



Field Guides Tour Report

BIRDING PLUS - Ireland in Fall 2012

Nov 1, 2012 to Nov 11, 2012
Terry and Karen McEneaney

For our tour description, itinerary, past triplists, dates, fees, and more, please [VISIT OUR TOUR PAGE](#).



Rock of Cashel served as the traditional seat of the kings of Munster for several centuries before the Norman invasion of Ireland in 1169. Most of the buildings on this site date from the 12th and 13th centuries. (Photo by guide Terry McEneaney)

It is nice to have relatives and close friends in Ireland. For wherever we travel in the Emerald Isle it feels like home, and we like to make people feel at home also. But most importantly, one experiences interesting people and personalities coupled with the Irish hospitality and birds, since everything shines through the Irish mist. Our fall Field Guides Ireland tour was nothing short of brilliant. We ended up with 96 species of birds, which is in the realm of normal for this trip, and in many cases thousands of individual wintering birds. Boreal migrant birds were somewhat slow in coming from Iceland and Fennoscandia to Ireland, because the cold weather never really hit those areas hard so far. Our music venues were also superb, and our pub-hopping never turned into a crawl, which is always a good thing.

When we first started the tour it was colder than normal with a fair amount of rain. But we never let the weather dampen our spirits—for we always had options such as birds, archaeological sites, traditional Irish music, and Irish cultural areas known as “pubs”, combined with “crack” Gaelic craic for “fun”. The small Mercedes bus made it “savagely” or superb for traveling. And because of a good attitude, the weather improved and we had the time of our lives.

All participants were on their first visit to the Emerald Isle, and were blown away by this land of enchantment. This isn't your ordinary tour of Ireland, after all; it is an insiders tour. Red Kites turned out to be the best birds seen on the trip. And watching kites soar overhead and traveling to a roost was sensational. The shorebird, gull, and corvid extravaganza wasn't bad either. A lot of my relatives and friends turned up along the way, making everyone feel welcome. We had super traditional Irish music every night. They heard we (FG) were coming, so they went out of their way for us. Our best nights were at Tossey's in County Armagh, Northern Ireland, where it was a farmhouse full of people, music, singing and cheer, followed by Lyons Bar in the republic where 20 musicians showed up radiating the walls with their sound. Clients could not believe the number of Irish archaeological sites, particularly the classics you find on the fall tour including Newgrange, Emain Macha or Navan Fort, and the Rock of Cashel. Then there were the countless forts, castles, and round towers. In reality, the entire Emerald Isle is one large archaeological site in some form or fashion. We returned home with many enjoyable memories and stories that incorporated Irish birds, music, landscapes, archaeological sites, pubs, and people into the conversation. The food was delicious, the black Guinness pints tasted like milk shakes, and the Irish whiskey “like butta”.

You did not have to drink alcohol to enjoy this trip, because the trip was intoxicatingly fun. We experienced Irish humor at its best, such as: a cut-off man's head in a church; a very funny birder friend and his wife who accompanied us for a day of laughter; a cemetery pub complete with conversing CEO's and cemetery workers to bury you nearby should the immediate need arise; Adam and Eve's pub that turned into Adam and Eve's church bearing the same name; a statue of the “tart with the cart” in Dublin; a church turned into a pub; a very witty and fun Irish bus driver, and the list goes on. But the key to visiting Ireland is to get off the beaten path, get off the tourist trail, watch Irish birds along the Irish Sea or in a sea of green vegetation, and meet the real Irish people in real Irish pubs and settings, when they are not busy. Few people will get to experience what we experienced in eastern Ireland (Dublin, Lough Neagh, Armagh, Belfast, Belfast Harbor, Wicklow Coast, Waterford, Wexford, Wexford Slobs, and Cobh and everything in

between). We did just that, and that is why FG's Birding Plus Ireland Fall—Birds, Traditional Music, and Pubs will continue to be a tour worth noting in the years to come.

Thank you for accompanying us on the magical mystery bird tour, and for allowing us the opportunity to show you eastern Ireland. We hope to see you again on future Field Guides tours. In the meantime Slan! Fare you well!

--Terry and Karen

KEYS FOR THIS LIST

One of the following keys may be shown in brackets for individual species as appropriate: * = heard only, I = introduced, E = endemic, N = nesting, a = austral migrant, b = boreal migrant

BIRDS

Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE (*Anser albifrons*) – Many at Wexford Slobs, of the Greenland race *flavirostris*.

GRAYLAG GOOSE (*Anser anser*) – Found a few individuals--Belfast Harbor.

