

# North Bull Island Bird Report

## 2019



Edited and compiled

by

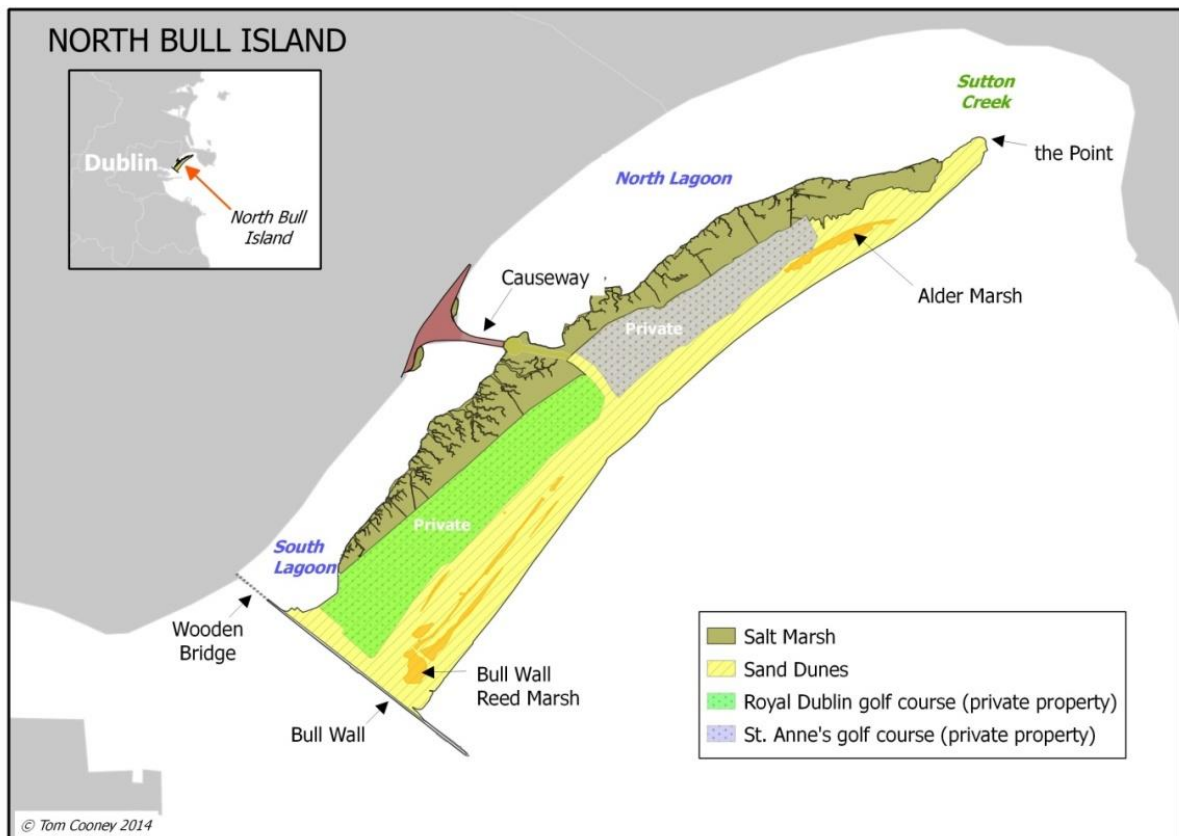
Tom Cooney

## Editorial

This is the ninth 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).

Few rare or scarce species were recorded during 2019. Noteworthy species were Pink-footed Goose in February, Spoonbill in April and a Quail in May. There was only one report of Little Tern which is now a rarity on the island. Whooper Swans occurred in record numbers. Carrion Crows were present regularly and short-eared owls were present in small numbers in the winter months. There was only one report of Curlew Sandpiper and two of Ruff but no Little Stints. Passage migrant passerines were also in short supply although a few Sedge Warblers, Grasshopper Warblers, Spotted Flycatchers and White Wagtails were recorded.

It is anticipated that the planning proposal for a new centre will be made public in early 2020. It is difficult to understand the philosophy behind this proposal considering that it is now established that human encroachment into natural habitats drives habitat loss and fragmentation, eventually leading to declines in species richness. If permitted, this new encroachment could potentially have a long term negative impact on the habitats and species in this legally protected area. There is already indisputable evidence that diversity on the island has decreased. Since becoming a nature reserve in 1988, the once common Irish Hare has become locally extinct and two bird species, Little Tern and Ringed Plover no longer nest. North Bull Island urgently needs protection from current disturbance levels and exploitation.



