North Bull Island Bird Report
2021

Edited and compiled
by
Tom Cooney
Editorial

This is the eleventh annual report summarising bird occurrences of interest on North Bull Island (53°22'12.3"N 6°08'56.7"W), 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) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

Red Kite was added to the island list in 2021. Although this species has become an increasingly familiar sight in Ireland over the last decade, this record is particularly noteworthy. North Bull Island did not even exist when the last of the native breeding population became extinct in Ireland in the late eighteenth century.

Scarce species in 2021 included the first Hen Harrier and Glaucous Gull for well over a decade, the first Twite since 2012 and Yellow Wagtail since 2013. Storm Petrels were recorded for the first time in several decades however as this species only occurs during severe weather conditions, it’s possibly under-recorded. Pink-footed Goose occurred for the fourth time in the last decade and Black Brant was recorded after several years absence. One of the more unusual highlights was the occurrence of Tree Sparrows for the second year in succession.

Unfortunately, ringed plovers were absent again from the traditional nesting location and not even one Little Tern was reported.
Acknowledgements

This report would not be possible without the goodwill and cooperation of birdwatchers who contributed observations and photographs in 2021. I wish to thank all contributors listed below.

List of Contributors

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<tr>
<th>D. Boylan</th>
<th>Sean Farrell</th>
<th>Paul Milne</th>
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<tr>
<td>Andy Burke</td>
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<td>Brian Burke</td>
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<td>Breandán Ó Braoin</td>
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<td>Robert Busby</td>
<td>Brian Gormley</td>
<td>Seán A O’Laoire</td>
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<td>Mark Carmody</td>
<td>James Hayes</td>
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<td>Ciaran Dunne</td>
<td>Colm McConnell</td>
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<td>Geraldine Donoghue</td>
<td>Vincie McManus</td>
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<td>Keith Mc Quillan</td>
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<td>Eddie Mc Elligott</td>
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Cover photo: Red Kite (Dominic Kelly)
Systematic List


**PHEASANT Phasianus colchicus ssp.**

Rare

A male in the dunes on 29th April (Eddie Mc Elligott).

Presumably the same bird reported in 2020.

**BRENT GOOSE Branta bernicla hrota**

Common winter visitor

Latest spring date: Up to 16 birds remained into May with eight on 26th at the Wooden Bridge (Ciaran Dunne, Gavin Rothwell, Paul Milne, Mark Collins, D. Boylan, Diarmuid Ó Sé).

Earliest autumn date: One on 11th September (Derek O’Reilly).

**Dark-bellied Brent Goose Branta bernicla bernicla**

Scarce winter visitor

January: two on 26th (Gavin Rothwell). February: single birds on 5th and 16th (Mark Carmody, Joe Proudfoot). March: one on 5th (Ciaran Dunne), three on 11th (Tom Doyle) and one on 26th (Paul Milne). April: One on 16th and two on 20th (Ciaran Dunne) and three on 24th and six (five juveniles and one adult) on 26th (Jan Rod). May: One on 1st (Paul Milne). October: One on 17th (Sean Geraty). November: One on 20th (Victor Caschera, Sean Geraty). December: one on 11th, 13th and 19th (Aidan G. Kelly, Sean Geraty, Joe Proudfoot).

![Dark-bellied Brent Goose (Photo: Joe Proudfoot).](image)
**Black Brant** *Branta bernicla nigricans*
Rare
One on 29th January (Niall T. Keogh), 5th February (Mark Carmody) and 27th March (Jan Rod). One on 15th November (Joe Proudfoot).
All reports probably refer to the same individual.

Two adults and three juveniles showing characteristics of the putative Grey-bellied Brant were reported on 24th April (Jan Rod).

**PINK-FOOTED GOOSE** *Anser brachyrhynchus*
Very scarce visitor
One on 24th April (Niall T. Keogh) remained until the 27th (Gavin Rothwell, Ciaran Dunne).

**MUTE SWAN** *Cygnus olor*
Regular throughout the year
Two reported on many occasions with a maximum of seven on 7th September (Ger Franck, Jim Duffy) and four on 1st November (Niall T. Keogh, João de Brito).

**WHOOPER SWAN** *Cygnus cygnus*
Scarce visitor during migration, occasional in winter
Two flyovers on 17th January (Ger Franck, Gavin Rothwell) and again on 3rd April (Andy Burke). In November five on 2nd (Mark Collins, Ciaran Dunne), seven on the north mudflats on 3rd and 7th (Mark Collins, Ciaran Dunne) and six flyovers on 9th (Shane Thomas Quinn).
A typical spread of records with most reported in November.

Whooper Swans (Photo: Mark Collins)
**SHELDUCK** *Tadorna tadorna*
Resident, common winter visitor

Summer: Small numbers reported were part of the resident breeding population.

High counts: 46 on 30th May, 56 on 19th June and 425 on 17th October (Sean Geraty). 550 on 1st November (Niall T. Keogh). 1,164 on 5th December (Sean Geraty). 1,330 on 12th December (Sean Geraty).

![Shoveler and Teal](Photo: Sean A. O’Laoire)

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**SHOVELER** *Anas clypeata*
Winter visitor

Last spring date: Two on 18th February (Geraldine Donoghue).

