

# North Bull Island Bird Report

## 2016



Edited and compiled

by

Tom Cooney

## Editorial

This is the sixth annual report summarising bird occurrences on North Bull Island, Dublin Bay, Ireland. North Bull Island became Ireland's first bird sanctuary in 1931 and is now a designated National Nature Reserve (NNR), Special Protection Area (SPA) for birds and Special Area for Conservation (SAC) for habitats.

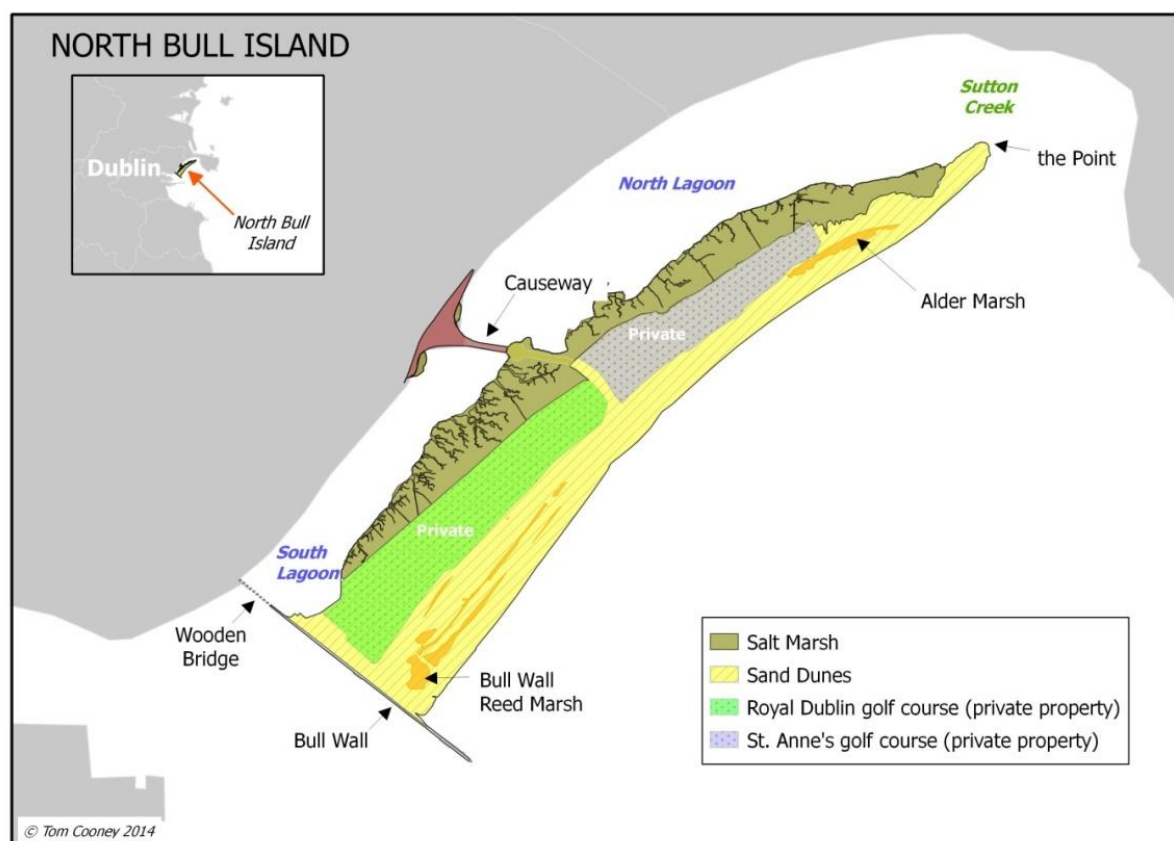
Four species were added to the island list in 2016: Terek Sandpiper, Baird's Sandpiper, White-tailed Eagle and Crossbill.

Species rarely recorded included pink-footed goose, glossy ibis, pectoral sandpiper and green-winged teal.

Locally scarce species included eider, garganey, woodcock, water rail, spotted redshank, grey phalarope, fulmar, arctic skua, yellow-legged gull, ring-billed gull and whinchat.

Rare passerines were in short supply but reed warbler occurred for the fifth spring in succession and grasshopper warblers were reported again in both spring and autumn.

Autumn 2016 was a particularly good year for little stints and curlew sandpipers which occurred in their highest numbers since the late 1990s.



*North Bull Island with some bird watching locations mentioned in this report.*

## Acknowledgements

This report would not be possible without the support and cooperation of birdwatchers who contributed observations and photographs in 2016. I wish to thank all contributors listed below.

## List of Contributors

Jim Bowman	Matt Garland	Dermot McCabe
Jim Byrne	Maris Ging	Jimmy McDonnell
Natalia Borodina	Niall Griffin	Colm McConnell
		Paul McMahon
		Stephen McMahon
Cian Cardiff	Niall Hatch	
Tom Cardiff	James Hayes	
Mark Carmody	Joe Henry	Michael Nolan
John Carroll		
Tom Carroll	Michael Keating	Tom O'Flynn
Brian Carruthers	Aidan G Kelly	Diarmuid Ó Sé
Victor Caschera	Edd Kealy	
Mark Collins	Niall T. Keogh	Brian Porter
Dick Coombes	Noel Keogh	Gerry Power
Tom Cooney	Tom Kilbane	
John Cusack	Pat King	Shane Thomas Quinn
	Stephen King	
João de Brito		Ciaran Salmon
	Paul Lynch	Ray Scally
		Mark Stewart
Hugh Delaney		
Joe Delaney	Paddy Manley	
Hazel Doyle	Sandra Murphy	Gay Traynor
John Doyle		Frank Turpin
Tom Doyle	Proinsias Mac an Bheatha	Rick Whelan
Jim Duffy	David MacPherson	
Ciaran Dunne		
John Fields		
Robert Foster		
John Fox		
Ger Franck		

*Cover photo: Baird's Sandpiper (David McPherson)*

# 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*

Occasional throughout the year

One and occasionally two were present in the lagoon in most months with a peak of seven on 14th September.

