10th October north of causeway with similar numbers for the rest of the month (Tom Doyle, Ciaran Dunne, Mark Collins).



Pintail (Mark Collins)

SHOVELER *Anas clypeata*

Common but decreasing winter visitor, scarce at other times

Autumn arrivals: Two on 12th August (Noel Keogh) with up to eight by the end of the month (Ger Franck, Mark Collins). Up to 30 in September (Niall Griffin, Ger Franck, Tom Carroll, John Fields).

Count: 112 on southern mudflats on 5th February (Ger Franck).

The February count is one of the highest in recent years.

TUFTED DUCK *Aythya fuligula*

Very scarce resident

Up to ten present occasionally.

LONG-TAILED DUCK *Clangula hyemalis*

Scarce winter visitor

Female on 17th December off the Point (Tom Cooney).

COMMON SCOTER *Melanitta nigra*

Regular winter visitor in small numbers

Two on 2nd February off the beach (Tom Cooney).

GOLDENEYE *Bucephala clangula*

Uncommon winter visitor

Three off Bull Wall on 19th January.

This species has become increasingly scarce in recent years.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER *Mergus serrator*
Regular visitor
Up to ten off the Bull Wall and Wooden Bridge between January and mid-March (Ciaran Dunne, Sandra Murphy, Dave MacPherson). Peak of 14 in Sutton Creek and the northern end of the island up to May (Ciaran Dunne, Tom Cooney, Edd Kealy). Eight to 16 from 8th September to the end of the year (Ger Franck, John Fox, Tom Cooney, Ciaran Dunne).

A pair at River Santry outflow on 19th February (Ger Franck) was unusual.

RED-THROATED DIVER *Gavia stellata*
Uncommon winter visitor
Three off Bull Wall on 17th April (Tom Cooney). Single birds occasionally off the Bull Wall, the beach and in Sutton Creek.

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER *Gavia immer*
Scarce winter visitor
One on 2nd January at Bull Wall (Tom Cooney).

MANX SHEARWATER *Puffinus puffinus*
Occasional spring to autumn
The only reports were in June of 58 on 4th (Ciaran Dunne) and five on 22nd (Tom Doyle)

GANNET *Morus bassanus*
Summer visitor
Five on 10th March with birds on many dates into late May with a peak of 27 on 30th April (Ciaran Dunne, Tom Cooney). Small numbers present regularly off the Bull Wall and beach throughout the summer months. Occasional reports of one or two in June and July with up to 15 from 20th to 25th August (Ciaran Dunne, Mark Collins, Tom Cooney, Tom Doyle).

Gannet off the beach (Mark Collins)

CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo*
Regular visitor all year
In September 28 at Sutton Creek on 1st (Ciaran Dunne) and 97 on 7th (Tom Cooney).

One feeding in a golf course pond on 7th November was unusual.

SHAG *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*
Scarce visitor all year
One at the Wooden Bridge on 12th January (Sandra Murphy).

LITTLE EGRET *Egretta garzetta*
Non-breeding resident
Small numbers (<20) for most of the year with an autumn peak of 65 on 14th August (Noel Keogh). Smaller numbers (<20) from mid-October onwards (Ger Franck, Tom Doyle, Tony Holohan, Mark Collins, Tom Cooney).

Little Egret (Mark Collins)

GREY HERON *Ardea cinerea*
Present all year
In summer a group of adults and juveniles were present daily feeding on the mudflats north of the causeway *e.g.* 19 on 11th June.

LITTLE GREBE *Tachybaptus ruficollis*
Scarce winter visitor
Up to six at the Wooden Bridge in January up to 5th February (Sandra Murphy, Ciaran Dunne, Ger Franck). A similar number were present towards the end of the year in the same general area. Up to three birds occasionally in the saltmarsh channels at high tide.

GREAT CRESTED GREBE *Podiceps cristatus*
Winter visitor, occasional at other times
Peaks of 19 off the Bull Wall on 22nd January and 18 on 13th October (Ciaran Dunne). Up to four at Bull Wall and in Sutton Creek up to mid-May (Tom Cooney, Ger Franck, Ciaran Dunne, Niall Griffin, Edd Kealy). One on 15th July (Ciaran Dunne). Regular from 14th August off the Bull Wall with a peak of 18 on 13th October (Ciaran Dunne, Tony Holohan, Tom Cooney, Ger Franck, John Fox).