*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 2019. I wish to thank all contributors listed below.

## List of Contributors

Mark Carmody	Matt Garland	Tom O'Flynn
Maureen Carroll	Niall Griffin	Seán A O'Laoire
Tom Carroll		
Brian Carruthers	Tom Kavanagh	Derek O'Reilly
Victor Caschera	Edd Kealy	Diarmuid Ó Sé
Debrup Chakraborty	Aidan G Kelly	
Mark Collins	Noel Keogh	Gerry Power
Tom Cooney	Fred Kiernan	Brian Porter
Paul Connaughton		
Gregory Connor	Gerry Lyons	Shane Thomas Quinn
Fintan Cronin		
	Proinsias Mac an Bheatha	Jan Rod
Alan Dalton	David MacPherson	Gavin Rothwell
João de Brito		
Tom Doyle	Dermot McCabe	Jonathon Stanley
Carol Duffy	Anthony McCarthy	Mark Stewart
Jim Duffy	Donal McCarthy	
Ciaran Dunne	Phil McCarthy	John Touhy
	Colm McConnell	Gay Traynor
Vinny Fallon		
John Fields	Brian McDonnell	Anna Valentin
John Fox		Luis Leon Vintro
Ger Franck	Paul McMahan	
		Gustavo Zoladz
Luke Geraty	Paul Milne	
Sean Geraty	Laura Murphy	
Brian Gormley		

*Cover photo:* Merlin by Mark Collins

# Systematic List

The sequence and scientific nomenclature follows Gill, F. & D. Donsker. (eds). 2019. *IOC World Bird List* (v9.2). Available from [www.worldbirdnames.org/](http://www.worldbirdnames.org/).

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

Common winter visitor

Latest spring date: Two on 7th May (Mark Collins).

Earliest autumn date: Four on 11th September (Tom Cooney).

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

Scarce winter visitor

Single birds on 19th January (Mark Collins) and 26th March (Ciaran Dunne).

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

Rare

One on 11th and 12th January feeding in the golf courses and probably the same bird again on 27 February on the north mudflats (Mark Collins, Shane Thomas Quinn, Niall T. Keogh, Noel Keogh, Mark Carmody, Paul Connaughton, Ger Franck, Jim Duffy). Eight flew over the causeway on 1 October (Tom Doyle).

This species has occurred in three of the last four winters.



Pink-footed Goose with Brent Goose (Photo: Mark Collins)

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

Regular throughout the year

Fewer than five occasionally throughout the year (Tom Cooney, Jim Duffy, Ger Franck), high counts were of 15 on 6th May (Mark Collins) and 10 on 14th December (Niall T. Keogh, João de Brito).

**WHOOPEER SWAN** *Cygnus cygnus*

Scarce visitor during migration, occasional in winter

January: Two on 11th and one on 12th (Mark Collins, Debrup Chakraborty). March: 35 roosting on the north mudflats on 26th (Brian Porter) and 17 flew over the island on 27th (Jim Duffy). October: One on 2nd (Shane Thomas Quinn), 6 on (Fintan Cronin) and 4 on 26th (Mark Collins).



Whooper Swans (Photo: Mark Collins)

**SHELDUCK** *Tadorna tadorna*

Resident, common winter visitor

High count: 885 on 14 December (Niall T. Keogh, João de Brito).

Up to 46 present in mid-May (Ciaran Dunne) and 30 on 1st July (Ger Franck, Jim Duffy). Numbers increased in September with 200 on 28th (Tom Carroll) and 320 on 27th October (Jim Duffy).

**SHOVELER** *Anas clypeata*

Winter visitor

Last date: Two in 19th March (Ciaran Dunne).

Autumn arrivals: Two on 21st August (Ger Franck).

**WIGEON** *Anas penelope*

Common winter visitor

Autumn arrival: Seven on 3rd September (Diarmuid Ó Sé).

**PINTAIL** *Anas acuta*

Winter visitor

Spring: Nine present to 8th March (Tom Carroll, Ciaran Dunne).

Autumn arrivals: Five on 22nd August (Ger Franck, Jim Duffy).

Count: 184 on 15th December (Mark Collins).