## **WHOOPE SWAN** *Cygnus cygnus*

Very scarce winter visitor

October: two arrived and stayed briefly on the northern mudflats on 19th (Shane Thomas Quinn, Seán A O'Laoire). November: two stopped briefly on the mudflats on 2nd, five flew north over the island on 7th and two flew north on 14th (Tom Cooney).



*Whooper Swans (Seán A O'Laoire)*

## **PINK-FOOTED GOOSE** *Anser brachyrhynchus*

Rare

Three on 18th and nine on 23rd November (Tom Cooney).

All birds flew over the island. These are the first records for 25 years.

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

Common winter visitor

Spring: Hundreds remained into April with a peak of 378 on 1st May with 20 present on the 8th.

Autumn arrivals: Three adults on 2nd September (Tom Cooney, Paul McMahon, Mark Collins).

Count: 1,186 on 16th November on the north saltmarsh (Paul McMahon).

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

Very scarce winter visitor

One on various dates from 12th February to 8th March (Tom Cooney, James Haynes, Hugh Delaney). Two on 15th March (Hugh Delaney).



*dark-bellied Brent Goose (James Hayes).*

**SHELDUCK** *Tadorna tadorna*

Resident, common winter visitor

Numbers increased rapidly over a number of days in October as post-moult birds returned to the island with 350 on 13th (Mark Collins). 485 on 20th October counted from photographs (Tom Cooney). 390 on 16th November (Paul McMahon).

**WIGEON** *Anas penelope*

Common winter visitor

Early autumn arrivals: Three on 29th August (Tom Cooney).

**GADWALL** *Anas hyemalis*

Very scarce autumn migrant and winter visitor

One on 19th April on north mudflats (Noel Keogh). One on 1st November (Paul McMahon).

**TEAL** *Anas crecca*

Common winter visitor

Latest date: 19 on 10th April (Ciaran Dunne).

Autumn arrivals: 18 on 15th August (Ger Franck).

**GREEN-WINGED TEAL** *Anas carolinensis*

Rare

Male north of the causeway from 11th March to 12th April (Brian Porter *et al.*).





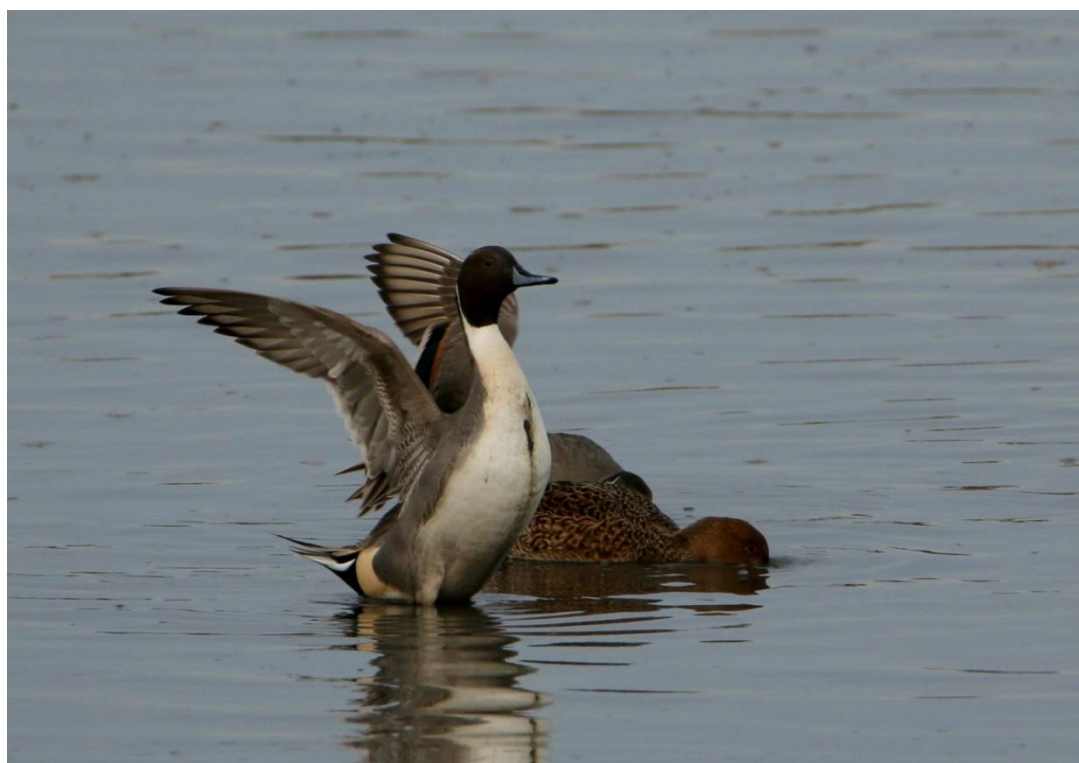
*Green-winged Teal (Mark Collins)*

**PINTAIL** *Anas acuta*

Winter visitor

92 on 10th February (Ger Franck). 63 on 29th September at Blackbanks and 72 on 16th November (Paul McMahon). In December 43 on 4th and 62 on 17th (Mark Collins).

Three in Sutton Creek on 21st November was an unusual location for this species (Ciaran Dunne).



*Pintail (Mark Collins)*

**GARGANEY** *Anas querquedula*

Rare

Juvenile or first winter on 18th September (Aidan G. Kelly).

**SHOVELER** *Anas clypeata*

Winter visitor

Autumn arrivals: 12 on 16th August (Ger Franck, Jim Duffy).

Counts: 39 on 18th September and 48 on 28th October (Mark Collins).

**TUFTED DUCK** *Aythya fuligula*

Resident

Occasional sightings on the southern end of the island.

**EIDER** *Somateria mollissima*

Rare

Female in Sutton Creek on 25th January (Tom Cooney).

This is the third record in four years.

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

Scarce winter visitor

Female in Sutton Creek on 14th November and presumably the same bird there on 1st December (Tom Cooney, Dave MacPherson).



*Long-tailed Duck (Dave MacPherson)*

**COMMON SCOTER** *Melanitta nigra*

Regular winter visitor in small numbers

A flock of 15 on 14th September with up to 30 later in the month (Tom Cooney, Edd Kealy).