One at the River Santry outflow on 19th February was unusual (Ger Franck).

Great Crested Grebe (Dave MacPherson)

SPARROWHAWK *Accipter nisus*
Regular visitor
One on 5th February at the southern mudflats was the only report in the early part of the year. Single birds on ten dates from 19th June to the end of the year with two on 1st September.

COMMON BUZZARD *Buteo buteo*
Formerly very rare, now scarce but regular visitor
One at the south saltmarsh on 6th November (Noel Keogh). One on 20th November (Michael Keating).

The November bird is probably the first of this species to be photographed at this site.

Common Buzzard (Michael Keating)

OSPREY *Pandion haliaetus*
Rare.
One flew over the northern lagoon on 13th September (Aidan G. Kelly).

Osprey (Aidan G. Kelly)

WATER RAIL *Rallus aquaticus*
Very rare winter visitor
One on 14th and 23rd December (Tom Cooney).

OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ostralegus*
Common winter visitor and passage migrant

Autumn:	The leucistic bird observed in previous years was present for several days in September (Tom Cooney).
Summer:	325 on 9th June with smaller numbers for the rest of the month. Up to 100 in July with a peak of 150 on 30th (Tom Doyle, Joe Delaney, Tom Cooney).

GOLDEN PLOVER *Pluvialis apricaria*
Common passage migrant and winter visitor

Late date(s):	Nine on 1st May (Tom Cooney)
Autumn arrival:	Three on 31st August (Ger Franck).
Count(s):	800 on 22nd March (Tom Doyle, Gary De Lacy) decreasing to 400 by 15th April and 55 on 17th April (Sandra Murphy, Tom Cooney). In October 560 on 7th, 700 on 9th, 550 on 11th and 25th (Tom Cooney, Niall Griffin, Mark Collins). 1,500 on 6th December (Ger Franck).

GREY PLOVER *Pluvialis squatarola*
Common winter visitor and passage migrant

Summer:	Up to five on various dates in June (Tom Cooney).
Autumn arrivals:	Two on 7th August (Ger Franck) slowly increasing to 64 by 7th September (Tom Cooney, Tom Doyle).

LAPWING *Pluvialis pluvialis*

Common in autumn, uncommon in winter

Autumn arrivals: 15 on 15th June (Ger Franck) with up to 30 for the rest of the month (Paul McMahon, Mark Collins, Sandra Murphy).

Count(s): 125 on 10th October (Tom Doyle).

RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius hiaticula*

Former breeder, common passage migrant and winter visitor

Spring/Summer: 30 to the Point on 17th April (Edd Kealy). Eight birds at the Point with migrant dunlins on 13th May (Tom Cooney). Two on 1st June flew northwards from the causeway (Gerry Power). Up to 19 birds were present on the mudflats and at the Point in June.

Breeding: No breeding birds recorded.

Autumn passage: 340 on 24th August with 150 on 1st September (Tom Cooney, Edd Kealy).

Birds were present on the island in May and June were either passage migrants or non-breeders. Ringed Plovers have been locally extinct as a breeding species for well over a decade. In 2015 land-kites, unleashed dogs, walkers, joggers, canoeists, sailing dinghies, a JCB and quad bikes were all observed on the former nesting area during spring and summer.

WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus*

Regular passage migrant.

Earliest spring date: Two on 25th March (Tom Cooney).

Spring passage: Generally lighter passage than recent years with a peak of 102 on 29th April (Tom Cooney, Niall Griffin, Edd Kealy, Noel Keogh, Sandra Murphy, Mark Stewart).

Summer: June: Up to nine birds on various dates throughout the month (Mark Collins, Tom Cooney, Ger Franck). July: one on 11th and 30th (Ger Franck, Tom Doyle).

Autumn passage: Lower numbers than spring with peaks of 40 on 24th August, ten on 7th September and one on 10th October (Tom Cooney, John Fields, Ger Franck, Mark Stewart). Five records of single birds up to 9th November (Ger Franck, John Fields, Tom Carroll).

CURLEW *Numenius arquata*

Common passage migrant and winter visitor

Latest spring record:

Summer: Over 50 were counted on various dates throughout June and July with a peak of 112 on 9th June (Frank Turpin, Tom Cooney, Joe Delaney, Tom Doyle).

