

North Bull Island Bird Report

2018



Edited and compiled

by

Tom Cooney

Editorial

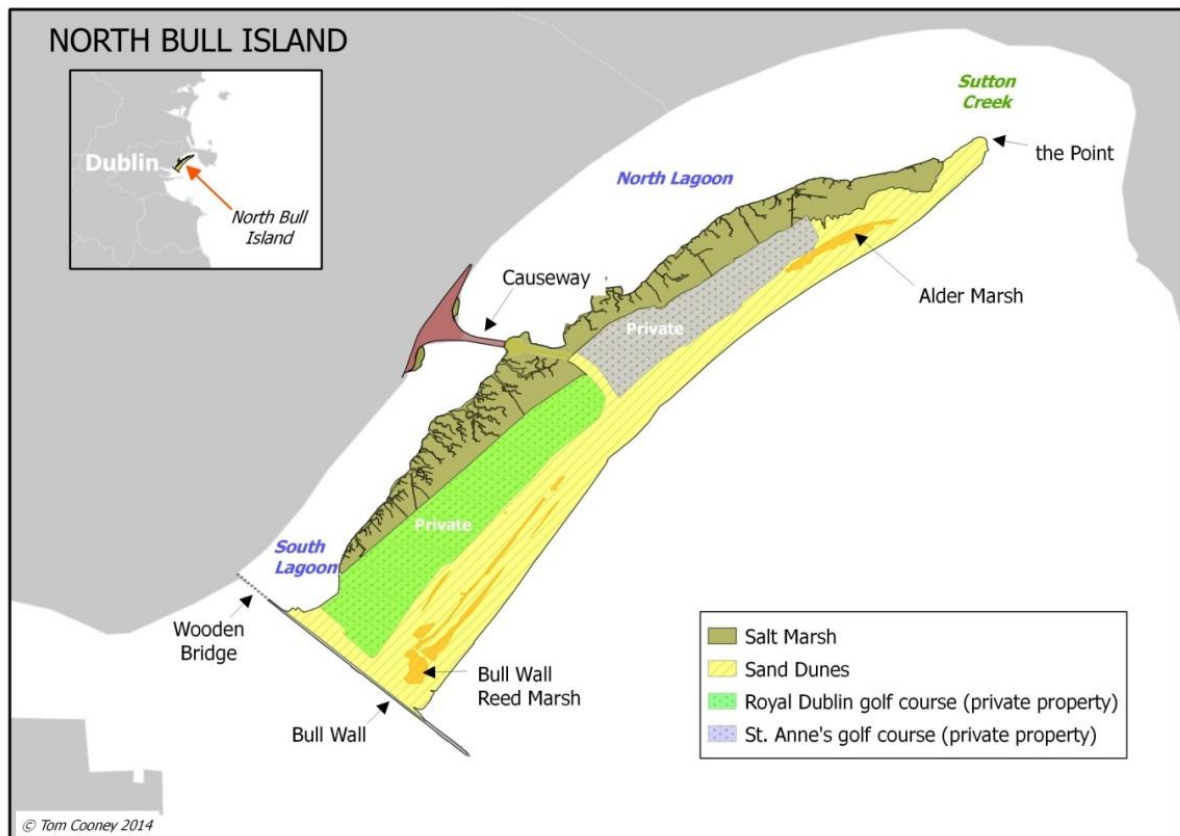
This is the eight annual report summarising bird occurrences of interest on North Bull Island (53°22'12.3"N 6°08'56.7"W), Dublin Bay, Ireland.

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).

A Ruddy Shelduck in May was the first recorded on the island. Records after 1950 are considered to be of uncertain origin and are therefore assigned to Category B / D1. Consequently, this record will not be added to the main list for the island.

The first Avocet for 26 years put in a welcome appearance in mid-September. Also recorded were the third Yellow-legged Gull and the fourth record of Garganey. Other uncommon species included Iceland Gull in April and December, Wood Sandpiper in July, Black Tern in August and Pink-footed Goose in October. Although still uncommon, Eider and Common Buzzard are occurring with increasing frequency. Regular passage migrant waders were largely absent in 2018 with only single records of Ruff and Curlew Sandpiper but no Little Stints. A Pectoral Sandpiper in September was the only Nearctic species reported.

A cold snap in March brought snow and low temperatures for several days. At this time the number of thrushes on the island increased with small numbers of Fieldfares, Redwings, Blackbirds and Song Thrushes.



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

Acknowledgements

This report would not be possible without the goodwill and cooperation of birdwatchers who contributed observations and photographs in 2018. I wish to thank all contributors listed below.