One on 3rd and two on 7th October (Tom Cooney, Paul McMahon, Ciaran Dunne).

**GOLDENEYE** *Bucephala clangula*

Scarce winter visitor

A male off the Bull Wall and a female in the South Lagoon on 13th January (Noel Keogh).

Two in Sutton Creek on 7th November (Tom Cooney).

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

Regular visitor in small numbers

Up to nine birds reported regularly at various locations throughout the year (David MacPherson, Tom Carroll, Ger Franck, John Fox, Ciaran Dunne, Joe Delaney, Niall Griffin, Mark Collins, Tom O'Flynn, Tom Cooney). Peak counts of 47 at Bull Wall, Wooden Bridge, North Lagoon and Sutton Creek on 14th February and 21 on 15th March at Sutton Creek (Ciaran Dunne). 25 in Sutton Creek on 7th October (Ciaran Dunne).

Up to 13 in Sutton Creek in November and December (Ciaran Dunne, Dave MacPherson) with up to seven at the Wooden Bridge / Bull Wall in the same period (Shane Thomas Quinn, Ciaran Dunne, Ger Franck).

**RED-THROATED DIVER** *Gavia stellata*

Uncommon winter visitor

Singles on 14th February (Ciaran Dunne) and 21st April (Ger Franck, Jim Duffy). One in Sutton Creek on 7th October and 29th November (Ciaran Dunne).

**GREAT NORTHERN DIVER** *Gavia immer*

Scarce winter visitor.

One and occasionally two from 1st January to 14th February in Sutton Creek or off the Bull Wall (James Haynes, Ciaran Dunne, Ger Franck, John Fox). One on 18th November off the Bull Wall (Ciaran Dunne).

**FULMAR** *Fulmarus glacialis*

Rare

One off the beach on 18th March (Tom Cooney).

**MANX SHEARWATER** *Puffinus puffinus*

Occasional spring to autumn

Twenty-two off the beach on 1st May.

**GANNET** *Morus bassanus*

Occasional offshore in summer

Up to five regularly off the Bull wall and beach from 23rd March to 17th July (Ciaran Dunne, Ger Franck, Jim Duffy, Tom Cooney, Tom Doyle). Two off the Bull Wall on 25th September (Tom Doyle). Six close inshore on 28th September d (Tom Cooney).

**CORMORANT** *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Regular visitor all year

Recorded throughout the year with peak count of 37 at Bull Wall on 7th June (Tom Cooney) and 29 at Sutton Creek on 5th August (Ciaran Dunne).

**SHAG** *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

Scarce visitor

Singles on 4th (Niall Griffin), 9th January (John Fox) and 1st December (David MacPherson).

**LITTLE EGRET** *Egretta garzetta*

Non-breeding resident

Recorded throughout the year with peak counts of 20 on 5th June (Dave MacPherson) and 34



on 13th June (Tom Doyle). The autumn peak count was 89 on 30th August (Tom Cooney). Up to and over 60 occasionally in September and 42 on 5th October.



*Little Egrets (Mark Collins)*

**GREY HERON** *Ardea cinerea*

Present all year

Up to 35 adults and juveniles in late summer and autumn.



*Grey Heron (Mark Collins)*

**GLOSSY IBIS** *Plegadis falcinellus*

Vagrant

One at Bull Wall Reed Marsh on 29th April (Tom Cooney, Ger Franck).

This is the first site record for 72 years.



*Glossy Ibis (Ger Franck)*

**LITTLE GREBE** *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Scarce winter visitor

At the Wooden Bridge peak of five on 25th October and 22nd November (Ciaran Dunne, Shane Thomas Quinn).

Several reports of one to four in the same area outside the breeding season.

**GREAT CRESTED GREBE** *Podiceps cristatus*

Winter visitor, occasional at other times

Low numbers in the early part of the year.

January: off the Bull Wall peak of only 12 on 23rd (Ciaran Dunne).

February: ten on 14th (Ciaran Dunne).

March: 11 on 15th (Ciaran Dunne *et al.*).

April and May: up to four reported on various dates up to 14th May (several observers).

October: peak of seven on 7th (Ciaran Dunne).

November: 69 on 29th in Sutton Creek / north end of the beach (Ciaran Dunne) with smaller numbers at other times (Paul McMahon, Shane Thomas Quinn).

December: 23 at Bull Wall on 2nd and 14 on 13th (Ciaran Dunne).

**WHITE-TAILED EAGLE** *Haliaeetus albicilla*

Vagrant

A juvenile was photographed flying over the island on 9th November (John Doyle).

This is the first site record. This sighting undoubtedly reflects the breeding success of this species in Ireland since its reintroduction in 2007. Six birds were fledged in Ireland in 2016.





*White-tailed Eagle mobbed by hooded crow (John Doyle)*



*White-tailed Eagle (John Doyle)*

**SPARROWHAWK** *Accipiter nisus*

Regular visitor

Single birds reported regularly in all seasons including summer.

**COMMON BUZZARD** *Buteo buteo*

Scarce visitor

Single birds reported as follows: 28th March (Colm McConnell), 26th August (Ger Franck, Jim Duffy, 17th October (Tom Cooney), 21st October and 7th November (Mark Collins).



*Common Buzzard at River Santry outflow (Mark Collins)*

**WATER RAIL** *Rallus aquaticus*

Rare

Single birds on 4th January and 21st November (Tom Cooney).

**COOT** *Fulica atra*

Resident

Three birds regularly at Bull Wall Reed Marsh up to 12th April (Ger Franck, Noel Keogh).

**OYSTERCATCHER** *Haematopus ostralegus*

Common winter visitor and passage migrant

850 roosting on the north saltmarsh on 4th September (Paul McMahon).

A leucistic bird observed in previous autumns was present in briefly in mid-September.