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa limosa*

Common passage migrant and winter visitor

Late spring dates:

Summer: 13 on 3rd May were the last spring migrants (Sandra Murphy).

Autumn arrivals: Four on 29th June (Sandra Murphy) but numbers increased rapidly in July with 58 on 8th and 165 on 31st (Ger Franck, Ciaran Dunne). 470 on 7th September (Tom Cooney).

Peak autumn count: 1,066 on 10th October (Tom Doyle).

BAR-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa lapponica*
Common winter visitor and passage migrant
Summer: 20 on 9th June (Tom Cooney) and 32 in breeding plumage on 11th July (Ger Franck).
Autumn arrivals: An increase in numbers was noted in the last week of July and early August.

TURNSTONE *Arenaria interpres*
Passage migrant, winter visitor
Spring/Summer: Up to five at Bull Wall from late May to late June.
Autumn arrivals: Two on 30th July (Ger Franck).
Count: 57 at Bull Wall on 20th October (Ciaran Dunne).
Roost: 135 on 2nd January on the old pier (slipway) in the south lagoon at high tide.
The pier roost regularly holds concentrations of national importance (*i.e.* > 95 birds).

KNOT *Calidris canutus*
Common winter visitor and passage migrant
Spring date: 55 on 22nd April (Ger Franck) with eight on 6th May (Tom Cooney).
Autumn arrivals: Three on 21st July (Ger Franck).
Count: 242 north of causeway on 10th October (Tom Doyle).

RUFF *Philomachus pugnax*
Scarce autumn passage migrant, rare in spring
Autumn passage: Four on 16th July (Mark Stewart). Two from 20th to 26th August (Jim Bowman, Tom Cooney, John Fields, Des Higgins, Paul McMahon, Mark Stewart).

CURLEW SANDPIPER *Calidris ferruginea*
Regular passage migrant in autumn, rare in winter and spring
Autumn: An adult in moult on 23rd and 24th August (Aidan G. Kelly, Tom Cooney). One on 10th September (Niall Griffin). Two on 16th October (Edd Kealy) were very late.
None in spring and only two birds is the lowest number on passage for many years.

SANDERLING *Calidris alba*
Common passage migrant and winter visitor
Count(s): 410 on southern end of the beach near Bull Wall on 2nd January (Tom Cooney). In the latter part of the year highest numbers reported were 180 on 6th September (Tom Doyle), 150 on 28th October and 190 on 12th November (Ciaran Dunne).
Summer: Two on 9th and ten on 19th June (Tom Cooney).

DUNLIN *Calidris alpina*
Very common passage migrant and winter visitor
Spring passage: 480 on 7th May mostly in breeding plumage (Tom Cooney).
Summer: Up to 15 birds, some of breeding plumage on various dates late May to mid-June June. Birds were heard in song on a number of occasions.

WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER *Calidris fuscicollis*
Rare visitor from North America
One seen very briefly on 20th August (Paul McMahon, Tom Cooney).

White-rumped Sandpiper – topmost bird (Paul McMahon)

PURPLE SANDPIPER *Calidris maritima*
Scarce and irregular winter visitor
Two on rock at the Bull Wall on 19th January (Tom Cooney).

LITTLE STINT *Calidris minuta*
Regular but scarce autumn passage migrant, rare in spring
Autumn passage: One on four dates from 25th August to 9th September (Mark Stewart, Tom Cooney).

COMMON SANDPIPER *Actitis hypoleucos*
Scarce and irregular migrant
Spring passage: Singles on 16th, 19th and 22nd April in the general vicinity of the causeway may have referred to the same bird (Tom Cooney, Frank Turpin, Ger Franck).
Autumn passage: Single birds on 11th July and 29th August (Ger Franck).

GREEN SANDPIPER *Tringa ochropus*
Very scarce passage migrant
Autumn passage: One on 25th August on the south saltmarsh (Ger Franck).

SPOTTED REDSHANK *Tringa erythropus*
Very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor
Spring passage: One in breeding plumage at the wooden bridge on 23rd April (Noel Keogh).
Autumn passage: One on 19th September (Aidan G. Kelly).

GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia*
Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor
Autumn arrivals: Two in breeding plumage on 18th June (Tom Cooney).
Peak count: 15 on 10th October (Tom Doyle).
The June birds were particularly early as main autumn passage usually starts until early July.

REDSHANK *Tringa totanus*
Very common passage migrant and winter visitor
Spring passage: 15 on 5th May (Tom Cooney).
Summer: Four on 9th June (Tom Cooney).
Autumn arrivals: Birds began to appear on the mudflats in late June and a peak of 108 on 12th July was unusual so early in autumn (Frank Turpin).

JACK SNIPE *Lymncryptes minimus*
Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor
Winter/Spring: Reported on many dates from January up to the 8th May (Tom Cooney, Gerry Lyons, Mark Stewart, Proinsias Mac an Bheatha, Niall Griffin).
Autumn/Winter: One on 2nd and three on 28th October with a peak of five on 28th November (Tom Cooney). Birds were present until the end of 2015.

COMMON SNIPE *Gallinago gallinago*
Regular passage migrant and winter visitor
Small numbers reported in most months except mid-summer.
Counts: Bull Wall Reed Marsh: peak of eight on 29th April.
North Saltmarsh: minimum of 20 on 29th January. 12 on 2nd November with similar number to the end of the year.
Late date: One on 14th May.
Autumn arrivals: One on 24th August (Tom Cooney).

ARCTIC SKUA *Stercorarius parasiticus*
Rare
Adult pale phase off the beach during strong easterly winds on 5th October (Tom Cooney).

BLACK GUILLEMOT *Cepphus grille*
Small number throughout the year.
One on 1st May and six on 7th May on the port side of the Bull Wall (Ciaran Dunne, Tom Cooney, Edd Kealy).

RAZORBILL *Alca torda*
Small number throughout the year
Bull Wall: Singles on 5th and 14th May (Tom Cooney).
Sutton Creek: Two on 14th October (Ciaran Dunne).

GUILLEMOT *Uria aalge*
Small number throughout the year
Singles on 24th March and 17th April at Bull Wall (Ciaran Dunne, Tom Cooney). One or two regularly off the Bull Wall from 13th October onwards (Ciaran Dunne).

LITTLE TERN *Sternula albifrons*
Former breeder, now very scarce summer migrant
Two on 14th July in the south lagoon (Ger Franck, Jim Duffy).

BLACK TERN *Chlidonias niger*
Scarce migrant
A flock of about 20 adults and juveniles off the beach on 23rd August, landed on the breakwater rocks at the Bull Wall before flying south towards Sandymount Strand (Aidan G. Kelly).

This is the highest number to occur on the island and was probably part of the record numbers (51) in South Dublin Bay the same day (www.irishbirding.com).

WHITE-WINGED BLACK TERN *Chlidonias leucopterus*
Rare vagrant
A juvenile in the company black terns at the Bull Wall on 23rd August (Aidan G. Kelly).

This is the fourth island record since 2006.

SANDWICH TERN *Sterna sandvicensis*
Common passage migrant, occasional in summer

Earliest date:	On 7th April four on 7th at the Bull Wall (Ger Franck, Niall Griffin) and 35 at the Point (Edd Kealy).
Latest date:	Two on 1st October (Ciaran Dunne).
Count:	40 on 1st September roosting at the Point (Edd Kealy).

COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo*
Common in summer

Earliest date:	Two on 17th April (Tom Cooney). Up to four on several dates up to 30th April with 20 – 40 from the first week of May onwards (Mark Stewart, Ger Franck, Jim Duffy, Edd Kealy).
Summer/Autumn:	Birds present daily around the island with 100-120 on 25th August (Tom Doyle, Ciaran Dunne).

ARCTIC TERN *Sterna paradisaea*
Uncommon summer visitor
Earliest date: One on 22nd April in Sutton Creek (Mark Stewart).

Three on 10th (including a juvenile) and four on the 15th on the south lagoon (Ger Franck, Niall Griffin).

KITTIWAKE *Rissa tridactyla*
Formerly very scarce visitor, now seasonally common
Present in the early part of the year from 16th April (Ciaran Dunne) with a peak of 88 on 17th (Tom Cooney). Up to 80 present frequently to mid-May. Most reports refer to the Bull Wall however 12 were on the water in the southern lagoon at high tide on 11th May.