Autumn arrivals: Two on 23rd August (Ger Franck).

Summer: Two on 28th May (Phil Clancy) were possibly failed breeders.

High counts: 170 on 13th January (Ger Franck). 76 on 22nd October (Shane Thomas Quinn). 97 on 1st November (Niall T. Keogh, João de Brito). 78 on 23rd December (Alan Dalton).

**GADWALL** *Mareca strepera*
Scarce visitor

Two on 7th September (Tom Carroll).

**WIGEON** *Anas penelope*
Common winter visitor

Autumn arrivals: 30 on 6th August (Shane Thomas Quinn) increased to over 50 by the end of the month (many observers).

**PINTAIL** *Anas acuta*
Winter visitor

Autumn arrivals: Nine of 31st August (Mark Collins).

High counts: 70 at Blackbanks on 10th February (Tom Carroll). 58 on 7th September (Tom Carroll), 71 on 24th September and 130 on 4th October (Shane Thomas Quinn) and 99 on 4th November (Ciaran Dunne). In December 71 on 5th (Sean Geraty), 162 on 23rd and 288 on 30th (Alan Dalton).
Pintails (Photo: Sean A O’Laoire)

**TEAL Anas crecca**
Common winter visitor

Latest spring report: One at Santry River outflow on 11th April (Geraldine Donoghue).
Autumn arrivals: Eight on 21st July in the south lagoon (Ger Franck).
Summer: One on 6th May (Ciaran Dunne, Mark Collins) was possibly a migrant.
High count: 1,126 on 24th December (Alan Dalton).
**TUFTED DUCK** *Aythya fuligula*
Resident
Three on the southern end of the island on 2nd April (Gerry Lyons). Two at St. Anne’s golf course on the 7th, 9th and 30th May (Mark Collins, Gavin Rothwell).

**EIDER** *Somateria mollissima*
Scarce visitor
Bull Wall: Female originally reported off the South Bull Wall on 30th December 2020 was present regularly off the port side of the Bull Wall up to 1st February (Noel Keogh et al.).

**COMMON SCOTER** *Melanitta nigra*
Regular winter visitor in small numbers
Two on 9th July (Ciaran Dunne) and nine on 11th July (Paul Milne). Six on 6th September (Ciaran Dunne).
All birds were observed off the northern end of the island.

**LONG-TAILED DUCK** *Clangula hyemalis*
Scarce winter visitor
One of 5th February (Mark Carmody). Two female types from 24th November to 27th December off the Bull Wall (Noel Keogh, Ciaran Dunne, Gerry Lyons, Victor Caschera, Sean Geraty, Dominic Kelly).

**GOLDENEYE** *Bucephala clangula*
Scarce winter visitor
All reports were front the first part of the year
Sutton Creek: Five in channel on the north mudflats on 9th January (Paul Milne). Single birds on 1st and 8th February, three on 5th March and one on 21st December (Ciaran Dunne).
Bull Wall: Up to three reported regularly from 10th January to 21st February with a peak of five on 24th January (Andy Burke, Ciaran Dunne). Three on 19th December (Andy Burke).

**RED-BREASTED MERGANSER** *Mergus serrator*
Regular in small numbers but very scarce in summer

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Highest counts were 72 on 20th January (Gavin Rothwell). 50 on 31st January (Gerry Power), 27 on 22nd October (Ciaran Dunne).
The January count is one of the largest to date.

**RED-THROATED DIVER** *Gavia stellata*
Uncommon winter visitor
Recorded from 17th January to 14th May with a maximum of five on 16th March and 2nd April (Ciaran Dunne, Andy Burke, Shane Thomas Quinn). Up to six were present from 2nd September to the end of the year with a peak of 14 on 10th November (Ciaran Dunne, Sean Farrell, Niall T. Keogh, João de Brito, Andy Burke).
GREAT NORTHERN DIVER *Gavia immer*
Scarce winter visitor
Most reports were from the Bull Wall.

Bull Wall: January: one to three regularly with four on 24th (Andy Burke, Ciaran Dunne). February: peak of six on 10th and 17th (Ciaran Dunne, Andy Burke). March: peak of five on 3rd (Ciaran Dunne, Andy Burke). April: two remained until 12th (Shane Thomas Quinn *et al.*). December: three on 19th (Andy Burke).

North end of island: Singles birds on 1st February, 1st and 16th March and 10th November (Ciaran Dunne).

Great Northern Diver (Proinsias Mac an Bheatha)

STORM PETREL *Hydrobates pelagicus*
Very scarce visitor

Sutton Creek: Single birds reported on 23rd May (Paul Milne) and 12th August (Ciaran Dunne).

It is likely that more Storm Petrels occur on the north end of the island and in the vicinity of Sutton Creek during strong southeast winds.

FULMAR *Fulmarus glacialis*
Very scarce visitor

Sutton Creek: One on 23rd May and two on 5th June (Paul Milne).

The dates of these sightings suggest these birds were probably from nearby breeding sites on Howth Head.
MANX SHEARWATER Puffinus puffinus
Occasional spring to autumn.
North end/Sutton Creek:  May: one on 3rd, 200 on 9th and 80 on 23rd (Paul Milne). June: 30 on 5th, three on 10th and two on 25th (Paul Milne, Ciaran Dunne). July: 48 on 11th (Paul Milne).
Offshore in bay: 100 on 3rd June (Andrew Kelly). Four on 3rd July (Sean Geraty).
Bull Wall: Six on 8th June (Neil Molloy).