**GOLDEN PLOVER**

Regular passage migrant and winter visitor

Winter: January: 900 on north mudflats on 9th (Ger Franck, John Fox).  
October: 450 on southern mudflats on 18th (Ger Franck, Jim Duffy) and 30th on north saltmarsh (Shane Thomas Quinn). November: 260 on south saltmarsh on 11th (Paul McMahon). December: 400 on 3rd (Mark Collins) and 600 on 11<sup>th</sup> (Ger Franck).  
Spring: 500 on south mudflats on 23rd March (Ger Franck). In April peaks of 220 on 14th and 147 on 19th (Dave MacPherson, Ger Franck).  
Summer: 30 on 2nd June (Ger Franck).  
Autumn: Singles on 16th July (Ger Franck) and 17th August (Niall Griffin). 300 on 29th September (Edd Kealy) and 350 on 1st October (Ger Franck).



*Golden Plovers in breeding plumage, April 2016 (Dave MacPherson)*

**GREY PLOVER** *Pluvialis squatarola*

Common winter visitor and passage migrant

Three on 1st and two on 31st May (Tom Cooney).

**LAPWING** *Pluvialis pluvialis*

Common in autumn, uncommon in winter

Autumn: Five on 14th June (Ger Franck) were the earliest returning birds. 25 on 15th July (Ciaran Dunne).

**RINGED PLOVER** *Charadrius hiaticula*

Former breeder, common passage migrant and winter visitor

No breeding pairs.

No birds reported from 30th April and 5th August.

Minimum of 106 on mudflats near the Wooden Bridge on 24th August (Tom Cooney).

**WHIMBREL** *Numenius phaeopus*

Regular passage migrant.

Earliest spring date: Three on 21st March.

Latest autumn date: One on 27th September.

Winter record: One on 2nd February (Tom Cooney). One on 7th November (Mark Collins).

Peak counts: April: 23 on 19th (Paul McMahon) and 30 on 29th (Tom Cooney). May: 103 on 1st (Tom Cooney), 25 on 6th (Ger Franck, Jim Duffy), 21 on 8th (Mark Collins). June: two on 7th (Jim Byrne). July: 17 on 12th and 34 on 26th (Ciaran Dunne). August: 15 on 18th (Ciaran Dunne). September: 12 on 13th (Tom Cooney).





*Whimbrel (Mark Collins)*

**BLACK-TAILED GODWIT** *Limosa limosa*

Common passage migrant and winter visitor

Spring: Several hundred reported with one count of 400 on 26th April (Joe Delaney, Mark Collins, Paul McMahon).

Summer/Autumn: 177 on 31st May (Tom Cooney), ten on 5th June (Dave MacPherson), 12 on 18th June (Robert Foster) and 70 on 28th June (Paul McMahon). 1,500 on 13th August (Tom Doyle). 370 on 16th November (Paul McMahon).

It is increasingly difficult to determine the cut-off point between late spring passage migration, summering birds and early returning migrants.



*Black-tailed Godwit (Mark Collins)*

**BAR-TAILED GODWIT** *Limosa lapponica*

Common winter visitor and passage migrant

Summer: Up to eight present regularly in June and early July.

This species is one of five that occur regularly in summer.

**TURNSTONE** *Arenaria interpres*

Winter visitor and passage migrant

Count: 80 at the Bull Wall and 60 at the slipway roost in the south lagoon on 19th February (Tom Cooney).

Summer: 24 on 4th June (Mark Collins). One on 16th July (Ger Franck).

Small numbers occur regularly in June and July.



Turnstones (Mark Collins)

**KNOT** *Calidris canutus*

Common winter visitor and passage migrant

Late date: Eighteen on 1st May near the Sea Scouts (Ger Franck).

**RUFF** *Philomachus pugnax*

Scarce autumn passage migrant, rare in spring

One on 15th to 17th July (Cian Cardiff, Tom Cardiff, Noel Keogh, Brian Porter). At least one from 22nd to 31st August with two on 24th (Proinsias Mac an Bheatha, Tom Doyle, Niall Griffin, Tom Cooney, Ger Franck, Tom Carroll). One, probably a new bird, on 13th September (Tom Cooney).

**CURLEW SANDPIPER** *Calidris ferruginea*

Autumn passage migrant, rare in winter and spring

Autumn: August: five on 21st (Aidan G. Kelly) with up to ten on 23rd and 24th (Ger Franck, Jim Duffy, Tom Doyle) increasing to at least 24 on 25th (Tom Cooney) and 26 on 28th (Aidan G. Kelly) with smaller numbers reported on other dates (Paul McMahon, Mark Stewart). September: Minimum of 19 on 1st and 51 on 13th (Tom Cooney). October: two on 1st (Natalia Borodina, Niall



Hatch) and one on 7th (Ger Franck). Two on 14th and one on 26th (Tom Cooney). November: two on 14th (Shane Thomas Quinn).

No spring records. The September peak is the highest since the mid-1990s.

**SANDERLING** *Calidris alba*

Common passage migrant and winter visitor

Peak counts: January: 250 on 2nd, 400 on 9th, 250 on 23rd (Ciaran Dunne, Joe Delaney, Ger Franck, Mark Collins). March: 170 on 31st March (Ciaran Dunne, Ger Franck). September: Three on 14<sup>th</sup> (Ciaran Dunne). October: 240-250 on 17th and 18th (Ciaran Dunne, Ger Franck, Jim Duffy). November: 270 on 18th (Ciaran Dunne). December: 160 on 11th (Ger Franck).

Summer: 20 on 3rd June (Dave MacPherson).



*Sanderling (David MacPherson)*

**DUNLIN** *Calidris alpina*

Very common passage migrant and winter visitor

Spring passage: 257 on 1st May (Tom Cooney).

Autumn arrivals: 70 on 16th July (Ger Franck).

Winter: 300 on southern end of the beach (Ger Franck, Jim Duffy).

Passage in May appeared to be lighter than in recent years but birds continued to pass through the island into late May and June e.g. six on 18th June (Robert Foster).

**PURPLE SANDPIPER** *Calidris maritima*

Scarce and irregular winter visitor

Two on 19th February at Bull Wall (Tom Cooney).

**BAIRD'S SANDPIPER** *Calidris bairdii*

Vagrant

Juvenile from 26th to 3rd October (Tom Cooney *et al.*).

This is the first site record.