LITTLE GULL *Hydrocoloeus minutus*
Occasional visitor, mainly in winter
Adult on 7th December off the Point (Tom Cooney).

MEDITERRANEAN GULL *Larus melanocephalus*
Regular in small numbers
Up to three adults on several dates from 8th July to 21st August (Ger Franck, Mark Stewart, Ciaran Dunne, Jim Duffy, Tom Cooney**).**

RING-BILLED GULL *Larus delawarensis*
Very scarce, mostly recorded in spring
Adult on northern mudflats on 7th March (Tom Cooney).

ICELAND GULL *Larus glaucoides*
Very scarce visitor, mainly in spring
One on north mudflats on 17th January (Thomas Judge).

STOCK DOVE *Columba oenas*
Very scarce but regular visitor
One at the River Santry outflow on 8th, 10th and 16th July (Ger Franck and Ciaran Dunne).

COLLARED DOVE *Streptopelia decaocto*
Very scarce irregular visitor
One on 13th July on the Sutton shoreline (Paul Milne).

CUCKOO *Cuculus canorus*
Very scarce summer visitor
One on 7th May in the northern dunes (Edd Kealy, Tom Cooney). One on 28th May for several days and it or another bird from 7th and 28th June in the Alder Marsh (David MacPherson, Tom Cooney). A 'brown-type' was reported on 26th June (Paul McMahon).

Cuckoo (Mark Collins)

LONG–EARED OWL *Asio otus*
Very scarce visitor
One flew from the island toward St. Anne's Park at dawn on 4th June (Tom Cooney). One

was seen flying from the island towards Sutton on 18th August (Jim Duffy).

SHORT–EARED OWL *Asio flammeus*
Scarce and irregular winter visitor
One on 3rd and 6th February (Tom Cooney, Frank Smyth) presumably refer to the same bird. Several reports of a single bird from 26th August to the end of the 2015 (Tom Cooney, Edd Kealy, Mark Collins, Frank Turpin, Michael Keating).

SWIFT *Apus apus*
Frequent in spring and autumn, scarce in summer
Earliest date: Two on 1st May (Tom Cooney).
Latest dates: Two on 23rd August (Aidan G. Kelly).
Highest count(s): 80 on 28th June (Mark Collins).

Swift (Mark Collins)

KINGFISHER *Alcedo atthis*
Scarce but regular winter visitor
One at the River Santry outflow from 5th January to 19th February (Ger Franck, Tom Cooney, Mark Collins). One, possibly the same bird, on several dates from 14th August to 6th December at the River Santry outflow (Ger Franck, Jim Duffy, Vincent Hall, Tom Cooney, Mark Collins, Ciaran Dunne, Jim Duffy, Niall Griffin).

One at the bathing shelters on the Bull Wall on 27th September (Tom Doyle) was an unusual location and was probably the bird seen days earlier at the River Santry outflow.

KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus*
Resident
One or two reported in every month from all areas on the island.

MERLIN *Falco columbarius*
Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor
One, presumed to be the same bird present from 5th January to 19th March (Tom Cooney, Proinsias Mac an Bheatha, Tom Doyle). One of 13th September (Aidan G. Kelly). A female/immature on 10th October (Gerry Power) was probably the same bird seen on several dates from 1st to 24th November (Mark Collins, Tom Cooney, Joe Proudfoot). One and possibly a second bird present on 17th and 18th December (Niall Griffin, João de Brito, Tom Cooney).

On 5th March one was seen catching a jack snipe that had been flushed seconds earlier by an unleashed dog on the north saltmarsh (Tom Cooney).

PEREGRINE *Falco peregrinus*
Regular visitor
One or two on several dates up to 28th February (many observers) with three on 22nd March (Tom Doyle).

Peregrine (Mark Collins)

HOODED CROW *Corvus corone cornix*
Resident
Small flocks of 20 to 30 in September on the northern end of the island.

Carrion/Hooded Crow *C. c. corone/cornix*
Very scarce
One at the River Santry outflow and on the island throughout the year (Ger Franck, Mark Collins, Ciaran Dunne, Tom Cooney).

RAVEN *Corvus corax*
Scarce but regular visitor
One flew towards Howth over the Point on 15th April (Tom Cooney, Edd Kealy). Two on 2nd November on the north saltmarsh (Tom Cooney).