List of Contributors

Pauline Banducci	Luke Geraty	Liam O'Brien
Stephen Bolger	Sean Geraty	Seán A O'Laoire
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	Brian Gormley	Derek O'Reilly
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Brian Carruthers	James Hayes	Gerry Power
Victor Caschera		Joe Proudfoot
Tom Clear	John Long	
Mark Collins	Gerry Lyons	Shane Thomas Quinn
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Cover photo: Avocet by Seán A O'Laoire

Systematic List

The sequence and scientific nomenclature follows Gill, F. & D. Donsker. (eds). 2018. *IOC World Bird List* (v8.2). Available from www.worldbirdnames.org/.

BRENT GOOSE *Branta bernicla hrota*

Common winter visitor

Latest spring date: After the departure of the main wintering population in mid-April, up to five were present in May with one remaining until the 30th (Luke Geraty, Sean Geraty *et al.*).

Earliest autumn date: One on 21st September (Mark Collins) with 13 on 23rd September (Aidan G. Kelly). Large flocks did not arrive until late October (many observers).



Brent Geese (photo: Mark Collins)

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

Scarce winter visitor

One reported on 26th February (Mark Collins), 20th March (Niall Griffin), 4th and 20th April (Tom Cooney). Towards the end of 2018 one was reported on 23rd November (Joe Proudfoot) and 30th November (Ger Franck, Jim Duffy).

PINK-FOOTED GOOSE *Anser brachyrhynchus*

Rare

One on 7th October (Fintan Cronin).

This is the second record on three years.

MUTE SWAN *Cygnus olor*

Regular throughout the year

Small numbers present throughout the year. High counts in September of 11 on 21st (Ciaran Dunne) and 14 on 24th (Mark Collins).

WHOOPER SWAN *Cygnus cygnus*

Very scarce winter visitor

January: Five on 1st (Jan Rod). September: Five on 23rd (Mark Collins). October: four on 2nd (Liam O'Brien, Brendan Glynn), one at the point on 5th (Sean A O'Laoire) and five on the south saltmarsh on 6th, one on 22nd (Mark Collins). November: two on 8th in the south lagoon (Mark Collins).

Several of these records were of birds flying over the island. A blood stained bird on the 5th October was found dead the following day on the shore at Sutton Creek. Examination of the carcass and photographs suggest the bird may have suffered a severe trauma, potentially from a gunshot, prior to its arrival at North Bull Island.



Whooper Swan (Photo: Seán A O'Laoire)

SHELDUCK *Tadorna tadorna*

Resident, common winter visitor

High counts included 485 on 2 January (Alan Dalton), 600 on 28 October (Gerry Lyons) and a high count of 1,125 on 29th December (Alan Dalton).

Breeding proven in 2018.

RUDDY SHELDUCK *Tadorna ferruginea*

Category B / D1 species

Male from 20th May to 2nd July (Paul Lynch, Pauline Banducci, Brian Carruthers *et al.*)

This is the first record of this species on the island.



Ruddy Shelduck (Photo: Paul Lynch)



Ruddy Shelduck (Photo: Brian Carruthers)

GARGANEY *Spatula querquedula*

Rare

One on 8th November (Shane Thomas Quinn).

An unusual date for the fourth island record.

SHOVELER *Anas clypeata*

Winter visitor

Last date: Up to eight remained up to 30th March.

Summer: Two on 24th May (Mark Collins).

Autumn arrivals: Three on 26th August slowly increased in September and October with 66 present on 26th November (Shane Thomas Quinn).

Count: 132 on 29th December (Alan Dalton).

The record in May was very unusual, though not unique.



Shoveler (Photo: Mark Collins)

GADWALL *Mareca strepera*

Scarce visitor

One on 6th April (Ciaran Dunne).

WIGEON *Anas penelope*

Common winter visitor

Summer record: Male on 1st June (Tom Carroll).

Autumn arrival: Male on 25th July (Alan Dalton).

Count: 778 on 29th December (Alan Dalton).

Wigeon are exceptionally rare on North Bull Island in June.

PINTAIL *Anas acuta*

Winter visitor

Autumn arrivals: Four on 3rd September were the first reported in autumn (Tom Carroll).

Count: 141 on 3rd January (Ciaran Dunne, Mark Collins). High count of 307 on 29th (Alan Dalton).



Pintail (Photo: Seán A O'Laoire)

TEAL *Anas crecca*

Common winter visitor

Autumn arrivals: Six on 25th July (Alan Dalton).

Count: 1,075 on 29th December (Alan Dalton).