Shoveler (Photo: Sean A O’Laoire)



Pintail (Photo: Seán A O’Laoire)

**TEAL** *Anas crecca*

Common winter visitor

Spring departure: Small numbers (less than 50) remained into late March (Ciaran Dunne). Two on 5th May (Mark Collins) were probably late migrants.

Summer: Three on 29th June and one on 1st July (Mark Collins, Ger Franck, Jim Duffy) were likely to be failed breeders.

Autumn arrivals: Nine on 15th August (Ger Franck, Jim Duffy) with numbers increasing to 180 by the 29th (Tom Carroll).

**COMMON SCOTER** *Melanitta nigra*

Regular winter visitor in small numbers

Four at Sutton Creek on 27th December (Ciaran Dunne).

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

Scarce winter visitor

A female on 27th November on the port side of the Bull Wall was probably the same bird reported on 11th, 16th and 27th December (Ciaran Dunne, Noel Keogh).

**GOLDENEYE** *Bucephala clangula*

Scarce winter visitor

Two on 11th and five on 12th January in Sutton Creek (Niall T. Keogh, Noel Keogh, Mark Carmody, Paul Connaughton). One on 14th December on the port side of the Bull Wall (Niall T. Keogh, João de Brito).

**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>Sep</u>	<u>Oct</u>	<u>Nov</u>	<u>Dec</u>
Bull Wall	34	49	16	22	-	4	17	24
Sutton Creek	17	17	14	12	1	17	-	30

Single birds also reported close to the causeway and in channels in the south Lagoon (Ciaran Dunne, Tom Doyle, Matt Garland, Tom Cooney, Jim Duffy, Ger Franck, Mark Collins).

**QUAIL** *Coturnix coturnix*

Vagrant

One on 2nd May north of the Alder Marsh (Sean Geraty).

Only the third island record and a typical date for this summer visiting species.

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

Uncommon winter visitor

Several reports from the Bull Wall, the beach and Sutton Creek. Maximum of four on 11 January with one or two up to the 5th April (Noel Keogh, Ciaran Dunne). Three on 2nd October with one or two into December (Ciaran Dunne).

**GREAT NORTHERN DIVER** *Gavia immer*

Scarce winter visitor.

Single birds as follows: Bull Wall on 19th January (Ger Franck) and 12th April (Jim Duffy). Sutton Creek on 27th November and 27th December (Ciaran Dunne).



Red-breasted Merganser (Photo: Sean A O'Laoire)

**MANX SHEARWATER** *Puffinus puffinus*

Occasional spring to autumn

The only report was of fifteen on 12th April off the Bull Wall (Jim Duffy).

**LITTLE GREBE** *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Scarce winter visitor

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

Three on 9th and five on 30th January (Edd Kealy, Mark Collins). Recorded from 17th August to the end of December with highest counts of six on 5th November (Ciaran Dunne) and seven on 15th December (Matt Garland).

**GREAT CRESTED GREBE** *Podiceps cristatus*

Winter visitor, occasional at other times

Highest Counts: 26 on 3rd March and 143 on 21st October off the north end of the beach (Ciaran Dunne) with smaller numbers present into the first week of November.

Summer: Two on 18th June (Ciaran Dunne).

Small numbers reported off the port side of the Bull Wall and off the beach in winter.

**SPOONBILL** *Platalea leucorodia*

Rare

Second calendar year on 26th April (Vinny Fallon).

**LITTLE EGRET** *Egretta garzetta*

Non-breeding resident

Highest numbers in late summer and autumn but fewer were reported than recent years. Up to



20 in August and 30 in September and maximum counts of 36 on 1st and 15th October with 44 on 2nd October (Ciaran Dunne, Tom Cooney, Tom Doyle, Ger Franck *et al.*).

**GANNET** *Morus bassanus*

Occasional offshore in summer

Fewer than ten on many dates from 21st February to 9th October with maximums recorded in April of 10 on 14th and 12 on 30th (Ciaran Dunne, Ger Franck, Jim Duffy, Mark Collins).

**SHAG** *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

Scarce visitor

Up to three reported occasionally from January to April and from October to December (Ciaran Dunne, Niall T Keogh, João de Brito).

**CORMORANT** *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Non-breeding resident.

Maximum counts.

Bull Wall (roost): 79 on 25th April and 31 on 29th July (Ciaran Dunne).

The Point (roost): 23 on 4th June (Ciaran Dunne).

**SPARROWHAWK** *Accipter nisus*

Regular visitor

Apart from two on 23rd January and 28th October (Mark Collins), single birds report regularly throughout the year (many observers).