GANNET Morus bassanus
Occasional offshore in summer
Reported between 29th March and 12th October with most records from the Bull Wall or off the north end of the beach near Sutton Creek (many observers). Highest counts were 38 on 20th April (Ciaran Dunne), 20 on 11th July (Paul Milne). Monthly counts as follows.

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CORMORANT Phalacrocorax carbo
Regular visit all year. Maximum counts as follows:
Sutton Creek: At the Point there were 20 on 23rd April (Tom Carroll), 22 on 12th July, 39 on 25th August, 66 on 1st September (Ciaran Dunne).
Bull Wall: 13 on 15th March, 16 on 23rd April, 35 on 9th July and 48 on 3rd September (Mark Collins).

SHAG Phalacrocorax aristotelis
Scarce visitor
One to four reported on ten dates from January to May and September at various location around the island. Highest count of four was on 5th March (Ciaran Dunne).

LITTLE EGRET Egretta garzetta
Non-breeding resident
Counts of 20 or more included 20 on 28th May (Phil Clancy), 40 on 7th September (Ger Franck, Jim Duffy), 38 on 18th September (Sean Geraty).
Reports of less than 20 birds were reported by Gavin Rothwell, Geraldine Donoghue, Mark Collins and Andy Burke.

SPARROWHAWK Accipiter nisus
Regular visitor
Single birds reported on various dates throughout the year.

HEN HARRIER Circus cyaneus
Rare visitor
One flew over the causeway on 27th December (Mark Collins).
This is the first record for over a decade.

RED KITE Milvus milvus
Vagrant
An untagged bird flew over the island on 15th February (Dominic Kelly).
This is the first record for the island. It is very likely that more kites will be reported in the coming years as the breeding population in Ireland continues to grow.
Red Kite (Photo: Dominic Kelly)

**COMMON BUZZARD** *Buteo buteo*
Regular visitor
Single birds reported as follows: 13th April, 19th September, 7th October, 1st, 3rd, 4th and 20th November, 2nd, 4th, 24th and 30th December (Alan Dalton, Phil Clancy, Aidan G. Kelly, Jim Duffy, Mark Collins, Niall T. Keogh, João de Brito). Two on 22nd October (Shane Thomas Quinn).

Most sightings were in the vicinity of the causeway but those in April and September were from the Alder Marsh and Bull Wall respectively.

**MOORHEN** *Gallinula chloropus*
Resident
**Bull Wall:** One at the reed marsh on 26th, 30th and 31st March with four on 1st April (Ger Franck, Mark Collins, Dominic Kelly).

**North Saltmarsh:** One on 31st December (Alan Dalton).

**COOT** *Fulica atra*
Resident
One on the port side of the Bull Wall on 9th January (Paul Milne).

An unusual location for this freshwater species.

**LITTLE GREBE** *Tachybaptus ruficollis*
Scarce winter visitor
**Wooden Bridge:** Up to eight reported from 10th January to 28th February (Ciaran Dunne, Andy Burke, Niall T. Keogh, Ger Franck). Maximum of five from 4th October to 28th November (Shane Thomas Quinn, Niall T. Keogh, João de Brito, Gavin Rothwell).

**Bull Wall:** Two at the reed marsh on 1st and one on 27th April (Ger Franck).
GREAT CRESTED GREBE *Podiceps cristatus*
Mainly a winter visitor but occasional at other times
Highest monthly counts:

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These are the lowest numbers reported for many years. Most sightings were from the Bull Wall or Sutton Creek.
OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ostralegus*
Common winter visitor and passage migrant
Summer: May: 12 on 16th (Sean Geraty), 38 on 27th (Ciaran Dunne). June: 51 on 14th (Ciaran Dunne). July: 48 on 24th July (Sean Geraty).
The summer moulting population in 2021 was quite small by comparison with previous years.

LAPWING *Pluvialis pluvialis*
Common in autumn, uncommon in winter
Earliest autumn date: Three on the 8th June (Mark Collins). Numbers increased slowly to 40 by early August (Gavin Rothwell, Ciaran Dunne, Shane Thomas Quinn).
Winter count: 27 on south saltmarsh on 31st December (Alan Dalton).

GOLDEN PLOVER *Pluvialis apricaria*
Regular passage migrant and winter visitor
Latest spring date: Up to 50 remained into April with 37 reported on the 3rd (Tom Carroll, Ger Franck, Ciaran Dunne).
Earliest autumn date: Two on 2nd September (Sean Farrell).

GREY PLOVER *Pluvialis squatarola*
Common winter visitor and passage migrant
Many reports were received during the normal wintering period.
Latest spring date: Up to 20 remained into late April with nine on 1st May (Paul Milne).
Earliest autumn date: 40 on 1st and 2nd September (Sean Farrell).
Winter counts: December: 79 on 19th (Sean Geraty), 132 on 23rd and 146 on 30th (Alan Dalton).
RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius hiaticula*
Former breeder, common passage migrant and winter visitor
Breeding: No birds were reported from 18th April to 2nd August at the former nesting site.
Maximum counts: 11 on 5th April (Dominic Kelly). 52 on 7th August (Mark Collins) and 62 on 19th (Ciaran Dunne). Maximum counts of 90 on 24th August and 4th September on the southern end of the beach (Shane Thomas Quinn).

WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus*
Regular passage migrant, occurs in summer regularly.
Earliest spring date: Two on 20th March (Andy Burke).
Latest autumn date: One on 7th September (Sean Geraty).

Many reports of single birds or very small flocks. A typical bias with more reported in spring than in autumn. Highest monthly counts from spring to autumn as follows.

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CURLEW *Numenius arquata*
Common winter visitor, passage migrant, small number summer
Summer: June: five on 8th (Mark Collins), six on 19th (Sean Geraty), 30 on 23rd
(Tom Carroll) and one on 24th (Geraldine Donoghue).

Autumn: 170 on 19th July (Tom Carroll) were returning migrants.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa lapponica*
Common winter visitor and passage migrant
Summer: It is unclear how many over-summered but 150 were present on 9th July (Mark Collins).
High count: 1,600 on 23rd December (Alan Dalton).

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa limosa*
Common passage migrant and winter visitor
Summer: Ten were present up to 3rd May (Tom Carroll, Paul Milne). 107 on 24th July (Sean Geraty) increased to 155 by 29th (Diarmuid Ó Sé).
High counts: 428 on 30th and 667 on 31st December (Alan Dalton).

TURNSTONE *Arenaria interpres*
Winter visitor and passage migrant
Reports in all months.
Summer: May: one on the north mudflats on 14th (Paul Milne), three on beach at Bull Wall on 23rd (Sean Geraty) and eight on 26th at Wooden Bridge (Ciaran Dunne). June: Six on north mudflats on 24th (Geraldine Donoghue). July: Five at Bull Wall on 22nd July (Ciaran Dunne).
Highest counts: At the Bull Wall 22 on 9th March (Ciaran Dunne), 28 on 14th August and 100 on 4th October (Mark Collins). 39 on the southern end of the beach on 31st October and 24 on 5th December (Sean Geraty).
Turnstones (Photo: Alan Dalton)

**KNOT *Calidris canutus***
Common winter visitor and passage migrant
Spring: One on 3rd April (Tom Carroll) was the last report in spring.
Summer: Single birds on 14th May (Paul Milne) and 9th July (Mark Collins).
Autumn: One on 12th August (Shane Thomas Quinn) is a typical date for a post-breeding migrant. Small numbers were reported after this date until the arrival of the main wintering population.

**RUFF *Philomachus pugnax***
Scarce autumn passage migrant, rare at other times
Juvenile on 17th August (Derek O’Reilly) was probably the same bird seen again in the general vicinity of the causeway on 23rd, 25th and 29th August and 11th September (Mark Collins, Tom Doyle, Brian Gormley, Gerry Power). Possibly a different bird at the Bull Wall on 25th September (Sean Geraty).
Ruff (Photo: Derek O’Reilly)

**CURLEW SANDPIPER* Calidris ferruginea**

Autumn passage migrant, rare in winter and spring

Beach south end: One on 7th, 18th (Sean Geraty) and 21st September (Mark Collins).

Wooden Bridge area: Three on 10th (Ger Franck), one on 27th (Aidan G. Kelly) and two on 29th September (Gerry Lyons).

Dunlin and Curlew Sandpiper (Photo: Mark Collins)
PURPLE SANDPIPER *Calidris maritima*
Scarcce and irregular winter visitor
Bull Wall: Three on 14th February (Tom Doyle) and one on 15th February (Ciaran Dunne).
Birds move regularly between the South Wall and the Bull Wall so it’s very likely this species occurs more frequently than these reports suggest.

**SANDERLING** *Calidris alba*
Common passage migrant and winter visitor
Maximum counts as follows:

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<td>22</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>660</td>
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Other high counts included: 230 on 4th September 460 on 20th November, 315 on 1st November and 400 on 19th December (Sean Geraty, Niall T. Keogh, João de Brito, Shane Thomas Quinn, Tom Carroll, Karl O’Toole. Ciaran Dunne, Mark Collins, Ger Franck).

DUNLIN *Calidris alpina*
Very common passage migrant and winter visitor
Following the departure of the wintering populations passage was recorded as follows.

**Spring:**
April: 230 at the Bull Wall on 23rd (Ciaran Dunne). May: 100 on the south mudflats on 1st (Paul Milne), 62 at Sea Scouts on 8th (Diarmuid O Se), 300 on north mudflats on 14th (Paul Milne). Five on 23rd (Sean Geraty). June: two on 8th (Neil Molloy).

**Autumn:**
Seven on 6th August (Mark Collins) increased to 230 by the 23rd (Ger Franck, Jim Duffy, Gerry Power, Shane Thomas Quinn). 800 on 4th September on the south end of the beach (Mark Collins, Gary De Lacy).

**Winter count:**
1,785 at causeway area on 31st December (Alan Dalton).
LITTLE STINT *Calidris minuta*
Regular but scarce passage migrant
Five reports of either one or two birds from 3rd to 19th September on the beach near the Bull Wall (Mark Collins, Sean Geraty, Tom Carroll, Ger Franck, Andy Burke).