These were the first reported birds of autumn 2018.



Teal (Photo: Seán A O'Laoire)

SCAUP *Aythya marila*

Very scarce visitor

Female off the Bull Wall on 21st March (Ciaran Dunne).

EIDER *Somateria mollissima*

Scarce visitor

Two females at Sutton Creek with three females and immature male on the port side off the Bull Wall on 26th November (Ciaran Dunne). First-year male in the River Liffey on 29th November (Noel Keogh). Two immature males in Sutton Creek on 11th December (Ciaran Dunne). Female at Bull Wall on 22nd, 26th and 30th December (Shane Thomas Quinn, Laura Murphy).

At least five birds were present in late November with three remaining into December. This species has now been reported in four winters since 2013.

LONG-TAILED DUCK *Clangula hyemalis*

Scarce winter visitor

A male on 4th, 5th and 6th February at the Wooden Bridge (Mark Collins, Ciaran Dunne, Tom Kavanagh) and possibly the same bird at the Point on 13th February (Edd Kealy).

The records at the Wooden Bridge probably involved birds observed off Clontarf/River Tolka Estuary where up to three were present from mid-January to late March.

GOLDENEYE *Bucephala clangula*

Scarce winter visitor

Single birds reported on a number of dates in January, February, November and December at the Wooden Bridge, Bull Wall and Sutton Creek. Two reported on 13th February, 21st March, 3rd, 26th and 30th December and four on 19th February (Ciaran Dunne, Shane Thomas Quinn, Laura Murphy, Ger Franck, Edd Kealy).

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER *Mergus serrator*

Regular in small numbers but very scarce in summer

Highest counts:

	<u>Jan</u>	<u>Feb</u>	<u>Mar</u>	<u>Apr</u>	<u>May</u>	<u>Oct</u>	<u>Nov</u>	<u>Dec</u>
Bull Wall	50	42	74	41	-	-	41	13
Sutton Creek	12	-	3	5	5	20	6	11

Bull Wall includes records at the Wooden Bridge and South Lagoon.

Sutton Creek includes records at the Point and in the North Lagoon.

RED-THROATED DIVER *Gavia stellata*

Uncommon winter visitor

Two on 30th March and one on 4th April at the Bull Wall (Ciaran Dunne).

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER *Gavia immer*

Scarce winter visitor.

Nine reports of single birds in January, March, November and December in Sutton Creek and on the port side of the Bull Wall (Tom Cooney, Ciaran Dunne, Mark Collins).

MANX SHEARWATER *Puffinus puffinus*

Occasional spring to autumn

Three offshore on 6th September.

LITTLE GREBE *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Scarce winter visitor

Reported from the Wooden Bridge area in all months except April to July. Up to seven were present from January to March and eight from August to December (many observers).

GREAT CRESTED GREBE *Podiceps cristatus*

Winter visitor, occasional at other times

Highest Counts: 16 on 30th March and 16th April (Ciaran Dunne). 38 on 23rd November and 27 on 26th November (Shane Thomas Quinn) with 23 on 23rd December (Mark Collins).

Reported in all months except June.

LITTLE EGRET *Egretta garzetta*

Non-breeding resident

Common through the year but few counts received. Highest numbers were 42 on 19th September (Tom Doyle) and 29 on 9th October (Sean Geraty, Luke Geraty).



Little Egret (Photo: Seán A O'Laoire)

GANNET *Morus bassanus*

Occasional offshore in summer

Bull Wall: Reported on eight dates from 4th April to 29th May with a maximum of only five on 16th April (Ciaran Dunne, Mark Collins). In the latter part of the year two on 10th September with single birds on 14th September and 1st October (Ciaran Dunne).

These are the lowest numbers reported in the last five years.

SHAG *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

Scarce visitor

Fourteen reports received in January, March to June, November and December. Single birds reported on thirteen dates with two on 7th January and three on 24th December in Sutton Creek (Ciaran Dunne *et al.*).

CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Regular visitor all year

Roosts: Bull Wall: 35 on 24th July, 52 on 13th August and 38 on 25th October (Ciaran Dunne, Mark Collins).

The Point: 24 on 27th July (Ciaran Dunne).



Cormorant (Photo: Mark Collins)

SPARROWHAWK *Accipiter nisus*

Regular visitor

Single birds reported regularly for all months except April to June.

COMMON BUZZARD *Buteo buteo*

Occasional visitor

A total of twelve single birds reported in May, September, October, November and December (many observers).

WATER RAIL *Rallus aquaticus*

Very rare winter visitor

Two on 3rd January (Tom Cooney, Alan Dalton).