GOLDCREST *Regulus regulus*
Scarce passage migrant
Winter 2014/15: One on 19th January in the Alder Marsh (Tom Cooney).
Autumn/winter 2015: Up to four in the Alder Marsh and at the Causeway on many dates between 23rd September and 1st December (Tom Cooney, Edd Kealy). Two at Bull Wall Reed Marsh on 16th October (Edd Kealy) were the only reports from the southern end of the island.

BLUE TIT *Cyanistes caeruleus*
Rare
Single juveniles in hedge/scrub at the Santry River outflow on 8th and 12th June (Tom Cooney).

GREAT TIT *Parus major*
Rare
One in hedge/scrub at the Santry River outflow on 1st June (Tom Cooney).

SKYLARK *Alauda arvensis*
Common resident and passage migrant
Autumn passage: Several small flocks (15-30 birds each) in October flying south over the island (Tom Cooney).
Winter: Flocks of 15 to 30 in the southern dunes from January to March (Ger Franck, Sandra Murphy).

SAND MARTIN *Riparia riparia*
Regular but uncommon passage migrant, very scarce in summer
Earliest dates: One on 14th and three on 16th March (Ger Franck, Tom Cooney)
Latest date: 30 on 17th September (Ger Franck).
Small numbers occasionally in summer near the causeway.

BARN SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*
Summer visitor and passage migrant
Earliest date: Four on 7th April (Ger Franck, Niall Griffin).
Latest date: One on 30th October (James Hayes).
Spring passage: Peak of *c*.60 per hour north on 5th May (Tom Cooney).
Autumn passage: Highest count was only 200 on 24th August (Tom Cooney).

HOUSE MARTIN *Delichon urbica*
Summer visitor and passage migrant
Earliest date: Six on 15th April (Edd Kealy, Tom Cooney).

CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus collybita*
Scarce but regular passage migrant
Spring passage: Four on 7th April (Edd Kealy). A spring peak of seven on 15th April with singles on 16th April, 7th and 13th May (Tom Cooney, Edd Kealy, Ger Franck).
Autumn passage: One at Bull Wall on Reed Marsh on 19th September (Niall Griffin). Up to four at the Alder Marsh and four at the Causeway from 22nd September to 7th October (Tom Cooney). One at Bull Wall Reed Marsh on 16th October (Edd Kealy).

WILLOW WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochilus*
Uncommon but regular passage migrant

Spring passage: Four on 7th April (Ger Franck, Niall Griffin) were the first of spring. Passage peaked on 15th April with 27 birds (Tom Cooney, Edd Kealy). Small numbers reported in late April and early May. One near the Alder Marsh on 13th May (Tom Cooney).

Autumn passage: Two at the Alder March on 26th August and one on 1st September (Tom Cooney, Mark Collins). Three on 10th September at the Bull wall Reed Marsh (Ciaran Dunne) and three at the Alder Marsh on 23rd September (Tom Cooney).

BLACKCAP *Sylvia atricapilla*
Scarce migrant and winter visitor

Spring passage: April: minimum of four in the Alder Marsh between 15th and 17th and one on 1st May at the causeway (Tom Cooney).

Summer: One on 23rd June (Niall T. Keogh).

Autumn passage: Fifteen (11 males, 4 females) on the northern end of the island from 4th September to 4th November (Tom Cooney, Ger Franck).

GARDEN WARBLER *Sylvia borin*
Rare
One in the Alder Marsh on 24th August (Tom Cooney).

WHITETHROAT *Sylvia communis*
Scarce passage migrant

Spring passage: One near Bull Wall on 29th April (Tom Cooney). One in the Alder Marsh on 7th May with a second bird also present from 13th to 15th (Tom Cooney, Edd Kealy, Ger Franck). One at the causeway on 16th May (Tom Cooney, Paul McMahon).

Autumn passage: Two on 26th August and one on 12th September in the Alder Marsh (Tom Cooney).

Common Whitethroat (Ger Franck)

GRASSHOPPER WARBLER *Locustella naevia*
Scarce but regular spring passage migrant, occasional in autumn
Spring passage: Singles on 15th April at the causeway (Edd Kealy, Tom Cooney) and on 17th at Bull Wall Reed Marsh (Ger Franck, Jim Duffy), two near the Alder Marsh on 21st April and two in the southern dunes on 1st May (Tom Cooney). One beside the Interpretative Centre on 13th May (Ger Franck, Jim Duffy).
Autumn passage: One near the Alder Marsh on 12th September (Tom Cooney).