*Baird's Sandpiper (Tom Cooney)*



*Baird's Sandpiper (Tom Cooney)*

**LITTLE STINT** *Calidris minuta*

Regular but scarce passage migrant

August: two juveniles on 24th, 28th and 29th with reports of single birds on other dates (Tom



Cooney, Aidan G. Kelly, Ger Franck, Jim Duffy, John Fox, Mark Stewart). September: peak of four on 6th (Dermot McCabe), eight on 13th with at least three up to 28th (Tom Cooney, Edd Kealy). October: two in 3rd (Tom Cooney).

The September peak is the largest since the mid-1990s.

**PECTORAL SANDPIPER** *Calidris melanotos*

Rare

Juvenile on 2nd September (Tom Cooney, Paul McMahon, Mark Collins).



*Pectoral Sandpiper (Mark Collins)*



**GREY PHALAROPE** *Phalaropus fulicarius*

Very scarce visitor

Juvenile/first winters on 18th September (Aidan G. Kelly) and 25th September (Tom Kilbane).

**TEREK SANDPIPER** *Xenus cinereus*

Vagrant

One at River Santry outflow on 16th July (Ger Frank *et al.*).

This is the first island record and the eight Irish record.



*Terek Sandpiper (Ger Franck)*

**COMMON SANDPIPER** *Actitis hypoleucos*

Scarce and irregular migrant

Spring: Two on 13th and one on 27th April (Paul McMahon, Jim Duffy).

Autumn: Singles on 18th July (Ger Franck, Jim Duffy), 5th August (Tom Carroll), 18th August (Niall Griffin, Tom Doyle).

All birds were recorded at River Santry outflow.

**SPOTTED REDSHANK** *Tringa erythropus*

Scarce passage migrant, very scarce in winter

One on 26th August (Tom Cooney, Ger Franck, Jim Duffy, John Fox, Mark Stewart). One on 13th September (Tom Cooney).

**GREENSHANK** *Tringa nebularia*

Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor

Spring latest date: One on 13th April (Mark Collins).

Summer: One on 14th June (Ger Franck).

Autumn arrivals: 15 on 16th July with 21 on 20th (Ger Franck, Mark Collins, Niall Griffin).

Peak count: 56 on 27th September (Tom Cooney).

**REDSHANK** *Tringa totanus*

Common passage migrant and winter visitor

Spring passage: One on 4th May (John Carroll).

Autumn passage: One on 18th June (Robert Foster). 1,000 on 13th August (Tom Doyle).

**JACK SNIPE** *Lymnecryptes minimus*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor, probably under-recorded

Peak of five on 15th January (Tom Cooney, João de Brito, Niall T Keogh, Noel Keogh, Brian Porter, Mark Carmody, Hugh Delaney). The last recorded bird in spring was of one on 15th April (Tom Cooney). Singles on 19th September and 20th October (Tom Cooney) with one or two occasionally in November and December (Tom Cooney, Paul McMahon).

**WOODCOCK** *Scolopax rusticola*

Rare

One flushed from dunes on northern end on 15th January (Tom Cooney).

**COMMON SNIPE** *Gallinago gallinago*

Regular passage migrant and winter visitor

Up to ten recorded at various locations in the early part of the year up to 28th April with peak counts of 18 on 12th February (Tom Cooney, Ger Franck, Jim Duffy, João de Brito). The first bird of autumn was on 13th September. Small numbers reported with a peak of eight on 13th October on north saltmarsh.

**ARCTIC SKUA** *Stercorarius parasiticus*

Scarce migrant

One on 1st January (Victor Caschera). A juvenile flew over the causeway on 19th August (Dick Coombes).

The January record of the first for that month.

**BLACK GUILLEMOT** *Cephus grille*

Occasional visitor

Up to four regularly off the Bull Wall and Wooden Bridge early part of the year (David MacPherson, Ciaran Dunne, Tom Cooney). Birds were not reported in April and May.

**RAZORBILL** *Alca torda*

Occasional visitor

Present occasionally singly off the Bull Wall.

**GUILLEMOT** *Uria aalge*

Occasional

Reports of one or two off the Bull Wall throughout the year (Ciaran Dunne, Tom Cooney).

**LITTLE TERN** *Sternula albifrons*

Formerly nationally important breeding population, now a rare summer visitor

Two on 16th July (Paul McMahon).

**SANDWICH TERN** *Sterna sandvicensis*

Common passage migrant, occasional in summer

Earliest date: Two on 31st March (Rick Whelan, Paddy Manley).

Latest date: One at the point on 2nd October (Ger Franck).

**COMMON TERN** *Sterna hirundo*

Common in summer

Earliest date: One on 20th April (Edd Kealy).



*Common Tern (David MacPherson)*

**ARCTIC TERN** *Sterna paradisaea*

Uncommon summer visitor

Very scarce throughout 2016 with only four reports of one or two birds on 6th and 19th May, 15th and 17th July (Ciaran Dunne, Tom Doyle).

**LITTLE GULL** *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

Regular but scarce visitor

Juvenile at the point on 27th September (Tom Cooney) and possibly the same bird at the causeway on 29th (Edd Kealy).

**KITTIWAKE** *Rissa tridactyla*

Regular visitor mainly in spring.

Spring: Recorded from 19th February to 9th May. A peak of 35 on 10th March (Ciaran Dunne) but numbers increased substantially in April and May with a peak of 320 on 4th May the Bull Wall (Tom Cooney).  
Autumn: Two on 19th August (Ciaran Dunne). Up to twenty off the northern end of the beach on 28th September during strong southerly winds (Tom Cooney).

Winter: Nine on 27th December (Ciaran Dunne).

**MEDITERRANEAN GULL** *Larus melanocephalus*

Scarce

Singles on 8th January (Ciaran Dunne) and 11th March (Ger Franck). One or two regularly from 28th June into autumn (Paul McMahon, Ger Franck, Jim Duffy, Niall Griffin, Tom Doyle). Peak of 27 on 17th July at Bull Wall (Tom Doyle). Adult on 1st September (Tom Cooney) and 14th (Paul McMahon).

**RING-BILLED GULL** *Larus delawarensis*

Rare

Adult at Blackbanks on 1st November (Paul McMahon).

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

Scarce visitor

One on 12th May (Paul McMahon).