COOT *Fulica atra*

Resident

Up to three reported 17th February to 15th May at Royal Dublin golf course, the Bull Wall Reed Marsh and the River Santry outflow (Mark Collins, Ciaran Dunne, Ger Franck).

OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ostralegus*

Common winter visitor and passage migrant

Summer: 36 on 19th and 129 on 5th July (Ciaran Dunne) increasing to 257 on 27th July (Alan Dalton).



Oystercatcher (Photo: Seán A O'Laoire)

AVOCET *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Rare visitor.

One from 16th to 18th September (Tom Carroll, Maureen Carroll *et al.*).

This is the first island record for 26 years and only the second since the 1970s.



Avocet (Photo: Tom Carroll)

LAPWING *Pluvialis pluvialis*

Common in autumn, uncommon in winter

Autumn: The first returning migrants of autumn were five on 7th June (Mark Collins) increasing to 33 by the 12th June (Ciaran Dunne, Ger Franck). Higher numbers reported subsequently.

GOLDEN PLOVER

Regular passage migrant and winter visitor

The last of the wintering population departed in mid-April.

Autumn: One on 27th July (Alan Dalton) was the earliest returning migrant. Nine on 12th July (Mark Collins) increased to 68 on 27th July (Ciaran Dunne).

Winter count: 915 on 29th December (Alan Dalton).

GREY PLOVER *Pluvialis squatarola*

Common winter visitor and passage migrant

The last of the wintering population departed in March.

Autumn: Seven on 26th July (Alan Dalton) were the earliest report migrants.

Count: 102 on 26th and 188 on 29th December (Alan Dalton).

RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius hiaticula*

Former breeder, common passage migrant and winter visitor

Breeding: No birds were present in summer at the former nesting grounds.

The highest count outside the core monitoring period was 56 on 25th August at the Wooden Bridge (Mark Collins).

WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus*

Regular passage migrant, occurs in summer regularly.

Earliest spring date: One on 20th March (Tom Cooney).

Latest autumn date: One on 30th August (Ciaran Dunne).

Summer: In June two on 5th and single birds on 11th and 19th (Ciaran Dunne, Ger Franck).

Highest counts: 35 on 30th April (Tom Cooney).

Many reports of small numbers in all months from March to August.

CURLEW *Numenius arquata*

Common winter visitor, passage migrant, small number summer

Summer: 24 on 22nd May and 72 on 14th July (Mark Collins).



Curlew (Photo: Tom Cooney)

BAR-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa lapponica*

Common winter visitor and passage migrant

Summer: 55 on 5th June (Ciaran Dunne).

Autumn: 416 on 26th July (Alan Dalton) with numbers increasing into winter.

Count: 1,965 on 29th December (Alan Dalton).

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa limosa*

Common passage migrant and winter visitor

Summer: 50 on 2nd June and 105 on 3rd July (Mark Collins, Ciaran Dunne).

Count: 462 on 29th December (Alan Dalton).

TURNSTONE *Arenaria interpres*

Winter visitor and passage migrant

In July one on 24th and 26th (Ciaran Dunne, Alan Dalton) and two on 28th (Mark Collins).

Up to 50 reported in January, February and August to December.



Turnstone (Photo: Tom Cooney)

KNOT *Calidris canutus*

Common winter visitor and passage migrant

May: One on 28th (Mark Stewart).

July: 16 on 26th (Alan Dalton) were returning autumn migrants.

Count: 1,150 on 29th December (Alan Dalton).

RUFF *Philomachus pugnax*

Scarce autumn passage migrant, rare at other times

Autumn: One on 19th September (Tom Doyle).

CURLEW SANDPIPER *Calidris ferruginea*

Autumn passage migrant, rare in winter and spring

One on 27th September (Diarmuid Ó Sé).

SANDERLING *Calidris alba*

Common passage migrant and winter visitor

Highest counts:

<u>Jan</u>	<u>Feb</u>	<u>Mar</u>	<u>Apr</u>	<u>May</u>	<u>Aug</u>	<u>Sep</u>	<u>Oct</u>	<u>Nov</u>	<u>Dec</u>
220	120	170	130	8	80	100	15	320	125

DUNLIN *Calidris alpina*

Very common passage migrant and winter visitor

The latest report in spring was of five on 28th May (Mark Collins) with returning birds reported on 22nd July increasing to 335 by the 27th (Alan Dalton).



Dunlin (Photo: Tom Cooney)

PURPLE SANDPIPER *Calidris maritima*

Scarce and irregular winter visitor

One on 25th December (Tom Cooney).