**COMMON BUZZARD** *Buteo buteo*

Occasional visitor

Single birds reported in 14th and 16th January and 1st March (Mark Collins, Shane Thomas Quinn, Anna Valentin). The only autumn record was one on 16th November (Tom Doyle).



Common Buzzard (Photo: Mark Collins)

**WATER RAIL** *Rallus aquaticus*

Very rare winter visitor

One on the north end of the island on 3rd January (Tom Cooney) and one at Royal Dublin Golf Course on 16th December (Matt Garland).

Although very rarely reported in winter, it is possible this species occurs more frequently than records suggest.

**COOT** *Fulica atra*

Resident

Single bird reported occasionally from Bull Wall Reed Marsh.

**OYSTERCATCHER** *Haematopus ostralegus*

Common winter visitor and passage migrant

Summer: 68 on 5th July (Ciaran Dunne).

**LAPWING** *Pluvialis pluvialis*

Common in autumn, uncommon in winter

Autumn arrivals: Two on 24th June (Ger Franck) was a typical date for first returning birds. Numbers increased slowly to 20 by 1st July (Jim Duffy) and 30 by 24th September (Shane Thomas Quinn).

**GOLDEN PLOVER**

Regular passage migrant and winter visitor

Spring departure: 27 on 26th April (Mark Collins).

Autumn arrivals: 250 on 15th August (Ger Franck, Jim Duffy) increasing to 600 by 30th October (Ger Franck, Tom Carroll, Ciaran Dunne) and 1,050 on 5th November (Ciaran Dunne).

**GREY PLOVER** *Pluvialis squatarola*

Common winter visitor and passage migrant

The last of the wintering population departed in March.

Summer: One on 21st May (John Touhy).

Autumn arrivals: Seven on 17th August (Mark Collins) with up to 100 by September (Ger Franck).

**RINGED PLOVER** *Charadrius hiaticula*

Former breeder, common passage migrant and winter visitor

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

Counts: Only up to 80 reported between August to December (Gerry Power, Ger Franck, Ciaran Dunne, Mark Collins).

**WHIMBREL** *Numenius phaeopus*

Regular passage migrant, occurs in summer regularly.

Earliest spring date: One on 13th March (Sean A. O'Laoire).

Latest autumn date: One on 28th September (Mark Collins).

Highest counts: Very small numbers reported between 13th March and 15th May, highest counts were only 12 on 20th April and 2nd May (Sean A. O'Laoire) and 10 on 7th May (Mark Collins). Although there were many reports in autumn the highest count was only three on 7th August (Ger Franck).



Whimbrel (Photo: Sean A O'Laoire)

**CURLEW** *Numenius arquata*

Common winter visitor, passage migrant, small number summer

Summer: 18 on 17th June (Ger Franck).

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

Common winter visitor and passage migrant

Summer: Two on 17th June (Ger Franck) and 88 on 5th July (Ciaran Dunne).

Autumn arrivals: 380 on 7th August (Ger Franck).

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

Common passage migrant and winter visitor

Spring departures: Up to 31 remained to 7th May (Ciaran Dunne).

Summer: Five on 4th June (Ciaran Dunne) and 45 on 1st July (Ger Franck, Jim Duffy).

Autumn arrivals: 210 on 7th August (Ciaran Dunne) increased rapidly to 1,250 by 11th August (Mark Collins).



Black-tailed Godwit (Photo: Debrup Chakraborty)



Black-tailed Godwits (Photo: Sean A O'Laoire)

**TURNSTONE** *Arenaria interpres*

Winter visitor and passage migrant

Fewer than fifty reported on any one date.

Autumn arrivals: Seven on 29th July (Ciaran Dunne).

**KNOT** *Calidris canutus*

Common winter visitor and passage migrant

Spring: Small numbers present into April with 26 remaining until the 23rd (Ciaran Dunne *et al.*).

Autumn: 35 on 2nd August were the earliest arrival (Ger Franck) with a similar number present on 25th Tom Carroll).

Count: 2,900 on 9th February (Mark Collins).

Intense surveying in early 2019 revealed that Knot colour-ringed in Norway, Netherlands, Iceland and England winter at North Bull Island.

**RUFF** *Philomachus pugnax*

Scarce autumn passage migrant, rare at other times

Autumn: Two on 11th (Fintan Cronin) and one on 25th August (Tom Carroll).