**STOCK DOVE** *Columba oenas*

Very scarce

Two on 16th July (Ger Franck)

**COLLARED DOVE** *Streptopelia decaocto*

Scarce visitor

One on 19th April at Royal Dublin, Two at Bull Wall on 14th May and two at River Santry outflow on 18th July (Ger Franck, Jim Duffy).

**CUCKOO** *Cuculus canorus*

Very scarce summer visitor

One on 30th April (John Carroll) was probably the same bird at the Alder Marsh from 12th to 31st May (Matt Garland, Paul McMahon, Tom Cooney).

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

Scarce and irregular winter visitor

Up to five recorded regularly from January to 8th May (Gerry Power, Mark Collins, Tom Cooney, John Cusack, Tom O'Flynn, Ger Franck, Jim Duffy, Hugh Delaney, Michael Nolan, Edd Kealy, David MacPherson). First of autumn was a single bird in the southern dunes on 2nd October (Gerry Power) may have been the same bird on many dates up to mid-November (Tom Cooney, Mark Collins, Brian Carruthers and Hazel Doyle).



*Short-eared Owl (David MacPherson)*

**SWIFT** *Apus apus*

Frequent in spring and autumn, scarce in summer

Earliest date: One on 30th April (Tom Carroll, Mark Collins).

Latest date: Seven on 31st August (Tom Cooney, Ger Franck, Tom Carroll).

Highest count: Twenty-five on 12th July (Ger Franck).

**KINGFISHER** *Alcedo atthis*

Scarce but regular winter visitor

One regularly at the River Santry outflow from 4th to 22nd January (Tom Cooney, Ger Franck, John Fox, John Cusack, Noel Keogh, Joe Delaney). In autumn, single birds on 23rd and 26th August (Ger Franck, Jim Duffy, Tom Cooney, John Fox) and 22nd September (Paul McMahon). Two on 11th October at the River Santry outflow (Mark Collins) and one at the same location on many dates to the end of the year (Gay Traynor, Shane Thomas Quinn, Mark Collins).



*Kingfisher (Mark Collins)*

**KESTREL** *Falco tinnunculus*

Resident

One and occasionally two present daily.

**MERLIN** *Falco columbarius*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor

One at various locations on the island from 2nd to 27th January (Gerry Power, Tom Carroll, Mark Stewart, Jim Duffy, João de Brito, Paul Lynch, Jim Bowman). One on 16th March (João de Brito). One from 27th September (Tom Cooney) was last reported on 17<sup>th</sup> December (many observers).





*Merlin (Michael Keating)*

**PEREGRINE** *Falco peregrinus*

Regular visitor

Single birds reported throughout the year but no records for May or June.



*Peregrine (Mark Collins)*

**HOODED CROW** *Corvus corone cornix*

Resident

Common in all areas throughout the year with up to 30 birds on the mudflats in autumn.

**Carrion/Hooded Crow** *C. c. corone/cornix*

Very scarce

The hybrid observed in previous years was present throughout 2016 in the general vicinity of the River Santry outflow (many observers).

**RAVEN** *Corvus corax*

Scarce but regular visitor

Two on 2nd March and one on 3rd May (Tom Cooney), one on 19th April (Paul McMahon), one on 14th June. Three on 15th and 26th August (Ger Franck, Jim Duffy, John Fox). Two over the northern dunes on 5th October (Tom Cooney). Single birds on the north saltmarsh on 7th November (Paul McMahon) and at the causeway on 21st and 23rd (Tom Cooney).

**GOLDCREST** *Regulus regulus*

Very scarce passage migrant, mainly in autumn

Winter: One on 3rd January (Joe Delaney).

Spring passage: Up to two on several dates in the Alder Marsh from 23rd February to 14th March (Tom Cooney, Ger Franck, Jim Duffy, Hugh Delaney). One at the causeway on 14th April (Tom Cooney).

Autumn passage: September: up to two in the Alder Marsh daily from 13th to 19th and four on 26th and six on 28th (Paul McMahon, Tom Cooney, Edd Kealy). October: Several birds on northern end of the island throughout the month with peaks of 14 on 10th and six on 13th with smaller numbers to the end of the month (Tom Cooney, Mark Collins). November: up to two in the Alder Marsh until 11th (Tom Cooney, Paul McMahon, Mark Collins).

**BLUE TIT** *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Very scarce visitor

One at River Santry outflow on 14th May (Mark Collins).

**COAL TIT** *Periparus ater*

Rare

One feeding in scrub near the Interpretative Centre on 13th October (Tom Cooney).

**SAND MARTIN** *Riparia riparia*

Regular spring and autumn passage migrant in small numbers, scarce in summer

Earliest date: One on 23rd March (Ger Franck) with peak of 16 on 12th April.

Summer: Twelve on 12th July.

Latest date: Four on 21st September (Tom Cooney).

**BARN SWALLOW** *Hirundo rustica*

Summer visitor and passage migrant

Earliest Date: Four on 31st March (Rick Whelan).

Latest Date: One on 18th October (Ger Franck, Jim Duffy).

Spring passage: No significant reports.

Autumn passage: Many hundreds, probably thousands, migrating southwards over the

island daily in the last few days of September.

**HOUSE MARTIN** *Delichon urbica*

Summer visitor and passage migrant

Earliest date: Eight on 14th April.

Latest date: One on 18th October (Ger Franck, Jim Duffy).

**CHIFFCHAFF** *Phylloscopus collybita*

Scarce but regular passage migrant

Spring passage: Up to four reported regularly from 4th April to 3rd May (Tom Cooney, Ger Franck, Jim Duffy, Paul McMahon, Edd Kealy) with a peak of ten on 12th April near Bull Wall Reed Marsh (Ger Franck).

Autumn passage: Only one autumn record. One in the Alder Marsh from 5th to 9th October (Tom Cooney, Mark Collins).



*Chiffchaff (Mark Collins)*

**WILLOW WARBLER** *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Uncommon but regular passage migrant

Spring passage: One on 4th April (Tom Cooney). Up to 11 on 14th on the southern end (Paul McMahon, Ger Franck) with smaller numbers elsewhere on the island after this date. Peak of five on 3rd May.

Autumn passage: Up to four reported regularly from 23rd August to 26th September at various locations. Most reports were from early September.