LITTLE STINT *Calidris minuta*

Regular but scarce passage migrant

None reported.

PECTORAL SANDPIPER *Calidris melanotos*

Rare

One on 24th September on mudflats north of the causeway (Tom Kavanagh, James Hayes) may have been the same bird there on 8th October (Shane Thomas Quinn).

WOODCOCK *Scolopax rusticola*

Very scarce visitor

One flew over the causeway on 19th October (Shane Thomas Quinn).

JACK SNIPE *Lymnecryptes minimus*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor

Several reports of single birds up to 26th March but two were present on 3rd January and 4th April (Tom Cooney, Alan Dalton, Stephen Bolger, Niall Griffin). In December one on 7th, 24th and 30th (Shane Thomas Quinn, Tom Cooney, Mark Collins), and on 26th two on the north saltmarsh (Alan Dalton) and one on the Alder Marsh (Shane Thomas Quinn).

SNIPE *Gallinago gallinago*

Regular passage migrant and winter visitor

Latest date: 4th May (Ger Franck).

Earliest date: 1st October (Ger Franck).

Highest count: 18 on 3rd January (Tom Cooney, Alan Dalton).

COMMON SANDPIPER *Actitis hypoleucos*

Scarce and irregular migrant

Spring: No spring records.

Autumn: Single birds on 21st, 22nd and 31st July and 12th August. Four on 30th July and three on 1st August (Ger Franck, Mark Collins, Alan Dalton, Ciaran Dunne).



Common Sandpiper (Photo: Tom Cooney)

REDSHANK *Tringa totanus*

Common passage migrant and winter visitor

Autumn passage: The first returning birds appeared in late June with a high count of 1,015 on both mudflats on 26th July (Alan Dalton).

WOOD SANDPIPER *Tringa glareola*

Very scarce migrant

One on 27th July (Stephen King) was probably the same bird again on 7th August (Mark Stewart).

GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia*

Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor

Autumn arrivals: Six on 16th July (Ger Franck, Jim Duffy).

Highest count: 31 on 9th and 29th September (Mark Collins). Eleven on 27th (Luke Geraty, Sean Geraty) and 16 on 29th December (Alan Dalton).

KITTIWAKE *Rissa tridactyla*

Regular visitor mainly in spring.

One on 1st February (Tom Cooney) was an early date. Several counts from 14th April to 24th July with a high count of 200 on 16th April (Ciaran Dunne *et al.*).

A typical spread of records with large numbers again in April at the Bull Wall.

LITTLE GULL *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

Regular but scarce visitor

Three records. One at the Point on 16th January with two on 14th March near the Bull Wall (Tom Cooney), one on 26th May at the causeway (Mark Collins).



Little Gull (Photo: Mark Collins)

MEDITERRANEAN GULL *Larus melanocephalus*

Uncommon visitor

January: one on 2nd and two on 4th (Alan Dalton). February: one on 16th (Mark Collins).

June: one on 20th (Tom Carroll) and two on 28th (Ciaran Dunne). July: up to three from 16th to 25th at various locations (Ciaran Dunne, Ger Franck, Alan Dalton). August: one on 30th

August (Ciaran Dunne). September: single birds on 14th and 17th (Ciaran Dunne, Robert Busby). December: two adults on 24th and 25th at the Bull Wall (Tom Cooney, Victor Caschera).

ICELAND GULL *Larus glaucooides*

Very scarce visitor

Immature on 13th April (Diarmuid Ó Sé). Second winter on 8th December (Tom Doyle).

YELLOW-LEGGED GULL *Larus michahellis*

Scarce visitor

Adult on 31st October (Fintan Cronin).

This is the third island record.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus fuscus*

Uncommon in summer, small numbers in winter

38 on 25th July (Alan Dalton) was the only report received.

SANDWICH TERN *Sterna sandvicensis*

Common passage migrant, occasional in summer

Earliest date: Two on 4th April (Ciaran Dunne).

Winter records: Singles birds on 22nd February (Ger Franck, Jim Duffy) and 23rd December (Mark Collins).

LITTLE TERN *Sternula albifrons*

Very scarce summer visitor

Two in Sutton Creek on 9th May (Paul Milne).

Up to the early 1990s the island was a nationally important breeding site for this species.

ROSEATE TERN *Sterna dougallii*

Very scarce visitor mainly in autumn

One on 3rd August (Ciaran Dunne).

COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo*

Common in summer

Reported from various locations around the island from 26th April to 18th August (Ciaran Dunne, Mark Collins, Ger Franck, Jim Duffy) Highest counts were 77 on 25th May (Mark Collins) and 85 on 17th August (Ciaran Dunne).

“Commic” tern flocks included 40 on 80th August and 80 on 3rd July (Ciaran Dunne).

ARCTIC TERN *Sterna paradisaea*

Uncommon summer visitor

Up to three on six dates from 22nd May to 30th August in the general vicinity of the Bull Wall (Edd Kealy, Ciaran Dunne, Alan Dalton, Joe Proudfoot, Mark Collins).

BLACK TERN *Chlidonias niger*

Scarce migrant

One on 30th August off the Bull Wall (Ciaran Dunne).

Black Tern has been recorded in four out of the past ten years.

GUILLEMOT *Uria aalge*

Occasional

Reported from March to November with maximum count of 11 on 15th May (Ciaran Dunne).

RAZORBILL *Alca torda*

Occasional visitor

Bull Wall: Single birds on only three dates: 27th April, 10th September and 20th November (Ciaran Dunne).

BLACK GUILLEMOT *Cepphus grille*

Regular visitor

Highest counts: February: 2 on 13th, March: 9 on 15th, April: 22 on 16th, May: 14 on 15th, June: 8 on 26th, July: 2 on 13th, August: 5 on 30th, September: 4 on 10th, November: 1 on 26th (Ciaran Dunne, Proinsias Mac an Bheatha, Mark Collins).

All reports were from the port side of the Bull Wall or the Wooden Bridge.

STOCK DOVE *Columba oenas*

Very scarce visitor

One at the River Santry outflow on 3rd August (Joe Proudfoot).

COLLARED DOVE *Streptopelia decaocto*

Very scarce visitor

One near Royal Dublin clubhouse on 2nd May (Tom Cooney).

CUCKOO *Cuculus canorus*

Very scarce summer visitor

Single birds reported on 17th and 23rd July at the Alder Marsh and Bull Wall Reed Marsh (Ger Franck). It is likely that both reports refer to the same bird.

LONG-EARED OWL *Asio otus*

Very scarce visitor

Corpse of bird found beside St. Anne's golf course on 17th July (Ger Franck). It may have been dead for many weeks or months. The cause of its death is unknown.



Long-eared Owl (Photo: Ger Franck)

SHORT-EARED OWL *Asio flammeus*

Scarce and irregular winter visitor

Up to four recorded from 31st January to 3rd February with single birds on most dates from 9th October to 27th November with three on 11th November (many observers). One on south saltmarsh on 25th December (Mark Collins) and two in the north dunes on 26th and 30th December (Alan Dalton, Mark Collins).

SWIFT *Apus apus*

Frequent in spring and autumn, scarce in summer

Earliest date: Two on 2nd May (Tom Cooney).

Latest date: 18 on 1st August (Alan Dalton).

Peak count: 44 on 29th July (Mark Collins).

KINGFISHER *Alcedo atthis*

Scarce but regular winter visitor

One regularly at the River Santry and River Naniken outflows and at other locations.



Kingfisher (Photo: Seán A O'Laoire)

KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus*

Resident

Reported throughout the year.

MERLIN *Falco columbarius*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor

Single birds present on many dates from January up to 29th March and from 16th October to the end of the year (many observers). Two were present on three dates: 2nd February, 29th Marc and 4th December.



Merlin (Photo: Mark Collins)



Merlin (Photo: John Fields)

PEREGRINE *Falco peregrinus*

Regular visitor

One and occasionally two birds were present throughout the year except during mid-summer.

CARRION CROW *Corvus corone corone*

Very scarce

Up to three reported from 15th October to 30th December (Shane Thomas Quinn, Laura Murphy).

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

Very scarce

The hybrid reported in recent years was present on 25th May (Robert Busby) and 26th October). Two on 26th December (Shane Thomas Quinn).

HOODED CROW *Corvus corone cornix*

Resident

Total of 115 on 15th July was unusually large number (Ger Franck, Jim Duffy).

RAVEN *Corvus corax*

Scarce but regular visitor

January: one on 2nd (Alan Dalton). March: reported on three dates with four on 22nd (Ger Franck). August: One on 12th (Mark Collins). September: One or two reported on five dates (Ger Franck, Jim Duffy, Tom Doyle, Mark Collins). December: two on 26th (Alan Dalton).



Ravens (Photo: Tom Doyle)

BLUE TIT *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Very scarce visitor

One at the Alder Marsh on 9th February, five in scrub at River Santry outflow and near the

Bull Wall on 13th February, and two in scrub at River Santry outflow on 28th March and 27th August (Mark Collins).