**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>
80	16	160	32	15	-	160	-	240	220

**DUNLIN** *Calidris alpina*

Very common passage migrant and winter visitor

Spring departures: 1,500 on 13th March (Tom Doyle). 133 on 6th May and 70 on 13th May were probably passage migrants.

Autumn arrivals: 98 on 5th August (Ciaran Dunne).

**PURPLE SANDPIPER** *Calidris maritima*

Scarce and irregular winter visitor

Not reported.

**LITTLE STINT** *Calidris minuta*

Regular but scarce passage migrant

Not reported.

**JACK SNIPE** *Lymnecryptes minimus*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor

Four on 10th January and three on 16th February (Tom Cooney). One on 24th March (Brian Gormley).

**SNIPE** *Gallinago gallinago*

Regular passage migrant and winter visitor

Latest spring date: One on 23rd April (Mark Collins).  
Summer: One on 7th June (Jim Duffy, Carol Duffy).  
Earliest autumn date: One on 30th September (Tom Cooney).  
Highest count(s): Maximums on only five on several dates.



Common Snipe (Photo: Sean A. O'Laoire)

**COMMON SANDPIPER** *Actitis hypoleucos*

Scarce and irregular migrant

Spring: Two at the Wooden Bridge on 27th May (Ciaran Dunne).  
Autumn: Two on 13th and 17th August with one on 27th at Santry River (Ciaran Dunne, Mark Collins). Single birds on 4th and 9th October at the same location (Jim Duffy, Mark Collins).

**REDSHANK** *Tringa totanus*

Common passage migrant and winter visitor

Summer: Two on 24th June (Ger Franck) were probably early returning migrants.  
Autumn arrivals: 97 on 14th July and 220 on 11th August (Mark Collins).

**GREENSHANK** *Tringa nebularia*

Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor

Latest spring date: One on 6th April (Niall Griffin).  
Summer: One on 17th June (Ger Franck) was probably a returning migrant.  
Autumn arrivals: Three on 23rd July (Ciaran Dunne).

**KITTIWAKE** *Rissa tridactyla*

Regular visitor mainly in spring.

Recorded between 12th April and 14th June with a minimum of 200 on 17th and 150 on 25th April (Ciaran Dunne, Jim Duffy).

**LITTLE GULL** *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

Regular but scarce visitor

No reported for the first time in over a decade.

**MEDITERRANEAN GULL** *Larus melanocephalus*

Uncommon visitor

Single birds reported on nine dates between 17th February and 5th April (Ger Franck, Jim Duffy, Ciaran Dunne, Mark Collins, Tom Cooney). Maximums in July of two on 4th and nine on 9th (Ciaran Dunne). One on 17th November (Tom Doyle).

**LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL** *Larus fuscus*

Uncommon in summer, small numbers in winter

Spring arrivals: Four on 11th March (Ger Franck, Jim Duffy).

**SANDWICH TERN** *Sterna sandvicensis*

Common passage migrant, occasional in summer

Earliest spring date: Two on 26th March (Ciaran Dunne).

Latest autumn date: One on 9th October (Ciaran Dunne).

Highest counts: 33 on 7th April (Jim Duffy) and 57 on 2nd August (Ciaran Dunne).



Sandwich Terns (Photo: Tom Cooney)

**LITTLE TERN** *Sternula albifrons*

Rare summer visitor

One on 17th June (Ger Franck).

Within only one record annually in recent years, usually in mid-summer, this species is now a rarity at North Bull Island.

**COMMON TERN** *Sterna hirundo*

Common in summer

Earliest spring date: 11 on 14th April (Mark Collins).

Up to 15 regularly from April to late June (many observers).



Common Tern (Photo: Tom Cooney)

**ARCTIC TERN** *Sterna paradisaea*

Uncommon summer visitor

Two records involving three birds in the south mudflats/lagoon. One on 17th June and two on 1st July (Ger Franck, Jim Duffy).

**GUILLEMOT** *Uria aalge*

Occasional

Up to five reported occasionally in January, February and December mostly from the Bull Wall or Sutton Creek.

**RAZORBILL** *Alca torda*

Occasional visitor

Highest count: 11 on 16th September (Ciaran Dunne).

Small numbers also reported in April, May, September and October.



**BLACK GUILLEMOT** *Cepphus grille*

Regular visitor all year

Highest counts: 13 on 19th March and 14 on 5th April (Ciaran Dunne).