BRANT (*Branta bernicla*) – Very common along coast numbering in the ten's of thousands.

MUTE SWAN (*Cygnus olor*)

WHOOPEE SWAN (*Cygnus cygnus*) – Whooper Swans were slow in arriving this year from Iceland. Found a family group of 4 (2 adults, 2 cygnets) seen flying north of "the Slobs".

COMMON SHELDUCK (*Tadorna tadorna*) – Dozens.

GADWALL (*Anas strepera*) – A few individuals-Wexford Slobs.

EURASIAN WIGEON (*Anas penelope*) – Most days.

MALLARD (*Anas platyrhynchos*) – Omnipresent.

NORTHERN SHOVELER (*Anas clypeata*) – Several individuals-Belfast Harbor.

NORTHERN PINTAIL (*Anas acuta*) – A few individuals near Tramore.

GREEN-WINGED TEAL (*Anas crecca*)

TUFTED DUCK (*Aythya fuligula*)

GREATER SCAUP (*Aythya marila*) – Many of these on Lough Neagh.

COMMON EIDER (*Somateria mollissima*) – An unusual flock of 500 individuals-Belfast Harbor.

COMMON SCOTER (*Melanitta nigra*) – Hundreds along east coast of Ireland.

LONG-TAILED DUCK (*Clangula hyemalis*) – A single bird on Lough Neagh.

COMMON GOLDENEYE (*Bucephala clangula*) – Mainly on Lough Neagh and in Northern Ireland.

COMMON MERGANSER (*Mergus merganser*) – A lone drake "Goosander" flying upriver at "the Meeting of the Waters".

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER (*Mergus serrator*) – Quite a few individuals in many places.

Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

RING-NECKED PHEASANT (*Phasianus colchicus*) – These Irish birds are very dark in color, but not as many pheasants as other years. [I]

Gaviidae (Loons)

RED-THROATED LOON (*Gavia stellata*) – A lone individual as we traveled the east coast of Ireland.

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

LITTLE GREBE (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*) – Dozens of individuals.

GREAT CRESTED GREBE (*Podiceps cristatus*) – Dozens of individuals-from a distance they look very white in winter plumage.

Sulidae (Boobies and Gannets)

NORTHERN GANNET (*Morus bassanus*) – Over a dozen following a fishing boat at Dunmore East.

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

GREAT CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

GRAY HERON (*Ardea cinerea*)

LITTLE EGRET (*Egretta garzetta*) – Becoming quite plentiful.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

RED KITE (*Milvus milvus*) – Super kite flying weather with the sun starting to set in the Wicklow Mountains, and the red sun shining on these magnificent birds "kiting" overhead. Estimated we saw four different individuals. Their huge size, forked tail and stunning rusty, cream, and black colors took your breath away.

NORTHERN HARRIER (*Circus cyaneus*) – Not as many as other years.

COMMON BUZZARD (*Buteo buteo*) – Seen over a dozen individuals.

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

EURASIAN KESTREL (*Falco tinnunculus*) – Several individuals with one close up view.

MERLIN (*Falco columbarius*) – Only twice seen on the trip, but one time up close and personal.

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

EURASIAN MOORHEN (*Gallinula chloropus*)

EURASIAN COOT (*Fulica atra*)

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

NORTHERN LAPWING (*Vanellus vanellus*) – Thousands of individuals. Great fliers-especially the way they maneuver.

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – Not as many as other years.

EUROPEAN GOLDEN-PLOVER (*Pluvialis apricaria*) – Several nice large flocks or "golden clouds" of these birds.

COMMON RINGED PLOVER (*Charadrius hiaticula*) – Not as many as other years.

Haematopodidae (Oystercatchers)

EURASIAN OYSTERCATCHER (*Haematopus ostralegus*) – Thousands of individuals-too numerous to count.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

COMMON GREENSHANK (*Tringa nebularia*) – A few individuals.

COMMON REDSHANK (*Tringa totanus*) – By the thousands.

EURASIAN CURLEW (*Numenius arquata*) – Dozens if not hundreds of individuals.

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT (*Limosa limosa*) – Great looks at many individuals.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT (*Limosa lapponica*) – Great looks at many individuals.

RUDDY TURNSTONE (*Arenaria interpres*) – On three different occasions.

RED KNOT (*Calidris canutus*) – Belfast harbor.

SANDERLING (*Calidris alba*)

DUNLIN (*Calidris alpina*)

COMMON SNIPE (*Gallinago gallinago*) – Great looks at times.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE (*Rissa tridactyla*) – A lone individual flying near shore in the wind -Dunmore East.