**BLACKCAP** *Sylvia atricapilla*

Scarce migrant and winter visitor

Spring passage: Three or four near the Bull Wall Reed Marsh on 12th April (Paul McMahon, Ger Franck). Male and female at the causeway on 14th April and a male at the boundary of St. Anne's golf course on 1st May (Tom Cooney).

Autumn passage: A male at the Alder Marsh on 23rd August. Single males on the north end on 26th September. Male in the Alder Marsh on 5th October (Tom Cooney).  
Winter: Two near the Royal Dublin clubhouse on 10th December (Ray Scally) and a male on 22nd (Ger Franck).

**WHITETHROAT** *Sylvia communis*

Scarce passage migrant

Spring passage: One on 29th April (Tom Cooney, Ger Franck). One in St. Anne's golf course on 1st May (Tom Cooney).  
Summer: One on 18<sup>th</sup> June (Robert Foster).  
Autumn passage: One on 23rd August at the Alder Marsh (Tom Cooney).

**GRASSHOPPER WARBLER** *Locustella naevia*

Very scarce but regular passage migrant

Spring: In southern dunes one on 21st April and two on 1st May (Tom Cooney). One on 4th May on southern end (John Carroll).  
Autumn: One at Bull Wall Reed Marsh on 24th August (Ger Franck). One on 1st September on northern end (Tom Cooney).

This species is now a regular migrant in spring and autumn.

**SEDGE WARBLER** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Scarce but regular passage migrant

Spring: Singles at Bull Wall Reed Marsh on 20th April, 3rd and 6th May (Edd Kealy, Tom Cooney). Singles on 4th May at Santry River outflow and the Interpretative Centre (Paul McMahon).  
Summer: One at Royal Dublin Golf Course on 11th June (Ger Franck).  
Autumn: Singles on 24th August and 19th September (Tom Cooney).

**REED WARBLER** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Very rare but annual spring migrant

Spring: One in song in buckthorn at the corner of the Royal Dublin Golf Course on 29th April (Tom Cooney).

This is the fifth year in succession that reed warblers have been recorded on the island. It is likely that some of these birds belong to the breeding populations in Counties Dublin and Louth.

**WREN** *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Resident

Breeding has now been re-established at all regular sites on the island. Birds reported from many areas on the island outside the breeding season.

**BLACKBIRD** *Turdus merula*

Resident

Small numbers throughout the year but small loose flocks in late December may have been winter visitors.

**SONG THRUSH** *Turdus philomelos*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor

In January two on 15th in the Alder Marsh and two on 23rd at River Santry outflow (Mark

Collins). Single birds on various dates in October. Three or four in the dunes on the northern and southern ends of the island in December were probably winter visitors.

One holding territory at Royal Dublin in spring (Ger Franck).

**REDWING** *Turdus iliacus*

Passage migrant and winter visitor.

One on 8th January. Two on 18th and 20th October.

**MISTLE THRUSH** *Turdus viscivorus*

Uncommon visitor

Seven at the mainland end of the causeway on 22nd January (Niall Griffin) and one at River Naniken outflow on 3rd June (Ger Franck).

**SPOTTED FLYCATCHER** *Muscicapa striata*

Very scarce passage migrant

Singles in 6th May and 23rd August (Tom Cooney).

**WHINCHAT** *Saxicola rubetra*

Very scarce migrant

One from 22nd to 24th October (Mark Collins *et al.*).



Whinchat (Mark Collins)



**STONECHAT** *Saxicola torquata*

Uncommon resident

In the early part of the year up to three regularly in the general vicinity of the Alder Marsh and the dunes on the southern end of the island. Up to seven reported from early October to the end of the year.

Breeding: A pair with three juveniles in southern dunes in summer.

This is the first confirmed nesting for a number of years.



Stonechat (Dave MacPherson)

**WHEATEAR** *Oenanthe oenanthe*

Common passage migrant, former breeder

Earliest date: One on 31st March at the Bull Wall (Rick Whelan, Paddy Manley).

Latest date: One on 21st October (Mark Collins).

Spring: Highest counts of only 14 on 20th April, 10 on 30th April and 10 on 6th May (John Carroll, Edd Kealy, Tom Cooney).

Autumn: Fewer than four reported daily from 4th July onwards (many observers).

Spring arrivals were later than normal and the low numbers reported in spring and autumn probably reflects observer effort rather than a scarcity of birds.

**DUNNOCK** *Prunella modularis*

Rare resident

Two on 5th April at Royal Dublin golf course and another there on 11th December (Ger Franck).

**HOUSE SPARROW** *Passer domesticus*

Scarce visitor

One on 24th April (Mark Collins). Three on 5th July (Tom Cooney).

**GREY WAGTAIL** *Motacilla cinerea*

Occasional along mainland

Single birds reported on 5th August at River Santry outflow (Tom Carroll), at Blackbanks on 30th September (Paul McMahon) and at River Santry outflow on 15th October and 15th November (Mark Collins).



Grey Wagtail (Mark Collins)

**PIED WAGTAIL** *Motacilla alba yarrellii*

Resident and passage migrant

**White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba alba*

Scarce passage migrant

Spring: One on 9th April (Diarmuid Ó Sé).

Autumn: September: one on 2nd (Paul McMahon); one seen arriving at the point on the 28th during a day of visible passerine migration (Tom Cooney, John Fox, Mark Stewart). One at St. Anne's golf course on 29th (Edd Kealy) may have been the same bird. October: Two on 10th (Thomas O'Flynn) and one on 11th (Tom Cooney).  
November: one at Blackbanks on 1st November (Paul McMahon).

**ROCK PIPIT** *Anthus petrosus*

Uncommon winter visitor

Up to three reported occasionally at Bull Wall, Causeway and North Saltmarsh from January to April and from October into 2017 (Mark Collins, Tom Cooney, Ger Franck).

**CHAFFINCH** *Fringilla coelebs*

Common winter visitor

Birds present at River Santry outflow on 8th May, 4th June and 28th December (Mark Collins). The only record on the island was of single female in scrub near the Royal Dublin clubhouse on 11th and 20th December (Ger Franck).