**COLLARED DOVE** *Streptopelia decaocto*

Very scarce visitor

One on 17th June at the Wooden Bridge (Ger Franck).

**CUCKOO** *Cuculus canorus*

Very scarce summer visitor

One from 6th to 13th June with two on 15th (John Touhy, Jim Duffy, Carol Duffy, Ger Franck Fred Kiernan, Mark Collins).

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

Scarce and irregular winter visitor

Two on 9th January (Edd Kealy). Single birds on 25th and 30th March, 21st April and 22nd October (Mark Collins, Colm McConnell, John Fields).

**SWIFT** *Apus apus*

Frequent in spring and autumn, scarce in summer

Earliest date: One on 4th May (Tom Cooney).

Latest date: One on 1st September (Mark Collins).

Peak counts: 30 on 2nd and 18th July (Mark Collins, Tom Carroll).

**KINGFISHER** *Alcedo atthis*

Scarce but regular winter visitor

Single birds reported on many dates from January to 28th March and from 13th August to the end of the year (many observers).

**KESTREL** *Falco tinnunculus*

Resident

Reported throughout the year.

**MERLIN** *Falco columbarius*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor

Single birds reported on many dates from early January to 27th February and from 27th August to the end of the year (Many observers). Two on 9th January (Edd Kealy). Male and female on 16th and 18th November (Tom Doyle, Shane Thomas Quinn, Sean A. O'Laoire).

**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

Several reports from the Bull Wall, southern end of the island's mudflats and saltmarsh of one or two adults in January, February, March, April, September and October (Edd Kealy, Shane Thomas Quinn, Tom Doyle). Birds were observed flying to and from St. Anne's Park.

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

Very scarce

Hybrid bird reported from the Bull Wall on 4th February (Ciaran Dunne).

**HOODED CROW** *Corvus corone cornix*

Resident

Flock of 31 on 7th August (Ciaran Dunne).

**RAVEN** *Corvus corax*

Occasional visitor

One or two January to 30th March and from 27th August to the end of the year (Noel Keogh, Shane Thomas Quinn, Anna Valentin, Mark Collins, Ger Franck, Ciaran Dunne, Jim Duffy)



Raven (Photo: Tom Cooney)

**SAND MARTIN** *Riparia riparia*

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

Earliest spring date: Four on 1st April (Shane Thomas Quinn).

Latest autumn date: Four on 17th December (Ger Franck)

Highest counts: 33 on 1st May and 26 on 4th June.

**BARN SWALLOW** *Hirundo rustica*

Summer visitor and passage migrant

Earliest spring date: One on 2nd April (Jim Duffy).

Latest autumn date: Three on 14th October (Shane Thomas Quinn)

**HOUSE MARTIN** *Delichon urbica*

Summer visitor and passage migrant

Earliest spring date: One on 8th March (Mark Collins).

**WILLOW WARBLER** *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Uncommon but regular passage migrant

Earliest spring date: One on 22nd April (Ger Franck).

Latest autumn date: One on 14th September (Tom Cooney).

Migrants were very scarce in spring and autumn 2019.

**CHIFFCHAFF** *Phylloscopus collybita*

Scarce but regular passage migrant

Spring passage: One on 3rd (Mark Collins) and two on 5th March (Tom Cooney).

Autumn passage: One on 16th July, five on 6th August, four on 6th and two on 13th September (Tom Cooney, Mark Collins).

A typical spread of records from various locations on the island.

**SEDGE WARBLER** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Scarce but regular passage migrant

Single bird present and displaying territorial behaviour at the Bull Wall Reed Marsh in June and July (many observers). One at the causeway on 3rd August (Mark Collins).

For several years in succession a bird has held territory in summer and it is very likely that nesting takes place.

**GRASSHOPPER WARBLER** *Locustella naevia*

Very scarce but regular passage migrant

Two on 4th May (Tom Cooney).

**BLACKCAP** *Sylvia atricapilla*

Scarce migrant and winter visitor

One on 8th September near the Bull Wall Reed Marsh (Mark Collins) was the only report

Only one bird reported

**WHITETHROAT** *Sylvia communis*

Scarce passage migrant

Single birds in scrub near the Bull Wall Reed Marsh on 14th July (Mark Collins) and 3rd September (Ger Franck, Jim Duffy).

**GOLDCREST** *Regulus regulus*

Scarce passage migrant, mainly in late autumn

Single birds reported on 5th, 6th October and 14th December with four on 27th October (Mark Collins, Niall T Keogh, João de Brito).