![Little Stint (Photo: Tom Carroll)](image)

Little Stints (Photo: Ger Franck)

JACK SNIPE *Lymnocryptes minimus*
Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor
Singles birds on 30th March, 31st October, 14th November (Mark Collins) and 31st December (Alan Dalton).
SNIPE  *Gallinago gallinago*
Regular passage migrant and winter visitor
Small numbers reported in the early part of the year up to 2nd May with maximums of nine on 9th January (Paul Milne) and three on 26th March and 12th April (Ger Franck, Mark Collins, Gavin Rothwell, Ciaran Dunne). Reported from 24th July to the end of the year with a maximum of 14 on 31st December (Alan Dalton, Dominic Kelly, Mark Collins, Ger Franck, Shane Thomas Quinn).

COMMON SANDPIPER  *Actitis hypoleucos*
Scarce and irregular migrant
Earliest date: One on 14th April (Keith Mc Quillan).
Latest date: One on 31st July (Mark Collins).
Causeway area: One on 6th May with two on 7th July (Ciaran Dunne, Mark Collins).
Sutton shoreline: Two on 11th July (Paul Milne).
Bull Wall: One on 4th July (Mark Collins).
Wooden Bridge: Three on 12th July (Niamh Fitzgerald).

![Common Sandpiper (Photo: Mark Collins)](image)

REDSHANK  *Tringa totanus*
Common passage migrant and winter visitor
Autumn: Three on 12th July were the first returning bird but numbers quickly increased to 140 by the 18th (Mark Collins).

GREENSHANK  *Tringa nebularia*
Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor
Last spring record: One on 3rd April (Tom Carroll).
First autumn record: Five on 21st July (Ger Franck).
Counts: Ten on 9th August (Ciaran Dunne) increased to 30 by 1st September (Sean Farrell) with small numbers thereafter.

**KITTiwake Rissa tridactyla**
Regular visitor mainly in spring
Sutton Creek: 12 on 9th May (Paul Milne)
Bull Wall: March: 180 on 3rd (Ciaran Dunne) and 18th on 29th (Ger Franck). May: 33 on 9th, 23 on 10th and seven on 12th (Sean Geraty, Mark Collins). June: four on 8th (Neil Molloy).

**Little Gull Hydrocoloeus minutus**
Regular but scarce visitor
Bull Wall: Three on 14th February (Tom Doyle).

**Mediterranean Gull Larus melanocephalus**
Uncommon visitor
February: single birds on 11th, 16th, 19th and 31st (Victor Caschera, Tom Doyle, Ciaran Dunne, Andy Burke) with two on 22nd (Tom Doyle). May: Single birds on the 3rd and 10th (Tom Carroll, Mark Collins). June: at least five on 21st and 22nd (Paul Milne, Ciaran Dunne). July: from 2nd to 13th a minimum of eight birds were present (Phil Clancy, Mark Collins, Ciaran Dunne, Derek O’Reilly, Paul Milne). One on 15th and two on 22nd (Ciaran Dunne). August: one on 4th and 25th with three on 31st (Ciaran Dunne). September: One on 3rd, 4th and 13th (Ciaran Dunne, Mark Collins). October: Two on 18th (Evan Salholm).

**Ring-billed Gull Larus delawarensis**
Very scarce visitor
One on 19th and 22nd March at the Wooden Bridge (Shane Thomas Quinn, Victor Caschera).

**Great Black-backed Gull Larus fuscus**
Uncommon in summer, small numbers in winter
The only counts received were in August as follows: 27 on 10th, 42 on 12th and 39 on 31st (Mark Collins, Shane Thomas Quinn).

**Glaucous Gull Larus hyperboreus**
Vary scarce visitor
One off the Bull Wall on 28th February (Andy Burke).
This is the first record for over a decade.

**Yellow-legged Gull Larus michahellis**
Very scarce visitor
First winter on 31st December (Robert Busby).

**Sandwich Tern Sterna sandvicensis**
Common passage migrant, occasional in summer
Earliest spring date: One on 29th March (Tom Doyle).
Latest autumn date: Two on 2nd October (Mark Collins).
Highest counts: 35 at Sutton Creek on 11th July (Paul Milne).
Many reports received from various locations around the island including 31 at the Point on 12th July, 18 on the beach on 3rd September (Phil Clancy, Gavin Rothwell, Ciaran Dunne, Mark Collins, Paul Milne, Tom Cooney).
LITTLE TERN *Sternula albifrons*
Former colonial breeder now rare
No reports of the once common visitor.

COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo*
Common in summer
Earliest date: One on 3rd April (Andy Burke).
Maximum counts: 44 on 25th June and 125 on 3rd September (Mark Collins).
ARCTIC TERN *Sterna paradisaea*
Uncommon summer visitor
One on 12th May at the Wooden Bridge (Mark Collins).
This species probably occurs more frequently than the records suggest.

GUILLEMOT *Uria aalge*
Occasional
Reported from the Bull Wall and off the north end of the island in most months. Most sightings refer to fewer than five birds but 20 on 23rd May in Sutton Creek was exceptional (Paul Milne, Ciaran Dunne, Gavin Rothwell).