SEDGE WARBLER *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*
Scarce but regular passage migrant
Spring passage: Up to three from 15th to 30th April at Bull Wall Reed Marsh area (Edd Kealy, Tom Cooney, Niall Griffin) with one remaining to mid-May. Two in the Alder Marsh on 24th April (Tom Cooney). One on 13th May near the Alder Marsh (Ger Franck).
The bird at the Bull Wall Reed Marsh held territory up to July (Ger Franck, Tom Cooney, Edd Kealy, Niall Griffin).

REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*
Very rare but possibly annual spring migrant
Spring passage: One on 10th and 11th May (Tom Doyle, Tom Cooney) in scrub beside the causeway.
This is the fourth year in succession that reed warblers have occurred on the island.

WREN *Troglodytes troglodytes*
Resident
The breeding population continues to recover following the severe winter of 2009/2010.

STARLING *Sturnus vulgaris*
Common throughout the year
In late summer small flocks of up to 200 were reported (David MacPherson, Mark Collins)

FIELDFARE *Turdus pilaris*
Irregular passage migrant and winter visitor
One on 20th November (Tom Cooney).

SONG THRUSH *Turdus philomelos*
Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor
Singles on 5th January near the Interpretative Centre and in the Alder Marsh on 3rd February.
Despite being a common thrush on the mainland song thrushes remain scarce visitors on the island.

MISTLE THRUSH *Turdus viscivorus*
Very scarce visitor
One near the Alder Marsh on 5th January and 2nd November (Tom Cooney).

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa striata*
Very scarce passage migrant
Spring passage: Singles in scrub beside the causeway on 6th May and in the Alder Marsh on 15th May (Tom Cooney).

Autumn passage: Singles on 26th August (Tom Cooney) and 13th September (Brian Carruthers and Rachel Hynes).

ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula*
Scarce visitor, occasional breeder
In autumn and winter birds were present in many parts of the island.

WHINCHAT *Saxicola rubetra*
Very scarce passage migrant
Spring passage: One on 5th May in the northern dunes (Tom Cooney)

STONECHAT *Saxicola torquata*
Very scarce resident
Breeding: No birds were located in 2015.
Small numbers reported from various parts of the island from January to March with eleven in the southern dunes on 10th March (Sandra Murphy). In autumn up to ten regularly on the northern end of the island from 26th August onwards (Many observers).

WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oenanthe*
Common passage migrant, occasionally nests
Earliest date: One on 23rd March (Tom Cooney).
Latest date: Three on 10th October on the north saltmarsh (Gerry Power), three at the Bull Wall (James Hayes) and two at the causeway (John Fields).
Spring passage: Peak of 33 on 30th April.
Autumn passage: Small numbers reported regularly with a maximum of eight on 21st September (Ger Franck) and again on 10th October (see latest date).

DUNNOCK *Prunella modularis*
Very scarce or rare
One or two occasionally in scrub beside the Royal Dublin golf course.

HOUSE SPARROW *Passer domesticus*
Occasional in spring and early summer, very rare at other times
One at the causeway on 29th April (Ger Franck, Jim Duffy). One on 13th May at the causeway with up to six feeding in buckthorn in the same on 15th and 16th May (Tom Cooney, Paul McMahon).

GREY WAGTAIL *Motacilla cinerea*
Occasional along mainland
One on 5th February at River Santry outflow (Ger Franck).

PIED WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba yarrellii*
Resident and passage migrant

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba alba*
Scarce passage migrant
Spring: Nine on 7th May (Tom Cooney, Edd Kealy) on the beach beside

the Bull Wall. Three near the Point on 8th May (Tom Cooney).

Autumn: Eight records from 24th August to 21st September with maximum of three on 1st September (Ciaran Dunne, Tom Doyle, Edd Kealy, Tom Cooney, Ger Franck).

White Wagtails (Edd Kealy)

ROCK PIPIT *Anthus petrosus*
Uncommon passage migrant, very scarce winter visitor

Winter: At least two in January at Bull Wall (Tom Cooney, Sandra Murphy). One at River Naniken outflow on 12th January (Sandra Murphy).