SKYLARK *Alauda arvensis*

Resident and passage migrant

Migration: Several small flocks reported migrating in October.

SAND MARTIN *Riparia riparia*

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

Earliest date: One on 5th April (Ger Franck).

Highest counts: 50 on 23rd July (Ger Franck) and 68 on 26th July (Alan Dalton).

BARN SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*

Summer visitor and passage migrant

Earliest Date: One on 5th April (Ger Franck)

Mixed flocks of Hirundines reported were 150 on 21st July, 160 on 29th July and 75 on 1st August (Ger Franck, Mark Collins, Alan Dalton).

HOUSE MARTIN *Delichon urbica*

Summer visitor and passage migrant

Earliest date: Two on 9th April (Tom Cooney).



Skylark (Photo: Tom Cooney)

LONG-TAILED TIT *Aegithalos caudatus*

Rare

No birds reported on the island but a party of eight were in the scrub at the Santry River outflow on 7th December (Shane Thomas Quinn).

WILLOW WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Uncommon but regular passage migrant

Earliest date: One on 3rd April (Tom Cooney).

Latest date: One on 23rd September (Mark Collins).

All reported were between 3rd April and 4th May and 22nd July to 23rd September.

CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus collybita*

Scarce but regular passage migrant

Two on 3rd and one on 4th April at the Alder Marsh (Tom Cooney). Single birds on 21st April and 23rd July in scrub near the Bull Wall (Ger Franck).

SEDGE WARBLER *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Scarce but regular passage migrant

Single birds reported on many dates in April, May, July and August at the Alder Marsh, Causeway and the Bull Wall Reed Marsh. Two were present in July at the latter location. Although birds have been holding territory at the reed marsh in recent years, proof of nesting has not been obtained.

GRASSHOPPER WARBLER *Locustella naevia*

Very scarce but regular passage migrant

Spring: Two on 5th May (Mark Collins).

BLACKCAP *Sylvia atricapilla*

Scarce migrant and winter visitor

Ten reports between 13th February and 7th April. Single birds on most dates but two were present on 13th February (Mark Collins) and three on 25th March and 5th April (Ger Franck).



Grasshopper Warbler (Photo: Mark Collins)

WHITETHROAT *Sylvia communis*

Scarce passage migrant

Spring passage: One on 2nd May (Tom Cooney).

GOLDCREST *Regulus regulus*

Scarce passage migrant, mainly in late autumn

Up to three in scrub near the Bull Wall from 13th to 17th February and one on 11th November (Mark Collins). One on 16th October (Edd Kealy) and three on 24th October (Tom Cooney) at the Alder Marsh.

WREN *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Resident.

Common throughout the island in 2018.

STARLING *Sturnus vulgaris*

Resident, passage migrant and winter visitor

Flocks reported: 160 on 2nd January, 85 on 13th July, 550 on 12th August, 190 on 1st October (Alan Dalton, Ciaran Dunne, Mark Collins).

FIELDFARE *Turdus pilaris*

Uncommon winter visitor

On 2nd March 36 were recorded on both golf courses and 26 near the Bull Wall on the 4th March with small numbers on other dates up to 4th April (Tom Cooney, Mark Collins, Ger Franck).

The occurrence of these birds coincided with an unusual cold snap in spring.



Fieldfare (Photo: Tom Cooney)

REDWING *Turdus iliscus*

Irregular passage migrant and winter visitor

In March highest counts were of 23 on 2nd, 15 on 4th with a few birds still present up to 25th (Tom Cooney Mark Collins, Ger Franck).

These birds occurred at the same time as Fieldfares during the cold snap in spring.

SONG THRUSH *Turdus philomelos*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor

Several reports of up to five in February and March coincided a cold snap in the weather.

MISTLE THRUSH *Turdus viscivorus*

Uncommon visitor

Two reports of single birds at St. Anne's Golf Course.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa striata*

Very scarce passage migrant

One on 5th September (Tom Cooney).

ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula*

Rare breeder, winter visitor

Breeding proven in 2018.



Robin juvenile (Photo: Tom Cooney)

STONECHAT *Saxicola torquata*

Uncommon resident

The population of this species has recovered following a severe winter weather of 2010/2011. In the early part of the year up to ten or more were present with similar numbers towards the end of the year. Breeding was proven in 2018.

WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oenanthe*

Common passage migrant, former breeder

Earliest date: One on 15th March (Dermot McCabe).

Latest date: Five on 16th October (Edd Kealy).

Very small numbers reported during spring and autumn passage.