RAZORBILL *Alca torda*
Occasional visitor
Small numbers reported in most months from the Bull Wall or off the north end of the island.
Bull Wall:
Up to three from 18th January to 3rd April (Ciaran Dunne, Andy Burke).
One on 22nd July and 2nd December (Ciaran Dunne).
North end of island:
Three on 16th, 22 on 20th April and three on 27th. Four on 14th May and 13 on 12th October (Ciaran Dunne). Six in Sutton Creek on 5th June and one on 15th November (Ciaran Dunne).

BLACK GUILLEMOT *Cepphus grille*
Regular visitor all year
Most reports were from the Bull Wall but a few were from Sutton Creek (Ciaran Dunne, Andy Burke, Paul Milne, Shane Thomas Quinn, Phil Clancy). Highest monthly counts as follows.

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<th>Month</th>
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COLLARED DOVE *Streptopelia decaocto*
Very scarce visitor
None reported on the island.
Two on 12th July on inter-tidal sediments beside the Wooden Bridge (Mark Collins). One along the coastal path on 9th January (Mark Collins) and at Blackbanks on 1st May (Paul Milne).

CUCKOO *Cuculus canorus*
Very scarce summer visitor
Reported between 3rd June (Andrew Kelly, Gerry Lyons) and 31st July (Mark Collins) with most records from the Alder Marsh or the Bull Wall Reed Marsh. Single birds were reported on seven dates in June and on three dates in July (Mark Collins, Brian Gormley, Kevin Dooney, John Tuohy, Neil Molloy). Two on 5th June in the southern dunes (Gavin Rothwell) and three on 13th June at the Alder Marsh (Sean Geraty).

SHORT–EARED OWL *Asio flammeus*
Scarce and irregular winter visitor
One on 5th February (Mark Carmody).
This is the lowest number reported for many years.
Cuckoo (Photo: Mark Collins)

**SWIFT Apus apus**
Frequent in spring and autumn, scarce in summer
Earliest date: One on 7th May (Mark Collins).
Latest date: Two on 15th August (Gavin Rothwell).
Maximum count: Sixty on 25th June (Shane Thomas Quinn).
Up to 12 on other dates (any observers).

**KINGFISHER Alcedo atthis**
Scarce but regular winter visitor
Single birds reported at the Santry River outflow on 9th January (Mark Collins) and 24th August (Shane Thomas Quinn).

**KESTREL Falco tinnunculus**
Resident
Kestrels were reported more frequently in 2021 than in any previous year. The majority of records were of single birds but two were present on 6th May, 3rd June, 31st July, 7th October and 1st November (many observers).

**MERLIN Falco columbarius**
Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor
A total of twelve reports of single birds between 28th January and 29th March (Derek O’Reilly, Ger Franck, Tom Doyle) and from 8th October to 30th December (Alan Dalton, Dominic Kelly, Mark Collins, Paul Milne). One of the birds reported in December was a juvenile.
PEREGRINE *Falco peregrinus*
Regular visitor
Many reports of single birds in all months except June (many observers) with two on 18th July, 24th August and 9th November (Robbie Egan, Shane Thomas Quinn, Mark Collins). Juvenile on 31st December (Alan Dalton).

JACKDAW *Coloeus monedula*
Common non-breeding resident
A bird showing characteristics of the Eastern Jackdaw *C.m. monedula or C.m. soemmerringii* was present at the Santry River outflow on 10th October (Ciaran Dunne).
Peregrine (Photo: Dominic Kelly)

CARRION CROW *Corvus corone corone*
Very scarce
Seven on the south mudflats on 22nd March and one on 24th September (Shane Thomas Quinn).
One at the causeway on 31st December (Alan Dalton).

   *Carrion/Hooded Crow* *C. c. corone/cornix*
   Very scarce
   One at the Santry River outflow on 12th, 22nd and 26th October (Ciaran Dunne, Shane Thomas Quinn).

HOODED CROW *Corvus corone cornix*
Resident
Present but no large flocks reported.

RAVEN *Corvus corax*
Occasional visitor
One on 9th January (Paul Milne). Two on 13th July (Shane Thomas Quinn), 8th and 27th September (Mark Collins).

BLUE TIT *Cyanistes caeruleus*
Occasional at causeway, very rare on island
Two on 17th February at the corner of the Royal Dublin golf course near the Bull Wall (Ger Franck). Three in scrub at the Santry River outflow on 15th March (Mark Collins).
One on 19th November at the Alder Marsh (Niall T. Keogh, João de Brito).
Records on the island are noteworthy.
SAND MARTIN *Riparia riparia*
Regular passage migrant, scarce in summer
Earliest spring date: Seven on 30th March (Mark Collins).
Highest counts: 35 on 6th August (Shane Thomas Quinn).
   Many reports of up to 26 birds throughout the summer from various locations between the Bull Wall to Sutton shoreline (Dominic Kelly, Andrew Kelly, Paul Milne, Sean Geraty, Gavin Rothwell, Phil Clancy, Gerry Lyons, Andy Burke, Gerry Power, Mark Collins, Ciaran Dunne, Tom Cooney).

BARN SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*
Summer visitor and passage migrant
Earliest spring date: One on 30th March (Mark Collins).
Latest autumn date: One on 24th October (Mark Collins).
   Up to 13 reported at various locations throughout the summer (many observers).