**WREN** *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Resident.

Nesting widely on the island wherever suitable habitat occurs.

**STARLING** *Sturnus vulgaris*

Resident, passage migrant and winter visitor

Small to medium sized flocks reported during the year. The highest number was 350 on 1st June (Mark Collins).

**FIELDFARE** *Turdus pilaris*

Uncommon winter visitor  
Not reported.

**REDWING** *Turdus iliscus*

Irregular passage migrant and winter visitor  
Two on 21st October (Shane Thomas Quinn) over the south saltmarsh.

**SONG THRUSH** *Turdus philomelos*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor  
Single birds reported occasionally. Three on 12th January and six on 30th January (Niall T Keogh, Noel Keogh, Mark Carmody, Paul Connaughton, Mark Collins).

**MISTLE THRUSH** *Turdus viscivorus*

Uncommon visitor  
Two on 19th January (Tom Cooney).

**SPOTTED FLYCATCHER** *Muscicapa striata*

Very scarce passage migrant  
One on 30th August and three on 8th September.



Common Whitethroat (Photo: Mark Collins)



Spotted Flycatcher (Photo: Tom Cooney).

**ROBIN** *Erithacus rubecula*

Rare breeder, winter visitor

Occasional reports of single birds outside the breeding season.

**STONECHAT** *Saxicola torquata*

Uncommon resident

Small numbers reported from various locations on the island and the causeway throughout the year (many observers). Breeding proven at three sites.

**WHEATEAR** *Oenanthe oenanthe*

Common passage migrant, former breeder

Earliest date: Three on 24th March.

Latest date: One on 11th September.

Very small numbers reported in spring and autumn and none were present in summer.

**HOUSE SPARROW** *Passer domesticus*

Scarce summer visitor

Eight on 3rd June at the causeway (Ger Franck).

**DUNNOCK** *Prunella modularis*

Rare resident

Royal Dublin: Single birds on a number of dates in March (Ger Franck *et al.*).

**GREY WAGTAIL** *Motacilla cinerea*

Occasional along mainland shore

River Santry outflow: Several reports of one or two in January, March, June and July with

South Saltmarsh: two juveniles on 7th October (Tom O’Flynn *et al.*).  
One flew over the low water channel on the southern mudflats on 2nd October (Shane Thomas Quinn).

**PIED WAGTAIL** *Motacilla alba yarrellii*

Resident and passage migrant

**White Wagtail** *Motacilla a. alba*

Scarce passage migrant

Autumn: Four on 6th September (John Long).

**MEADOW PIPIT** *Anthus pratensis*

Common resident

Many reports of birds throughout the year.

**ROCK PIPIT** *Anthus petrosus*

Uncommon winter visitor, probably under reported.

High count: 18 on 14th December (Niall T Keogh, João de Brito)

Summer: Two on 1st June (Mark Collins).

One on 12th January (Niall T Keogh, Noel Keogh, Mark Carmody, Paul Connaughton) and 3rd September (Ger Franck, Jim Duffy). Two on 30th October (Ger Franck).

**CHAFFINCH** *Fringilla coelebs*

Common winter visitor

Two on 5th October (Mark Collins).



Meadow Pipit (Photo Tom Cooney)



Rock Pipit (Photo Mark Collins)

**LINNET** *Carduelis cannabina*

Resident, passage migrant and winter visitor

Autumn flocks: 410 on 30th August (Tom Cooney). 430 on 11th October (Mark Collins).

Smaller flocks of up to 300 on saltmarshes in August, September and October.

**LESSER REDPOLL** *Carduelis flammea cabaret*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor

Four on 6th November at the Alder Marsh (Tom Cooney).

**GOLDFINCH** *Carduelis carduelis*

Common passage migrant and winter visitor, occasional breeder

Count: 70 on 30th August (Tom Cooney).

Smaller flocks of less than ten reported from various locations including the causeway.

## **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 2019 many reports were received of unleashed dogs chasing birds and mammals in the nature reserve. In addition, there were also reports of disturbances to roosting birds at high tide by water sports activities in the lagoons. Despite being legally designated as an area reserved for the protection of habitats and species, the same issues arise year after year. Now that encroachment appears to have higher priority than conservation, the future of North Bull Island Nature Reserve, its protected habitats and species, appears bleak. It is now up to Irish nature organisations to protect this valuable site.