BLACK-HEADED GULL (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*) – Tens of thousands.

MEW GULL (*Larus canus*) – Quite a few.

RING-BILLED GULL (*Larus delawarensis*) – A couple individuals along the east coast of Ireland.

HERRING GULL (*Larus argentatus*) – Thousands.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus fuscus*) – Over a hundred individuals.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus marinus*) – Quite numerous in the south.

Alcidae (Auks, Murres, and Puffins)

COMMON MURRE (*Uria aalge*) – A lone individual up close at Wicklow Head.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*)

COMMON WOOD-PIGEON (*Columba palumbus*) – Dozens, primarily flying, everyday.

EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE (*Streptopelia decaocto*) – Dozens.

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

EURASIAN JAY (*Garrulus glandarius hibernicus*) [E]

EURASIAN MAGPIE (*Pica pica*)

EURASIAN JACKDAW (*Corvus monedula*)

ROOK (*Corvus frugilegus*) – Thousands---without question Ireland's most numerous corvid.

CARRION CROW (*Corvus corone*) – A lone individual along the east coast of Ireland.

HOODED CROW (*Corvus cornix*) – Many along the coast-even more numerous in the south.

COMMON RAVEN (*Corvus corax*) – A few individuals here and there.

Paridae (Chickadees and Tits)

COAL TIT (*Parus ater hibernicus*) [E]

GREAT TIT (*Parus major*)

EURASIAN BLUE TIT (*Cyanistes caeruleus*)

Aegithalidae (Long-tailed Tits)

LONG-TAILED TIT (*Aegithalos caudatus*) – Great birds.

Certhiidae (Treecreepers)

EURASIAN TREECREEPER (*Certhia familiaris*) – One individual in particular came very close.

Troglodytidae (Wrens)

EURASIAN WREN (*Troglodytes troglodytes*)

Regulidae (Kinglets)

GOLDCREST (*Regulus regulus*)

Muscicapidae (Old World Flycatchers)

EUROPEAN ROBIN (*Erithacus rubecula*) – A darling bird.

STONECHAT (EUROPEAN) (*Saxicola torquatus rubicola*) – Not as many as other years.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

EURASIAN BLACKBIRD (*Turdus merula*) – Most hedgerows.

REDWING (*Turdus iliacus*) – A lone individual-Armagh City.

SONG THRUSH (*Turdus philomelos*) – More individuals in the south.

MISTLE THRUSH (*Turdus viscivorus*) – Nice looks especially the one out the window of the bus.

Sturnidae (Starlings)

EUROPEAN STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*)

Prunellidae (Accentors)

DUNNOCK (*Prunella modularis*) – Ireland's chocolate bird.

Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)

GRAY WAGTAIL (*Motacilla cinerea*) – Along the east coast of Ireland.

WHITE WAGTAIL (BRITISH) (*Motacilla alba yarrellii*) – Stunning looks of the blacker "pied" form" yarrellii race.

MEADOW PIPIT (*Anthus pratensis*) – Not as many as other years.

ROCK PIPIT (*Anthus petrosus*) – A couple individuals--hard to find this year.

Fringillidae (Siskins, Crossbills, and Allies)

COMMON CHAFFINCH (*Fringilla coelebs*)

EUROPEAN GREENFINCH (*Chloris chloris*)

RED CROSSBILL (*Loxia curvirostra*) – Near Ravenwood. [*]

LESSER REDPOLL (*Acanthis cabaret*) – Belfast Harbor.

EURASIAN SISKIN (*Spinus spinus*)

EUROPEAN GOLDFINCH (*Carduelis carduelis*) – Super looks.

EURASIAN LINNET (*Carduelis cannabina*) – Dozens.

EURASIAN BULLFINCH (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*) – Quite few individuals on three different days. The most bullfinches I have ever seen in Ireland.

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*)

MAMMALS

EUROPEAN BROWN HARE (*Lepus europaeus*)

NORTHERN (BLUE) HARE (*Lepus timidus*) – At Wexford Slobs hiding in the fields.

EASTERN GRAY SQUIRREL (*Sciurus carolinensis*) – Dozens found [I]

NORWAY (BROWN) RAT (*Rattus norvegicus*) – One scurrying along the road in front of the bus.

GRAY SEAL (*Halichoerus grypus*) – A few individuals along the east coast of Ireland.

FALLOW DEER (*Dama dama*)

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Totals for the tour: 96 bird taxa and 6 mammal taxa