**GREENFINCH** *Carduelis chloris*

Common winter visitor

Scarce in 2016 with all flocks of less than ten birds reported.

**LINNET** *Carduelis cannabina*

Resident and very common winter visitor

Autumn flocks: 120 on 31st August (Paul McMahon) and 160 on 1st September (Tom Cooney). Seventy on north saltmarsh on 7th October.

Migration: Small numbers observed arriving at the point from a northerly direction on 28th September. These birds continued flying southwards on a day of visible migration.

Winter: On the north saltmarsh 120 on 25th November and 200 on 11th December (Mark Collins).

**REDPOLL** *Carduelis flammea cabaret*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor

All records from the Alder Marsh. Up to five regularly from January to 13th March (Tom Cooney, Mark Collins, Joe Delaney, Hugh Delaney) with a peak of 20 on 18th March (Edd Kealy). In autumn, ten on 23rd August (Tom Cooney), one on 28th September (Paul McMahon) and two on 20th October (Tom Cooney).



Redpoll (Mark Collins)

**CROSSBILL** *Loxia curvirostra*

Vagrant

Two flew over the causeway on 15th March (Hugh Delaney).

This is the first island record.

**GOLDFINCH** *Carduelis carduelis*

Common passage migrant and winter visitor, occasional breeder

Up to three in the vicinity of the Santry River outflow from April to June. In autumn several flocks were reported in various parts of the island with peak counts as follows:

August: 65 at the causeway on 26th.

September: 60+ at the causeway on 16th, 32 on north saltmarsh on 19th, 31 at Bull Wall Reed Marsh on 20th, 60 on south saltmarsh on 22nd. Up to 160 in the vicinity of the Alder Marsh throughout the month.

October: peak of 418 on 5th (counted from photographs) and 390 on 7th (Tom Cooney) with up to 200 regularly in subsequent weeks (Mark Collins *et al.*).

The October flocks were some of the largest seen on the island for several decades.



## Issues of Conservation Concern 2016

Although the North Bull Island is officially a Nature Reserve, Special Protection Area (SPA) for birds and a Special Area for Conservation (SAC) numerous recreational activities take place on a daily basis that have a negative impact on the islands habitats and wildlife.

The following are examples of incidents reported by the general public to [www.bullislandbirds.com](http://www.bullislandbirds.com) in 2016. Whether accidental or deliberate, all of these activities caused damage to protected habitats and/or disturbance to protected bird species. The range of activities observed in 2016 in habitats where birds were nesting, feeding or roosting: golfing, dogs (numerous), bait digging, shellfish collecting, jogging, walkers with dogs on saltmarshes and mudflats, canoeing (individuals), fishing and quad bikes.

### Grass cutting Meadow Pipit breeding habitat

In early 2016 grass areas on both sides of the causeway were mown by Dublin City Council (DCC) staff. Information has been received that DCC staff checked the area before any cutting is done and no nesting birds were located. This is very peculiar because at least two pairs of the Meadow Pipits have been nesting there since at least 2012 and were in territorial behaviour in spring 2016. Meadow Pipits are Red list species of conservation concern in Ireland and this nesting habitat lies within the National Nature Reserve (NNR), Special Protection Area (SPA) for birds and Special Area for Conservation (SAC) for habitats (see <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites>). It is not known why DCC decided to cut this nesting habitat or whether they intend to repair the damage. During the summer months it was also noted that brambles in this general area were cut down. These native scrub species were used by a range of passerines for perching and feeding.

### House Martin nests disappear

A report was received that two house martin nests on the Interpretative Centre unexpectedly disappeared during the breeding season.

### Sea Buckthorn *Hippophae rhamnoides*.

DCC made some progress in 2016 attempting to control this highly invasive shrub. Large thickets on the northern end of the island near the Alder Marsh were cut down. Unfortunately areas cut in previous years have not only regenerated but have expanded into nearby dunes. Even the Alder Marsh with its rich floral diversity is now under threat. A single shrub that became established about 2010 has expanded considerably and will soon become a dense thicket eventually encroaching into areas with diverse and rare native flora. Sea Buckthorn is an invasive shrub that was introduced to North Bull Island several decades ago.

**Dogs:** there were numerous incidents dogs chasing birds and other wildlife in 2016. On several occasions dogs were walked the full length of both northern and southern mudflats and were observed chasing Brent geese and waders that were feeding on the incoming tide. In all incidents, the dog owners paid no attention to the disturbances caused by their dogs. On one occasion a dog owner was observed encouraging their dog to chase flocks of waders. In addition, bait diggers occasionally bring their dogs out onto the mudflats for hours at a time. The detrimental impacts of dogs in the Nature Reserve are not confined to birds. In 2016 the significant role they have played in the demise and almost certain local extinction of the Irish Hares in this important National Nature Reserve was raised by local TDs in Dáil Éireann (<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/oireachtas/bull-island-s-hare-population-all-but->



[extinct-due-to-dogs-1.2197411](#)). Concerns have also been expressed over their harassment of the islands seal populations. This situation needs to be resolved as a matter of urgency before more damage is done to the islands wildlife and biodiversity.

**Bait digging, shellfish collecting and crabbing:** EU Annex I inter-tidal habitats (mudflats and sandflats) continued to be damaged in 2016 in addition to the removal of organisms from the National Nature Reserve.

**Unprotected nesting habitat:** no ringed plovers or little terns were present at the former nesting site in the spring or summer of 2016. Lack of protection from disturbance is the main reason.

**Water sports:** various activities caused disturbances to birds roosting on the saltmarshes in 2016. On the beach side of the island windsurfing close to the shore regularly disturbed sanderlings and ringed plovers throughout the year. In the lagoons canoeing and boating were common on the highest tides of the year and these activities were observed to cause disturbances to roosting birds for up to one hour at a time. Paddle boarding has become more frequent in recent years causing prolonged disturbances to migratory and wintering birds.



Surfer padding in the north lagoon which is within the designated NNR, SPA, NHA and SAC on 17/04/2016.



Surfer (padding) in south lagoon 6th March 2016

Disturbance to feeding and roosting birds by recreational activities has increased in the lagoons in recent years