HOUSE MARTIN *Delichon urbica*
Summer visitor and passage migrant
Earliest spring date: Four on 10th April (Tom Doyle).
Latest autumn date: No late date reported.

WILLOW WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochilus*
Uncommon but regular passage migrant
Spring passage: Two on 3rd April (Gerry Power), four on 9th April (Tom Cooney).
Autumn passage: Three on 2nd August (Mark Collins), four on 23rd August (Proinsias Mac an Bheatha) and two on 7th September (Mark Collins).
**CHIFFCHAFF** *Phylloscopus collybita*

Scarcely but regular passage migrant

- **Spring passage:** Single birds on 30th and 31st March (Dominic Kelly). Two on 4th April (Mark Collins), three on 9th April (Tom Cooney), with single birds on 11th, 12th and 14th April (Tom Doyle, Mark Collins, Ciaran Dunne, Phil Clancy).
- **Autumn passage:** Six on 8th September (Ger Franck).

**SEDGE WARBLER** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Scarcely but regular passage migrant

- **Earliest spring date:** Two on 24th April (Tom Doyle).
- **Latest autumn date:** One on 7th September (Mark Collins).
- **Bull Wall Reed Marsh:** Many reports from 11th May to 7th September with a maximum of six on 2nd August (many observers).
- **Causeway:** One on 19th June (Dominic Kelly).
- **St. Anne’s golf course:** One on 13th and 19th June (Sean Geraty).

Although juveniles were not reported, nesting may have taken place at the Bull Wall Reed Marsh and possibly at St. Anne’s golf course.
Sedge Warbler (Photo: Mark Collins)

**GRASSHOPPER WARBLER** *Locustella naevia*
Very scarce but regular passage migrant
Singles birds reported from the southern end of the island on 21st June (Colm McConnell) and 18th September (Ger Franck).

**BLACKCAP** *Sylvia atricapilla*
Scarce migrant and winter visitor
Spring: No reports.
Autumn: One at the Alder Marsh on 23rd August (Proinsias Mac an Bheatha).
WHITETHROAT *Sylvia communis*
Scarcely passage migrant
Spring: One at the causeway on 28th May (Phil Clancy).
Autumn: Two at the Alder Marsh on 28th August (Proinsias Mac an Bheatha).

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**GOLDCREST** *Regulus regulus*
Scarce passage migrant, mainly in late autumn
Alder Marsh: Two on 31st October (Mark Collins) and three on 1st November (Niall T. Keogh, João de Brito).

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**WREN** *Troglodytes troglodytes*
Resident
Several reports during the breeding season from various locations on the island.

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**STARLING** *Sturnus vulgaris*
Resident, passage migrant and winter visitor
Largest flocks reported were 220 on 30th March in the southern dunes (Mark Collins) and a minimum of 700 on north saltmarsh on 2nd September (Tom Cooney).

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**REDWING** *Turdus iliacus*
Irregular passage migrant and winter visitor
Eight flew over the causeway on 9th January (Mark Collins).
SONG THRUSH *Turdus philomelos*
Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor
Three on 9th January (Mark Collins) and one on 17th January (Ger Franck) in scrub at the Royal Dublin golf course. Three at the Alder Marsh on 14th November (Mark Collins).

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa striata*
Very scarce passage migrant
Two in the Alder Marsh on 23rd August (Proinsias Mac an Bheatha).
ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula*
Rare breeder, winter visitor
One on 17th February, three on 4th and six on 18th September (Ger Franck).
These reports were from the southern end of the island.

STONECHAT *Saxicola torquata*
Uncommon resident
Reported in every month and successful breeding was recorded at several locations.
Most records were of one or two birds but up to six were occasionally reported with a maximum of ten on 13th November (many observers). Birds were reported from all areas on the island but the vicinity of the Riven Naniken outflow was unusual.

WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oenanthe*
Common passage migrant, former breeder
Spring: Earliest report was of eight on 30th March (Dominic Kelly, Mark Collins). Passage was light with maximums of 11 on 24th April (Tom Doyle) and eight on 2nd May (Sean Geraty) with small numbers up to 28th May (many observers).
Autumn: A maximum of only four were reported from 19th August to a late date of one on 1st November (Niall T. Keogh, João de Brito).

Wheatear (Photo: Dominic Kelly)

HOUSE SPARROW *Passer domesticus*
Scarce summer visitor
May: Ten on 1st (Paul Milne) with single birds on 10th and 30th (Mark Collins).
August: Two on 15th (Shane Thomas Quinn).
September: Three on 2nd (Shane Thomas Quinn).
House Sparrow (Photo: Mark Collins)

**TREE SPARROW** *Passer montanus*
Vagrant
Two in 21st and one on 27th November on the Sutton shoreline (Paul Milne).

The occurrence of tree sparrows in the vicinity of the island in recent years is most likely linked to a range expansion of this species on the east coast of Ireland.

**DUNNOCK** *Prunella modularis*
Rare resident
Single birds on 26th March and 1st April with three on 10th October in scrub at the Royal Dublin golf course near the Bull Wall (Ger Franck).