HOUSE SPARROW *Passer domesticus*

Scarce summer visitor

Reported from the general area of the causeway on a number of dates with up to five from 15th May to 16th July and a high count of 19 on 8th October (Mark Collins, Luke Geraty, Sean Geraty, Ger Franck, Jim Duffy).

DUNNOCK *Prunella modularis*

Rare resident

Santry River outflow: One on 2nd January (Alan Dalton).

Alder Marsh: One in song near the Alder Marsh on 26th March (Tom Cooney).

The March record is the first for the northern end of the island for at least a decade.

GREY WAGTAIL *Motacilla cinerea*

Occasional along mainland shore

Several reports of single birds along the mainland shore, the River Santry outflow and the Bull Wall with two on 22nd September (Mark Collins) and 26th November (Shane Thomas Quinn).

PIED WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba yarrellii*

Resident and passage migrant

White Wagtail *Motacilla a. alba*

Scarce passage migrant

Spring: None reported.

Autumn: One from 29th August to 3rd September beside and two on 12th September (Mark Collins, Ciaran Dunne).



White Wagtail (Photo: Mark Collins)

ROCK PIPIT *Anthus petrosus*

Uncommon winter visitor, probably under reported.

High count: 16 on 3rd march (Mark Collins).

CHAFFINCH *Fringilla coelebs*

Common winter visitor

Up to three in scrub at the corner of the Royal Dublin golf course near the Bull Wall from 2nd January to 22nd March with two on 4th November (Mark Collins, Ciaran Dunne, Ger Franck). Three in scrub at Santry River outflow on 28th March and 18th April (Ciaran Dunne, Mark Collins).

GREENFINCH *Carduelis chloris*

Winter visitor in variable numbers

Up to seven reported at various time and locations throughout the year, including summer.

LINNET *Carduelis cannabina*

Resident, passage migrant and winter visitor

Highest counts over 250 included 300 on 16th and 23rd September and a minimum of 400 on 2nd October.

LESSER REDPOLL *Carduelis flammea cabaret*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor

In scrub near the Bull Wall two on 2nd January (Mark Collins) with 12 on 22nd March and three on 25th March (Ger Franck).

GOLDFINCH *Carduelis carduelis*

Common passage migrant and winter visitor, occasional breeder

Counts: Post-breeding flocks were reported in July to September with a high count of 125 on 23rd September.

REED BUNTING *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Resident

Outside the breeding season loose flocks reported near in grasslands near the Bull Wall.



Reed Bunting (Photo: Tom Cooney)

Conservation Issues

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

In 2018 birdwatchers and members of the general public reported incidents of disturbance to birds, mammals and habitats. These included dogs off leashes chasing roosting birds and other wildlife, bait digging, shell fish collecting, paddle boarding in the lagoons at high tide and wind-surfing close to roost sites in the lagoons. The fact that these activities continue on a regular basis is clear evidence that Irish and EU laws protecting the islands habitats and species are not being enforced. It is unlikely that they ever will be.

Proposed Building Development in the Nature Reserve

In his seminal publication *An Irish Sanctuary – Birds of the North Bull* (1953), the ornithologist Fr. Patrick Kennedy outlined the many attempts by local and national authorities to exploit the island for purposes other than nature conservation. In the chapter titled “Violation of Sanctuary” he considered that a “cold war” was being waged against the bird sanctuary that he helped to establish in 1931. Over several decades he and other like-minded individuals fought against these proposals including the Blue Lagoon Scheme and a scheme to develop the island into a tourist resort. Since his book was published, a number of other major developments included the construction of the causeway linking the island to the mainland and the establishment of a municipal refuse tip on the north saltmarshes. The latter development was only removed after an intervention by An Taisce (The National Trust for Ireland). In fact, most of these development proposals were successfully opposed by enlightened individuals and organisations that recognised the importance of the island for scientific research, biodiversity and conservation. Finally, a combination of public opinion and Ireland’s membership of the European Union contributed to the island being designated a National Nature Reserve (NNR), Special Protection Area (SPA) for birds, Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and a proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA). These legal designations should have safeguarded the island and its wildlife from all future developments but it appears that the “cold war”, as described by Kennedy, is still being waged against the Nature Reserve.

It is inexcusable that a new building, which bizarrely includes a restaurant, is being proposed for this nature reserve at a time when major international conservation organisations are warning in very stark terms that global biodiversity is decreasing due to loss of habitat and human encroachment. It is now up to modern day bird and nature conservation organisations in Ireland to protect North Bull Island National Nature Reserve from such encroachment.