Autumn: October: at Bull Wall one on 10th (James Hayes) and four on 27th (Ciaran Dunne). November/December: up to five regularly on the north saltmarsh.

CHAFFINCH *Fringilla coelebs*
Very scarce throughout the year
Male singing in shrubs above River Santry outflow on 5th and 19th February (Ger Franck).

GREENFINCH *Carduelis chloris*
Common winter visitor

Count(s): October: flocks of 28 on 10th (James Haynes) and 18 on 27th (Ciaran Dunne). Smaller numbers elsewhere usually in association with other finch species (Ger Franck, Tom Cooney).

LINNET *Linaria cannabina*
Resident and very common winter visitor
Flocks of up to 30 reported in the spring and summer (Mark Collins, Sandra Murphy, Joe Delaney). In autumn flock sizes over 50 birds were not uncommon with peaks of 200 on 16th September (Niall Griffin) and 100 on 7th October (Tom Cooney).

REDPOLL *Carduelis flammea cabaret*
Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor
Flocks were present in the Alder Marsh from 22nd September to the end of the year with a peak of 31 on 7th October. Two at Royal Dublin golf course on 16th October was the only record from the southern end of the island (Edd Kealy).

GOLDFINCH *Carduelis carduelis*
Common passage migrant and winter visitor, occasional breeder
Very scarce in the early part of the year with only three records (peak six birds) up to the end of July. In autumn the largest flock was 32 on 26th September (Mark Collins) with smaller numbers elsewhere (Tom Cooney, Ciaran Dunne). Twenty-six on 6th December (Mark Collins).

Goldfinches (Mark Collins)

SNOW BUNTING *Plectrophenax nivalis*
Irregular winter visitors
Male on 11th October (Mark Collins).

REED BUNTING *Emberiza schoeniclus*
Common resident

Reed Bunting juvenile (Dave MacPherson)

Issues of Conservation Concern 2015

During 2015 birdwatchers and members of the public reported disturbances to species and damage to habitats within the North Bull Island Nature Reserve, SPA, SAC and pNHA.

Proposed development: no further information is available on the proposed development or redevelopment of the Interpretative Centre.

Dogs: continue to be a major issue for wildlife and habitats within the nature reserve. Many dozens if not hundreds of dogs are allowed into the nature reserve on a daily basis. This continues to have a negative impact on ground nesting birds, winter and passage waterfowl as well as mammals on the island. The role of dogs in the decline and apparent local extinction of the Irish hare became the focus of attention for journalists and politicians in early 2015. The need for a resolution to this problem was raised in Dáil Éireann when the matter was brought to the attention of the Minister for Heritage, Heather Humphreys and An Taoiseach Enda Kenny. If the existing environmental laws protecting the islands mammals are strictly enforced then this will also benefit the islands birdlife.

Decline in breeding bird diversity: No ringed plovers or little terns nested in 2015. Apart from daily disturbances at the traditional nesting site by day trippers/joggers *etc* the regular movement of a JCB vehicle across nesting grounds during the breeding season guarantees these bird species will not return to nest on the island.

Fresh tyre tracks (a JCB) across the traditional nesting grounds for Ringed Plover and Little Tern at the Point on 29th May 2015. Both species and their habitats are supposed to be legally protected from disturbance and damage in the nature reserve.

Bait digging and shellfish collecting: this activity continued unabated during 2015. Sediments that are part of EU Annex I habitats were interfered with and damaged almost daily. This activity also causes disturbance to birds attempting to feed on inter-tidal areas.

Sea Buckthorn *Hippophae rhamnoides*.
A small area of buckthorn on the northern end of the island was cut in the winter 2014/2015 by Dublin City Council (DCC) staff. Many of the small patches cut down in recent years by DCC have regenerated. In addition, new plants are now growing well away from the established thickets. This invasive shrub is a serious biological threat to the islands important dune habitats will soon be out of control. It is clear that more resources will be required if this shrub is to be successfully eradicated from the nature reserve.

Water sporting activities:
On many occasions in 2015 waders and wildfowl feeding and roosting on the saltmarshes and the beach were observed being disturbed water sport activities in the nature reserve.