**YELLOW WAGTAIL** *Motacilla flava flavissima*
Rare
One on 23rd April at St. Anne’s golf course (Brian Burke).

**GREY WAGTAIL** *Motacilla cinerea*
Occasional along mainland shore
Single birds at Santry River outflow on 18th February (Geraldine Donoghue) and 30th December (Alan Dalton), 12th August and 24th September in the south lagoon (Shane Thomas Quinn).
PIED WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba yarrellii*
Resident and passage migrant
Highest counts: On the south end of the beach 23 on 18th and 22 on 24th July. 30 on 12th September (Sean Geraty).

White Wagtail *Motacilla a. alba*
Scarce passage migrant
About nine birds were reported.
Spring: One on 2nd April on the south end of the island (Gerry Lyons), two on 11th April at the Point (Tom Doyle), two in the Royal Dublin golf course on the 14th (Phil Clancy).
Autumn: One on 7th, 18th and 20th September (Sean Geraty, Shane Thomas Quinn, Ciaran Dunne). One on 7th November (Sean Geraty).

MEADOW PIPIT *Anthus pratensis*
Common resident
Several reports received but the largest count was 60 on 18th September at the stony beach near the Sea Scouts (Ger Franck).

Meadow Pipit (Photo: Dominic Kelly)

ROCK PIPIT *Anthus petrosus*
Uncommon winter visitor, probably under reported.
Reports of up to five at various locations (many observers) in all months except May.
Bull Wall: One or two on several dates but three on 18th July (Sean Geraty) was unusual.
Sutton shoreline: Four on 3rd April and three on 5th June (Paul Milne) were presumably birds that nest on the Sutton/Howth coastline.
Naniken outflow: Three on 23rd and 24th December (Alan Dalton).
In addition, five were reported from various locations on the island on 1st November (Niall T. Keogh, João de Brito).

**CHAFFINCH** *Fringilla coelebs*
Regular but scarce visitor in winter
One at the Alder Marsh on 11th April (Tom Doyle).

**TWITE** *Linaria flavirostris*
Rare
Two on 18th January (Mark Collins).

**LINNET** *Carduelis cannabina*
Resident, passage migrant and winter visitor
Highest counts: 65 on 15th October on the south end of the beach (Ciaran Dunne), 100 on 24th October at the Point (Sean Geraty), 400 on 2nd November at the causeway (Mark Collins), 200 on 21st November on the Sutton shoreline (Paul Milne).
Smaller numbers reported from many areas on the island during the year.
Linnet (Photo: Tom Cooney)

**LESSER REDPOLL** *Carduelis flammea*
Scarcely passage migrant and winter visitor
Three reports.  
**January:** Seven on 9th (Mark Collins) and five on 23rd (Gavin Rothwell) at Bull Wall Reed Marsh.  
**November:** One in dunes on south end of the island on 7th November (Sean Geraty).

**GOLDFINCH** *Carduelis carduelis*
Common passage migrant and winter visitor, occasional breeder
This familiar species occurs more frequently than records suggest.
Four on 23rd April (Ciaran Dunne), and two on 24th June (Geraldine O’Donoghue). In September five on 12th (Gerry Power), 60 on 12th (Sean Geraty) and five on 20th (Geraldine O’Donoghue).

**SNOW BUNTING** *Plectrophenax nivalis*
Scarce winter visitor
Single birds at the Bull Wall and south end of the beach on 10th November (Ciaran Dunne), 5th December (Proinsias Mac an Bheatha) and 13th December (Grzegorz Burkowski).
Category B /D1

**Ruddy Shelduck** *Tadorna ferruginea*
Unknown origin
A hybrid was present from 14th to 26th October (Brian Burke *et al.*).

Photo: Sean Geraty
Category E

Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*
Escape from captivity
A bird from Fota Island, Co. Cork made a brief visit to the island from 14th to 22nd August (John Hayes *et al.*) providing an unusual but very impressive sight in the lagoons.

Photos: Mark Collins.
Conservation Issues

Although the North Bull Island is a legally protected site, numerous activities take place daily that have a negative impact on the island’s habitats and wildlife.

As in previous years activities causing disturbance to wildlife were reported during 2021. Most reports related to unleashed dogs chasing birds on the saltmarshes and on the beach.

Despite all the legislation designed to protect nature at North Bull Island, human activities and encroachment continue to impact negatively on the island’s habitats and wildlife. Whilst some activities are relatively innocuous, others are not. For example, the beach is a feeding and at times a roosting habitat for several migratory and wintering shorebird species including Sanderling and Turnstone. In fact, sandy beaches are the primary habitat for Sanderlings, hence the name. In the current bird report, there is clear evidence that nationally important populations of both species utilise this sandy habitat. This is not new discovery. It’s been known for decades that the beach at North Bull Island is an important habitat for these and other shorebird species. Despite this, shorebirds are frequently harassed by unleashed dogs. Fast-moving water sport activities close to shore also disturb the birds. For many years birdwatchers, tourists and others have quite rightly questioned why these and other activities are permitted in the nature reserve. Of course, they are permitted because pandering to the needs of humans (and their pets) is easier and more popular than implementing conservation measures. Unfortunately, the attitude that wildlife must put up with or adapt to human activities is still prevalent among decision makers. This is despite the fact that there is now global recognition that species diversity and habitats, such as those at North Bull Island, are in urgent need of maximum protection.